

AT HOME IN
EUROPE

SOMALIS

IN **Oslo**

Somalis in European Cities



OPEN SOCIETY
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Somalis in Oslo

At Home in Europe

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Open Society Foundations Mission Statement

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 100 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

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This city report was prepared as part of a series of reports titled Somalis in European Cities. The series focuses on seven cities in Europe with a Somali origin population. The cities chosen, and within them specific neighbourhoods, are Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmö, and Oslo.

The reports have been prepared by At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations and in cooperation with local/national based experts. The Somalis in Oslo report has been researched and drafted by the Peace Research Institute Oslo, specifically the following individuals:

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At Home in Europe has final responsibility for the content of the report, including any errors or misrepresentations.

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PREFACE

A central belief of the Open Society Foundations is that all people in an open society count equally and should enjoy equal opportunities. The Open Society Foundations work day-to-day with civil society organizations across Europe to respond to discrimination, prejudice and injustice; to understand the emergence of new and sometimes worrying political phenomena; to inform better practices in policing and security; to connect those seeking justice and equality with policymakers and institutions; to promote inclusion for Europe's minorities; to support a critical and informed discourse among nongovernmental actors; and to empower grassroots organizations to seek change for themselves, unique to their own local context.

At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations, is a research and advocacy initiative which works to advance equality and social justice for groups excluded from the mainstream of civil, political, economic, and, cultural life in Western Europe. It places a high priority on local community and city level practices that mitigate discrimination and seek to ensure access to equal opportunities for all. At Home in Europe engages with policymakers, civil society organisations, and communities at the local, national and international level to improve the social inclusion of Europe's diverse minority and marginalised communities in different ways.

Minority communities – whether Muslim, migrant or Roma – continue to come under intense scrutiny in Europe today. This complex situation presents Europe with one its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity. The Somali community is one such emerging minority group on whom a lack of precise data hampers the possibility of achieving meaningful integration.

People of Somali origin have lived in parts of Europe for many generations but in the past 15 years their numbers have increased. There are no accurate figures for the number of Somalis in Europe but on the whole, whilst small in absolute numbers, they are among one of the continent's largest refugee groups and a growing minority population. Europe's Somalis can be divided into three broad categories: people of Somali origin born in Europe, Somali refugees and asylum seekers (who came directly from Somalia or neighbouring countries largely as a result of conflict) and Somalis who migrated to a country in Europe from elsewhere in Europe, such as from Sweden to the UK for example. They are a diverse and vibrant community who suffer from negative and biased media representation and stereotyping. There is a limited understanding on the specific needs of this community and they are in the category of groups that experience significant inequalities in accessing education, employment, health, and housing with resulting poor outcomes. Somali community groups are very present in certain countries in Europe but their engagement with policymakers and in local and national bodies can be relatively limited.

The comparative research series ‘Somalis in European Cities’ examines city and municipal policies that have actively sought to understand Somali origin communities and their specific needs. The research aims to capture the everyday, lived experiences as well as the type and degree of engagement policymakers have initiated with their Somali and minority constituents. An underlying theme is how Somali communities have themselves actively participated in tackling discrimination and whether the needs of specific groups warrant individual policy approaches in overcoming barriers to equal opportunities.

The ‘Somalis in European Cities’ series contains seven individual city reports and an overview. The cities selected take into account the population size, diversity, and the local political context. They are: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmo, and Oslo. All seven city reports were prepared by teams of local experts on the basis of the same methodology to allow for comparative analysis. Each report includes detailed recommendations for improving the opportunities for full participation and inclusion of Somalis in wider society in the selected city. These recommendations will form the basis for At Home in Europe of the Open Society Initiative for Europe’s advocacy activities.

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Somalis in Oslo

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLD	The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (<i>barne-, likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet</i>)
FGM	female genital mutilation
IMDi	Directorate of Integration and Diversity (<i>Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet</i>)
LDO	Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombuds (<i>Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet</i>)
MiFA	Diversity in Focus in Academia (<i>Mangfold i Fokus i Akademia</i>)
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NCPD	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue
NOAS	Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (<i>Norsk Organisasjon for Asylsøkere</i>)
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (<i>Direktoratet for Utviklingssamarbeid</i>)
NOU	Norwegian Official Report (<i>Norges offentlige utredninger</i>)
NOVA	Norwegian Institute for Research on Adolescence, Welfare and Aging (<i>Norsk Institutt for forskning om Oppvekst, Velferd og Aldring</i>)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMOD	Organisation against Public Discrimination (<i>Organisasjonen Mot Offentlig Diskriminering</i>)
OXLO	Oslo Extra Large
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
SeFI	Centre for Refugees and Immigrants (<i>Senter for Flyktninger og Innvandrere</i>)
Statistics Norway	Statistics Norway (<i>Statistisk sentralbyrå</i>)
UDI	Directorate of Immigration (<i>Utlendingsdirektoratet</i>)
UiO	University of Oslo
UKE	Improvement and Development Agency (<i>Utviklings- og kompetanseetaten</i>)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the experience of Somalis living in Oslo, Norway, focusing on five areas of local policy and the broader themes of identity, belonging and interaction. Through focus group discussions with Norwegian-Somali residents and interviews and conversations with key stakeholders in the city, the Open Society Foundations has incorporated diverse perspectives and provides recommendations for improving integration to the benefit of all.

Norway has only recently become a country hosting any substantial number of immigrants; the past decade has seen a surge in annual immigration, with numbers almost doubling between 2005 and 2011. People of Somali origin make up a fairly small percentage of the overall immigrant population, but are among the largest refugee groups. Somali immigrants in Norway are young: 80 percent are under 40, and 80 percent of the second generation, children born in Norway to Somali immigrant parents, is under the age of 10. Somali communities are concentrated in the urban areas of Norway, especially Oslo, where they are the third-largest immigrant group in the city. Oslo has developed a robust policy framework for managing inclusion, and scores high on the Intercultural Cities Index; a joint initiative by the Council of Europe and the European Union to utilize the potentials of a diverse citizenship. City policies include the OXLO (Oslo Extra Large) initiative, which is a framework for enhancing inclusion.

Identity and belonging: Migration is still a new phenomenon in Norway, and a cross-cultural identity is still developing. According to one observer, equality is conceived as sameness in the Norwegian context, equating national identity with ethnic origin. Younger Norwegian-Somalis report not being accepted as Norwegian, and some struggle with not feeling a sense of belonging to Norway while not feeling fully Somali either. Feelings of being excluded and facing stereotypes on a daily basis are expressed by young and old alike, and affect all areas of local policy discussed in the report.

Education: The large number of children among Norwegian-Somalis gives education special significance in their perspectives on integration. Participation rates in school are lower for Norwegian-Somalis than for the population as a whole as well as for all immigrant groups, with drop-out rates well above average as well. This may in part be due to education trajectories disrupted by war and displacement and the range of challenges facing Somali families in Norway, as well as the fact that the Norwegian educational system has not adjusted quickly enough to increasing diversity in Oslo schools. Language and cultural barriers make it difficult for Norwegian-Somali parents to engage with the school system, and to assist children with their studies. The Open Society Foundations focus group participants expressed concern about the uneven distribution of students with an immigrant background in Oslo's schools, and the insufficient resources that certain schools have to follow up students with extra needs. A range of initiatives exist to improve the situation, such as the City of Oslo's focus on lifting conditions – including those in kindergartens and schools – in deprived city districts like Groruddal; the Child Welfare Services' Drop-out Team (*barnevern Drop*

Out Teamet) in Søndre Nordstrand district that provides guidance and support for those dropping out or at the risk of dropping out of secondary school; and the Somali Students Association's (*Somalisk Studentforening*, SSF) initiative to provide homework support and organise motivational seminars for those in secondary schools.

Employment: Norwegian-Somalis struggle in the labour market, with a range of studies finding low levels of employment, for instance in Oslo where by 1 January 2013, only 40 percent of men and 23.1 percent of women aged 30–59 were employed. Women's participation in the labour force is particularly low, possibly due in part to the fact that many are single mothers with responsibility for many children and because of expectations that women do not seek work outside the home. The overall poor labour market situation of Norwegian-Somalis can partly be explained by the fact that Somalis have arrived recently in Norway, and the lack of formal qualifications of the majority of them is problematic in a country that lacks options for unskilled labourers.

The lengthy process towards finding work is a real barrier to inclusion. In particular the first phase in Norwegian asylum centres – which has been described as the waiting phase – is crucial in this respect. Moreover, many Norwegian-Somalis find the programmes to help them find employment are of limited use. Focus group participants attributed the difficulties securing work to a range of factors, including both structural factors such as discrimination and exclusion, and personal ones such as insufficient language skills or a lack of formal qualifications. Initiatives to address the situation include the Job Opportunity (*Jobbsjansen*) project; the Link Workers (*Linkarbeidere*) project; and initiatives to provide support for entrepreneurs.

Housing: In a country where the majority of people are homeowners, only 16 percent of Norwegian-Somalis own their own home. While there is state and local support to help those with limited funds to secure housing, navigating the social housing system is difficult and the standards of the housing are often a concern. Discrimination in the private housing market has been documented, despite legislation forbidding discriminatory treatment; moreover, private renters face considerable insecurity as they can be thrown out at any time and often have to move frequently. A challenge that prevents Norwegian-Somalis from buying, besides their lack of purchasing power, is that they avoid taking out a mortgage because there are none available that complies with Islamic lending rules. Housing is a central element of inclusion, which is especially strongly felt by homeless people. The Church's City Mission (*Kirkens Bymisjon*) runs a housing project in Grønland for East Africans (mainly Somalis) with severe psychological problems.

Health and social protection: Data on migrants' health are scarce, which makes it difficult to develop appropriate measures. The 2013 strategy on migrant health of the Ministry of Health and Care Services suggests further measures to address this lack of knowledge, building on the established Norwegian Centre for Minority Health Research (*Nasjonal Kompetanseenhhet for Minoritetshelse*, NAKMI). Its main goal is to reduce social health differences and guarantee equal health and care services. The main challenges of reaching this aim are information and communication: how people understand health, signs of

illness and measures for improving health often varies greatly across cultures; and on top, quality interpretation is often not provided in the health services.

The aspect of the social protection framework that is of most concern to the Open Society Foundations respondents is the child welfare services. Stories circulate about the service improperly interfering in family affairs among recent Somali immigrants, exacerbated by a heavy reliance on personal contacts as information source. At the same time, professionals working with the service may have insufficient background knowledge about the functioning of Somali families and may have incorrect assumptions about social and cultural practices. Communication, both in terms of language and intercultural understanding, is a major problem, according to focus group participants. An Oslo mosque has initiated a programme to help engage the authorities and Somali families in the child welfare services, and both civil society and the private sector have also developed measures in this area.

Policing and security: Oslo is overall regarded as a safe city, but needs to continue the holistic work it is engaged in to prevent an increase of crime and segregation in the city. Research indicates that police “stop and search” actions rely on racial profiling and give rise to tensions between ethnic minorities and the police force. Youth gang activity, which is currently rare but is an issue of future concern, does often have an ethnic or racial component, and a number of programmes have been developed to address youth criminality in Oslo. SaLTo, for example, is an innovative initiative by the Oslo municipality and police district to engage in crime prevention work among children and young people.

Participation and citizenship: Both Norwegian and Somali cultures highly value a sense of civic participation and community; and Somalis are very involved in civic and political participation while their levels of Norwegian citizenship attainment are also high. Locally, most focus group participants acknowledged that many Norwegian-Somalis do not engage deeply with their neighbourhoods, schools and other community outlets. This was attributed to language difficulties and insufficient information and knowledge. At the same time, there is a wide range of Somali organisations engaged in integration support. Strategic cooperation between these organisations is, however, often lacking.

Norwegian-Somalis have a good voting rate compared with other immigrant groups, and three Norwegian-Somali candidates have been elected City Council representatives. These elected representatives face high expectations from Somali voters, although they are often seen as minority politicians only who are having to become adept in the art of political lobbying and coalition building. Another important aspect of Norwegian-Somali civic and political participation relates to the fact that the Norwegian-Somali community, as part of a larger Somali diaspora, maintains strong and active ties with Somalia and Somali affairs. These transnational ties have been acknowledged by the Norwegian government as a strategic political resource.

Media: Immigration is a topic much covered in the media, but little attention is given to the everyday lives of immigrants. Analyses of media coverage have shown that Somalis are

among the immigrant groups mentioned most often, on topics such as unemployment, poor school performance, khat abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and other issues with negative associations. Open Society Foundations focus group participants reflected on this negative image, and felt that it affected their everyday lives in Oslo to a great extent, affecting the perceptions of teachers, employers, landlords and policymakers. An increasing number of Norwegian-Somalis are working in the media and several media outlets have made efforts to expand coverage of an increasingly diverse Norway. Norwegian-Somali media are simultaneously involved in providing information to Norwegian-Somalis and stimulating debate about a range of topics. A number of them can play a corrective role to the fact that Norwegian-Somali friends, family and neighbours often are an important but not necessarily always reliable source of information in the Norwegian-Somali community.

Conclusion: Norwegian society is still in the process of adjusting to a more diverse reality, one where being Norwegian is defined by more than birthplace or parentage. Norwegian-Somalis, as a large and visible immigrant group, often bear the brunt of lingering stereotypes and prejudice. A wide range of initiatives has been undertaken to challenge processes of exclusion that are everyday reality for Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo. These initiatives are led by religious groups, civil society organisations, and the state and local authorities. Norwegian-Somalis are a politically active group with increasing levels of qualifications and expertise in a range of areas. While the report encourages stakeholders in the field of integration in Oslo to make better use of that competence within the Norwegian-Somali community, Norwegian-Somalis can increasingly lobby for inclusion on their own behalf.

Overall recommendations:

1. The City of Oslo and other stakeholders should strengthen their engagement with Somali and other immigrant communities and faith organisations as well as community members by involving those with relevant experience and expertise and networks as active partners in promoting integration. Engagement should be at a level that brings them on board as active and equal citizens and residents of Oslo.
2. Norwegian-Somalis are a vibrant, dynamic and engaged community across various sectors and issues. In order to ensure that this level of engagement is fully utilised and captured there is a need for this community to increase its capacity and skills, at the individual, civil society and small scale organisational level. A more qualified and professional set of Somali organisations can only be an asset to the city of Oslo.
3. Labour participation amongst Norwegian-Somalis is low. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) and civil society organisations should work to develop support and guidance for civil servants and policy makers on addressing the particular challenges faced by immigrant job seekers. These include language needs, foreign qualifications, work experience outside Norway and unfamiliarity with recruitment and employment practices in Norway. This initiative would also assist immigrant civil society organisations to develop information and guidance on what to expect from government services and how to get the maximum benefit from those services.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this report was carried out in Oslo between December 2012 and October 2013. A wealth of highly relevant reports from Statistics Norway (Statistics Norway) with detailed analysis of a range of aspects of the lives of Somalis in Norway and in Oslo was fortunately available to supplement this study.¹ Norwegian-Somalis have also received a great deal of academic attention throughout the years.² Furthermore, the national and local governments, directorates and other policymaking institutions commission many studies that aim to inform policy or improve the quality of services provided in Norway and in Oslo.³

Besides this wealth of largely very good-quality written material, the report is based on in-depth interviews and focus groups. The research team attended a range of events

¹ S. Blom and K. Henriksen, "Levekår Blant Innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006" (Living Conditions Among Immigrants in Norway 2005–2006), Statistics Norway (*Statistisk sentralbyrå*, Statistics Norway), 2008 (hereafter, Blom and Henriksen, "Levekår Blant Innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006"); K. Henriksen, "Fakta om 18 Innvandrergupper i Norge" (Facts about 18 Immigrant Groups in Norway), Statistics Norway, 2007 (hereafter, Henriksen, "Fakta om 18 innvandrergupper"); K. Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land" ((Living Conditions and Gender Difference Among Immigrants from Ten Countries), Statistics Norway, 2010 (hereafter, Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land"); K. Henriksen, L. Østby and D. Elingsen, "Innvandring og Innvandrere 2010" (Immigration and Immigrants 2010), Statistics Norway, 2011 (hereafter, Henriksen et al., "Innvandring og Innvandrere 2010"); B. Olsen, "Flyktninger og Arbeidsmarkedet, 4 Kvartal 2011" ("Refugees and the Labour Market, 4th quarter 2011"), Statistics Norway, 2013 (hereafter, Olsen, "Flyktninger og Arbeidsmarkedet"); S.V. Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner. Demografi, Levekår og Deltagelse i Arbeidsstyrken" (Immigrants in Norwegian Municipalities. Demography, Living Conditions and Participation in the Labour Force), Statistics Norway, 2009 (hereafter, Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner"); L. Østby, "Innvandrere med Lavinntekt" (Immigrants with Low Income), Statistics Norway, 2010 (hereafter, Østby, "Innvandrere med Lavinntekt"); L. Østby, "Norway's Population Groups of Developing Countries' Origin. Change and Integration", Statistics Norway, 2013 (hereafter, Østby, "Norway's Population Groups of Developing Countries' Origin").

² A.I. Engebrigtsen, "Ali's Disappearance: The Tension of Moving and Dwelling in Norwegian Welfare Society", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (2) (February 2011), pp. 297–313 (hereafter, Engebrigtsen, "Ali's Disappearance"); A. Engebrigtsen and G. Farstad, *Somalier i Eksil i Norge – En Kartlegging av Erfaringer Fra Fem Kommuner og Åtte Bydeler i Oslo* (Somalis in Exile in Norway – A Survey of Experiences from Five Municipalities and Eight City Districts of Oslo), Norwegian Institute for Research on Adolescence, Welfare and Aging (*Norsk Institutt for forskning om Oppvekst, Velferd og Aldring*, NOVA), Oslo, 2004 (hereafter, Engebrigtsen and Farstad, *Somalier i eksil i Norge*); K. Fangen, "Assimilert, Hybrid Eller Inkorporert i det Etniske? Tilpasning og Identifikasjon Blant Somalier i Norge" ("Assimilated, Hybrid or Incorporated in the Ethnic? Adaptation and Identification Among Somalis in Norway"), *Sosiologisk tidsskrift* (Journal of Sociology) 14 (1) (2006), pp. 4–33 (hereafter, Fangen, "Assimilert, Hybrid Eller Inkorporert i det Etniske?"); K. Fangen, "Breaking Up Different Constituting Parts of Ethnicity: The Case of Young Somalis in Norway", *Acta Sociologica* 50 (4) (December 2007), pp. 401–414 (hereafter, "Fangen, Breaking Up Different Constituting Parts of Ethnicity").

³ This genre is as extensive as it is diverse. Relevant reports can be found in each of the sections.

during the research period, and engaged in participant observation in a leadership course for Norwegian-Somali women. Key stakeholders contributed 17 in-depth interviews and extensive discussions on the relevant themes were furthermore engaged in with an advisory board consisting of nine additional stakeholders. Further conversations were held orally or in writing with stakeholders in response to the draft report. The 31 key stakeholders⁴ consulted are experts on the range of topics that this report covers, and represent many of the organisations working in inclusion in Oslo or Norway. Most of them have experience working with the Norwegian-Somali community.

Discussions with 78 participants in 12 focus groups were conducted and recorded, and provide extensive material for the report. All names are pseudonyms, to protect the identity of our informants. Participants were recruited through organisations, institutions, personal networks and in places frequented by Norwegian-Somalis. Care was taken to engage participants from a wide variety of backgrounds, and in particular a balance between women and men; different age groups; different levels of education and employment status; and people living in different parts of Oslo. We included more women than men, and – if we compare age groups above 20 – have a reasonably representative age spread compared with Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo generally. We do have a very strong overrepresentation of those with higher education, as is clear from Table 4. However, the bias seems even stronger than it is since other information about these participants suggests that many of those who did not reveal their level of education have no formal education.

The report includes many quotations from the focus groups, and some from interviews with key informants. These quotations reflect different individuals' perspectives, and were selected based on insights gained throughout the data collection. Some quotations represent widely held perspectives, while others are exceptional and extreme positions that are contested among Norwegian-Somalis. Just like perceptions about Somalis affect the lives of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, the perceptions of Norwegian-Somalis are just as influential. Constructs and perceptions are not only influenced by social reality but also have an impact on the discourses taking place within that reality, and thus on people's actions.⁵ As such, they play a central role in an account of the situation of Somalis in Oslo as well as in measures to improve that situation.

⁴ See Appendix 2.

⁵ E. Wolf, "Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People", *Current Anthropology* 35 (1) (1994), pp. 1–12. See also C. Horst, *Transnational Nomads. How Somalis Cope with Refugee Life in the Dadaab Camps of Kenya*, Berghahn Books, Oxford and New York, 2006 (hereafter, Horst, *Transnational Nomads*).

Table 1. Participants' gender

Female	Male
47	31

Source: Open Society Foundations

Table 2. Participants' age

Below 20	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s and above	Unknown
3	25	14	15	7	5	9

Source: Open Society Foundations

Table 3. Participants' area of residence in Oslo

Centre	East	West	Outer Oslo	Homeless	Unknown
25	27	2	3	2	19

Source: Open Society Foundations

Table 4. Participants' level of education

No education	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Unknown ⁶
1	6	15	33	23

⁶ A considerable proportion of those who did not indicate their level of education are likely not to have any formal education, considering other background characteristics.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report sets out to understand the everyday experiences of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, with a particular focus on the processes of social inclusion and exclusion that they experience. Social inclusion is understood as a two-way process that includes engagement by individuals as well as opportunities for their participation. In Norway this concept of social inclusion is clearly reflected in policy: a White Paper, “A Comprehensive Integration Policy. Diversity and Community”, stresses that “All residents of Norway have duties and rights. All shall have opportunities to take part and contribute in the labour market and society.”⁷ This report explores how this balanced understanding of integration in Norway compares with the everyday lives of Norwegian-Somalis. It will explore the parts that are working well as well as steps that are needed to reach the ideals of the integration and inclusion policy, which are built on principles of equality, solidarity and justice.

A report that places its focus on Somalis as a group faces the challenge that Somalis are not a fixed group with defined boundaries, but rather a diverse set of individuals. The Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad⁸ has argued that in Norway equality is understood all too often as sameness, underpinning the ethnic construction of national identity. This is an important point, and it contributes to the stereotypes that Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo face and challenge on a daily basis. The choice to use the term “Norwegian-Somalis” instead of “Somalis” is an attempt to contribute to change. It is an attempt to underscore the fact that the people who contributed their experiences to this report are Norwegian residents and, often, citizens. This approach echoes that suggested by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, who presented the concept of “the new Norwegian we” in a feature article in *Aftenposten*,⁹ where he argued that a narrow understanding of “we” weakens the meaning of what it means to be Norwegian. In his view “We’ cannot just mean those of us who look like Norwegians did 50 years ago.”

This report suggests that an ethnic understanding of national identity also leads to assumptions of similarity within a certain (ethnic) group. Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo are individuals who have lived in Norway for two years or 20 years; who were born in Somalia, Norway and a range of other countries; who have a PhD or have dropped out of school; they are people who live in extreme poverty and they are people who have

⁷ Barne-, Likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartement (Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, BLD), White Paper No. 6 (2012–2013), *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk: Mangfold og Felleskap* (A Comprehensive Integration Policy: Diversity and Community), BLD, Oslo, 2012, p. 7, at www.regjeringen.no/pages/38098840/PDFS/STM201220130006000DDDPDFS.pdf (accessed 22 November 2013) (hereafter, White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*).

⁸ M. Gullestad, *Det Norske Sett Med Nye Øyne. Kritisk Analyse av Norsk Innvandringsdebatt* (The Norwegian Seen With New Eyes. A Critical Analysis of the Norwegian Immigration Debate), Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 2002 (hereafter, Gullestad, *Det Norske Sett Med Nye Øyne*).

⁹ *Aftenposten*, “Det Nye Norske Vi” (“The new Norwegian we”), 29 April 2007, at fa

created a fortune for themselves in the country. They have different understandings of what it means to be Somali, Norwegian, Muslim, mother, teacher, student, unemployed. This report cannot do justice to all these different experiences, and describing the experiences of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo undercuts them to some extent. After all, many Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo have problems related to, for example, employment and housing which in some aspects are comparable with other citizens' poverty¹⁰ while being very different from the experiences of other Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo. As such, the descriptions in this report are often not unique for Norwegian-Somalis and experiences within this group vary widely.¹¹

Yet it is important to describe the experiences of Somalis in Oslo because they are a visible minority in a country with a short immigration history¹² and often face exclusion because of being identified as Somali. As the report will show, that label far too often incorporates a range of presumptions and prejudices that does no justice to people's daily lives. This research aims to better reflect the diverse, contrasting and at times contradictory experiences of Norwegian-Somalis.

¹⁰ Aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article1761653.ece Business, letter to Open Society Foundations "Comments on draft report", ref 201303620-3.

¹¹ Comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

¹² City of Oslo, Department of Cultural Affairs and Business, "Comments on draft report" letter, ref 201303620-3.

2. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

This section describes the demographics, migration history and settlement pattern in the broader Norwegian context and in Oslo, Norway. Furthermore, it provides statistics on issues of citizenship and access to citizenship (see also section 10).

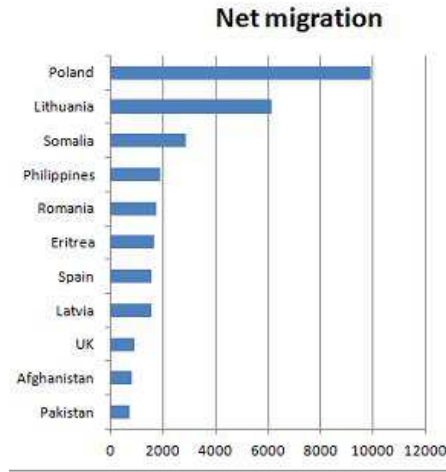
2.1 Immigration to Norway

Norway is a country with a recent migration history, and a small but increasing migrant population.¹³ It was towards the end of the 1960s that the first labour migrants from third-world countries came to Norway. In fact, “Norway did not become a net immigration country in modern times before 1968.”¹⁴ In 1970, only 1.3 percent of the population was not Norwegian, of which the large majority came from the Nordic countries, Europe and North America. Yet despite these low numbers, the postwar period was important in the sense that it introduced Norway to cold-war refugees, a liberal political immigration regime, its first contact with immigration from non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and, as a consequence, to support for stricter regulation of the influx.¹⁵

¹³ The migrant population refers to immigrants and descendants. Throughout this report, the Statistics Norway definition of the term “immigrant” referring to a person who is born outside Norway of parents who are born abroad and has migrated to Norway is used. This report also follows Statistics Norway definitions for “Norwegian-born with immigrant parents” or “descendant” referring to a person who is born in Norway of two parents who were born abroad. On top are the four grandparents born abroad. See Østby, “Norway’s population groups of developing countries’ origin”.

¹⁴ G. Brochmann and K. Kjeldstadli, *A History of Immigration. The Case of Norway 900–2000*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 2008 (hereafter, Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, *A History of Immigration*).

¹⁵ Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, *A History of Immigration*, p. 179.

Figure 1. Net migration from abroad, by citizenship, 2012

Source: Statistics Norway, at <http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvutv/aar/2013-05-02#content> (accessed 2 December 2013).

Following the first oil discoveries in the North Sea in 1969, there was a period of economic improvement in Norway. The expansion of the oil industry created many job opportunities for Norwegians, which resulted in a shortage of unskilled manual labour in low-paid jobs with harsh working conditions in the industrial, catering and agricultural sectors. Although the Norwegian authorities never actively recruited unskilled workers from abroad,¹⁶ Norway had been driven by a very liberal immigration policy after the second world war which made it easy and attractive for labour migrants to come to Norway in pursuit of better opportunities. The first labour migrants came from Turkey and Morocco, and they were soon followed by Pakistanis. In 1970, there were 434 Moroccan, 260 Turkish and 212 Indian/Pakistani citizens in Norway.¹⁷

Currently, the population is growing at the highest rate ever.¹⁸ At the beginning of 1992, immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents totalled 183,000, or 4.3 percent of Norway's population. Twenty years later, at the beginning of 2012, these

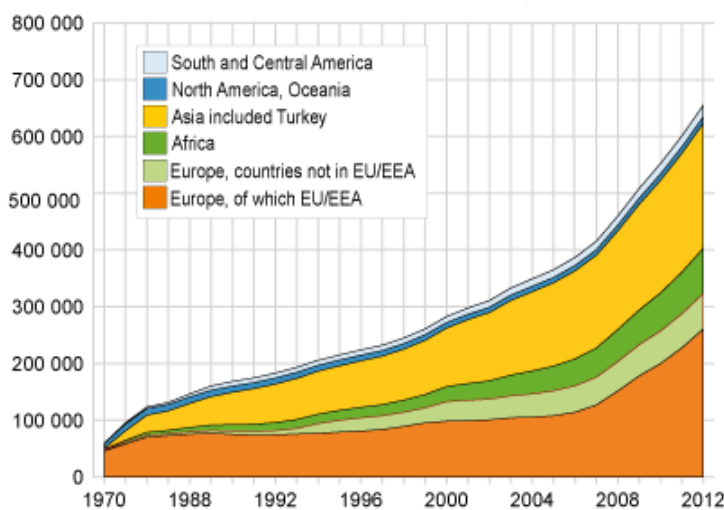
¹⁶ K. Wist, "Pakistanere og Indere i Norge – på vei oppover? Om Pakistanere og Indere i Norsk Arbeidsliv fra 1960-tallet til 2000" (Pakistanis and Indians in Norway – on the way up? Pakistanis and Indians in Norwegian Working Life, to 2000), unpublished thesis, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo, 2000.

¹⁷ Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, *A History of Immigration*, p 194.

¹⁸ For population, see Statistics Norway, in particular [ssb.no/folkemengde_en](http://www.ssb.no/folkemengde_en) (accessed 22 November 2013).

groups had risen to 593,300 immigrants and 117,100 Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in Norway or 14 percent of the population.¹⁹ Norway currently has the highest immigration rate in Europe at 8.8 per 1,000 inhabitants (annual rate).²⁰ Population movement of all kinds has increased in Norway; immigration, emigration and internal migration are all at the highest levels to date.²¹ Norwegian immigration has steadily increased over the years but has doubled since 2005. In 2005, 40,148 immigrants officially entered Norway; in 2011 the number was 79,498.²²

Figure 2. Immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents, 1970–2012



Source: Statistics Norway, at www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef (accessed 2 December 2013)

2.2 Norwegian-Somalis: Facts and Figures

In the broad context of all immigrants, Somali immigration is small compared with those coming to Norway as labour migrants from EU countries. While the figure for the total number of Polish immigrants in 2012 was 72,108, for Somali immigrants it was less than half that (see Table 5). At the same time, since the 2000s Somalis have

¹⁹ For immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents, see www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef (accessed 2 December 2013)..

²⁰ See www.ssb.no/en/folkemengde (accessed 24 November 2013).

²¹ See Statistics Norway, at ssb.no/flytting_en (accessed 23 November 2013).

²² See Statistics Norway, <http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvutv/aar/2013-05-02#content>.

been one of the largest refugee groups and indeed one of the largest refugee groups of African origin.

Table 5. Population size of selected immigrant groups, 2011 and 2012

Country of origin ²³	2011	2012	Increase from 2011 to 2012 (%)
Poland	60,610	72,108	16
Sweden	34,108	36,578	7
Pakistan	31,884	32,737	3
Somalia	27,523	29,395	6
Iraq	27,827	28,935	4

Source: Statistics Norway²⁴

Somalis started coming to Norway in the mid-1980s, with an increase after the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, but the largest group of immigrants from Somalia arrived in the 2000s and later.²⁵ While in the 1990s there were about 500 Somalis arriving in Norway annually, from 1999 onwards the number of new arrivals has been 1,000–2,000 per year. In 2012, the net immigration of Somalis was 3,394, which was an increase of 133.9 percent over the year before.²⁶ The Norwegian-Somali community has not been in Norway long: in 2009, 23 percent of Norwegian-Somalis had lived in Norway for two years or less, and only 13 percent had lived in Norway for 15 years or more.²⁷

Emigration from Norway by those born in Somalia has been high compared with other groups from Africa and Asia, with the highest numbers in 2004 and 2011, of slightly over 500 people.²⁸ Numbers of Norwegian-born children of migrants from Somalia display similar emigration patterns, with a spike in 2011 when 360 children immigrated. While the emigration rate per 1,000 emigrants from Somalia was 25 in

²³ See Statistics Norway at www.ssb.no/a/english/kortnavn/innvbef_en/tab-2012-04-26-01-en.html (accessed 2 December 2013).

²⁴ See Statistics Norway at www.ssb.no/a/english/kortnavn/innvbef_en/tab-2012-04-26-01-en.html (accessed 2 December 2013).

²⁵ Pettersen, “Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner”; Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”.

²⁶ See ssb.no/befolkning/statistikker/innvutv (accessed 2 December 2013).

²⁷ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, p. 216.

²⁸ S. Pettersen, “Utvandring fra Norge 1971–2011 (Emigration from Norway 1971–2011), Statistics Norway Report 30/2013, Statistics Norway, Oslo, 2013 (hereafter, Pettersen, “Utvandring fra Norge”).

2011, for Norwegian-born children of migrants it was almost double that.²⁹ These children were evenly split between boys and girls, and were largely less than 10 years old. For one-third of Somalis who migrate from Norway it is unknown where they migrated to, whereas 15 percent moved to Kenya and a further 15 percent to the UK. A total 42 percent migrated to Africa and the Middle East.³⁰

Almost all Norwegian-Somalis come to Norway as refugees, or for family reunification with those who had already settled as refugees. There has also been a high proportion of unaccompanied minors, of which only a few have had their parents join them.³¹ Over 60 percent of asylum seekers in Norway obtain a permit to stay nowadays, whereas it has been as low as 20 percent and on average is around 40 percent.³² Furthermore, an increasing number of those asylum seekers who are allowed to stay receive refugee status instead of the weaker right to remain on the basis of humanitarian reasons. According to the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (*Norsk Organisasjon for Asylsøkere*, NOAS), this reflects changes in the law, the fact that asylum seekers have stronger cases, and an increased awareness in Norway that people with protection needs should get full refugee status.³³

The majority of Norwegian-Somalis reported coming from cities,³⁴ most apparently from areas around Mogadishu and along the coast in the south. Immigrants from Somalia are young, with 80 percent being under 40 years old, and the Norwegian-born children of Somali immigrants are similarly young, with 80 percent less than 10 years old compared with two out of three among other immigrants and over half of the general population.³⁵ The percentage of children among Somali immigrants is high, both for family reunification and as unaccompanied minors. Half of the Norwegian-Somali population is part of households with five or more people, whereas one-fifth of the population lives alone: both figures are higher than the national averages.³⁶ There is also a large percentage of single-headed households.³⁷

The Norwegian-Somali population has a high rate of naturalisation (see section 10). According to the Statistics Norway naturalisation study, cumulatively between 1977 and 2011 Norwegian-Somalis were the second largest group in absolute numbers of

²⁹ Pettersen, "Utvandring fra Norge", p. 65.

³⁰ Pettersen, "Utvandring fra Norge", p. 65.

³¹ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner".

³² Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (*Norsk Organisasjon for Asylsøkere*, NOAS), "Asyldebatten og Sentrale Asylpolitiske Hendelser 1980–2013" (The asylum debate and central asylum-political events), 2013, at noas.no/asyldebatten-og-sentrale-asylpolitiske-hendelser-1980-2013 (accessed 23 November 2013) (hereafter, NOAS, "Asyldebatten").

³³ NOAS, "Asyldebatten".

³⁴ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnsforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 219.

³⁵ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", pp. 250–251.

³⁶ See Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", figure 15.9.

³⁷ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 256.

naturalisations, after Pakistanis, who have a much longer migration history in Norway.³⁸ In 2011, naturalized Somalis were by far the largest group in absolute terms.³⁹ When comparing recent refugee-origin countries in relative terms (per 100 residents, counting only those who have lived in Norway at least seven years), Norwegian-Somalis again score highest in almost all years.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the percentage is particularly high among women: in 2011, the annual number of Norwegian-Somalis who naturalise after seven years or more is 48.3 percent, of which 68.4 percent are women and 38.2 percent are men. In Oslo, 76.2 percent of Norwegian-Somalis have Norwegian citizenship,⁴¹ of which 71.4 percent are immigrants and 85.3 percent are descendants of immigrants.⁴²

2.3 Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo

Oslo is by far the largest city in Norway, with a population of 623,966 inhabitants on 1 January 2013, compared with the next largest city of Bergen at 267,950.⁴³ Oslo residents make up 12.4 percent of the population of Norway. As expected from the most densely populated city in the country, it experiences the largest migration trends. The total immigration for the year 2011 was 46,958 and emigration was 38,633. The net migration was thus 8,325 individuals moving into the Oslo area, the highest level to date;⁴⁴ indeed, there was a 16.4 percent increase in population from 2002 to 2011.⁴⁵ This type of annual immigration into Oslo continues to change the cityscape. As of 1 January 2012 Oslo municipality had the highest proportion of immigrants (23 percent).⁴⁶ In Oslo, of the 70,750 immigrants of foreign citizenship, the majority (45,500 or 64 percent) were citizens of EU member states. Similar percentages could also be seen in the 1960s, but the share decreased and as late as in 2003 was only 37 percent. While extensive immigration in previous years was due to large numbers of refugees, particularly from 2006, labour immigration has accounted for the high

³⁸ S.V. Pettersen, "Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap 1977–2011" (Transition to Norwegian Citizenship 1977–2011), Statistics Norway Report 25/2012, p. 18 (hereafter, Pettersen, "Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap").

³⁹ Pettersen, "Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap", p. 17.

⁴⁰ Pettersen, "Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap", p. 28.

⁴¹ Oslo Improvement and Development Agency (*Utviklings- og kompetanseetaten*, UKE), *Statistisk årbok for Oslo 2012* (Statistics Yearbook for Oslo 2012), UKE, Oslo, p. 24 (hereafter, UKE, *Statistisk årbok for Oslo 2012*). Available at <http://www.utviklings-og-kompetanseetaten.oslo.kommune.no/oslostatistikken/article241462-42123.htm>

⁴² UKE, *Statistisk Årbok for Oslo 2012*, p. 46.

⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Minifacts about Norway 2013", at ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/114562?_ts=13ecbcb1848 (accessed 23 November 2013).

⁴⁴ For migration, see Statistics Norway, at ssb.no/flytting_en (accessed 23 November 2013).

⁴⁵ UKE, *Statistisk Årbok for Oslo 2012*.

⁴⁶ See ssb.no/en/innvbf (accessed 23 November 2013).

immigration figures. There is a concentration of immigrants in the eastern and southern parts of the city.

Norwegian-Somalis can be found living in 238 of Norway's 430 municipalities. This settlement dispersal reflects their status as refugees. Refugees in Norway are settled through agreements between the state and selected municipalities, which usually leads to a varied and evenly spread settlement pattern.⁴⁷ Still, in 2007 more than 40 percent of Norwegian-Somalis lived in Oslo, and adding the cities of Bergen, Stavanger and Fredrikstad, this includes half of the immigrants with Somali background and almost two-thirds of Norwegian-born children of Somali parents. Many have moved to Oslo after first being settled elsewhere, and there are only a few immigrant communities in Norway that have a similarly high percentage as that found living in Oslo.⁴⁸ This pattern of secondary internal migration seems to have reduced in later years, in particular as a consequence of the introduction programme.⁴⁹ In 2012, Somalis were the third-largest immigrant group in the city, after Pakistanis and Swedes, at 12,779.⁵⁰ Compared with Norwegian-Somalis in other Norwegian cities, those in Oslo have the longest length of stay in the country: more than half the Somali immigrants have been in Norway more than seven years, which is true only in Bærum and Halden in addition to Oslo.⁵¹

Table 6. Somalis in Oslo according to year of arrival in Norway, 2012 and 2013

	Oslo totals	Before 1985	1985–1989	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2012
1 January 2012	8,387	22	531	1,202	1,590	2,893	1,740	409
1 January 2013	8,633	23	522	1,175	1,564	2,878	1,745	726

Source: Statistics Norway

⁴⁷ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 249.

⁴⁸ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 249.

⁴⁹ E. Høydahl, "Monitor for Sekundærflytting. Sekundærflytting Blant Flyktninger Bosatt i Norge i 2000–2009" (Monitor for Secondary Migration. Secondary Migration Among Refugees Living in Norway in 2000–2009), Statistics Norway, 2009, p. 42 (hereafter, Høydahl, "Monitor for Sekundærflytting").

⁵⁰ UKE, Statistisk Årbok for Oslo 2012.

⁵¹ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 255.

Norwegian-Somalis are mainly concentrated in the centre and east of the city.⁵² They are a group with some segregation, but in the period between 1998 and 2010, the level of segregation actually went down a bit.⁵³

Table 7. First- and second-generation immigrants from Somalia residing in Oslo, January 2013

	Totals	0–5 years	6–15 years	16–19 years	20–24 years	25–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50 + years
Oslo totals	13,184	2,224	2,806	944	963	1,247	2,356	1,790	854
01 Gamle Oslo	2,671	545	521	154	191	268	497	328	167
02 Grünerløkka	1,444	271	250	59	107	158	295	227	77
03 Sagene	1,424	294	253	71	110	159	269	180	88
04 St.Hanshaugen	506	79	93	37	45	42	95	83	32
05 Frogner	261	33	43	16	34	41	55	22	17
06 Ullern	109	21	13	12	14	9	22	13	5
07 Vestre Aker	212	37	56	9	23	20	34	21	12
08 Nordre Aker	315	46	52	16	27	34	71	52	17
09 Bjerke	894	150	200	60	50	81	179	127	47
10 Grorud	703	102	154	68	61	58	110	91	59
11 Stovner	1,005	140	260	99	73	68	158	119	88
12 Alna	985	156	240	90	59	92	142	133	73
13 Østensjø	680	98	177	67	41	68	103	91	35
14 Nordstrand	431	80	95	42	26	31	71	63	23
15 Søndre Nordstrand	1,072	147	303	121	79	68	148	130	76
Centrum, Marka, no registered address	472	25	96	23	23	50	107	110	38

Note: 149 persons with a background from Somalia are 67 or older

Source: Statistics Norway

⁵² Inner and Outer East.

⁵³ S. Blom, "Etnisk Segregasjon i Oslo Over To Tiår" (Ethnic Segregation in Oslo Over Two Decades), *Tidsskrift for velferdsforskning* (Journal of Social Research) 15 (4) (2012), pp. 275–291.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the administrative structure of the city, in particular the roles and responsibilities of national, regional, municipal and submunicipal bodies. It also explores some of the national and local policy initiatives for integration. Later sections will analyse to what extent this policy framework has succeeded in promoting the inclusion and participation of Norwegian-Somali residents in Oslo.

3.1 Administrative Structure of Oslo

Although the national government and federal laws have primary jurisdiction, counties and municipalities have local autonomy. A governor oversees counties and municipalities, which for Oslo and Akershus is combined in one person. The counties are divided into 430 municipalities. Oslo is unique in that the geographic areas of the municipality and the county are the same. While directly elected assemblies commonly lead municipalities, and elect a board of aldermen and a mayor, Oslo has a parliamentary system of government. The City Council is elected by the residents of Oslo, and the Council elects a city government that is responsible for executive functions.

The City Council is made up of 59 seats, and representatives are elected every four years. In the last election, which took place in 2011, three Norwegian-Somalis were elected to the City Council. Over one-third of elected city councillors in Oslo have an immigrant background. The City Council has a number of departments; integration and diversity fall under the Department of Cultural Affairs and Business Development. The city's executive branch consists of the governing mayor and currently seven deputy mayors, holding ministerial positions. The deputy mayors are appointed and removed by the governing mayor. The governing mayor and the deputy mayors can individually or collectively be voted out of office by the City Council.

As of 1 January 2004, the city was divided into 15 city districts (*bydeler*) that are to a considerable extent self-governing. Each city district is responsible for local services not overseen by the City Council, such as social services, basic health care and kindergartens. All of these levels of administration have a role to play in the policy context of immigration and integration of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo.

3.2 National and Local Policy Initiatives

The main policy responsibilities for immigrants in Norway are shared between central government and municipalities. Integration activities, including training, education, health,

social work and housing, are largely a municipal responsibility. The work is financed through grants per head from central government.⁵⁴

In 2006, the then Labour and Inclusion Ministry launched a comprehensive action plan for integration and inclusion, and had the ambition for Norway to be the “most inclusive society in the world”. The political and administrative responsibility for integration policy in Norway has shifted in the last decade, and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion⁵⁵ has been responsible for integration since 2010. On 1 January 2006, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (*Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet*, IMDi) was set up to guarantee the implementation of the ministry’s policies.⁵⁶

Norway’s integration policy, set out in White Paper No. 6 (2012–2013) “A comprehensive Integration Policy. Diversity and Community”, stresses that integration is a process encompassing both those who already live in Norway and those who have moved to the country.⁵⁷ It sets out a comprehensive approach which encompasses employment; preschool and education; health; parenting and family; housing and settlement; community; discrimination; citizenship; influence and volunteering; and criminality. It draws on an extensive review of literature on better integration; welfare and migration; and multilingual children, youngsters and adults in the educational system.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Council of Europe, *The city of Oslo Intercultural Profile*, Strasbourg, 2012, p. 3, at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/osloprofile.pdf> (accessed 24 November 2013) (hereafter, Council of Europe, *The City of Oslo*).

⁵⁵ The Labour and Inclusion Ministry (AID) first had the responsibility for integration, which was handed over to the Ministry of Children and Equality and then the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (*Barne-, Likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet*, BLD).

⁵⁶ M.L. Sandbæk and K.R. Tronstad, *Hovedtrekk ved Integreringspolitikken i Norge, Sverige, Danmark, Storbritannia, Frankrike og Canada* (Main Features of Integration Policies in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, UK, France and Canada), Fafo, Oslo, 2011 (hereafter, Sandbæk and Tronstad, *Hovedtrekk ved integreringspolitikken*).

⁵⁷ BLD, Forvaltningsreformen – Deloppdrag E (Administrative Reform – Assignment E), Oslo, 7 May 2012, p. 9, 2012 (hereafter BLD, *Forvaltningsreformen*).

⁵⁸ Norwegian Official Report (*Norges offentlige utredninger*, NOU), *Bedre Integrering. Mål, Strategier, Tiltak* (Better Integration. Objectives, Strategies and Measures), Information Management Administration Services (*Departementenes servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning*), Oslo, 2011 www.regjeringen.no/pages/16634493/PDFS/NOU201120110014000DDDPDFS.pdf (accessed 2 December 2013) (hereafter, NOU, *Bedre integrering*); NOU, *Velferd og Migrasjon. Den Norske Modellens Framtid* (Welfare and Migration. The Norwegian Model’s Future), Information Management Administration Services (*Departementenes servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning*), Oslo, 2011 www.regjeringen.no/pages/16413697/PDFS/NOU201120110007000DDDPDFS.pdf (accessed 2 December 2013) (hereafter, NOU, *Velferd og migrasjon*); NOU, *Mangfold og mestring. Flerspråklige Barn, Unge og Voksne i Opplæringssystemet* (Diversity and Coping. Multilingual Children, Adolescents and Adults in the Educational System), Information Management Administration Services (*Departementenes servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning*), Oslo, 2010 www.regjeringen.no/pages/10797590/PDFS/NOU201020100007000DDDPDFS.pdf (accessed 2 December 2013) (hereafter, NOU, *Mangfold og mestring*).

Following the Act on an Introduction Programme and Norwegian-language training for newly arrived immigrants (the Introduction Act), the national integration and inclusion policy aims have been to enable new arrivals to participate in the labour market and society as quickly as possible, enjoying equal living standards and opportunities with those of Norwegian citizens.⁵⁹ Three main programmes have been implemented by the municipalities and through the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration's (NAV) local offices. The first is the right and obligation to participate in Norwegian language and social studies. The second is the "Introduction Programme" for refugees, which aims to provide basic Norwegian-language skills; provide basic insight into Norwegian social conditions; and prepare for participation in working life.⁶⁰ Each participant follows an individual development plan and receives an income of around €18,000 per year,⁶¹ conditional on full-time attendance.⁶² The third is the Job Opportunity (*Jobbsjansen*) project, which targets immigrants and Norwegian-born children of immigrants with limited links to the labour market, such as stay-at-home mothers and young people aged 18–25.⁶³ This initiative has recently been evaluated.⁶⁴

Oslo is placed second in the Intercultural Cities Index, which recognises cities which have established a 'rational and robust policy framework across a wide-ranging agenda, with clear political backing and which can demonstrate the resources and competence to deliver it into practice'.⁶⁵ The City Council of Oslo first passed major legislation on migration and integration in 1996. In 2001 it launched the OXLO Oslo Extra Large initiative, as a political commitment to work for an inclusive city (see Box 1).⁶⁶

⁵⁹ The Act on an Introduction Programme and Norwegian Language Training for Newly Arrived Immigrants (Introduction Act), Section 17, at www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-20030704-080-eng.pdf (accessed 23 November 2013) (hereafter, Introduction Act). See also BLD, *Forvaltningsreformen – Deloppdrag E*.

⁶⁰ Introduction Act, Section 4.

⁶¹ This is twice the basic amount from the National Insurance Scheme (Introduction Act).

⁶² Council of Europe, *The City of Oslo*, p. 4.

⁶³ The Job Opportunity project is the permanent continuation since 2013 of the pilot project Second Chance (*Ny sjanse*). See Box 9.

⁶⁴ A. Ekeland, "Ny sjans – varige resultater? En vurdering av integreringstiltaket 'Ny sjanse'" (Second chance – lasting results? An assessment of the Integration Project "Second Chance"), Statistics Norway, 2012 (hereafter, Ekeland, "Ny sjanse – varige resultater?"); K. Frøyland and C. B. Neumann, *Ungdom I Ny Sjanse. Kvalifisering av Ungdom med Innvandrerbakgrunn til Skole og Arbeid – Metoder og Erfaringer fra Åtte Prosjekter* (Youth in Second Chance. Qualification of Adolescents with Immigrant Backgrounds to School and Work – Methods and Experiences of Eight Projects), Work Research Institute (*Arbeids Forskningsinstituttet*, AFI), Report 6/2012, 2012 (hereafter, Frøyland and Neumann, *Ungdom I Ny Sjanse*).

⁶⁵ Council of Europe, *The City of Oslo*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Council of Europe, *The City of Oslo*, p. 5.

Box 1. OXLO – Oslo Extra Large⁶⁷

OXLO stands for Oslo Extra Large – a city for all – and symbolises Oslo municipality’s diversity and integration work. The main responsibility for advocating and informing OXLO lies with the City of Oslo. OXLO was initiated by Oslo’s mayor in August 2001 as part of the capital’s action plan against Nazism, racism and intolerance, after the racially motivated killing of 15-year-old Benjamin Labaran Hermansen in Holmlia (Søndre Nordstrand city district).

The core of OXLO is represented on the poster “Oslo – a city for all”, that was adopted by the City Council in 2001. This document states that diversity provides enrichment and strength for the city, that every inhabitant is of equal value and has the same fundamental rights, duties and responsibilities. Some of the commitments have included facilitating meeting places for people to interact; supporting measures against racism and discrimination; taking minorities’ needs and preferences into account for public services; and ensuring that municipal employees reflect the diversity of the city’s population.

In 2012, the City Council (in case 152/12, “Diversity’s possibilities – about OXLO, Oslo Extra Large”) renewed and revised the OXLO policy initiative. This document notes that despite major achievements many challenges remain, in particular, low participation of immigrant women in the labour market, large numbers of drop-out from education and discrimination. Among the concrete measures explored in the revised decision is the development of the Oslo Job Match project as an arena for cooperation and for making immigrants visible as resources for business and employment.⁶⁸ Investments are to be made to make OXLO better known among Oslo’s citizens. Furthermore, the principles in the Eurocities Charter on Integrating Cities are to be the foundation of integration and diversity work in Oslo.

The City Council Decision No. 129/13 states that the City of Oslo does not have policies based on group ethnicity; it has general policies for services for the citizens.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Information for this box is based on information from www.bydel-grunerlokka.oslo.kommune.no/enhet_for_mangfold_og_integrering/oxlo_ressursportalen (accessed 23 November 2013); City Government Decision No. 152/12, at bydel-grunerlokka.oslo.kommune.no/getfile.php/bydel%20gr%C3%BCnerl%C3%B8kka%20%28BGA%29/Internett%20%28BGA%29/EMI/OXLOsaken%20engelsk.pdf (accessed 23 November 2013).

⁶⁸ City of Oslo 2012. City Council Decision No. 152/12, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Source for this paragraph: City of Oslo Department of Cultural Affairs and Business, letter to Open Society Foundations “Comments on draft report”, ref 201303620-3.

This policy is based on the political conviction that services should be available to all citizens regardless of their origin. The Governing Mayor of Oslo signed the Eurocities Charter on Integrating Cities in London in 2010,⁷⁰ followed by 30 cities in Europe, confirming the ambition to make services available to a diverse population. The City of Oslo service providers will support equal access for migrants to services to which they are entitled, particularly access to language learning, housing, employment, health, social care and education, and will ensure that migrants' needs are understood and met by service providers.

Since Oslo attracts many refugees from municipalities where they were originally settled, the city loses out on the initial funding needed to provide training, education and other support for its migrant population so that it can fully participate in the opportunities the city provides, thereby contributing to its development. In 2013 the government allocated NOK32 million (approximately €2.8 million) to a new subsidy arrangement to strengthen the work of municipalities in education and societal knowledge as well as the Introduction Programme and other qualification programmes aimed at cities and municipalities where over 5 percent of the inhabitants are immigrants or children of foreign-born parents. The aim is to improve the quality of the programme and develop methods that on the whole will improve integration in the local environment. In Oslo, eight different projects received funding, all of which seek to facilitate interaction with local workplaces. Many of these projects will find a workplace for individuals which is willing to train, and a teacher will then provide Norwegian-language classes at the workplace. While the arrangement only started in 2013, and it is thus too early to evaluate results, many interesting and innovative projects were funded.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Eurocities Charter on Integrating Cities: see integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/integrating_cities_charter (accessed 23 November 2013).

⁷¹ Source: IMDi. For further information, see www.imdi.no/Tilskudd/2013/Tilskudd-til-kommuna-le-innvandreriltak---utviklingsmidler-til-kommunene-2013-/ (accessed 23 November 2013).

4. IDENTITY AND BELONGING

And then there is the issue of how integrated you can get. You read *VG*⁷² and have skis on your feet in January, but when you walk in Grønland and Carl I. Hagen⁷³ stands in front of you, you are equal to someone who came from the airport yesterday and applied for asylum yesterday. Irrespective of whether you speak Norwegian, the first thing he sees, his first impression, is your brown skin and long beard. It's like "When did you come to Norway?" So just to sum up a bit: as an individual, you take steps to adapt and create an inclusive society but then it is dependent on ethnic Norwegians and the rest of the society to take steps towards us and fight or prevent ethnocentrism, stigmatising and xenophobia. There are changes in the world which lead towards increased immigration. Until we remove xenophobia we won't get any form of integration, because integration is not a one-way street.⁷⁴

This section explores how Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo define themselves. It will illustrate how the images that exist in Norwegian society, which confront Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo on a daily basis, affect their sense of belonging to Norway. It explores how Norwegian-Somalis discuss this among themselves. The section will then explore how the experience of living in Oslo differs from living elsewhere in Norway. This is followed by a discussion of the challenges that Norwegian-Somali parents in Oslo face in guiding their children in a new environment, and the challenges that many Norwegian-Somali youngsters experience in finding a clear sense of belonging.

4.1 Who Belongs and Who Decides? Stories about Somalis in Norway

By focusing on Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, this project has already made a choice about the relevance of ethnicity. While this is a challenging starting point that is increasingly criticised, at the same time "Somaliness" is important as a marker both of self-identification and identification by others. It is also a clear contributor to processes of exclusion in many areas of society. The main problem, of course, is that research that aims to make these processes of exclusion visible runs the risk of assuming ethnicity is both fixed and of overarching importance, and giving far too much weight to it as a defining factor of people's daily lives. One of the side effects of focusing on ethnicity as a marker for similarity and difference is that it makes many other markers – such as class,

⁷² *Verdens Gang* (*VG*) is a Norwegian newspaper.

⁷³ Carl I. Hagen is Norwegian politician and former Vice-president of Parliament. He was the chairman of the Progress Party from 1978 until 2006.

⁷⁴ Osman Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

gender, religion, age – invisible.⁷⁵ Gullestad⁷⁶ has argued that in the Norwegian context, there is a focus on an “imagined sameness”, by which she refers to “equality” being conceived as “sameness”, underpinning the ethnic construction of national identity.

The ethnic construction of national identity does not just lead to assumptions of differences from ethnic Norwegians, but it also leads to assumptions of similarity within a certain (ethnic) group. This leads to stereotypes that Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo face and challenge on a daily basis. When asked about the experience of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo during a key informant interview, Hassan Yunis said “I can only speak for myself.” The issue was mentioned by quite a few focus group participants as well; as Osman Mohamed,⁷⁷ a young man who studies at the University College of Oslo, pointed out when discussing what it means to face prejudices and stigma:

Society has the tendency to place you in a box. You are Somali so that means you have a number of characteristics. You don’t work, you are being asked when you are returning to your country, you are being asked about religion. You feel that they are going into direct attack. You feel like you constantly need to defend Islam, which is a hot subject in the media, when they see characteristics in you that they define as Muslim. That is the issue with stigmatising, generalising: it does not matter how much education you get or how long you have lived in Norway, it is repeated, one is asked all the time. Isn’t it? This is not just Oslo, this is all over Norway.⁷⁸

As Osman further points out, religion is part of the box that Norwegian-Somalis are placed in, and negative perceptions about Islam are an important aspect of existing prejudices against Norwegian-Somalis. This is something that has strong implications for everyday life, affecting practices and debates on food, clothing and prayer, for example. In a number of focus group discussions, prayer and clothing were a topic of discussion. Norwegian-Somalis are confronted with limited understanding of their wish to pray during introduction courses or at work. Quite a few research participants point out that prayer times can be compared with the amount of time others use to smoke, and they thus cannot understand why it is seen to be a problem.

While discussions about prayer are affecting men and women alike, Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo agree that women have a more difficult time because of clothing. They emphasise that the reaction to the hijab can be a major obstacle for women, bringing more negative judgement on them from the first meeting. The perceptions that Norwegian-Somalis have about Norwegian attitudes are largely corroborated by research on such attitudes: a 2012 survey found that between half and three-quarters of

⁷⁵ Gullestad, *Det Norske Sett Med Nye Øyne*; A. Wimmer and N. Glick Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology”, *International Migration Review* 37(3) (2003), pp. 576–610.

⁷⁶ Gullestad, *Det Norske Sett Med Nye Øyne*.

⁷⁷ Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the research participants.

⁷⁸ Osman Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

the population has a negative attitude towards women wearing a hijab in a range of contexts beyond just wearing it on the street.⁷⁹

Research on Norwegian attitudes towards immigrants indicates that contact and interaction generally correlates with more positive attitudes, and vice versa.⁸⁰ Our research similarly suggests that most often, prejudices towards Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo are not necessarily based on contact and interaction. Many of the Norwegian-Somalis interviewed indicated that those they interact with on a day-to-day basis are confronted with a clash between stereotypes and reality. In focus group discussions a number of people pointed out how much they dislike facing disbelief (“Are *you* Somali?”) or seeming compliments that imply very negative perceptions about Norwegian-Somalis as a group. It is not uncommon to get compliments about the fact that one speaks Norwegian well, but it is then implicitly or explicitly suggested that this is as remarkable as it is rare. As Osman illustrated:

The kinds of comments I do not like are, for example, “But you are a competent Somali who has a job.” If people say such a thing as if it was something special, one wonders what kind of impression people actually have about us. But things will get better, my siblings will be in a better position than my parents. Things take time, one has to be an optimist.⁸¹

Here an important point is raised: things will improve, but that process takes time. One of the likely ways in which improvement will occur is through increased daily contact between people. IMDi’s integration barometer, a yearly research initiative to measure the state of integration in Norway, shows that the percentage of the Norwegian population that has no or few people living in their neighbourhood with a foreign background has decreased from 84 percent in 2005 to 70 percent in 2012.⁸² At the same time, the report concludes that people with extensive and frequent contact with immigrants are generally more positive about the question of the level of immigration and the integration process, and they have a higher tolerance for diversity than those with less contact.

Yet more contact may not always necessarily improve relations, as this really depends on the nature and quality of contacts we are referring to. For contact to lead to positive

⁷⁹ IMDi, *Integreringsbarometeret 2012. Holdninger til Innvandring, Integrering og Mangfold* (Integration Barometer 2012. Attitudes to Immigration, Integration and Diversity), IMDi, Oslo, 2013, p. 32, figure 20, at www.imdi.no/Documents/Rapporter/Integreringsbarometeret_2012.pdf (hereafter, IMDi, *Integreringsbarometeret*).

⁸⁰ IMDi, *Godt No(rs)k? – om Språk og Integrering* (Good Enough Norwegian? – On Language and Integration), IMDi, Oslo, 2011.

⁸¹ Osman Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

⁸² IMDi, *Integreringsbarometeret*.

attitudes and higher tolerance for diversity, that contact needs to be meaningful.⁸³ A key informant illustrates that some of the barriers for meaningful contact actually do not lie in many of the issues that are discussed, such as the way people dress, what they eat, or whether they pray, but in other things:

In the debate in Norway, there is a lot of focus on migrants' preferences, because it is about values. But very often these are not the most important issues, they often don't even pose a challenge but are just made into a challenge. The big challenges occur when people do not speak Norwegian, have no bureaucratic competence and have a low socio-economic background.⁸⁴

Furthermore, we need to realise that many of the daily interactions that occur between Norwegian-Somalis and other Norwegians do not occur on an equal footing but are hierarchical relations: there are far too few interactions as fellow residents of Oslo. In order to understand the ways in which daily contact between Norwegian-Somalis and others in Oslo affects the processes of inclusion and exclusion, and thus people's sense of belonging and identity, it is important to look at daily interactions in Oslo. Various initiatives have been set up by the government and civil society actors to improve that daily interaction and to build bridges between different groups. The Leadership Foundation has set up a bridge-building project that has a holistic approach to this (Box 2).

⁸³ M. Hewstone and H. Swart, "Fifty-odd Years of Inter-group Contact: From Hypothesis to Integrated Theory", *British Journal of Social Psychology* 50 (2011), pp. 374–386.

⁸⁴ Open Society Foundations interview, 29 January 2013.

Box 2. Norsombro – Norwegian-Somali bridge-building⁸⁵

Together with participants from the Somali community and other supporting players, the Leadership Foundation has designed the Norsombro project, which will both help highlight the positive Somali contributions to Norwegian society and provide ethnic Somali youngsters with dialogue networks, mentorship, networking opportunities, access to Somali role models, and conflict resolution and communication skills relevant to Somali experience in Norway.

The project has three points of focus: a webpage highlighting Somali role models and information;⁸⁶ a local community focus that includes a pilot mentoring programme for young Somalis in Oslo in collaboration with Norwegian business and industry, courses for youth and dialogue meetings; and the Nordic Somali Summit. This is a workshop-based summit designed to empower Somali youth, build skills, enable networking and focus on the positive stories of Somalis. The summit is an annual event held in Oslo in 2012 and Stockholm in 2013; it will be held in Copenhagen in 2014.

The Leadership Foundation also recently initiated an imam project for sharing best practices between imams in the United States and the dialogue methods they use in interacting with public authorities.

The foundation's Somali portfolio is part of a larger focus on diversity through a range of projects, research and consulting.⁸⁷

4.2 Belonging to the City: Norwegian-Somali Residents of Oslo

Common attitudes among the rest of the Norwegian population challenge immigrants' sense of belonging to Norway. At the same time, there is a tendency among migrants to hold stereotypical views about Norwegians as well. But as Osman explained:

The society has two sides. There is part of the population that has a kind of sympathy for what we have gone through and tries to get you along and let you be "one of the boys". And there is a part that has already drawn its own conclusion even if you have a masters degree or earn a million: you remain a foreigner to them. You will not get to hear that directly. Politics in this country does not allow for racism, but in society you meet it. There are those who want

⁸⁵ Source: Leadership Foundation, <http://www.leadershipfoundation.no/> (accessed 2 December 2013)

⁸⁶ See norsombro.no/category/rollemodell (accessed 23 November 2013).

⁸⁷ See leadershipfoundation.no (accessed 23 November 2013).

to kick you out of the country indirectly. One can't say that Norwegian society is one-sided. That is what I have experienced and see in the society.⁸⁸

People's sense of identity and belonging is very personal, very individual, and is not static but changes over time.⁸⁹ While wider societal perceptions as read about in the media and experienced in meetings with strangers affect this sense of belonging, people's relations to the everyday play a crucial role as well. Inclusion or exclusion largely takes place in arenas of interaction like neighbourhoods, schools, kindergartens and workplaces. It happens when people participate in society as residents, as parents, as employees or employers. Abdihakim Mohamed, a young teacher from Sagene city district explains:

I feel Norwegian in my everyday life. My job, education, paying my bills. Despite everything, I lead a good life. I feel that I am part of Norway.⁹⁰

Many of those moving to Oslo do so because it offers big-city advantages. Norway has very few cities, and Oslo with its almost 624,000 inhabitants (January 2013) is a small-sized city but the biggest in the country.⁹¹ According to our research participants, what attracts Norwegian-Somalis to the city is that Oslo offers a concentration of jobs and educational opportunities, while many Somalis live there and socio-cultural life is good. They further noted that it is easy to travel to and from Oslo, and it is easy to get a variety of types of foods and services there.⁹² At the same time, Oslo also has big-city problems such as higher crime rates and drug problems.

One of the issues debated by Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo is the impact of the concentration of Somalis in the city on the processes of integration. In deciding where to live, for many the fact that there is a large Somali community in Oslo attracts them to the city. New arrivals especially feel more secure getting help from fellow Somalis, having people around them who speak the same language and have similar experiences. Others, however, make deliberate choices to live away from where there are large concentrations of Somalis. Halima Abdi, a young secondary-school student, explains:

I believe it is easier to integrate in a Norwegian neighbourhood. Like for example where I stay, there's *dugnad*⁹³ for my mother. We have Norwegian friends. It then becomes easier to take part in Norwegian politics.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Osman Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

⁸⁹ M. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: a Relational and Network Approach", *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), pp. 605–649; Gullestad, *Det Norske Sett Med Nye Øyne*.

⁹⁰ Abdihakim Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

⁹¹ Statistics Norway, 2013.

⁹² Open Society Foundations focus group on Identity and Belonging with young men.

⁹³ *Dugnad* is a Norwegian term for voluntary work done with other people.

Yet it is not just a matter of choice where to live within the city, as there are clear socio-economic dividing lines in Oslo. Moreover, the housing market is quite restrictive for Norwegian-Somalis (see section 7).

4.3 Norwegian-Somali Children and Youngsters: Home in Oslo?

While it may be difficult for adults who migrate to a new country to feel a sense of belonging, in particular if they left their country as a consequence of war, the main test of how inclusive a society can be lies in what happens to the next generation.

In the focus groups and interviews with Norwegian-Somalis, the challenges that Norwegian-Somali youngsters face in terms of feeling a sense of belonging came up time and again. This corroborates other research on young people in Oslo, which emphasises that school-age youngsters feel identified as foreign and their belonging to Norway is questioned in many different ways.⁹⁵

There is a number of possible reasons for the lack of feelings of belonging among Norwegian-Somali youngsters in Oslo. Facing negative stereotypes on a daily basis affects educational and job opportunities, and is likely to affect one's sense of self. Another possible reason relates to the situation of the older generation of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo. Many of them, particularly men, have not managed to replace the role they had in Somalia in a meaningful way in Norway. Many young people then lack role models both in the public and private sense. Those Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo who are doing well, on the other hand, are often not visible (see section 10). As Hassan Yunis expressed in a key informant interview after being asked about self-image and pride:

You can have confidence, you can be proud. But then, you can be put in a situation that you cannot deal with, like trying to get a job, going to offices, being denied so many things so many times. Sure, Somalis are real proud when it comes to different things, for example about their country and how it used to be. But coming here, the elders are no longer role models, they don't have the authority they used to have.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Halima Abdi, Open Society Foundations focus group on civil and political participation.

⁹⁵ L. R. Frøyland and C. Gjerustad, *Vennskap, Utdanning og Framtidsplaner. Forskjeller og Likheter Blant Ungdom med og uten Innvandrerbakgrunn i Oslo* (Friendship, Education and Future Plans. Differences and Similarities Among Adolescents with and without Immigrant Background in Oslo), NOVA, Oslo, 2012 (hereafter, Frøyland and Gjerustad, *Vennskap, Utdanning og Framtidsplaner*); Organisation against Public Discrimination (*Organisasjonen Mot Offentlig Diskriminering*, OMOD), *Skolen er fra Mars, Elevene er fra Venus – Utdanning i et Multietnisk Samfunn* (Schools are from Mars, Students are from Venus – Education in a Multi-ethnic Society), OMOD, Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, OMOD, *Skolen er fra Mars, Eleven er fra Venus*).

⁹⁶ Interview with Hassan Yunis, 11 February 2013.

Another possible reason relates to cross-cultural pressure generated by various potential intergenerational frictions. These frictions at times are related to the conflict in Somalia and at times to the clashes of understanding that Norwegian-Somali parents and Norwegian society have about parenting and of how best to raise children to be members of the community. Frictions related to the conflict in Somalia have to do with the fact that the war and inter-communal hatred in Somalia⁹⁷ affect those who have experienced it very differently from those who have not. Parents can pass on the trauma and hatred experienced, or break with that past by silencing it or by acting against it in daily encounters. As Kassim Ali, a young married man who works as an interpreter, explained:

And one gets confused, at times one really does not know what is happening, especially when one starts to become engaged as a youth, like most of those in this group. Because one deals with grown-ups who have known each other for more than 30 years who have their own conflicts that have gone since before you were born. Those conflicts can take place in the Somali community, for example related to wars and clan conflicts that were there in the home country, that you do not have a full overview of.⁹⁸

While it is crucial not to over-emphasise the impact and experiences of trauma (see also section 8), at the same time it is crucial to understand that the experiences of Somalis as refugees relating to a past and present conflict do shape understandings of identity and belonging. What happens between generations is crucial, both for the individuals involved and for the reconciliation process that needs to take place inside and outside Somalia.

Potential intergenerational friction that is based on clashes between Norwegian society and the generation of Norwegian-Somali parents is another important dimension. According to Sadio Hussein:

Another issue that is different is the level of independence parents give their children. [Here she draws two triangles facing in opposite directions.] In Somalia, the system teaches people to be part of a collective, in Norway the system teaches people to become individuals. In Norway, you start from a young age with teaching kids rules, teaching them right and wrong, and gradually their sense of responsibility will grow, until by 18, they are understood to be independent. In the Somali system, as small children, kids can do whatever they want, and gradually, more rules are introduced – in particular for girls. This difference causes conflicts. At the age of 14 or so, kids (particularly girls) find themselves facing increasing restrictions, whereas at the same time, their friends

⁹⁷ L. Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia: The Ruinous Legacy of 1991*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2013.

⁹⁸ Kassim Ali, Open Society Foundations focus group on civil and political participation.

are finding increasing freedom. Clashes occur where the girl does not listen and the parents feel they are not doing a good job as parents.⁹⁹

There have been some initiatives to offer parental guidance courses. The Church's City Mission's PMV (see Box 15), together with Enerhaugen Family Welfare Office,¹⁰⁰ have offered International Child Development Programme (ICDP) training for Norwegian-Somali parents in 2012 and 2013, and have good experiences.¹⁰¹ The courses were run by a family therapist from the Family Welfare Office and built on the Church's City Mission network in the Norwegian-Somali community.

While the issue of being too integrated came up in the focus group discussions, underlying that is the question of what integration actually means. When the discussion in the Norwegian-Somali community focuses on people being too integrated, the inference is that there are people who have accepted parts of Norwegian ways of being that are thought to be incompatible with being Somali. Where that boundary lies, however, is not the same for all and is the cause of many debates among Norwegian-Somalis.

This issue of identity ... All those who talk here are more Somali. But if we speak the truth there is a lot of Norwegianness in us. We are well integrated, to put it differently. Because we live here and have grown up here, it is impossible for us to be fully Somali after such a long time. Like the others said, it is about how Norwegian we accept ourselves to be. Norwegian in the sense of drinking alcohol and eating pork with them, or Norwegian in the sense of reading *VG*, playing handball? We are positive to that part and want to integrate and be with our fellow countrymen, the Norwegians.¹⁰²

On the other hand, there is the question of the relationship with Somalia. A number of Norwegian-Somali young people feel a strong commitment to contribute to Somalia, and wish to return temporarily or long-term in order to help improve conditions there.¹⁰³ At the same time, they also realise, based on travels and stories from others, that when one travels to Somalia one is not understood as fully Somali but rather as European or foreign-born. The level of fluency in the Somali language plays an important role in this process as well. The question is whether for the individuals involved, their situation of being in between, not fully one nor the other, can be

⁹⁹ Interview with Sadio Hussein, 11 March 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Under the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Barne-, ungdoms- og familietaten Bufetat). See www.bufetat.no/om/ (accessed 2 December 2013).

¹⁰¹ Source: the Church's City Mission and Family Welfare Services.

¹⁰² Abdihakim Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on Identity and belonging with young men.

¹⁰³ Research on diaspora return that is driven by a motivation to contribute to the rebuilding of Somalia is currently undertaken by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in collaboration with the Humphrey School (University of Minneapolis) and the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) in Mogadishu. Results are expected to come out in summer 2014.

understood and used as an opportunity rather than a difficulty. The provision of mother-tongue education can play an important role in this process because it rests on an understanding that mother-tongue education plays an important part in students' identity and self-esteem. It enables students to master their own language and learn more about their homeland and thus strengthen their identity as Somalis. This confidence helps them navigate their position as Norwegians with a Somali background while giving them the advantage of being multilingual (See Box 3).

Box 3. Mother tongue education¹⁰⁴

The right for pupils to receive mother-tongue education is manifested in Norwegian law through the Education Act § 2–8 and § 3–12. The law applies to primary and secondary schools and their implementation is the responsibility of the municipalities. Due to the diverse nature of minority pupils, there are no limitations on age or the amount of mother-tongue education a pupil can receive. However, this education stops when the pupil has reached a functional level in his or her mother tongue (Directorate for Education and Training 2009: 11–12).

Mother-tongue education is given to pupils whose mother tongue is not Norwegian or Sami. These classes are additional to regular classes and do not replace other classes (not to be confused with bilingual education such as math training in Urdu). In the autumn of 2012, 2770 pupils received mother-tongue education in Norway in 108 different languages. The most common languages were Somali, Arabic and Polish (Directorate for Education and Training 2013: 15). In Oslo schools, however, the official policy has for many years been an emphasis on learning Norwegian rather than using resources for mother tongue education.

Norwegian education policy states that the purpose of mother tongue education is to strengthen the pupil's abilities to learn and develop basic language skills and vocabulary in their own languages. These abilities will in turn enable pupils to master the Norwegian language. Additionally, it will create an intercultural understanding, linguistic confidence and a bilingual identity (Directorate for Education and Training 2009: 3).

Especially when discussing experiences of identity and belonging among Norwegian-Somalis, it is crucial to remember that there are great differences between Norwegian-Somali women and men, young and old, but there are as many differences within these

¹⁰⁴ This box was written by Sadiq Adam Dahir, University of Oslo (UiO).

different groups as well. In particular, the length of stay in Norway and having the resources to self-mobilise to address and positively engage with stereotypes plays an important role. According to Hassan Yunis:

You need a strong base. You need people who are always proud of you. If you do not have a strong base, you can easily be pushed around. A lot of this is about getting back confidence, restoring people's self-image. And maybe you can actually talk to people. Stereotypes exist due to ignorance: if you don't know much about people, you make assumptions.¹⁰⁵

There is a low sense of belonging to Norwegian society among many young Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo. The main issue is not how to include Somali youth in Norwegian society, but how to create a more inclusive perception of Norwegian society so that Norwegian-Somali youngsters feel included and have incentives to contribute actively to society. This is a crucial project both for Norwegian society and the individuals involved, as one of the problems of the current situation is a risk of what has been discussed as "reactive ethnicity" and "reactive religiosity".¹⁰⁶ Forging a reactive ethnicity in the face of perceived discrimination and exclusion is a mode of ethnic identity formation that is not uncommon, highlighting the "role of a hostile context of reception in accounting for the rise rather than the erosion of importance of ethnicity for children of immigrants".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Hassan Yunis, 11 February 2013.

¹⁰⁶ A. Portes and R.G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: the Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001; R. Rumbaut, "Reaping What You Sow: Immigration, Youth and Reactive Ethnicity", *Applied Developmental Science* 22 (2) (2008), p. 3 (hereafter Rumbaut, "Reaping What You Sow"); F. Fleischmann and K. Phalet, "Integration and Religiosity among the Turkish Second Generation in Europe: a Comparative Analysis across Four Capital Cities", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35 (2) (2012).

¹⁰⁷ Rumbaut, "Reaping What You Sow", p. 3.

5. EDUCATION

I have taken all my education in Norway and I have almost always been the only person with a minority background in the class. I grew up in northern Norway and moved to a municipality outside of Oslo after primary school. I started secondary school here, there were not many children with an immigrant background that went that time; there were maybe two or three in my class. I have had positive experiences, and have never met direct discrimination.¹⁰⁸

This section will explore the position and experiences of Norwegian-Somalis in the Norwegian educational system, first discussing some of the basic facts, the number of Norwegian-Somali pupils in schools in Oslo, the education of girls compared with boys and educational achievement levels. School drop-out rates of Norwegian-Somali pupils are of particular importance. A second part will focus on the qualitative experiences of Norwegian-Somalis in education, from the perspectives of both the students and the parents. This part will include discussions on cooperation between parents and schools and Norwegian-Somali youngsters' experiences.

5.1 Norwegian-Somali Pupils in Oslo Schools

Education is both free and obligatory for children aged between six and 16; from 16 to 19, young people have the right to secondary education.¹⁰⁹ Basic education takes place over a 10-year period, divided into primary education from class 1 to 7, and lower secondary from class 8 to 10. After this, upper-secondary education consists of another three years. Upper secondary has two streams: general education and vocational education. Higher education is offered at six universities and a wide range of university colleges. While most education in Norway is public, there are private schools at all levels. About 2 percent of children in primary and 5 percent of those in secondary education are attending private schools.¹¹⁰ Two aspects of the Norwegian educational system are important to highlight here: first, the system is strongly based on communication competence, which can disadvantage those with limited language competence.¹¹¹ Second, from primary school onwards, parents are supposed to play a central role in homework assistance. This again can have an impact on pupils whose parents have no or limited formal education.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Mariam Elmi, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with students. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology, on the selection and use of quotations.

¹⁰⁹ See snl.no/Skole_og_utdanning_i_Norge (accessed 23 November 2013).

¹¹⁰ See snl.no/Skole_og_utdanning_i_Norge#menuitem7 (accessed 23 November 2013).

¹¹¹ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

¹¹² Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013. These effects are offset to some extent by the fact that many schools offer homework assistance after school.

A number of reports have looked at various aspects of how schools relate to the increasing diversity of their pupils and how this increasing diversity affects schools.¹¹³ One of the aspects discussed is the fact that in a short period Norway (and particularly Oslo) has seen a changing population. The system has needed to adapt but the curriculum is not adjusted quickly enough to the changing realities.¹¹⁴ The debate on diversity in schools has been closely linked to the larger integration debate, since education has an impact on social mobility, employment and wellbeing: there is increasing demand for skilled labour, whereas the opportunities for unskilled employment are decreasing. In this context, low levels of education increase the risk of marginalisation and exclusion.¹¹⁵

Norwegian-Somali pupils are an important part of the student body in Oslo's primary and secondary schools. There are also increasing numbers of Norwegian-Somali students in universities and university colleges. In Oslo, Norwegian-Somalis form the largest group of immigrants in secondary school, and this is also the group with the highest numbers in mother-tongue education.¹¹⁶ The Norwegian-Somali community is very young both in terms of age and year of arrival. This means that many of those in secondary (and tertiary) education are immigrants themselves, while descendants of Somali immigrants are a small group of whom only few have moved beyond primary education.¹¹⁷ There are only survey data on educational levels upon arrival, not register data, but the available data suggest that a large part of the adult population entering Norway has no educational background at all, and only 14 percent has higher education.¹¹⁸ This has to do with the situation in Somalia, where there has not been a public school system since the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. Furthermore, those who fled to Norway from outside Somalia often spent years in refugee camps or urban spaces, where opportunities for formal education were limited. Among those who came in the early and mid-1990s, there are more with higher education and this is the group that has the largest number of school-going children which fall into the category "born in Norway to immigrant parents".

Although Norwegian-Somali pupils form an increasing percentage of the school-age population in Oslo, they face considerable challenges. It is too early to fully evaluate their performance and processes of inclusion and exclusion quantitatively, as this can only be properly evaluated for those born in Norway to immigrant parents, which is not yet a substantial group among Norwegian-Somalis. In the statistics on educational

¹¹³ NOU, *Mangfold og Mestring*; OMOD, *Skolen er fra Mars, Elevene er fra Venus*.

¹¹⁴ OMOD, *Skolen er fra Mars, Elevene er fra Venus*.

¹¹⁵ NOU *Bedre Integrering*, p. 169.

¹¹⁶ G. Nygård, "Utdanning" (Education), in Henriksen et al, "Innvandring og innvandrere 2010", 2011 (hereafter, Nygård, "Utdanning").

¹¹⁷ For absolute numbers in secondary school (2005, 2007, 2009), see Nygård, "Utdanning", table 3.8.

¹¹⁸ Henriksen, "Fakta om 18 Innvandrergupper i Norge".

achievement that are available, Norwegian-Somalis usually come out at the bottom of the list. These statistics often fail to take into account their difficult starting point, in terms of recent arrival and limited levels of education before arrival. The picture may look different, though, when adjusting for the factors that are known to affect educational attainment in Norway.

There is a difference in the post-16 education participation rates of Norwegian-Somalis between those who were born in Norway (and have therefore had their entire education in Norway) and those who arrived as children or young adults. In the category of 16–18-year-olds, in October 2009 52 percent of Somali immigrants and 73.1 percent of Norwegian-Somalis born in Norway are in education. This can be compared with averages for all immigrants and their descendants of respectively 67 percent and 89 percent, and a rate for all Norway's 16–18-year-olds of 91 percent.¹¹⁹ Those who arrive when they are over 16 years old are in a particularly difficult position because they need a basic primary school education before starting secondary school, which can be done through parallel education in language and academic content.¹²⁰

For young people aged 19–21 years the participation rate in education is lower still, at 26.4 percent for Norwegian-Somali immigrants and 11.5 percent for Norwegian-Somalis born in Norway of immigrant parents, compared with 20.4 percent for all immigrants and 15.7 percent for all second-generation immigrants.¹²¹ Numbers for higher education (between 19 and 24 years of age) are comparably low, but show an interesting surprise: among immigrants and Norwegian-born children of immigrant parents aged 19–24,¹²² the percentage of Norwegian-Somali girls entering higher education is above the average at 46.2 percent compared with 42.6 percent for all immigrant groups.¹²³ Kristin Henriksen has pointed out that “Immigrants from Somalia, who came to Norway with very little education, have been among the keenest to get an education here.”¹²⁴ This observation needs to be seen in the light of the limited educational levels upon arrival and the recent arrival, compared with other groups. At the same time, it seems that a higher percentage of the parents of those who are in Norwegian universities now actually did complete secondary or tertiary education in Somalia or elsewhere. Furthermore, Norwegian universities are also increasingly aware of the need to actively attract students with a minority background (See Box 4).

¹¹⁹ Nygård, “Utdanning”, pp. 51–52.

¹²⁰ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

¹²¹ Nygård, “Utdanning”, table 3.7.

¹²² In the case of Norwegian-Somalis, numbers in the last group are small. Most of the individuals taking higher education now are those who migrated themselves as (young) children.

¹²³ Nygård, “Utdanning”, table 3.17.

¹²⁴ K. Henriksen, “Education”, in Blom and Henriksen, *Living Conditions among Immigrants in Norway 2005–2006*; Statistics Norway, 2009/2, 2009, p. 74.

Box 4. Diversity in Focus in Academia

(*Mangfold i Fokus i Academia*, MiFA), University of Oslo (UiO)¹²⁵

The University of Oslo (UiO) is Norway's largest educational institution, with approximately 27,600 students in 2013. Though the student population is recruited from all over the country, most of the students are recruited from the eastern regions of Norway, where an increasing proportion of young people come from minority backgrounds. UiO's aim is to see this increase reflected in the student population at the university. Since 2003, MiFA has worked to increase the proportion of minority students at the university through different recruiting programmes. Since the initiative started in 2003, the number of students of minority background has doubled and now stands at 13 percent.

MiFA partners with nine upper secondary schools, and offers an annual course to 45 students from these schools. The course takes place on campus and is aimed at students who are interested in higher education and career options. These students gain experience in student life and learn about different courses they can study. They also get training in project management and how to motivate fellow students to enter higher education.

Courses such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and engineering more easily recruit minority students but other subjects do not. MiFA focuses on these studies, such as pedagogy or social anthropology, and the career options they provide. MiFA ultimately aims to contribute to an increasing diversity among professionals in a range of fields. It argues that students with a minority background have additional linguistic and cultural competences that they can draw on in ways that benefit present-day multicultural Norway.

A recent report by Lars Østby¹²⁶ similarly shows a mixed picture, with generally the lowest participation rates in education among Norwegian-Somalis, but there are some causes for optimism. In fact, the mixed figures seem to suggest an increasing division within the Norwegian-Somali population in Norway. On the one hand, enrolment figures among the age groups 16–19, 20–24 and 25–29 have been low throughout the period of study (1998–2008), with enrolment for women consistently lower than for men.¹²⁷ On the other, enrolment in academically oriented courses among descendants of Somali immigrants aged 16–19 is in fact well above the national average, at 51.3

¹²⁵ Based on information from the University of Oslo.

¹²⁶ Østby, "Norway's Population Groups of Developing Countries' Origin".

¹²⁷ Østby, "Norway's Population Groups of Developing Countries' Origin", tables 4.1 and 4.2.

percent for Norwegian-Somalis compared with 39.9 percent for the population as a whole.¹²⁸

Looking at the research on educational performance of minorities in Norway more generally, various studies have shown that the educational achievement of young people with a minority background is on average lower than those of young people without such a background.¹²⁹ These results occur despite the fact that on average pupils with a minority background indicate that they spend more time on homework than those with a majority background.¹³⁰ At the same time, spending more time on homework is not correlated with better results in school.¹³¹ This may first indicate that minority youngsters benefit less from spending more time on their homework than majority youngsters. Second, it may also indicate that youngsters with immigrant backgrounds face greater challenges in the educational system in Norway. This is particularly the case in secondary education.¹³² Finally, the limited impact of spending more time on homework may be related to the fact that many parents are not in a position to help them with their homework. There are many Norwegian-Somali pupils who make use of homework assistance programmes in the neighbourhood, and the SSF also offers homework assistance in primary school to prevent dropping out at later stages and motivate pupils to go on to higher education (See Box 5).

¹²⁸ Østby, "Norway's Population Groups of Developing Countries' Origin", table 4.7, data from 1 October 2008.

¹²⁹ A. Bakken, *Minoritetsspråklig Ungdom i Skolen. Reproduksjon av Ulikhet Eller Sosial Mobilitet?* (Linguistic Minority Youth in School. Reproduction of Inequality or Social Mobility?), NOVA, Oslo, 2003 (hereafter, Bakken, *Minoritetsspråklig Ungdom i Skolen*); S. N. Fekjær, "Utdanning Hos Annengenerasjon Etniske Minoriteter i Norge", (Education among Second-generation Ethnic Minorities in Norway), *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* (Journal of Social Research) 47 (2006), pp. 37, 57–93 (hereafter, Fekjær, "Utdanning Hos Annengenerasjon Etniske Minoriteter i Norge"); L. A. Støren, "Innvandrere med Høyere Utdanning – Hvordan er Deres Møte med det Norske Arbeidsmarkedet?" (Immigrants with Higher Education – How Are They Facing the Norwegian Labour Market?), in J. B. Grøgaard and L. A. Støren (eds), *Kunnskapssamfunnet tar form – Utdanningseksplasjon og arbeidsmarkedets struktur* (The Knowledge Society Takes Shape – the exposition of education and labour market structure), Cappelen Akademisk forlag, Oslo, 2006 (hereafter, Støren, "Innvandrere med Høyere Utdanning"); A. Bakken, *Prestasjonsforskjeller i Kunnskapsløftets Første År – Kjønn, Minoritetsstatus og Foreldres Utdanning* (Performance Differences in the First Year of Knowledge Promotion – Sex, Minority Status and Parents' Education), Report 9/2010, NOVA, Oslo, 2010, p. 65, tables 3-1 (hereafter, Bakken, *Prestasjonsforskjeller i Kunnskapsløftets*).

¹³⁰ Frøyland and Gjerustad, *Vennskap, Utdanning og Framtidsplaner*, figure 5.3.

¹³¹ Frøyland and Gjerustad, *Vennskap, Utdanning og Framtidsplaner*, p. 122.

¹³² V. Opheim and L. A. Støren, *Innvandrerungdom og Majoritetsungdom Gjennom Videregående til Høyere Utdanning: Utdanningsforløp, Utdanningsaspirasjoner og Realiserte Utdanningsvalg* (Immigrant and Majority Youth from Secondary to Higher Education: Educational Progress, Educational Aspirations and Actual Educational Choices), Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (Nordisk institutt for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning, NIFU) Report 7-2001, Oslo, 2001, p. 10 (hereafter, Opheim and Støren, *Innvandrerungdom og Majoritetsungdom Gjennom Videregående til Høyere Utdanning*).

Box 5. Somali Student Association (SSF)

The Somali Student Association (*Somalisk studentforening*, SSF) was established in 1993 and is among the oldest Somali organisations in Norway. SSF consists of Norwegian-Somali students at universities and university colleges who work voluntarily to motivate and help Norwegian-Somali children and young people to take higher education and create a positive attitude towards education. Central to the work are homework assistance, motivational seminars, debate evenings and other social gatherings.

Homework assistance is on offer for Norwegian-Somali pupils in primary and secondary schools. Most of those providing homework assistance are Norwegian-Somali students in higher education who also function as role models. SSF focuses on homework assistance because many Norwegian-Somali pupils face academic challenges in schools as many parents are not in a position to help them with their homework.

Another main area of focus is the yearly motivational seminars on higher education that SSF organises. Somali academics, students and other inspirational figures are asked to hold a presentation about their education, job or ambitions. Representatives from universities and university colleges as well as Norwegian-Somali students are present to inform prospective students about the study programmes offered at various universities.

Empirical findings from previous studies indicate that the differences in educational achievements between minority and majority youngsters can be explained by differences in social background, which is defined in terms of the parents' educational levels and participation in the labour market, as well as length of stay in Norway.¹³³ In the NOVA (*Norsk Institutt for forskning om Oppvekst, Velferd og Aldring*) Report 9/2010, researchers divided the group of those with minority background into three equally-sized groups of youngsters with similar grade levels: those who performed poorly, medium and well. These groups clearly differed in terms of the level of education of the parents, length of stay in Norway and school results.¹³⁴ Norwegian-Somali pupils were in the category of low-performing pupils, together with those from Iraq, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Chile. These pupils had parents with low levels of

¹³³ There are likely to be correlations between these factors as well: generally, and in particular in the case of refugees, it is common for different migration waves to consist of people with different socio-economic backgrounds (Horst, *Transnational Nomads*). This means that many of those who have been in Norway longer came from Somalia with better socio-economic backgrounds – including higher education.

¹³⁴ Bakken, Prestasjonsforskjeller i Kunnskapsløftet.

education; fewer of them were born in Norway and others of them had a shorter length of stay in the country. Anders Bakken¹³⁵ emphasises that these are only a part of the explanation for the approximately 20 percent performance gap between minority groups and majority groups.

As will be discussed in section 7, there are differences in housing conditions and patterns, according to ethnic background. Oslo has an increasing concentration of minorities in certain areas, and this of course also leads to an increasing concentration of pupils with a minority background in schools. Therese Sundell has shown that increased segregation can also be explained by the preferences of the majority population, for instance parents moving out of areas where there is a high concentration of children with minority backgrounds in the schools.¹³⁶ As research on the young in Oslo finds that the most significant differences in their living conditions relate to which part of Oslo they live in,¹³⁷ the consequences of increased segregation are important to follow up on.

While this is a cause of concern, the City Council of Oslo has an active policy for making sure that schools in Oslo offer equal opportunities for all pupils, irrespective of background. As City Council Decision No. 152/12 highlights, research indicates that the schools in Oslo compensate for parental background to a greater extent than schools in Norway in general.¹³⁸ According to the City of Oslo's Education Agency, educational outcomes at schools in Oslo with high proportions of minority-background students are good compared with the rest of Norway: four out of 15 schools with a two-thirds share of minority students in 2010–2011 had better results in 5th grade than the national average.¹³⁹ Because school programmes do not have the same starting points, as there are problems guaranteeing language and academic education to facilitate the entry of newly arrived pupils into the Norwegian schooling system,¹⁴⁰ an increased focus on measuring progress and not only outcomes may be put in place. This will allow the City government and schools to evaluate their progress in more appropriate ways, enable a more positive evaluation of hard work being done, and identify successful measures. One of the many measures the City Council has taken in education forms part of the Groruddal city district initiative (See Box 6).

¹³⁵ Bakken, *Prestasjonsforskjeller i Kunnskapsløftet*, p. 66.

¹³⁶ Sundell, "*Hvit flukt' blant norske barnefamilier i Oslo? En kvantitativ studie* ('White flight' among Norwegian families with children in Oslo? A quantitative study), Master Thesis Social Geography, Institute for Sociology and Social Geography, University of Oslo, 2008 (hereafter, Sundell, "*Hvit flukt' blant norske barnefamilier i Oslo?*").

¹³⁷ Frøyland and Gjerustad, *Vennskap, utdanning og framtidsplaner*.

¹³⁸ City Government Decision No. 152/12, 13 September 2012, p. 7 (hereafter, City Government Decision No. 152/12).

¹³⁹ City Government Decision No. 152/12, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

Box 6. Groruddal City District's Initiatives on Education¹⁴¹

Groruddal is one of the most diverse city districts in Oslo, and houses about one-fifth of Oslo's population. The "Groruddal Initiative" started in 2007 and will last until 2016. Every year, the City of Oslo and the government invest NOK50 million in Groruddal. One of the focus areas is "Upbringing, education, livelihood, cultural activities and inclusion". Its overarching aim is to make sure all residents have the opportunity to create a good and meaningful life, where they are in a position to take care of themselves and their families.

Collaborating partners are IMDi, the Directorate of Health, the Norwegian State Housing Bank (Husbanken), NAV, the Directorate of Education and a range of actors in the City of Oslo, including the Department of Knowledge and Education. Much of the initiative is done through stimulating and supporting voluntary work, which will contribute to creating an open and inclusive society.

For children and young people in Groruddal, a number of goals have been set: all children are to have sufficient Norwegian-language skills to be confident when starting school; the cooperation between kindergartens and the home is strengthened; improved educational results in schools; offers for youth are maintained and expanded as attractive and inclusive meeting places. To accomplish this, Groruddal City District offers, among other things, 20 hours in kindergarten free for all four- and five-year-olds, a facility which is used by nine out of 10 families. During this period, language competences are mapped and those children and families that need more support get this during the time the child is in kindergarten. Furthermore, selected schools offer longer schooldays in which pupils are offered extra hours in Norwegian language and other core subjects. While this offer started as a voluntary arrangement, from 2012 it will be obligatory.

5.2 School Absences and Drop-outs

I know many boys and girls that have dropped out. It is mostly girls that hold on and continue studying. Boys give up quickly and drop out, while girls find the opportunities that are available out there. It's mostly Somali boys, I know six Somali boys that have dropped out this year. All of them are working now.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Sources: prosjekt-groruddalen.oslo.kommune.no/om_groruddalssatsingen; prosjekt-groruddalen.oslo.kommune.no/programomrade_4 (both accessed 23 November 2013).

¹⁴² Shamsa Osman, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with students.

While specific research on Norwegian-Somalis' school absences and drop-out is limited, and a general mapping of drop-outs would be highly beneficial, various studies about school performance among groups with a mother tongue other than Norwegian have mapped the levels at which Norwegian-Somalis complete education, compared with other nationalities and the Norwegian population as a whole.¹⁴³ In particular, dropping out in secondary school is of concern. To complete secondary education means that the pupil has completed between three and five years of secondary school, passed all the years and obtained the necessary certificates. The higher drop-out rates among immigrants and children of immigrants is seen as a real problem in Oslo, and has led to a range of activities, including those of the Drop-out Team in the city district of Søndre Nordstrand (Box 7).

Research shows that there is a higher drop-out rate in secondary school among youngsters from non-Western immigration backgrounds than among those who speak Norwegian as their first language. Children of immigrants have a much lower drop-out rate than immigrants and the difference between them and majority youth is not statistically significant.¹⁴⁴ Research furthermore shows that vocational programmes have higher drop-out

¹⁴³ L. Støren, *Videregående Opplæring Gjennom ti år Blant Jenter og Gutter, Minoritet og Majoritet: Progresjon, Søkemønster og Tilgang til Læreplasser* (Upper-secondary Education over Ten Years Among Girls and Boys, Minority and Majority: Progression, Search Patterns and Access to Apprenticeships), NIFU, Oslo, 2003; B. Lødding, *Sluttere, Slitere og Sertifiserte: Bortvalg, Gjennomføring og Kompetanseoppnåelse Blant Minoritetsspråklige Ungdommer i Videregående Opplæring* (Quitters, Strugglers and Certified: Dropout, Implementation and Achievement Among Linguistic Minority Youth in Secondary Education), NIFU, Oslo, 2009; E. Markussen, M.W. Frøseth, B. Lødding and N. Sandberg, *Bortvalg og Kompetanse. Gjennomføring, Bortvalg og Kompetanseoppnåelse i Videregående Opplæring Blant 9749 Ungdommer Som Gikk ut av Grunnskolen på Østlandet Våren 2002. Hovedfunn, Konklusjoner og Implikasjoner Fem År Etter* (Drop-out and Competence. Completion, Drop-out and Attainment in Secondary Education Among 9,749 Youth Who Left Primary School in Norway in Spring 2002. Main Findings, Conclusions and Implications Five Years After), NIFU, Oslo, 2008; S. Wollscheid, *Språk, Stimulans og Læringslyst – Tidlig Innsats og Tiltak mot Frafall i Videregående Opplæring Gjennom Hele Oppveksten* (Language, Stimulation and Learning Desire – Early Intervention and Measures Against Dropping Out of Secondary Education Throughout Childhood), NOVA, Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, Wollscheid, *Språk, Stimulans og Læringslyst*).

¹⁴⁴ B. Lødding, *Frafall Blant Minoritetsspråklige: Om Frafall og Norsk Som Andrespråk Blant Minoritetsspråklige Elever i Overgangen fra 10. Klasse til Videregående Opplæring* (Drop-out among Linguistic Minorities: About Drop-out and Norwegian as a Second Language Among Linguistic Minority Students in the Transition from the 10th Grade to Upper Secondary Education), NIFU, Oslo, 2003, pp. 28–38 (hereafter, Lødding, *Frafall Blant Minoritetsspråklige*); Opheim and Støren, *Innvandrerungdom og Majoritetsungdom Gjennom Videregående til Høyere Utdanning: Bakken, Prestasjonsforskjeller i Kunnskapsløftet*; L. Støren, *Unge Innvandrere i Utdanning og Overgang til Arbeid* (Young Immigrants in Education and Transition to Employment), NIFU, Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, Støren, *Unge Innvandrere i Utdanning og Overgang til Arbeid*); Wollscheid, *Språk, stimulans og læringslyst*.

rates than programmes preparing pupils for higher education.¹⁴⁵ This issue will arise again when discussing experiences of Norwegian-Somali youth.

¹⁴⁵ B. Lødding, *Forskjell på Folk – Hva Gjør Skolen? Valg, Bortvalg og Kompetanseoppnåelse i Videregående Opplæring Blant 9749 Ungdommer Som Gikk ut av Grunnskolen på Østlandet* (Differences between People – What Does the School Do? Choice, Drop-out and Competence Attainment in Secondary Education among 9,749 Who Left Primary Education in Østland), NOVA, Oslo, 2006; L. Støren, H. Helland and J. Grøgaard, *Og Hvem Stod Igjen...? Sluttrapport fra Prosjektet Gjennomstrømning i Videregående Opplæring Blant Elever som Startet i Videregående Opplæring i Årene 1999–2001* (And Who Was Left ...? Final Report from the Project “Through Flow” in Secondary Education Among Students Enrolled in Upper Secondary Education in the Years 1999–2001), NIFU STEP, Oslo, 2007; Wollscheid, *Språk, Stimulans og Læringslyst*.

Box 7. The Drop-out Team, Child Welfare Services, Søndre Nordstrand¹⁴⁶

The Drop-out Team is organised under the Child Welfare Services' Youth Team in the Oslo City District of Søndre Nordstrand, which contains a high concentration of residents with an immigrant background. Its main task is to help marginalised youngsters between 15 and 20 years old who have dropped out or are close to dropping out of upper secondary school. The team, consisting of two full-time positions, can help young people look for work or, in cooperation with NAV, an internship, or take other measures related to schooling or employment.

The goal is that all participants should have a meaningful daily life, eventually leading to individuals returning to school or finding employment, to guarantee economic independence. The team works on an individual basis with participants, to guarantee that the young person finds employment according to their own needs. This may require extensive mapping and practical assistance. Great focus is placed on an increased feeling of mastery which can increase young people's motivation and belief in an independent future.

In cases where participants are known to Child Welfare Services, close collaboration takes place. The Drop-out Team also works with schools, NAV, employers, health services, depending on needs. In cooperation with the City of Oslo's Education Agency, the city district and NAV, the Drop-out Team is also responsible for monitoring and providing services for all young people at risk of dropping out. The team also engages in a preventative measure called "Smart Start", where individuals in 10th grade are monitored in the transition to upper secondary school. Lower secondary schools in the city district are responsible for identifying pupils at risk.

Education completion rates differ by gender across both majority and minority groups. Among young women in secondary education, 87 percent of the majority group completes their education in five years compared with 78 percent among young women with migrant parents. For young men, the numbers are 79 percent and 65 percent respectively. Of young people who are immigrants themselves, the group with the lowest completion numbers,¹⁴⁷ 71 percent of the girls and 57 percent of the boys complete their education. These numbers are for all non-Western immigrants, but the

¹⁴⁶ Based on input from the Drop-out Team and information at bydel-sondre-nordstrand.oslo.kommune.no/barn_ungdom_og_familie/barnevern/dropout (accessed 23 November 2013).

¹⁴⁷ Støren, Unge Innvandrere i Utdanning og Overgang til Arbeid, p. 7.

numbers for Norwegian-Somalis are even starker.¹⁴⁸ One of the likely reasons for this is that this group includes many who came to Norway late into their educational career, without having received sufficient or even any education before they travelled. As Sadio Hussein, who works as a minority counsellor in a secondary school in an area where many Norwegian-Somalis live, explained:

There is the issue of those who come in late in the school system. There are many of those in this school, there are many Somalis in this school. They are between 16 and 21 years old, and many of them only have had one or two years of education. After one year in Norway, they are put into secondary school. How can they do this? Many of the girls choose to marry when they are 18, as a more realistic alternative. They become receivers of social benefits. If the parents would only be better, stronger, they could provide those kids with more motivation, dreams, ambitions. This group needs follow-up.¹⁴⁹

The percentage of boys with minority backgrounds who complete vocational education is very low.¹⁵⁰ In this group there is little difference between immigrants and the second generation. Girls have a higher completion rate.¹⁵¹ There is little difference in how many children of immigrants complete their studies compared with majority girls, though those who themselves are immigrants have a lower completion rate.

After controlling for various variables, results in several studies indicate that the differences in social background, parents' education and labour market participation, and pupils' length of stay alone cannot explain the performance differences of different nationalities.¹⁵² To explain why Norwegian-Somali pupils perform poorly, factors such as the low educational levels of the mothers,¹⁵³ the fact that many children live in single-headed households,¹⁵⁴ the poor living conditions and high number of siblings in

¹⁴⁸ Støren, Unge Innvandrere i Utdanning og Overgang til Arbeid, p. 24.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Sadio Hussein, 11 March 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Støren, Unge Innvandrere i Utdanning og Overgang til Arbeid.

¹⁵¹ Opheim and Støren, Innvandrerdøm og Majoritetsungdom Gjennom Videregående til Høyere Utdanning; Lødding, Frafall Blant Minoritetsspråklige; Støren, Unge Innvandrere i Utdanning og Overgang til Arbeid.

¹⁵² Fekjær, "Utdanning Hos Annengenerasjon Etniske Minoriteter i Norge"; Støren, Innvandrere med Høyere Utdanning; Bakken, Prestasjonsforskjeller i Kunnskapsløftet; Wollscheid, Språk, Stimulans og Læringslyst.

¹⁵³ Henriksen, "Fakta om 18 innvandergrupper", p. 79.

¹⁵⁴ A. Siyad, C. Bildsten and C. Hellevang (eds), *Somalier i Norge – Noen Erfaringer. Informasjon, Samarbeid, Dialog* (Somalis in Norway – Some Experiences. Information, Cooperation, Dialogue), Somalisk utviklingsforum, Mølla kompetansesenter and Leieboerforeningen (Somali development Forum, Mølla competence center and Tenants Association), 2006.

a family¹⁵⁵ and the limited number of years in preschool before starting school should be taken into account.¹⁵⁶

Age, gender, year of arrival, type of study (vocational or academic) and whether the place of residence is Oslo, do have a significant effect on poorer educational performances among ethnic minorities.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, social relations in and outside school and economic conditions are important contributing factors. Family background, in particular the level of education of the parents, is an essential factor influencing the likelihood that young people complete their secondary school. The higher the educational level of the parents, the more likely it is that the children will complete school. In particular, the mother's level of education has been argued to make a difference in the likelihood of dropping out of school.¹⁵⁸ Statistics Norway suggests that 12 percent of Somali immigrant women coming to Norway report they came with no formal education and 58 percent report having completed primary education.¹⁵⁹ It is clear that in many ways Norwegian-Somali young people face challenges in the educational system, such as the cooperation between school and home.

5.3 Cooperation between School and Home

One can get far by increasing cooperation, which is true both from the side of the parents and the teacher: strengthen the cooperation! This requires good communication between parents and teacher, and more openness about the child. I personally want to know everything about my child and want to develop cooperation. I want more openness ... The parents have to take the initiative e... The rector has my number and I have his, I call when I need to know something.¹⁶⁰

Statistics show that Norwegian-Somalis are at the lowest end of the income ladder; they have little to no education and a weak link to the labour market. Many live on social welfare. Despite the fact that many Norwegian-Somali parents are what is termed resource-weak in Norway and do not speak Norwegian very well, many of them work hard with the resources they have to make sure that their children will succeed in Norwegian society, for example by encouraging their children to take higher education in order to secure a good future.

¹⁵⁵ T. Hægeland, T., L. Kikreboen and O. Raaum, "Skoleresultatene 2005. En Kartlegging av Karakterer fra Grunnskoler og Videregående skoler i Norge" (School Results 2005. A Mapping of Grades of Primary and Secondary Schools in Norway), Oslo, Statistics Norway, 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Bakken, Minoritetsspråklig Ungdom i Skolen.

¹⁵⁷ Støren, Innvandrere med Høyere Utdanning, p. 71.

¹⁵⁸ Lødding, Frafall Blant Minoritetsspråklige.

¹⁵⁹ A. Steinkellner and A. M. Rustad Holseter, "Befolkningens utdanningsnivå, etter spørreundersøkelsen om utdanning fullført i utlandet" (population education, for the survey of education completed abroad), Statistics Norway Report 24/2013, 2013, p. 16.

¹⁶⁰ Mohamuud Roble, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with parents.

Good communication and dialogue is an important prerequisite for cooperation between school and home, including parental participation in the biannual individual meetings with the teacher about the development of the child, parent meetings and engagement with other events at school. Stave discusses the different types of contacts that Norwegian-Somali parents have with Norwegian schools.¹⁶¹ Much of the cooperation between the school and parents is formalised, meaning that parents should be in touch with the school based on the conditions that the school sets; such as through attending the meetings that the school sets up or through electronic or phone communication that follows certain rules. Norwegian-Somali parents are not used to that level of formalisation. "In Somalia we don't have fixed meeting times in the course of the year. The school calls the parents for example only when the child has done something bad."¹⁶² Parents often get in touch with the school by calling by on their own initiative or dropping by without a prearranged formal meeting.

Two secondary schools with a large number of Somali students addressed this issue by organising an event for Norwegian-Somali parents specifically, and investing extra resources in guaranteeing participation. The Norwegian-Somali minority adviser in one of the schools called all the 150 parents personally, after which 55 parents came to the meeting. He explains:

It is crucial to call parents rather than provide the information in writing. At the same time, this process is time-consuming and not always successful: I did not manage to get in touch with 39 people on the list although I tried to call them a number of times.

It is of course crucial to understand what causes the common difficulties with engaging many of the Norwegian-Somali parents. Sometimes, parents may be scared to meet the school, afraid that they do not have enough competence and expecting they will be criticised.¹⁶³ Limited knowledge of Norwegian also weakens communication between the school and home and means that parents are unable to help their children with homework. These language challenges are discussed in a range of studies showing how

¹⁶¹ T. Stave, *Samarbeid Mellom Grunnskolen Oslo og Foreldre med Somalisk Bakgrunn: Faktorer som Fremmer Eller Hindrer Samarbeid Mellom Skole og Foreldre med Somalisk Bakgrunn* (Cooperation between Oslo Primary School and Parents of Somali Background: Factors that Promote or Hinder Cooperation between the School and Parents of Somali Origin), Høgskolen i Oslo, 2003 (hereafter, Stave, *Samarbeid Mellom Grunnskolen Oslo og Foreldre med Somalisk Bakgrunn*).

¹⁶² Stave, *Samarbeid Mellom Grunnskolen Oslo og Foreldre med Somalisk Bakgrunn*, p. 89.

¹⁶³ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

they hinder optimal dialogue between the school and Norwegian-Somali parents.¹⁶⁴ Another related problem is that many parents are not very familiar with the educational system. In the focus group with parents, these difficulties were also highlighted, participants stressing that even if parents go to school meetings they often do not understand what is being said. There is a need for an interpreter, but few people know that the education law provides parents with that right. It is thus crucial to make this right to interpretation happen, which may enable more parents to participate in parents' meetings and other events.¹⁶⁵ When people have insufficient knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, they should try to get that information from their own networks. There is a risk that Norwegian-Somali parents misinform each other and rumours become an important source of information.

A Norwegian-Somali mother gave an example of how damaging this could be. She was informed by the kindergarten that her daughter could get special education (*pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste*, PPT) because she had difficulties with language and speech. Responses from her Somali network were that it would be irresponsible to send her child there, as it was seen as part of Child Welfare Services. She decided not to take the offer, but as she related:

Fortunately I got in touch with an Iranian woman who explained to me that I had misunderstood the services offered. She advised me to get help and send my child to PPT. This really assisted my daughter with the development of her speech.¹⁶⁶

Norwegian teachers, on the other hand, have different experiences in their meetings with Norwegian-Somali parents. In her doctoral thesis, Inger Marie Holm¹⁶⁷ describes how cooperation between the school and home depends on the teacher's efforts and personal characteristics, so that too much depends upon the individual teacher to encourage a good dialogue with Norwegian-Somali parents. This study revealed a considerable difference between how teachers feel about Norwegian-Somali fathers as opposed to Norwegian-Somali mothers. Many of the teachers interviewed described

¹⁶⁴ Stave, Samarbeid Mellom Grunnskolen Oslo og Foreldre med Somalisk Bakgrunn; D. Gobdoon and A. A. Mohammed, "Snakk med Oss! Hva Gjør at Noen Somaliske Elever Fullfører Videregående Skole, Mens Andre Mislykkes Eller Velger Bort Videregående Skole?" (Talk to us! What Makes Some Somali Students Complete High School, While Others Fail or Opt Out of High School?) Masters thesis, multicultural preventive work with children and youth, University College Telemark, 2011 (hereafter, Gobdoon and Mohammed, "Snakk med Oss!"); I. M. Holm, "Somaliere og Norsk Skole. En Studie om Somaliere i Norge med Særlig Fokus på Relasjoner Mellom Lærere og Foreldre" (Somalis and Norwegian School. A Study of Somalis in Norway with Particular Focus on the Relationships between Teachers and Parents), Doctoral thesis, Institute of Sociology, Political Science and Planning, University of Tromsø, 2011 (hereafter, Holm, "Somaliere og Norsk Skole").

¹⁶⁵ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Fadumo Ahmed, Open Society Foundation focus group on education with parents.

¹⁶⁷ Holm, "Somaliere og Norsk Skole".

Norwegian-Somali fathers as absent from this cooperation, whereas Norwegian-Somali mothers were generally described in a more positive light, underscoring good contact with the school, and a wish to have an overview of what their child was doing. But Daha Gobdoon and Abdullahi A. Mohammed talked to teachers who were generally more negative about the contributions of Norwegian-Somali parents, as they were not seen to participate in most school activities.¹⁶⁸

5.4 The Experiences of Norwegian-Somali Youngsters

I have mediated many times and then I have found that new Somalis often are stepped on by teachers. They do not have much information about the school system, and they do not know their rights. Some have relatives, an uncle or older siblings, or a Somali neighbour, who know the rules and thus can help them. Through this network they learn what is allowed and what is not. But then there are those who do not know the rules of the game and have a hard time in this society. And that ruins it for their further education. It is a kind of abuse of power, from the side of the school.¹⁶⁹

The Norwegian-Somali young people who took part in the Open Society Foundations research described a variety of experiences with Norwegian schools, some of which neatly match descriptions in a report called *Skolen er fra Mars, Elevenene er fra Venus* (Schools are from Mars, Pupils are from Venus).¹⁷⁰ Overall, they felt that Norwegian-Somali pupils might be failed by Oslo schools, though they also describe good experiences related to feeling a sense of belonging, support, a good environment for learning and academic motivation. Some of the factors they felt enable pupils to succeed in Norwegian schools include being goal-oriented, having a positive attitude towards education, planning ahead, getting support from home and having older siblings with an education.

One of the main reasons that they felt that Norwegian-Somali pupils lose out in Oslo schools is due to resource shortages, where there are too many pupils and too few teachers. Furthermore, as indicated, Oslo schools are to a certain extent segregated: some schools hardly have any pupils with immigrant backgrounds while others have a majority. These conditions are seen by focus group participants to lead to poor advice and follow-up, poor-quality education, little acknowledgement of students by teachers, stereotyping and discrimination, which in turn contribute to absences and dropping out. Those with an immigrant background lose out in particular, because they need extra help that they cannot get. Mariam Elmi explained:

I feel that Norwegian schools fail in the sense that you can go very far in school before anyone discovers your weaknesses. School classes are big, with few

¹⁶⁸ Gobdoon and Mohammed, "Snakk med Oss!".

¹⁶⁹ Shamsa Osman, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with students.

¹⁷⁰ OMOD, *Skolen er fra Mars, Elevenene er fra Venus*.

teachers. I am thinking of secondary, in particular lower secondary. I created a nice metaphor about this: the Norwegian school is a bus. Everyone can travel with it up to upper secondary, after lower secondary those who are weak fall off the bus. Or rather, they are thrown out of the bus. You might as well have been invisible because there is no one to catch you. I feel that this is a big failure and have talked to teachers who feel the same. Those who decide on reforms, those who sit in the Ministry of Education, have very little insight in what is happening in schools and very little contact with teachers.¹⁷¹

So those who at some point cannot catch up and “drop off the bus”, lack support not only from home but also from school. Research shows that, compared with children of Norwegian-born parents, young people with an immigrant background experience a strong reduction in concentration and engagement with the school, academic self-image, level of satisfaction at school, number of friends and academic and social support from teachers in the move to upper secondary school; in particular in the general study stream.¹⁷² According to Kristinn Hegna, the causes lie in the fact that some start their secondary education with somewhat poorer results from primary, but more so, the fact that pupils experience a loss of a network of friends and academic and social support from teachers at upper secondary school.¹⁷³

The lack of adequate school career guidance, in particular in lower secondary, is among the most commonly discussed problems that Norwegian-Somali pupils face in Oslo schools. This is something that concerns both Norwegian-Somali parents and pupils, and it is a concern that has been raised more generally in Norwegian society in relation to the role, resources and the qualification requirements of school advisers.¹⁷⁴ While Norwegian-Somalis aspire to get an education at university and university college, Norwegian-Somali pupils are often advised to take vocational training. I. M. Kileng has concluded that Norwegian-Somali parents are dissatisfied with the school advice their children get. She questions the fact that this dissatisfaction does not seem to be informed by school grades and argues that Norwegian-Somali parents are very negative about vocational training as in Somalia no education was required for such jobs, which were often seen as low-status.¹⁷⁵ Parents affect their children’s choice of education, and if expectations from home are unrealistic this creates difficulties for the pupil. At other

¹⁷¹ Mariam Elmi, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with students.

¹⁷² Kristinn Hegna, “Ungdom med Innvandringsbakgrunn Etter Overgangen til Videregående Opplæring. Tapte Nettverk og Svekket Skoletrivsel? (Youth with Immigrant Background after Transitioning to Secondary Education. Lost Network and Reduced Level of Satisfaction?), *Tidsskrift for Ungdomsforskning* (Journal of Youth Research) 13(1) (2013), pp. 49–79 (hereafter, Hegna, “Tapte Nettverk og Svekket Skoletrivsel?”).

¹⁷³ Hegna, “Tapte Nettverk og Svekket Skoletrivsel?”

¹⁷⁴ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

¹⁷⁵ I.M. Kileng, *Somaliske Foreldre og Norske Lærere. En Studie av Relasjoner og Møter* (Somali Parents and Norwegian Teachers. A Study of Relationships and Meetings), Northern Research Institute (NORUT), Oslo, 2007.

times, the problem is related more to the fact that school advisers do not stimulate high ambitions because they assume a resource-weak home environment.¹⁷⁶

The young people interviewed were also very dissatisfied with the school advice that Norwegian-Somali pupils generally get. They argued that advisers fail Norwegian-Somali children and do not motivate or encourage them to take higher education because of their negative attitudes towards Norwegian-Somali pupils. Pupils feel they are put in a box, as Farhiya Rashiid argued:

I believe that the reason why advisers are so generalising towards Somalis is that they do not have knowledge about us from before. It seems as if they have very little experience with Somalis. I do not know how it is with ethnic Norwegians, but with Somalis, it is like this: you meet your adviser maybe once or twice in the course of your lower and upper secondary school. How will he or she know what you can or cannot do? Maybe the solution is to have a meeting with your class teacher and adviser two or three times a year so that they have an overview of the pupils' development.¹⁷⁷

Because of these challenges, Norwegian-Somali youth often do not pay much attention to school advisers, but use their own networks instead. These networks can consist of older siblings, family members or friends who know about the educational system. As Mariam Elmi illustrates:

It pays off to have older siblings or others who know the system, who can help you. I had older siblings who went to that school before me, so I knew this about school advice. I never had contact with them and I did not feel the need to.¹⁷⁸

This section has presented some of the basic facts on the participation of Norwegian-Somali children in the educational system, which is among the lowest for any immigrant group. Previous studies have highlighted a number of challenges, including the differences in social background, parents' education, labour market participation and length of stay. Cooperation between school and home comes out as another important factor in much of the existing research. The Open Society Foundations research demonstrates that the experiences of pupils with the school system also contribute to the poor results and high drop-out levels. There is a sense that the school system does not allow for sufficient support of those who need extra assistance, and on top of that, pupils feel that stereotypes contribute to incorrect school career advice.

¹⁷⁶ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Farhiya Rashiid, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with students.

¹⁷⁸ Mariam Elmi, Open Society Foundations focus group on education with students.

6. EMPLOYMENT

I have taken a Norwegian language course, a job application course, a data course, a health and nursing course. I have taken all kinds of courses. They ask you to do course after course. How many courses does one have to take before one gets a job? If you say “No”, they tell you they cannot help you with your rent and sustenance. You can’t be doing courses all the time, you have to move on; you have to develop yourself. One does not do that here in Norway.¹⁷⁹

This section focuses on the position of Norwegian-Somalis in the labour market in terms of their employment rates, unemployment and educational levels. The section highlights the substantial mismatch between the formal qualifications that many Somalis have upon entering Norway and the requirements of the labour market. In combination with the short residence time in Norway and a range of other factors, this has resulted in very low labour market participation among Norwegian-Somalis.

This section discusses initiatives that the authorities have set up to improve inclusion in the labour market and describes how these are experienced by Norwegian-Somalis, including the introduction and qualification programmes; a recent Action Plan for supporting entrepreneurs; Job Opportunity (*Jobbsjansen*); and Link Workers (*Linkarbeidere*) a project with Norwegian-Somali bridge-builders. The analysis distinguishes between those who do not have any formal education when they arrive in Norway and who often face great difficulties obtaining the necessary qualifications, and those who either come with or manage to obtain higher education while in Norway, who should thus in principle have fewer difficulties accessing the labour market. Both groups, however, meet a range of structural barriers. While the situation may improve for descendants of Somali immigrants, there are also indicators that the problems remain substantial.

6.1 Norwegian-Somalis in the Labour Market: Facts and Figures

Participation in the labour market is an important part of the integration process for immigrants in Norway.¹⁸⁰ The government considers employment as the main pillar for improving gender equality and for attaining economic and social equality. Norway has a high employment rate compared with most other countries, particularly for women, whose employment rates are only a few percentage points lower than those of

¹⁷⁹ Rukia Harun, Open Society Foundations focus group on employment. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology, on selection and use of quotations.

¹⁸⁰ M. Rugkåsa, “Transformasjon og Integrasjon. Kvalifisering av Minoritetsetniske Kvinner Til arbeid og Deltakelse i den Norske Velferdsstaten” (Transformation and Integration. Qualification of Ethnic Minority Women to Work and Participation in the Norwegian Welfare State), Doctoral thesis, Social Anthropology Department, University of Oslo, 2010.

men.¹⁸¹ The government focuses on increasing employment rates for immigrants, not just so they may gain economic independence but also as a key to social inclusion.¹⁸²

Norwegian-Somalis, meanwhile, are frequently mentioned as the group performing most poorly on the Norwegian labour market; a range of statistical reports have illustrated this fact.¹⁸³ The situation has not changed significantly in the last decade. In 2008, among immigrants from Somalia,¹⁸⁴ only 51 percent were economically active in the labour force, which is by far the lowest among 17 immigrant groups studied in Norwegian municipalities.¹⁸⁵ Again, of those 51 percent, 38 percent were employed, 13 percent were registered as unemployed, double the percentage of all immigrants. The high unemployment rates may suggest that the desire to work is present, but opportunities for Norwegian-Somalis to find a job are fewer than for others.¹⁸⁶ In late 2011 among those aged 15–74, Somalis had the lowest employment rate of 30.6 percent; of which 37.1 percent was for men and 23.0 percent was for women. The national average at the time was 69.1 percent (71.7 percent for men and 66.4 percent for women), whereas the number was still low compared with other refugee groups such as those from Sri Lanka (70.4 percent) Iraq (41.4 percent) and Afghanistan (44.6 percent).¹⁸⁷ Not only is the employment rate low, but of those employed, only a little over half are in full-time employment.¹⁸⁸

In Oslo, numbers are in fact somewhat worse, and have not improved over the years. In 2008, only 49 percent of Norwegian-Somalis were economically active in the labour force, of which almost 36 percent were employed.¹⁸⁹ This was very low even compared with other recently arrived refugees: employment rates for Iraqis were 49 percent and for Afghans 56 percent. In municipalities that have large percentages of people moving there from within Norway, unemployment rates of Norwegian-Somalis are generally

¹⁸¹ S.V. Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 259. In 2011, 69 percent of women between 20 and 74 were in employment, compared with 75 percent of men in that age group. See ssb.no/fobsysut (accessed 23 November 2013).

¹⁸² White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*, p. 25.

¹⁸³ See, for example, Blom and Henriksen, "Levekår Blant Innvandrere i Norge 2005–2006"; Henriksen, *Fakta om 18 Innvandrergupper i Norge*; NOU, *Bedre Integrering*; Henriksen et al., *Innvandring og Innvandrere 2010*; Olsen, *Flyktninger og Arbeidsmarkedet*; Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner"; Østby, *Innvandrere med Lavinntekt*; Østby, "Norway's population groups of developing countries' origin".

¹⁸⁴ Statistical studies on the Norwegian-Somali labour market participation generally only look at immigrants, because the group of descendants of immigrants is too young and there are too few of employment age to draw any conclusions.

¹⁸⁵ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", table 15.2.

¹⁸⁶ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 259.

¹⁸⁷ Statistics Norway, see <http://www.ssb.no/a/kortnavn/innvregsys/tab-2012-06-21-09.html>.

¹⁸⁸ Olsen, *Flyktninger og Arbeidsmarkedet*, 4th quarter 2011, p. 88.

¹⁸⁹ Statistics Norway, see <http://www.ssb.no/a/kortnavn/innvregsys/tab-2012-06-21-09.html>.

higher than the average, and this is also the case in Oslo.¹⁹⁰ The only sector where Oslo has high numbers of employed is in the independent business sector, as Oslo is the only Norwegian city with a large enough Norwegian-Somali community to facilitate businesses catering to it. The government and the City of Oslo have a strong focus on supporting businesses as a potentially viable alternative means of income (Box 8). In 2011, of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo aged 30–59, 60 percent of men and almost 77 percent of women were not economically active in the labour force, and many of the women worked part-time.¹⁹¹

Indeed, another clear characteristic of Norwegian-Somali employment rates which affects the low totals, is the fact that women's participation in the labour force is extremely low. The difference between employment rates of women and men is among the largest in any immigrant group. In late 2011, 40 percent of men and 23.1 percent of women aged 30–59 were employed.¹⁹² The gender difference gets even larger when looking at the percentage that is economically active in the labour force, as men register themselves as unemployed more than women. While the Norwegian model expects women to participate in the labour market equally, this may contrast with the expectations of some of the women and families themselves. A further contribution to the low employment rate is the percentage of the group that is not regarded as economically active, and who are in fact engaged in various qualification programmes. In order to address the low levels of economic activity, it is vital to get a better understanding of what those who are not economically active in the labour force are engaged in, and whether and how their activities may contribute to economic participation in the labour market in the future.

¹⁹⁰ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner", p. 261.

¹⁹¹ Statistics Norway, selected data on file with the author.

¹⁹² Statistics Norway, selected data on file with the author.

Box 8. Stimulating Migrant Entrepreneurship¹⁹³

In White Paper No. 6 (2012–2013), “A Comprehensive Integration Policy”, one of the government’s goals was to make better use of migrants’ competences and to increase employment among immigrants. The White Paper promises an evaluation of how the state can improve opportunities for setting up a business. This has led to an Action Plan by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, “Vi trenger innvandrernes kompetanse” (We need immigrants’ competences).

The Action Plan points to the fact that many migrant businesses are set up as livelihood companies, as a way to take care of oneself and one’s family. This may be motivated by a wish to realise one’s own potential or by a weak labour market position. Creating opportunities for this group, including women, has the potential of reducing the employment gap, fighting poverty and reducing the costs of social benefits.

The government has started various measures to make it easier to set up a business in Norway. Also, it is in the process of establishing regional centres for those establishing a business. Funding for such a centre has been provided for city district Grorud. The centre will offer training, individual guidance and follow-up in ways that are matching migrants’ needs. The Ministry provides the funding for this measure, which will be managed by IMDi. Other measures include prioritizing migrants in NAV’s support for job-creating projects; and providing training courses and guidance in several languages, coordinated by the Agency for Business Development Services.¹⁹⁴

6.2 Explaining the Low Labour Market Participation through Facts and Figures

Multivariate analyses of the living conditions among immigrants in Norway (LKI survey data¹⁹⁵ show that age, gender, country of origin and length of stay are

¹⁹³ Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (*Barne-, likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet*, BLD), “Vi Trenger Innvandrernes Kompetanse. Handlingsplan 2013–2016” (We Need Migrants’ Competence. Action Plan 2013–2016), 2013. See regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/IMA/Handlingsplaner/Handlingsplan_innvandrernes_kompetanse.pdf (accessed 23 November 2013).

¹⁹⁴ In Gamle Oslo, for example, this is done in cooperation with Link Workers (Box 9).

¹⁹⁵ LKI data are survey data collected in 2005–2006. A representative sample of 3,053 immigrants and persons born in Norway to immigrant parents from the 10 main non-Western immigrant groups in Norway were interviewed about a number of aspects of their living conditions. There has not been a similar survey since then.

demographic variables that affect the employment rates of immigrants.¹⁹⁶ These variables certainly affect the poor labour market participation of Norwegian-Somalis, although there are many other complex factors at play. At the same time, of course, shifts in the general labour market situation affect employment rates.

Labour market participation generally improves with length of stay and with general living conditions, which are related to a range of aspects that are strongly affected by length of stay.¹⁹⁷ Newer arrivals also contribute to the higher unemployment rate, as those in the Introduction Programme are not counted as employed and thus skew the share of employed even more.¹⁹⁸ In many municipalities in Norway, the share of participants in the Introduction Programme among Somalis aged 18–55 is 10–20 percent. However, data analyses show that increased length of stay does not give the same positive growth in employment rates for Norwegian-Somalis as for other immigrant groups in Norway.¹⁹⁹ No immigrant cohort from Somalia has employment rates above 50 percent. Entering the Norwegian labour market seems to be a more long-term problem for immigrants from Somalia.²⁰⁰

Another factor is previous work experience. Norwegian-Somalis are not just among those with the shortest length of stay in Norway, but they are also among those with the lowest levels of education and labour market experience upon arrival.²⁰¹ The Living Conditions Survey shows that of the parents of immigrants to Norway, seven out of 10 mothers were housewives, whereas 30 percent of fathers were businessmen and 30 percent government officials.²⁰² Immigrants themselves, on the other hand, often were not employed in Somalia before they came to Norway (30 percent of men and 50 percent of women). Of those who did have jobs, most were businesspeople and a number were government officials.²⁰³

Another clear correlation is between levels of education and employment: employment rates go up with levels of education for Norwegian-Somalis, making the difference with other immigrant groups smaller. Among those with only primary school education or less, the difference from the average immigrant employment rates was 21 percent,

¹⁹⁶ S. Blom, “Sysselsetting Blant Innvandrere: Hvilken Betydning Har Individuelle Egenskaper og Tilpasningsstrategier? (Employment Among Immigrants: the Relevance of Individual Characteristics and Adaptation Strategies?), *Søkelys på arbeidslivet* 27 (1–2 (2010), pp. 59–75 (hereafter, Blom, “Sysselsetting Blant Innvandrere”).

¹⁹⁷ Blom, “Sysselsetting Blant Innvandrere”.

¹⁹⁸ A. W. Enes and K. Henriksen, “Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2011” (Monitor for Introduction Programme in 2011), Statistics Norway, 2012 (hereafter, Enes and Henriksen, “Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2011”).

¹⁹⁹ Henriksen, *Levekår og Kjønnsforkjeller Blant Innvandrere fra ti Land*, p. 227.

²⁰⁰ Østby, *Innvandrere med Lavinntekt*, p. 12.

²⁰¹ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnsforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”.

²⁰² Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnsforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, figure 8.7.

²⁰³ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnsforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, p. 220.

whereas for those with secondary or higher level education the difference was 14–16 percent. Not only is the number of Norwegian-Somalis with low educational levels high, but having a poor education seems to have worse consequences for Norwegian-Somalis than for others.²⁰⁴ Only two out of 10 with primary-school education or below are employed, compared with half of those with secondary or more. While employment rates for men in general are higher than for women, women with low educational levels are much less likely to be employed than men.²⁰⁵

6.3 The Long Road to Employment

According to the government, everyone in Norway has the same duties, rights and opportunity to contribute to and take part in society.²⁰⁶ The integration and inclusion policy builds on principles of equality, solidarity and justice and aims to ensure new citizens have the opportunity to contribute their resources to the Norwegian labour market within a short period of time. The government believes that this can be achieved by rapid and appropriate settlement, which can build the foundation for an active life in a safe environment. They argue that there is a right and duty to engage in Norwegian-language courses and take part in the Introduction Programme.

The responsibility for labour market policies rests with the Ministry of Labour, and NAV is responsible for implementing these policies. NAV and its partner the municipal social assistance service focus on job-oriented activities and a follow-up system tailored to individual needs. There is a NAV office in every municipality, established jointly with the social assistance services.²⁰⁷

Despite policies in place that stress the importance of labour inclusion, Norwegian-Somalis perform poorly on the Norwegian labour market, challenging perceptions of equality, solidarity and justice for all citizens. One of the biggest challenges for Norwegian-Somalis and for Norwegian integration and inclusion policies remains the long road into employment. Yasiin Omar underlines in a key stakeholder interview: “When they first arrive, the majority of immigrants are excited and eager to begin a new life. They want to make money and send it home in addition to begin to set up a life in Norway. But they soon realise that this is not realistic.”²⁰⁸

One obstacle to accessing the labour market is the waiting phase in asylum centres and in particular its impact on people’s mental and emotional states because of the lack of

²⁰⁴ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnsforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, p. 229.

²⁰⁵ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnsforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, figure 8.15.

²⁰⁶ White Paper No. 6, *En helhetlig integreringspolitikk*, pp. 7–8.

²⁰⁷ Ministry of Labour, “International Migration 2011–2012, IMO Report for Norway”, 7 January 2013.

²⁰⁸ Key stakeholder interview with Yasiin Omar, 31 January 2013.

meaningful content in daily life and resultant drug use.²⁰⁹ A research report by Espen Freng and Simen Lund shows some of the psychological effects of this waiting phase, summed up by a question that was posed among informants, asylum seekers in a centre: “What if you would still be in the same situation in five years’ time, if you would still be waiting? Do you think that you could still keep away from drugs?”²¹⁰ The report argues that asylum seekers, many of whom have gone through traumatic experiences, often develop psychological problems after coming to Norway during this waiting phase. While over the last couple of years the length of waiting has been greatly reduced,²¹¹ many of those we spoke to had waited a long time for a result of their asylum application. Exacerbating this problem is the difficulty of placing those who have been granted asylum in municipalities, which results in some individuals living in asylum centres for longer than they should.

During a focus group discussion with older men, several participants called attention to the impact of the first phase in Norway. Ali Yussuf is unemployed and has lived in Norway for 10 years:

There are many here in Norway who have not received asylum and are waiting and waiting. I know someone who has been in an asylum-seeker centre for eight years without getting asylum. There are many like him. They go crazy from the waiting. It is important to help them and give them an answer quickly. One ought not to have to live like that. Not to know whether you will be sent back or will be allowed to live in a peaceful country is something that is destructive for those who live in that situation. One is not here and not there. To live in such a situation for long, ruins the person’s future opportunities to start life in Norway.²¹²

Until an asylum application is processed the applicant has very limited options for accessing Norwegian language classes or seeking employment.²¹³ Somali immigrants often have to wait several years before they get access to basic settlement and all the rights and duties that come with it. Once a permit and housing outside the asylum centre are obtained for many the next step is to allow family members to join. This affects employment in two ways: first, the motivation to find employment quickly is

²⁰⁹ E. Freng and S. Lund, *Freeland – Ventefasen, Rus og Livsinhold. En Rapport om Rusmiddelbruk på Asylmottak* (Freeland – the Waiting Period, Drugs and a Meaning to Life. A Report on Drug Use at Asylum Centres), Oslo Municipality Welfare Administration Intoxication Resource (Oslo kommune Velferdsetaten Kompetansesenter rus), Oslo, 2012 (hereafter Freng and Lund, *Ventefasen, Rus og Livsinhold*).

²¹⁰ Freng and Lund, *Ventefasen, Rus og Livsinhold*, p. 23.

²¹¹ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

²¹² Ali Yussuf, Open Society Foundations focus group on employment with older men.

²¹³ Asylum seekers have no right (or duty) to learn Norwegian, but may receive up to 250 hours of training in Norwegian, depending on the municipality where the reception centre is located: see www.vox.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

strong because of the responsibility to contribute to improving the financial situation of the family and because only with a job it is possible to get a permit for family members to come to Norway.²¹⁴ Second, the stress that this situation creates, in particular for older men who face extreme challenges in accessing the Norwegian labour market, is substantial and can in the longer run affect employment opportunities. Some of the psychological impacts of this situation are addressed in section 8. Ali Yussuf explained:

All the time, I think about my family, waiting for me [in Ethiopia]. I have applied and applied to get them here, but I get a “no” all the time. It is a problem to live on social welfare. I need food, clothes, schooling and a lot more now than when my children were small. Now they are big and want a lot from me and I am in a difficult situation and do not know what to do. I get NOK 5,800 [about €771] from Social to live off, but I live off NOK 3,000 [about €399] and have to send the rest to my family every month. Every time I got a rejection from UDI²¹⁵ they say I have to work. I am sick, but I have tried to apply for jobs. They do not want me because I am too old. What can I do then? I can never meet UDI’s requirements to get my family here.²¹⁶

The second barrier for entry into the labour market is the gap between the nature of the labour market in Norway and the lack of formal qualifications that many Norwegian-Somalis have. As an Open Society Foundations informant stated:

I talked with a woman with four kids who was in the Introduction Programme. They normally get two years for the programme, which is not enough and particularly not for a mother from Somalia who is illiterate. The time and distance she needs to cross to get to work is great. So this is about the goals of integration in comparison to the investments needed to reach those goals.²¹⁷

The government has set up a range of initiatives to help immigrants access the labour market. The Introduction Programme is foremost among these projects, under which municipalities offer education in the Norwegian language and society, together with an employment internship and other measures to encourage employment.²¹⁸ In addition to the Introduction Programme, there are also other measures, such as the labour market training courses (*arbeidsmarkedskurs*, AMO courses²¹⁹) provided to those

²¹⁴ Blom, “Sysselsetting blant innvandrere”.

²¹⁵ Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, *Utlendingsdirektoratet*, UDI.

²¹⁶ Ali Yussuf, Open Society Foundations focus group on employment with older men.

²¹⁷ Interview, 29 January 2013.

²¹⁸ Enes and Henriksen, “Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2011”, p. 4. See www.imdi.no/no/Introduksjonsordningen/ (accessed 2 December 2013).

²¹⁹ See www.nav.no/English/English/Training.289850.cms (accessed 2 December 2013).

registered as unemployed. Both the Introduction Programme and the AMO courses were recently evaluated extensively and showed mixed results.²²⁰

Somalis are among the largest groups participating in the Introduction Programme, with the majority being women. Somalis are among those with the least success in transitioning into jobs or education after finishing the programme as well as being the largest number of drop-outs.²²¹ Just four out of 10 transitioned to employment or education in November 2010, and Somalis represented the highest number of registered unemployed participants after the course.²²² There are substantial gender differences, though, with 37 percent more men than women transitioning to employment or education after finishing the course.²²³ To cater better to this group, IMDi administers the Job Opportunity scheme (See Box 9).

²²⁰ A. B. Djuve, C. Kavli and A. Hagelund, *Kvinner i Kvalifisering. Introduksjonsprogram for Nyankomne Flyktninger med Lite Utdanning og Store Omsorgsoppgaver* (Females in Qualification. Introduction Programme for Newly Arrived Refugees with Little Education and Major Care Duties), Fafo, Oslo, 2011 (hereafter, Djuve et al., *Kvinner i Kvalifisering*); A. M. Enes and K. Kraakenes, *Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2010* (Monitor for Introduction Programme in 2010), Statistics Norway, 2011 (hereafter, Enes and Kraakenes, *Monitor for introduksjonsordningen 2010*); Enes and Henriksen, "Monitor for introduksjonsordningen 2011"; M. L. Sandbæk, *Voksne Innvandrere i Norskopplæringen. Bruksundersøkelse i Basis og Helsefagarbeideropplæringen* (Adult Immigrants in Norwegian Tuition. User Survey in Basic and Health Worker Training), Fafo, 2011 (hereafter, Sandbæk, *Voksne innvandrere i norskopplæring*); A. B. Djuve, M. L. Sandbæk and H. Lunde, *Likeverdige Tjenester? Storbyens Tjenestetilbud til en Etnisk Mangfoldig Befolkning* (Equitable Services? Big City Services to an Ethnically Diverse Population), Fafo, Oslo, 2011 (hereafter, Djuve et al., *Likeverdige Tjenester?*).

²²¹ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnsforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 225; Enes and Henriksen, "Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2011".

²²² Enes and Henriksen, "Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2011", p. 21.

²²³ Enes and Henriksen, "Monitor for Introduksjonsordningen 2011", figure 3.3.

Box 9. Job Opportunity (*Jobbsjansen*)²²⁴

Job Opportunity is a qualification programme for immigrants who after several years in Norway have no connection to working life. The aim is to develop knowledge and best practices for immigrants to become economically self-sufficient through employment and/or higher education. IMDi administers the programme. Municipalities with significant immigrant populations may apply for funds. The focus is on work, language tuition, work practice and social orientation.

The programme is meant to be a full-time engagement for participants, and normally lasts up to two years. Individuals with a low level of literacy can join the programme for up to four years. An important part consists of the development of an individual plan for each participant. Participants are entitled to follow-up one year after completing the programme. In 2013 there were 53 projects running across the country, and 18 projects in Oslo.

6.4 Unemployment: Two Tales Told

One is placed at a workplace, but does one get a job afterwards? I can work, I know the language. But every time I apply for a job they just turn around and say “We do not have a job, but good luck.” On the other hand, they say “You are inactive and unemployed,” Why these double standards?²²⁵

There are competing stories about the causes of the high levels of unemployment among Norwegian-Somalis, where either structural or individual (often interpreted as cultural) barriers are highlighted: one is a tale of lack of motivation, the other a tale of exclusion and exploitation. While these easily become two tales told about who is to blame for the current situation, the main requirement is to understand and address both the individual and structural barriers.

According to one study, in the AMO courses the participants’ motivation is often given excessive importance, which shifts responsibility on to the individual, overlooking more systemic problems.²²⁶ These problems include a lack of individual guidance, a poor match between participants and courses, little focus on job opportunities after

²²⁴ More information can be found at imdi.no/no/Jobbsjansen and regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2012-2013/meld-st-6-20122013/3/2/5.html?id=705965 (accessed 24 November 2013).

²²⁵ Idil Mohamuud, Open Society Foundations focus group on health and social services with elder women.

²²⁶ M. L. Sandbæk and A. B. Djuve, *Fortellinger om Motivasjon. Hva er Gode Arbeidsmetoder i NACs AMO-kurs for Innvandrere?* (Stories about Motivation. What are Good Methods in NAV’s AMO Courses for Immigrants?), Fafo, Oslo, 2012, p. 8 (hereafter, Sandbæk and Djuve, *Fortellinger om Motivasjon*).

courses, a great variation in the quality of the courses offered and unrealistic expectations of how much can be achieved in a short time. Some of the underlying difficulties identified are the privatisation of the course providers; the fact that there are far too many actors involved who communicate poorly and all of whom have diluted responsibilities for the ultimate goal of getting participants a job; and the fact that there are too few resources, so those offering services are often overburdened.²²⁷ As Yasiin Omar also pointed out:

The people at NAV are so busy. They only have time to tell you your rights and they do not care about the long-term effects. They do not have time to be concerned with whether or not something is the right move for you. It is simply a judgment on whether or not you are entitled to it. Once you get into NAV, it is difficult to get out. Often a new arrival will ask the NAV worker's opinion and will ask that they decide for them. The worker then just puts them on a course. The new arrival will do the course, pass the course, and be back in front of the NAV worker after the course. They are then redirected to another course and it becomes a cycle. They need a more long-term approach. They need to think about the future.²²⁸

Besides the existing frustrations about the number of courses one takes without finding employment, another concern that Norwegian-Somalis experience in their job searches is that they are also being sent from one work experience placement to another. Interviewees in the Open Society Foundations research said that they felt exploited, they felt they were treated like children and that they were not treated with respect. It is clear that a lot goes wrong in the meetings between NAV and its clients. Part of this may be unavoidable because of the situation that people are in, that both they themselves and the society consider problematic. Part of it may have to do with a deep level of misunderstanding and mistrust on the side of both parties. As Amina Yusuf explained:

NAV does many things incorrectly. They place you in a job experience placement, even extend it and say that you will get a job afterwards, but then at the end of the day you are still unemployed. They tell you to take a course and find a placement for you, but it is a place that actually does not have jobs available. They should rather make agreements with the employer to say that if you are satisfied with someone's performance on the job, you should hire them. It actually does not take a lot of time to find out whether you are satisfied with someone, whether you want to hire him or her or not. I do not get why they are wasting our time. People go from placement to placement without being hired. I

²²⁷ Sandbæk and Djuve, *Fortellinger om Motivasjon*.

²²⁸ Interview with Yasiin Omar, 31 January 2013.

was placed in a kindergarten for six months without getting a job. NAV abuses people!²²⁹

While there are many similar stories that discuss bad experiences in meetings with NAV, there are also many stories about the lack of motivation to work and find work. Some research participants themselves indicated that they are so frustrated by the endless search for jobs year after year that they have lost motivation. Farah Ibrahim, a 60-year-old unemployed man in temporary housing, described a decade-long struggle to find employment and concluded, “I did not get anything and now I have lived here so long and I have given up. I do not want to work now. They destroy people’s willpower.”²³⁰ Other research participants spoke about the motivations of fellow Norwegian-Somalis and explained their lack of employment by saying that it is too easy to get social benefits in Norway; that more demands should be made on those receiving welfare; and that children of those on benefits are more likely to be on benefits, themselves as the environment you are in frames your actions. They argued that the system in Norway does not encourage participation in the labour market.

Yasiin Omar, for example, described the dynamic as follows:

If you come to an environment where everyone is on social benefits, then you do the same. Or, if everyone goes to university and works on the weekends, then you want to do that as well. I tell people, “If you want to be independent, stay away from NAV. It begins to frame all your actions.”²³¹

An initiative at Gamle Oslo City District has been set up to address some of these challenges (See Box 10).

²²⁹ Amina Yusuf, Open Society Foundations focus group on health and social services with elder women.

²³⁰ Farah Ibrahim, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with elder men.

²³¹ Interview with Yasiin Omar, 31 January 2013.

Box 10. Link Workers (*Linkarbeidere*)²³²

In Oslo's City District of Gamle Oslo, the Link Workers project has provided services for residents with Somali backgrounds since September 2010. The project was created after the recommendation of a working group of the then Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, in their report "Somalis in Norway" (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (AID), 2009). The report illustrated how many Somalis experienced difficulties in their encounters with the Norwegian welfare state, related to their life situation but also to the fact that many are not used to relating to written information (AID, 2009).

The Link Workers project aims to help public services to become better adapted to citizens of Somali origin through the establishment of a municipal advisory service, funded by IMDi. Latterly, funding has also come from the City of Oslo's Health and Welfare Agency and from the City District. The project has been run by the Centre for Refugees and Immigrants (Senter for flyktninger og innvandrere, SeFI), in cooperation with the SSF, Toosan Youth organisation and Tøyen Mothers Group, and, *inter alia*, the Health and Welfare Agency, Child Welfare Services and the City of Oslo's Agency for Business Development Services.

Offering appropriate information, advice and guidance to Somali residents in Gamle Oslo – both individually and through information seminars – the project has primarily focused on employment, education, health care, housing and children's welfare services. Its success stems from linking Norwegian-Somalis who have established a life for themselves in Norway with those who have only recently arrived. The Link Workers project has prioritised piloting new methods in order to develop better strategies for bridge-building between the authorities and Norwegian-Somalis. It has involved mentoring for newly established refugees; teaching in the Introduction Programme; collaboration with the Job Opportunity project; a course on establishing a business in Norway in cooperation with the Agency of Commerce; information fora on health; information and dialogue on child welfare services; and capacity-building of service providers. Many of these initiatives have been positively evaluated and are said to have a large transfer potential (Proba 2013).

²³² This box is based on information at bydel-gamle-oslo.oslo.kommune.no/arbeid_trygd_og_sosiale_tjenester_nav/flyktninger_og_innvandrere/article214739-2030.html (accessed 24 November 2013) and from the evaluation report on the project (PROBA, *Evaluering av Forsøk med Linkarbeidere. Integrering Gjennom Bruk av Ressurser Fra Eget Miljø* (Evaluation of Experiments with Link Workers. Integrating the Use of Resources from One's Own Environment), PROBA samfunnsanalyse, Oslo, 2013).

6.5 Experiences of Exclusion

A recent study on ethnic discrimination in recruitment in Norway provides an important backdrop to understanding the labour market position of Norwegian-Somalis. A. H. Midtbøen and J. Rogstad sent 1,800 fictional job applications in response to actual job openings, where pairs of applications were identical in qualifications but differed in having a name that suggested ethnic-minority or -majority background. They then also conducted interviews with selected employers. In general, their results showed that discrimination in the hiring process poses a substantial obstacle for access to the labour market for people with an ethnic-minority background.²³³ The likelihood of being called in for a job interview was reduced on average by 25 percent when the applicant had a foreign-sounding name compared with an identically qualified applicant with a majority background. The results suggest that even those born in Norway to immigrant parents can face problems with “structural integration” in the Norwegian labour market.²³⁴

Based on the in-depth interviews done the study, Midtbøen and Rogstad argue that discrimination has many aspects to it – it is not a one-sided process. Many employers mention more absences for health reasons, bad work ethics or an inability to understand the codes that apply in the workplace among employees with ethnic-minority backgrounds. In a number of the interviews, various negative perceptions of Norwegian-Somalis were brought to light, at times based on experiences with previous employees and at times based on general stereotypes. The authors point out that good experiences are linked to individuals, whereas bad experiences are generalised to groups. Many employers stressed that “individual suitability” is important as well, which is used as an overarching concept for different ways in which ethnic-minority candidates do not fit.²³⁵

The 2005–2006 survey (LKI) of living conditions among Immigrants in Norway revealed that Norwegian-Somalis indicate that they experience discrimination in hiring processes by far the most often among 10 selected non-Western immigrant groups. Four out of 10 immigrants from Somalia reported that in the last five years they had failed to get a job that they applied for and felt they were qualified for because of their foreign background, a figure that is double the average of the living conditions survey, which was 21 percent.²³⁶ Immigrants from Somalia also indicated much higher levels of harassment or insult at the workplace.²³⁷ The Open Society Foundations data

²³³ A. H. Midtbøen and J. Rogstad, *Diskriminerings Omfang og Årsaker. Etniske Minoriteters Tilgang til Norsk Arbeidsliv* (The Extent and Causes of Discrimination. Ethnic Minorities' Access to Norwegian Working Life), Institute for Social Research (*Institutt for samfunnsforskning*), Oslo, 2012, p. 9 (hereafter, Midtbøen and Rogstad, *Diskriminerings Omfang og Årsaker*).

²³⁴ Midtbøen and Rogstad, *Diskriminerings Omfang og Årsaker*, p. 11.

²³⁵ Midtbøen and Rogstad, *Diskriminerings Omfang og Årsaker*, p. 11.

²³⁶ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, p. 230.

²³⁷ Henriksen, “Levekår og Kjønnforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land”, p. 231; Blom and Henriksen, “Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006”.

provide many examples of how Norwegian-Somalis experience these different forms of discrimination and exclusion from and in the labour market. Focus group interviews with highly educated Norwegian-Somalis who speak perfect Norwegian tell the story of people who have encountered processes of exclusion from the labour market just like the older generation of Norwegian-Somalis who do not speak Norwegian well.

And yet, there are also many who do succeed. Madar Abdi, who has a university degree and works as a social worker, tells us:

To find a job has not been hard for me: I have worked since I was 16, 17 years old. It is good to have a network but I have actually not used that so much. In my job interviews, we have mainly discussed qualifications ... But we have to be realistic: not everybody knows about the *hijab*, one should almost expect questions to come up. One has to realise that the employer has a difficult decision to make.²³⁸

Processes of exclusion are often related to visible markers such as gender, ethnicity and religion.²³⁹ According to several interviewees, much energy is spent on things that are not related to work, including prayer and clothing. Women who wear the hijab face additional challenges because of their attire, while both men and women who wish to pray during work hours often find few accommodations. Khadra Mohamed illustrated that there may be different perceptions of whether one fits in depending on the kind of job and the level of education it requires:

I have worked in a shop since I was 15, and I had never met discrimination until I was finished with my BA and was going to apply for a job as a radiographer. That is when I experienced how tough it can be ... It took me two years after my BA to get a job, and good grades did not help. When you call, the boss sounds satisfied on the phone and is open and nice. But during the meeting I can see from the face that they cannot place you. A considerable share of interviews begin normally but then move to the headscarf, belonging, language and such ... It is difficult to get a job in my field and even more difficult when one is different. Where I work now, it is OK and it is one of the few places where those questions did not come up during the interview.²⁴⁰

Norwegian integration and inclusion policy builds on principles of equality, solidarity and justice, and is meant to guarantee that new citizens have the opportunity to contribute their resources to the Norwegian labour market quickly. Research has clearly shown that there are many obstacles to be overcome before this ideal becomes reality for Norwegian-Somalis. Some of the many existing initiatives to tackle these obstacles, many of which have focused on piloting new methods, would be interesting to explore on a larger scale.

²³⁸ Madar Abdi, Open Society Foundations focus group on employment.

²³⁹ Gullestad, Det Norske Sett Med Nye Øyne.

²⁴⁰ Khadra Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on employment.

7. HOUSING

Social housing is small, and we Somalis have many children so houses are not big enough. A two-room apartment is not enough for a large family. Furthermore, there are health problems: these apartments were built a long time ago; they are very moist and humid. That is not good for one's health. One does not have the opportunity to buy an apartment, but renting on the private market is too expensive. Houses are too small, old, and those who live in private apartments have to move a lot – the children have to start at new schools all the time. While social housing is of bad quality, the situation is still better than that of those who live in private places and are kicked out and without housing all the time. Children need stability.²⁴¹

This section addresses the position of Norwegian-Somalis in the Norwegian housing market, particularly in Oslo. After providing a brief overview of the housing market in Norway and the housing situation of immigrants in Oslo, we focus on facts and figures of the housing situation of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo. There follow the different challenges related to renting, through social housing or privately, and buying. In conclusion, some of the missing elements in the housing market in Oslo will be explored.

7.1 Norway, a Country of Homeowners

Eight out of 10 citizens are homeowners. After the war, the government believed that the most effective way of ensuring equality was not through the state provision of housing – as other social democratic states did at the time – but by enabling as many Norwegians as possible to own their own accommodation.²⁴² Today housing is largely left to the market, with the exception of housing allowances and start-up loans that the Norwegian State Housing Bank (*Husbanken*) provides to those with lower incomes or facing other difficulties. As opposed to many other countries, housing support is provided not just to renters but also to owners. The state offers considerable incentives for people to become homeowners.

The Ministry of Local and Regional Development oversees the government's Housing and Building Department which is the primary government authority in housing. The Norwegian State Housing Bank, the Norwegian Building Authority and the Rent Disputes Tribunal all work closely with the department. The Norwegian State Housing Bank is responsible for implementing the national housing policy and for

²⁴¹ Iman Abdikarim, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

²⁴² NOU, *Rom for Alle. En Sosialbolig Politikk for Framtiden* (Space for All. A Social Housing Policy for the Future), Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (*Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet*), 2011, p. 15 (hereafter, NOU, *Rom for Alle*).

guaranteeing that this policy is sufficient for all to live well and safe.²⁴³ The local municipalities, in particular the housing offices at the level of City Districts, play an important role in social housing implementation, providing housing support, assigning social housing, etc.

There is a small sector of municipal social housing available for people in marginalised life situations or families with very inadequate housing,²⁴⁴ such as young people, refugees, drug addicts, people with mental illnesses and homeless people. The private rental market constitutes about 15 percent of all housing, while social housing accounts for approximately 4 percent.²⁴⁵ The rental market is not set up for long-term renting, and indeed, the assumption is that people rent short-term in certain phases of their lives. An underlying assumption is also that people ultimately want to own rather than rent, which is something we will come back to in relation to Norwegian-Somalis' views on homeownership in Norway.

People's living conditions are affected by the type and quality of house they live in, whether they own the house or rent it and the size of the house compared with the family size. While in principle a person's or family's income determines the type, quality, size and ownership of the house, there are also other factors.²⁴⁶ These includes people's preferences about where in Oslo they wish to live; their preferred social arrangements as to who they should live with and their preferences in terms of housing type, their access to the housing market and the restrictions they face because of various processes of exclusion.

7.2 Oslo: A Divided Town?

I cannot just live in Frogner for example: It is either too expensive, or simply something that is not possible. Before it was better, but now the situation has become such that immigrants live in one place and Norwegians in another place.²⁴⁷

Whereas the aim of the government's housing policy is that every citizen is provided with adequate housing, in fact it is distributed very unevenly throughout the

²⁴³ White Paper No. 6, En helhetlig integreringspolitikk.

²⁴⁴ A. Vassenden, T. Lie and K. Skoland, "Man Må Ha En Plass Å Bo". *En Sosiologisk Studie av Vanskeligstilte i et Boligeier Land* ('One Has To Have A Place To Live'. A Sociological Study of the Disadvantaged in a Land of Homeowners), International Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS) Report, Oslo, 2012 (hereafter, Vassenden et al., *Man Må Ha En Plass Å Bo*).

²⁴⁵ Vassenden et al., *Man må ha en plass å bo*.

²⁴⁶ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnsforskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 222.

²⁴⁷ Zahra Abdulahi, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

population.²⁴⁸ This is also shown in the increasing segregation in Oslo.²⁴⁹ As the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion points out, whereas Oslo has been a class-divided city for many hundreds of years, with poorer living conditions in the east and better conditions in the west, it now increasingly seems as if this class division coincides with the percentage of residents with immigrant backgrounds.²⁵⁰ The question is whether this trend will continue or whether it can be reversed through active policy measures. Population and housing censuses, as well as Statistics Norway's living conditions survey 2005–2006 show systematic differences in housing conditions according to ethnic background.²⁵¹ Dividing lines exist between the majority and minority population, as well as between ethnic groups.

Research has indicated a number of reasons for the increasing concentration of minorities in particular areas, including differences in income in combination with differences in housing prices in different areas; geographical differences in the division of rental and owner-occupied housing; political measures on national and municipal levels to influence access to housing; discrimination in the rental and buying market; and the preference of the rest of the population (not) to live in an area with many immigrants. A common belief is that the concentration of immigrants in some areas reflects their preference to live in an area with many immigrants.²⁵² Svein Blom, however, shows that immigrants' preferences play a minor role in the creation of immigrant concentrations. Rather, a large concentration of immigrants leads to an expressed wish among many to live in an area with fewer immigrants. The fact that people remain in the area, then, may suggest that there are other and stronger mechanisms at play.²⁵³ The preferences of the majority population, in the meantime, may contribute to concentrations, as they move away from areas where the immigrant population grows or choose not to move into areas with high concentrations of immigrants. As indicated in section 5, this is particularly related to families with children and parents moving out of areas with a high concentration of children with a minority background in schools.

²⁴⁸ S. Søholt and K. Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter og Forskjellsbehandling i Leiemarkedet* (Ethnic Minorities and Discrimination in the Renting Market), Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning (Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR) Report, Oslo, 2009 p. 16 (hereafter, Søholt and Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter*).

²⁴⁹ Sundell, "Hvit Flukt' Blant Norske Barnefamilier i Oslo? *En Kvantitativ Studie* ('White Flight' Among Norwegian Families with Children in Oslo? A Quantitative Study), Masters thesis Social Geography, Institute for Sociology and Social Geograhpy, University of Oslo, 2008 (hereafter, Sundell, "Hvit flukt" blant norske barnefamilier i Oslo?).

²⁵⁰ White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*, p. 90.

²⁵¹ Søholt and Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter og Forskjellsbehandling i Leiemarkedet*, p. 6.

²⁵² S. Blom, "Innvandrerers Bostedspreferanser: Årsak til Innvandrerrett Bosetting?" (Immigrants' Residential Preferences: Reason for Immigrant-Dense Settlement?), Statistics Norway, 2012 p. 32 (hereafter, Blom, "Innvandrerers Bostedspreferanser").

²⁵³ Blom, "Innvandrerers Bostedspreferanser",

Another element of housing in Oslo is the pattern of secondary movement to the capital city. Kirsten Danielsen and Lars Gulbrandsen studied this phenomenon, the movement of refugees from the municipality where they are first settled. Almost half of the refugees in Norway become secondary movers. This group has no right to communal support for the first six months in which they live in their new municipality, and they need to find their own housing.²⁵⁴ This therefore affects their housing situation in the short term and possibly in the longer term as well. Secondary movers are likely to move once or more in their new town of residence. They often start with a short stay with friends or in cheap housing of bad quality, before moving on. They are looking for housing through their community contacts or on the internet. Reasons for moving include being with family members or friends, as well as job opportunities.²⁵⁵ The Oslo struggles with a large percentage of secondary movers in the city without the necessary resources to support them. Norwegian-Somalis are one of the groups with the highest percentage of secondary movers who move on to Oslo.²⁵⁶

Somalis are the immigrant group with the lowest percentage of homeownership: in 2005–2006, only 16 percent owned their house, compared with 63 percent among immigrants generally and almost 80 percent among the population as a whole.²⁵⁷ In other ways as well, they are among the groups that are doing worst in the Norwegian housing market. The living conditions survey found Somalis to be one of the groups with the highest percentage of people living in housing blocks (58 percent) and in overcrowded conditions.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, among those who rented, there were many more in social housing than in other groups and it was less common to rent privately.²⁵⁹ Kristin Henriksen points to some of the reasons for the poor housing conditions of Somalis, such as the poor economic status, short length of stay and high numbers living in Oslo, where flats are more common. While housing conditions of Norwegian-Somalis have improved over the years, at the same time they have not improved as much as one would hope, but this may be related to the fact that the median length of stay among Norwegian-Somalis interviewed in 1996 and 2005–2006 remained roughly the same.²⁶⁰

The impact of people's housing situation on inclusion, particularly that of the inclusion of children of immigrants, is an important concern. Research has

²⁵⁴ K. Danielsen and L. Gulbrandsen, *Flytting i Nytt Land. Flyktingers Bosetting og Flytting Tidlig på 2000-tallet* (Moving in the New Country. Refugees' Settlement and Moving in the Beginning of the 2000s), NOVA, Oslo, 2008 (hereafter, Danielsen and Gulbrandsen, *Flytting i Nytt Land*).

²⁵⁵ Danielsen and Gulbrandsen, *Flytting i Nytt Land*.

²⁵⁶ E. Høydahl, "Monitor for Sekundærflytting. Sekundærflytting Blant Flyktninger Bosatt i Norge i 2000–2009" (Monitor for Secondary Migration. Secondary Migration Among Refugees Living in Norway in 2000–2009), Statistics Norway, 2011.

²⁵⁷ Blom and Henriksen, "Levekår Blant Innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006".

²⁵⁸ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnsskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 221.

²⁵⁹ Blom and Henriksen, "Levekår Blant Innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006", p. 43.

²⁶⁰ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnsskjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 222.

shown that immigrant families are strongly overrepresented among families living in social (municipal rented) housing.²⁶¹ Many immigrant families experience housing problems, with renters experiencing greater problems than owners, although there seems to be no difference between those in social housing and those renting privately.²⁶² Yet families who live in municipal housing are more likely than others to say that their neighbourhood has problems with vandalism, crime and violence, although Norwegian-Somalis report low levels of problems.²⁶³ A study on the frequency of relocation among families with children, including Norwegian-Somali families, analysed the relationship between parents' preferences, discriminating barriers in the housing market, the availability of homes in the Norwegian market and the public measures for social housing.²⁶⁴

7.3 Problems in the Renting Market: Social Housing

In Sweden there are more big companies that own flats. In Norway there are not many companies that own flats, most owners are private. The first issue is access: the number of houses and how many people are trying to find a flat do not match.²⁶⁵

One of the main problems that Norwegian-Somalis face in their encounter with the housing market in Norway is that they lack resources to engage with it. Their low incomes are clearly one of the issues, compelling people to make use of several types of municipal housing support. This can be in the form of a housing allowance, but it can also be in the form of social housing. Housing allowance is paid to low-income households and is paid by the Norwegian State Housing Bank in collaboration with the local municipality; it is meant to bridge the gap between income and expenses. One of the dilemmas with both the allowance and with social housing is that there are cut-off points at which people lose the right to housing allowance and/or social housing. Increasing income may thus lead to a worsening financial situation, resulting in venturing out into the private rental market or buy. As a consequence, some people find themselves limiting their sources of income to protect the family's household finances.

²⁶¹ A. Grødem, *Innvandrerbarn og Bolig. Hva Betyr Boligen og Bomiljø for Inkludering?* (Immigrant Children and Housing. What Does the House and the Housing Environment Mean for Inclusion?), Fafo, Oslo, 2011 (hereafter, Grødem, *Innvandrerbarn og Bolig*).

²⁶² A. Grødem suggests the explanation for this lies in discrimination in the housing market.

²⁶³ Grødem, *Innvandrerbarn og Bolig*.

²⁶⁴ A. S. Grødem and M. Latif Sandbæk, "Flyttehyppighet Blant Barnefamilier" (Frequency of Relocation Among Families with Children), Fafo Report Oslo, forthcoming. See fafo.no/pro/gvf-81942-flytte.html (accessed 24 November 2013).

²⁶⁵ Nuur Abdulahi, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

This issue was discussed among the research participants during the focus group on housing. Amal Abdisalad addressed the issue that the housing allowance was granted on the basis of what you earned the year before, and that this forced people not to work too much:

People want progress and they want to raise their children and be like others, but when you try to take a step towards progress or educate yourself someone will stop you. They will stop your housing allowance; that is the first thing that will happen. And when they do that and your apartment costs NOK 15,000, what do you have remaining? You maybe get NOK 18,000 after taxes, what do you have remaining after paying your house rent? You don't have anything, and you have many other bills. This forces you to find another apartment. It is better to take housing allowance, if you want to hear the truth.²⁶⁶

Zahra Abdulahi then pointed out:

But if you do not work it is worse. If you work, you get holiday money but most Somalis get social welfare and they take courses and benefits. If you travel you do not get anything. You cannot travel, you cannot go anywhere. If you look at it that way, there is nothing better than to work.²⁶⁷

Many of those in social housing, then, are very vulnerable financially. The research participants were very critical of the quality, size and price of social housing, although many preferred this over the uncertainty and need to move frequently in the private renting market. Social housing is criticised by focus group participants as expensive and small-scale, and there is little opportunity to move because there is a very long waiting list for social housing. Repairs are not done, and some older apartments have bad ventilation which may be bad for children's health.²⁶⁸ While there is variation in the quality of private rental houses, owners have to make it habitable so that it is rented out. According to the research participants, no one takes the responsibility for guaranteeing adequate standards for social housing, because there is always someone who will live there.

On top of this, the relationship with the support apparatus is not always easy. The focus group participants as well as a range of studies have shown the difficulties in relationships between social workers and clients.²⁶⁹ Many expressed frustrations over the fact that caseworkers were difficult to get hold of and difficult to communicate with. Discussions arose between focus group participants on whether bad relationships with social offices could be explained by the caseworkers or the fact that Somalis visited such offices so much. Iman Abdikarim, who works in the health sector, suggested it

²⁶⁶ Amal Abdisalad, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁶⁷ Zahra Abdulahi, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁶⁸ Grødem, *Innvandrerbarn og Bolig*.

²⁶⁹ Findings from other research on this topic are discussed in section 8.

was because she was black and Muslim. She considered filing a complaint but decided not to pursue this for fear of repercussions if she did.

These individuals treat people as they see fit. I worked at a medical practice and have seen this myself. Those days they are tired, they scream to those who call. It is not professional to treat people in any way you want. When you get paid for the job, you have to treat people with respect.²⁷⁰

One of the problems is the fact that often people have a limited knowledge and understanding of bureaucratic systems and their rules.²⁷¹ This makes it very unlikely that people will be able and willing to challenge what they consider unjust behaviour. A Norwegian-Somali single mother who went to the Social Office with a letter from her doctor that indicated that her apartment was in such a bad condition that it affected the health of her children, was told: "You Somalis just complain all the time" and she was not assisted.²⁷² Most of the focus group participants were of the opinion that they are not provided with adequate information, and many found it difficult to understand the institutional structures. This is particularly problematic for those at the bottom of the housing pyramid. Bishar Abdi, a homeless Norwegian-Somali elderly man we spoke to, said:

I do not know what to do. I need help; the system in Norway is difficult. One ends up talking to oneself. This is not Somalia, I do not know how I will find myself an apartment. There are few apartments for people like me. There are many Somalis who sleep outside. When it is cold and you see that a number of people are outside, is that just?²⁷³

In 2012, an initiative was set up to assist people like Bishar, by the Church's City Mission (See Box 11).

²⁷⁰ Iman Abdikarim, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁷¹ Djuve et al., *Likeverdige Tjenester?*

²⁷² Key informant interview, 29 January 2013.

²⁷³ Bishar Abdi, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging.

Box 11. Housing Project in Grønland²⁷⁴

A housing project in Grønland, a City District where many Somalis live and spend time, was set up in 2012 by the Church's City Mission with two-year funding from the City of Oslo and the Norwegian State Housing Bank. The mission is a network of diaconal foundations operating in 10 cities in Norway, working in a range of areas for the inclusion of disadvantaged people in cities and focusing on housing and health.²⁷⁵

Ali Muhamed Jama developed the idea for the project having worked as a social worker in the City of Oslo's municipal services and later Tøyen's District Psychiatric Centre, meeting many homeless East Africans (mostly Somalis) with psychological and psychiatric problems. In his view, the most problematic aspect of treatment was the fact that these people did not have housing and thus had no stability. Since housing them individually was difficult, he decided they needed a place where they could talk and get support. He now works as a social worker on the project with the department head, Cecilie Campos.

The mission opened a café, Kafé Saba, an information centre and 20 apartments, mainly for people from East Africa, in particular Somalia. Those who live in the building do not just obtain a stable place to live but also receive individual follow-up and assistance. Many inhabitants were homeless before and need support to live in an apartment. There are also plans to establish a collective for young people as a transition phase for those who need some structure in life before they move to their own apartment.

7.4 The Private Renting Market: Discrimination and Access

The private rental market is an alternative option for those with sufficient resources. The high prices in the private renting market means this option is not open to all. Yet one of the largest problems on the private housing market seems to be discrimination. Discrimination in the housing market, which is well documented, can limit access to good housing and will contribute to explaining the bad housing situation of

²⁷⁴ See bymisjon.no/no/Byer/Oslo/Oslo/2012/Takket-pa-vegne-av-ost-afrikanere and bymisjon.no/no/Virksomheter/ByBo---Bymisjonens-boligsatsing/Nyheter/Unikt-boligtiltak-og-frodig-moteplass (both accessed 24 November 2013).

²⁷⁵ For more information, see bymisjon.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

Norwegian-Somalis.²⁷⁶ Norwegian housing law forbids discrimination on the basis of *inter alia*, ethnicity, national background, colour of skin, language and religion.²⁷⁷

Research, however, shows that these laws do not prevent discrimination happening. Among the groups that took part in the living conditions survey, Somalis most frequently indicated that they experienced discrimination in the housing market. More than 40 percent believed that they were not offered a house for rent or sale because of their immigrant background, which is double the average percentage.²⁷⁸ Søholt and Astrup conducted a study among both tenants and landlords, in which they found that Somalis' perceptions of experienced discrimination on the basis of skin colour were strong; some of the landlords interviewed made it clear that Muslim tenants were also not wanted.²⁷⁹ Usually, potential tenants with a Norwegian-Somali background were rejected on the first housing enquiry on the basis of presumed group characteristics before they had the chance to present themselves as individuals. In this encounter, it is not uncommon for landlords to express openly that they do not want Somali tenants. Most of the research participants had themselves experienced this, or had close family and friends who had experienced it. Some of the phrases that participants in the focus groups had encountered were: "I don't rent out to Somalis and smokers"; "I do not want a Somali, and those who are single mothers are poor"; "I do not like Somalis"; "Somalis cannot be trusted, they ruin everything in the apartment and they smell".²⁸⁰

It is unacceptable that Norwegian-Somalis should suffer this kind of direct discrimination and what in many instances can be described as racism and these clearly contribute to a sense of exclusion from society. Both the participants in focus groups and the key stakeholder interviewee considered what lies behind some of these rejections. One explanation is that a range of stereotypes exist about Norwegian-Somalis, often enforced by the media, which lead to the conclusion that they do not fit the common notion of suitable tenants, working or studying and capable of paying the rent, able to take care of the dwelling and otherwise not cause concern, and to communicate in Norwegian.²⁸¹ Furthermore, small households are often preferred, preferably with few or no children. The idea is that big families ruin the house, but the actual size of the household does not really matter when people face rejections that are based on such ideas. All in all, landlords find it easier to rent to tenants with Norwegian or Western backgrounds.

²⁷⁶ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnssforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 222; K. Tronstad, "Experienced Discrimination", in Blom and Henriksen, "Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006"; Søholt and Astrup *Etniske minoriteter*.

²⁷⁷ See lovdata.no/all/tl-19990326-017-001.html (accessed 24 November 2013).

²⁷⁸ Henriksen, "Levekår og Kjønnssforkjeller Blant Innvandrere Fra Ti Land", p. 222.

²⁷⁹ Søholt and Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter*, p. 17.

²⁸⁰ Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁸¹ Søholt and Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter*, p. 18.

Another concern is that those who do manage to get a tenancy often end up paying more than was stated in the contract, and experience frequent changes in rent and unfair forced evacuation. Just as it is discrimination when tenants with an immigrant background are instantly rejected as possible tenants when they first encounter the landlord, it is also discrimination when tenants with a specific immigrant background are allowed to rent under the condition that they pay more than what is stated in the contract.²⁸² The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud of Norway (See Box 12) calls for those who are discriminated against on the housing market to step forward: the solution is for more people to report instances where they feel they have been refused housing based on their religious or ethnic background.²⁸³ Yet considering the nature of the discrimination, which is often expressed verbally and therefore difficult to prove, many feel it is extremely difficult to file a complaint and argue one's case convincingly. This makes it difficult to act on behalf of a specific group, as becomes clear from an interview at the Ombud's offices:

At the moment, our organisation does not have specific measures for Somali women or Somali citizens in Oslo ... The experience and knowledge we have in relation to discrimination-related problem areas often comes from complaints and counselling cases; those are the cases that give us knowledge about the problems out there and we can use that knowledge in preventive work. If specific groups who experience a lot of unfair treatment do not involve us in their experience, then unfortunately that experience cannot be used to argue for more targeted activities.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Søholt and Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter*, pp. 20–21.

²⁸³ See www.ldo.no/no/Sprakmeny/Lettlest/Forbud-mot-diskriminering-i-boligmarkedet/ (accessed 24 November 2013).

²⁸⁴ Open Society Foundations interview.

Box 12. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO)²⁸⁵

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (*Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet*, LDO) is a governmental body that was set up to combat discrimination and human rights violations, and promote equality irrespective of gender, ethnicity, language, religion and spirituality, disability, sexual orientation, age or disadvantages caused by a combination of causes. LDO assists those who themselves have experienced discrimination, those who wish to help others who have experienced discrimination, as well as those who want to find information about their rights and duties. LDO examines cases and produces a statement on whether anti-discrimination laws have been breached, and these services are free. LDO welcomes suggestions on which topics it should engage itself in. Employers, representatives and others can also receive advice and guidance on how they can prevent discrimination and promote equality.²⁸⁶

7.5 Problems in the Buying Market: Debates on Interest and Islam

As mentioned, the number of Norwegian-Somalis owning housing is extremely low, and an obvious explanation for this is the financial difficulties that many of them have. Many do not qualify to receive a loan because their income is too small or they do not have the required deposit. This became especially problematic with the stricter demands for deposits from autumn 2011. Whereas the Norwegian State Housing Bank may be able to assist some, people's financial status is a considerable problem. However, there is another issue that is hardly discussed in the extensive literature on immigrants in the housing market, and that is the Islamic prohibition of paying interest. This issue caused very extensive debate in a number of focus groups; not just the one on housing. It was clear that this was an issue that led to strong differences in opinions among participants in the focus group discussions. Abdihakim Mohamed made the following remark during the focus group on identity and belonging:

This issue of that we cannot buy an apartment without a loan; there are no countries that have no interest. You have to pay interest so I thought that discussion was long dead. I thought there was a Sheikh who said that necessity comes before haram. If it is necessary it is OK, I thought we were done with that.²⁸⁷

This statement and others led to heated debate among the group. In response to Abdihakim's remark, Osman Shukri retorted:

²⁸⁵ Open Society Foundations interview.

²⁸⁶ See www.ldo.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

²⁸⁷ Abdihakim Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

This issue with religion ... It is not true that in order to succeed in Norwegian society it is necessary to take that step. You do not have to buy an apartment in Norway. If you want to assimilate and take the same step that Ola Nordmann will take, then you can take interest and buy yourself an apartment. But do you have to buy? You do not have to.²⁸⁸

It seemed to be that a minority in the focus groups expressed support for buying houses, although this is not to suggest that this necessarily means a majority of Norwegian-Somalis are not in favour of buying now and in the future. First, in a social group it is not unlikely that those who are in favour do not say so when the group norm is that it is unacceptable to take a mortgage. Second, currently the number of Norwegian-Somalis who are able to buy is quite few, meaning that for most people the question of whether to take a mortgage or not is hypothetical. It is not unlikely that in future, with an improved ability to buy, the level of acceptance of taking out mortgages will also go up. In the focus groups, those defending having a mortgage – as they had one themselves – used arguments that revealed that other Muslims in Norway, in particular Norwegian-Pakistanis, owned houses; in addition they referred to religious leaders who argued that taking a mortgage in Europe was allowed:

When it comes to *riba*²⁸⁹ Somalis are not different from other Muslims but I feel there is more cultural or group pressure. I have talked to Somali Ullama and they told me things that I was satisfied with. I asked how Somalis should live abroad. The one I was talking to said it was OK to buy. During Ramadan last year, I met a man who said that an Ullama told him there is a rule that says that if you live in northern Norway, because the sun never goes down you can fast for a certain time ... What I want to say is there are different rules in different places.²⁹⁰

In a number of focus groups, there was a strong expression of the fact that *riba* was unacceptable and that if other Muslims were buying houses that was because they were not as religious as Somalis. One of our facilitators wanted to know more about why the prohibition against *riba* was something that Norwegian-Somalis were holding on to while there were other things that are *haram* which did not seem to lead to the same collective condemnation. Zamzam Abdinasir responded:

Like you say, Somalis do a lot that is *haram*. I am not a sheikh but Allah says that people can make mistakes but *riba* is one of the biggest sins. If human

²⁸⁸ Osman Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

²⁸⁹ *Riba* means interest and is forbidden in Islamic economic jurisprudence. It is considered one of the seven major sins. The rationale behind this is that it is considered an unearned or unequally distributed income; unearned when the realised income that is earned out of the loan is less than the interest rate, and unequally distributed when the realised income is higher than planned.

²⁹⁰ Nuur Abdulahi, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

beings do something that is *haram* they can ask for *tawba*.²⁹¹ But *riba* is one of the biggest sins so that might be why many Somalis do not take it.²⁹²

Muna Hassan added:

One's home is a place where one prays, raises one's children and a lot more. That is why people do not want to buy a home with *riba*.²⁹³

Group pressure over buying a house in Norway is high and extends to those who have already bought a house. In fact, as Zahra Abdulahi argues, a number of those who do buy are pressured into selling again:

If someone wants to do it all people around them think this person is strange. "What have you done, *riba*?" Then you might come back from it. I know many women who have bought themselves an apartment and sold it again after one year, losing money on it. This leads to many problems because they owe the bank money, they don't live in the place they bought and such. The problem is *riba*, there are many Somalis who work and have the possibility to buy ... but after they bought an apartment and got a loan from the bank, then the family, friends and religion come in. When they go to the mosque and hear preaching they realise they have to sell and return the money, while any money they get as profit they will need to give in *sadaqa*²⁹⁴ or use in another way.²⁹⁵

Yet while the social pressure from within the Norwegian-Somali community not to buy is strong, Norway is a country of homeowners and the housing market does not favour long-term renters. As Abdisalad Rahim, a taxi driver from Tøyen, indicated:

The system in Norway makes it expensive to rent an apartment so one is forced to buy. It is difficult for us who do not want to buy an apartment ... I have personally heard [prime minister] Stoltenberg on the television saying that all should take up a loan and own their own place to live. They make it into something positive, they make it into something nice, but I do not find it to be something positive.²⁹⁶

7.6 Conclusion

In this section we have seen the difficulties of Norwegian-Somalis in the housing market. Because of low levels of income, many depend on social housing. Among the

²⁹¹ *Tawba* means atonement.

²⁹² Zamzam Abdinisir, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁹³ Muna Hassan, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁹⁴ *Sadaqa* means voluntary charity, alms.

²⁹⁵ Zahra Abdulahi, Open Society Foundations focus group on housing.

²⁹⁶ Abdisalad Rahim, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

research participants, views on social housing were quite negative, suggesting this type of housing is small-scale and of poor quality, and is dependent on the renters maintaining their low income. Others have to rent privately, with the subsequent insecurity that the landlord can end the contract at any time. Furthermore, one of the biggest problems is to find an apartment in the first place, as discrimination towards Norwegian-Somalis on the housing market is a major problem. Finally, for many Norwegian-Somalis buying is also not an option because of the prohibition against interest on mortgages.

The fact that Norwegian-Somalis largely rent in a country of homeowners must have implications for how satisfied they are with their housing situation and how included they feel in society. How you live, the housing conditions and housing environment, has a lot to say about how included you feel in society.²⁹⁷ Many of the research participants, especially the women, had concerns about the quality of their (social) housing, health problems and the size of the house. They felt that the house where they lived in was of too poor a quality and too small for their family.

Housing associations and municipalities have criteria for selecting tenants which are intended to be neutral. Yet the question is whether these general criteria, selection procedures and housing supply are adapted to those tenants who are disadvantaged in the housing market today. Some of the criteria are not adjusted to the Norwegian-Somalis and other immigrants.²⁹⁸ For example, the need for sufficient residence time in a municipality before being permitted to apply is a hindrance. Other criteria, such as age and limitation on time of residence in housing associations, do not take into account that patterns of settlement for immigrant households are not the same as patterns for Norwegians, as immigrants can settle down in Norway at any age during their lifetime depending on their migrant pattern. In addition, there are those who prefer to remain permanent tenants in the housing associations rather than become homeowners, such as is currently the case for many Norwegian-Somalis.

So the question to ask is what is the alternative. One of the issues that a number of the research participants mention is the fact that there are Islamic banks in several countries, including the UK, which allow Muslims to own houses through a rent-free system. While something similar does not exist in Norway, there are private companies such as Global Housing²⁹⁹ offering loans that are compliant with *Sharia*.³⁰⁰ These companies are not yet targeting the Somali community in Norway and not many know about them. Instead of a flexible interest rate, Muslim banking allows for a fixed fee for services provided. However, at present there are no initiatives to set up an Islamic bank or similar arrangements in Norway in order to improve the position of Muslims on the housing market. The inference is that exclusion on the housing market continues and

²⁹⁷ Grødem, *Innvandrerbarn og Bolig*.

²⁹⁸ Søholt and Astrup, *Etniske Minoriteter*, p. 19.

²⁹⁹ See globalhousing.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

³⁰⁰ *Sharia* is the moral code and religious law of Islam.

this has further implications in other fields in health, employment and education. This is an issue that is too important to leave to the private market, and must be discussed both within the Norwegian-Somali community involving the mosque, and with Norwegian financial institutions.

8. HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In this section, we consider the health of Norwegian-Somalis and the experiences of Norwegian-Somalis with social protection in Norway. The focus is specifically on Child Welfare Services (*Barnevern*), because this was clearly of the most concern to the Open Society Foundations respondents.

8.1 Health

When someone is sick and gets a doctor's declaration social welfare services use a long time to award that which he or she has the right to. One has to go back and forth, to get documentation upon documentation. Those who are sick, get sicker as a consequence.³⁰¹

8.1.1 Immigrants' Health in Norway

In 2013, the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services presented a four-year strategy on immigrants' health.³⁰² This was embedded in the government's strategy to reduce social health differences and guarantee equal health and care services³⁰³ independent of diagnosis, place of residence, income, gender, country of birth, ethnicity and the individual's life situation,³⁰⁴ with a focus on prevention and early action, better cooperation between different services and better local access to health services. The strategy largely targets health and care personnel, and suggests a need for more cultural competence in the health and care sector and for better translation and interpretation services. It should be noted that the health and care sector is one of the sectors in Norway with a great number of employees with an immigrant background.

The Ministers of Health and Care Services and of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion point to the importance of an inclusive and equal society. The strategy stresses that good health for migrants is mainly about creating an inclusive society, with a safe living environment, a good working environment, good upbringing conditions

³⁰¹ Hibak Suleiman, Open Society Foundations focus group on health and social protection, older women. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

³⁰² Ministry of Health and Care Services (Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet), *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester – God Helse for Alle. Nasjonal Strategi om Innvandreres Helse* (Equal Health and Care Services – Good Health for Everyone. National Strategy on Immigrant Health), 2013 (hereafter, Ministry of Health and Care Services, *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester*).

³⁰³ Equal services (*likeverdige tjenester*) are of great concern for the Norwegian and Oslo governments. See Djuve, Sandbæk and Lunde, *Likeverdige Tjenester?*.

³⁰⁴ White Papers Nos. 20 National Strategy to Reduce Social Inequalities (Nasjonal Strategi for å Utjevne Sosiale Helseforskjeller 2006–2007); 16 National Health Care Plan (Nasjonal Helse-og Omsorgsplan 2010–2011); 6 A Comprehensive Integration Policy (En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk (2011–2012); and 34 Public Health Report (Folkehelsemeldingen).

for children and leisure activities.³⁰⁵ Likewise, good health affects these other aspects of life. The government recognises that the goal of equal health services is challenged by language difficulties, cultural differences, some individual health problems and a lack of knowledge about migrants' health.³⁰⁶ One measure to address the lack of knowledge has been the creation of a National Competence Unit for Minority Health (See Box 13).

Box 13. Norwegian Centre for Minority Health Research

(*Nasjonal Kompetanseenhet for Minoritetshelse, NAKMI*)³⁰⁷

NAKMI is an interdisciplinary knowledge centre which works to promote research-based knowledge and competence in somatic as well as mental health and care for migrants and their descendants both in Norway and internationally. The centre was established by the Ministry of Health and Care Services in 2003. NAKMI reports to the Directorate of Health, an executive agency and authority under the Ministry of Health and Care Services, and is managed by Oslo University Hospital.

NAKMI's core tasks are research and development, and dissemination and advisory services, as well as teaching and counselling. The main target groups are health policymakers and managers, health professionals, researchers and students. The objective of NAKMI's activities is to contribute to equality in health services.

NAKMI's research is interdisciplinary and defined by assignments from the Directorate of Health. The five most important themes in the field of minority health are: living conditions and their significance for health, the health status of minority populations, the rights to health services, access to health services and the quality of health services. The objectives of NAKMI's research are to influence practice, to improve the quality of health services provided, to improve access to health services for migrant minorities, to increase migrant populations' knowledge of the health service, and to strengthen the relationship between patients and health professionals.

Data on health are not readily available in Norway; it is fragmented and includes significant gaps, as is acknowledged by the Ministry of Health and Care Services. A research review conducted by NAKMI on the public health difficulties of immigrants in Norway included lifestyle and diet disorders including, diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases; mental health problems; infectious diseases; reproductive health; and a number of other public health

³⁰⁵ Ministry of Health and Care Services, *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester*, 2013. p. 4.

³⁰⁶ Ministry of Health and Care Services, *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester*, p. 3.

³⁰⁷ Box 13 was written by Bernadette Kumar, director of NAKMI, and Warsame Ali, researcher at NAKMI. For more information, see nakmi.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

problems.³⁰⁸ It not only discussed existing knowledge but also identified knowledge gaps and discussed the methodological challenges of research on immigrant health in Norway. The report concluded that most studies confirm poorer health in immigrant populations than in the majority population, with risk factors related to pre- and post-migration experiences, socio-economic conditions and individual backgrounds.³⁰⁹ At the same time it questioned the utility of a discussion of migrant health, given the large differences in the health outcomes between groups.³¹⁰ The report identified an urgent need for community-based and culturally adapted health promotion programmes and preventive interventions.

The most detailed studies on the health conditions of Norwegian-Somalis (and other large migrant groups in Norway) are two studies by Svein Blom based on the living conditions survey 2005/2006,³¹¹ in which Norwegian-Somalis were found to be the national group that scored best on health among the 10 groups in the survey. Health was operationalised by the following five indicators in the study: self-evaluated health, somatic diseases, deterioration in everyday wellbeing due to illness, psychosomatic pains and mental health problems.³¹² On all these indicators, Norwegian-Somalis scored positively and Norwegian-Somali men reported least health problems of all the 10 groups, whereas women reported the second-best after Norwegian-Sri Lankan women.³¹³ The main problem with the study is that it was based on people's answers to survey questions about health rather than on register data, which is barely available on health issues. Blom pointed out that another explanation of the positive health outcomes of Norwegian-Somalis was the young age of the group.³¹⁴

³⁰⁸ D. S. Abebe, *Public Health Challenges of Immigrants in Norway: A Research Review*, NAKMI Report 2/2010, Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, Abebe, *Public Health Challenges of Immigrants in Norway*).

³⁰⁹ Abebe, *Public Health Challenges of Immigrants in Norway*, p. 9. See also Svein Blom, "Dårligere Helse Blant Innvandererne" (Worse Health Among Immigrants), *Samfunnsspeilet* (journal published by Statistics Norway of analysis and research on living conditions and lifestyle), 2011/2, 2011, at www.ssb.no/helse/artikler-og-publikasjoner/daarlignere-helse-blant-innvandererne (accessed 24 November 2013).

³¹⁰ See also B. Kumar, Liv Grøtvedt, Haakon E. Meyer, Anne Johanne Søgård, Bjørn Heine Strand, "The Oslo Immigrant Health Profile", Norwegian Institute of Public Health (*Folkehelseinstituttet*), Report, Oslo, 2008, p. 7.

³¹¹ S. Blom, "Innvandrerens helse 2005/2006" (Immigrant Health 2005/2006), Statistics Norway Report 35/2008, 2008 (hereafter, Blom, "Innvandrerens Helse"); S. Blom, "Sosiale Forskjeller i Innvandrerens Helse. Funn Fra Undersøkelsen Levekår Blant Innvandrere 2005/2006" (Social Differences in Immigrants' Health. Findings from the Living Conditions Among Immigrants Research 2005/2006), Statistics Norway Report 47/2010, 2010 (hereafter, Blom, "Sosiale Forskjeller i Innvanderens Helse").

³¹² Blom, "Sosiale Forskjeller i Innvanderens Helse", p. 5.

³¹³ Blom, "Sosiale Forskjeller i Innvanderens Helse", p. 19.

³¹⁴ Blom, "Innvandrerens Helse", p. 9.

8.1.2 Information and Communication

One of the main difficulties in the health sector is information and communication: how people understand and communicate health, signs of illness and measures for improving health often varies greatly across cultures. It is very important that people's illness is explained to them in a way that they themselves can relate to and understand and which is acceptable in their own social circles.³¹⁵ This cannot be done without a base from which communication is feasible, and interpretation is often necessary.

Research on interpretation in the health sector in the South-East district of Oslo maps the challenges in this field.³¹⁶ From these reports it becomes clear that the language most requested for interpretation services is Somali (6,804 out of 31,833 assignments in 2011).³¹⁷ It is clear that the health sector, unlike the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (*Utlendingsdirektoratet*, UDI), largely makes use of uncertified interpreters: 88 percent of assignments are carried out by interpreters without formal qualifications, as opposed to 3 percent for UDI. Only 1 percent of assignments in the health sector is carried out by state-authorised interpreters, compared with 38 percent for UDI.³¹⁸ The issue of poor interpretation was brought up by the focus group participants as well. Safiya Mohamed responded to the question about identifying challenges:

Communication. They have to become better at using interpreters when it comes to conversations with case workers and when you arrive at the counter. You often need help to fill in forms.³¹⁹

The Ministry of Health and Care Services recognised both the importance of and the challenges with translation and interpretation in its strategy on equal health and care services. The document underlined that Norwegian-language education is crucial for improving communication, but that at the same time there will always be a need for interpretation services. It stresses the need for not only having better qualified interpreters but also having health personnel in Norway who can communicate via interpreters, which is a skill that requires training.³²⁰ One of the concerns is that

³¹⁵ Ministry of Health and Care Services, *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester*, p. 28.

³¹⁶ Helse Sør-Øst, *Ikke Lenger "en Tjeneste av Ukjent Kvalitet": Statusrapport om Tolkefeltet i Helsevesenet i Hovedstadsområdet* (No Longer "a Service of Unknown Quality": End Report on Translation in the Health Sector in the Oslo Area), 2012 (hereafter, Helse Sør-Øst, *Statusrapport om Tolkefeltet*); Helse Sør-Øst, *"Akkurat Slik Vi Gjør med Andre Spesialister": Anbefalinger for Fremtiden: Tolking som en Integrert del av Tjenestetilbudet i Helsevesenet i Hovedstadsområdet* ("Just like we do with other specialists": Recommendations for the Future: Translation as an Integrated Part of Service Provision in the Health Sector's Oslo Area), 2012 (hereafter, Helse Sør-Øst, *Tolking som en Integrert del av Tjenestetilbudet*).

³¹⁷ Helse Sør-Øst, *Statusrapport om Tolkefeltet*, p. 5.

³¹⁸ See www.nakmi.no/Details.asp?article=Tolking;+88%25+uten+formelle+kvalifikasjoner&aid=126 (accessed 24 November 2013).

³¹⁹ Safiya Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on health and social protection, young women.

³²⁰ Ministry of Health and Care Services, *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester*, p. 31.

children are sometimes used for interpretation; something that the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion is working towards prohibiting by law.³²¹ The Equal Health Services project of the hospitals in the Oslo area has concentrated on interpretation as one important service to address (see Box 14). It may be important not just to look at pure language interpretation, but also at the cultural translation of health concerns: how is health experienced and understood from diverse cultural backgrounds? Larger hospitals may need to have qualified interpreters with additional competences for cultural translation.³²²

³²¹ Ministry of Health and Care Services, *Likeverdige Helse- og Omsorgstjenester*, p. 31.

³²² Comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

Box 14. Equal Health Services Project: Interpretation as a Focus Area³²³

The health sector realises it has to relate actively to an increasingly diverse population, and this requires additional efforts in various areas. 70 percent of migrants and children of migrants in Norway live in the area that Health Services South-East is responsible for, and most live in the hospital areas Oslo, Akershus and Vestre Viken. As a consequence of this concentration, the equal health services project was set up to strengthen equal and integrated health services for the migrant population in the Oslo area. The project is carried out in collaboration with the hospitals in Oslo and other health service providers in the City of Oslo city districts.

The project aims to increase patients' understanding of and participation in the treatment process; increase knowledge on how to do health-improving work; and guarantee the mainstreaming of equal health service provision. The project has focused on establishing a course on multicultural health work; improving interpretation services; mapping relevant measures in the Oslo area; radio health programmes in several languages; and various other measures.

A range of reports has been produced on improving interpretation.³²⁴ These reports clearly illustrate the language most requested for interpretation services is Somali (6,804 out of 31,833 assignments in 2011). They also show that the health sector is largely using uncertified interpreters. Various recommendations are made, including the need for more courses for Somali interpreters and more opportunities for them to get full authorisation. Also, a change in attitude is required, so that the need for an interpreter is planned in advance to guarantee availability, just like with other specialists.

Another area of concern is the dissemination of general health information and the best way to convey such information in a culturally appropriate way. Finding better ways of doing this can lead to increased health literacy and is crucial for both individuals and

³²³ See oslo-universitetssykehus.no/aktuelt/prosjekter/sider/styrking-av-likeverdige-og-integrerende-helsetjeneste-for-minoritetsbefolkning-i-hovedstadsområdet-et-samhandlingsprosjekt.aspx (accessed 24 November 2013); Hege Linnestad and Andrea Lie, *Sluttrapport 2010–2013 'Styrking av likeverdige og integrerende helsetjeneste for minoritetsbefolkning i hovedstadsområdet'* (End report 2010–2013. Strengthening equal and integrated health services for the migrant population in Oslo area), 2013, at oslo-universitetssykehus.no/aktuelt/prosjekter/Documents/Sluttrapport_2010-2013_kombinerte_fil.pdf (accessed 24 November 2013).

³²⁴ Helse Sør-Øst, Statusrapport om Tolkefeltet; Helse Sør-Øst, *Tolking som en Integrert del av Tjenestetilbud*.

society. There have been various experiments with Somali health radio (See Boxes 14 and 19), as well as a Centrum for Health, Dialogue and Development that has systematically worked on developing methods for better communication, dialogue and improved health literacy among migrants (See Box 15).

Box 15. PMV, the Centre for Health, Dialogue and Development³²⁵

The Centre for Health, Dialogue and Development (*Primærmedisinsk Verksted*, PMV) is a centre located in Grønland borough (Gamle Oslo city district) that develops activities and methods for improving health in a multicultural community, run by the Church's City Mission in Oslo. It mainly works on social and intercultural bridge-building. The project was started in 1994 through a collaboration between Gamle Oslo city district and the state to improve conditions in Gamle Oslo district.

All activities are based on principles for structured dialogue aiming to achieve a greater sense of empowerment and developing self-help strategies. The work is built on cooperation between qualified social workers with a migrant background and experts with various professional backgrounds.

PMV has for almost 20 years worked on integration, concentrating on minority women in Oslo, including Somali women. It has established a central and important role for itself in various migrant groups and has a wide contact network in Norwegian society, so it is in a good position to convey important information between migrant groups and Norwegian society, contributing to an increased mutual understanding.

Although there are somatic diseases that may be particularly relevant for Norwegian-Somalis, including diabetes, there is little research being done on understanding how they affect the community. This section focuses on three health concerns that exemplify some of the difficulties in encounters between the Norwegian health system and Norwegian-Somali women and men: female circumcision, psychological health and substance abuse.

³²⁵ See <http://www.bymisjon.no/Virksomheter/Primærmedisinsk-Verksted/>

8.1.3 Examples of Particular Health Concerns for Immigrants

8.1.3.1 *Female Circumcision*³²⁶

From the point of view of the Norwegian system, one of the main health problems that has been given considerable weight is female circumcision. While this is not a topic that came up during the focus group discussions, except in relation to child welfare services, it is discussed here because it is a practice that causes great concern among Norwegian practitioners in a range of fields. It has been extensively discussed in media, politics and health-care facilities. Female circumcision is also addressed in a range of policies, most recently in an Action Plan on female circumcision in combination with forced marriages and extreme control.³²⁷ A 1995 law not only forbids female genital mutilation (FGM) but also contains a clause forbidding “reconstruction of genital mutilation”, as after a woman has given birth.³²⁸

The report of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Norway, under recommendation 15, expresses concern for the fact that the perceived excessive focus on FGM and forced marriage can be seen as stigmatising groups of immigrants in Norway.³²⁹ Discussing female circumcision is not just relevant because it is much debated and leads to stereotyping and stigmatising, but it also permits an exploration of encounters between the Norwegian health system and Norwegian-Somalis that are difficult in various ways and that have been extensively researched.³³⁰

Elise Johansen analyses experiences and management of birth care of Somali women who have undergone circumcision.³³¹ She questions the fact that female circumcision is not considered a risk factor during delivery in Norway, and highlights the insufficient

³²⁶ “Female circumcision” is the concept closest to Norwegian-Somali uses of the term and is also the term used in some recent studies. “Female genital mutilation” (FGM) is used in Norway in legal and governmental documents.

³²⁷ Ministry of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion (BLD), *Handlingsplan mot Tvangsekteskap, Kjønnsmlestelse og Alvorlige Begrensninger av Unges Frihet* (Action Plan Against Forced Marriage, FGM and Serious Restrictions of Young Persons’ Freedom), Oslo, 2013, at www.regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/IMA/tvangsekteskap/handlingsplan_2013.pdf (accessed 24 November 2013).

³²⁸ Act No. 74 of 15 December 1995.

³²⁹ See 2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/co/Norway_AUV.pdf (accessed August 2013).

³³⁰ E. Johansen, “Care for Infibulated Women Giving Birth in Norway: an Anthropological Analysis of Health Workers’ Management of a Medically and Culturally Unfamiliar Issue,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20 (4) (2006), pp. 516–544 (hereafter, Johansen, “Care for Infibulated Women”); E. Johansen, “Pain as a Counterpoint to Culture: Toward an Analysis of Pain Associated with Infibulations Among Somali Immigrants in Norway,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 16 (3) (2002), pp. 312–340 (hereafter, Johansen, “Pain as a Counterpoint to Culture”); A. Gele, B. Kumar, K. Harsløf Hjelde and J. Sundby, “Attitudes Toward Female Circumcision Among Somali Immigrants in Oslo: a Qualitative Study,” *International Journal of Women’s Health* 4 (2012), pp. 7–17.

³³¹ Johansen, “Pain as a Counterpoint to Culture”; Johansen, “Care for Infibulated Women”.

knowledge on the topic among most Norwegian health-care workers. Norwegian health workers maintain a level of taboo and silence around female circumcision which reduces their access to knowledge on the topic. At the same time, there is a tendency to overemphasise culture and the “otherness” of Somali women.³³² As a consequence, many Somali women fear stigmatization. Health workers’ lack of knowledge about how to deal with infibulations is not being dealt with and a much needed open discussion between Norwegian-Somali women and relevant actors is not taking place.

This fear of and actual experiences of stigmatisation were expressed by many participants in the Open Society Foundations focus group discussions. Hawa Matan discusses examples from her experiences as an interpreter in a range of contexts:

Doctors, nurses, teachers, and child welfare consultants take their personal prejudices in their professional role, when they ideally should be neutral. Not only do they take such prejudices with them, but they also act upon them.

8.1.3.2 *Psychological Health*

A study that aims to provide an overview of the knowledge on migrant mental health in Norway drew the conclusion that in the majority of studies, migrants from low- and middle-income countries have been found to have more mental health problems than Norwegians and the general population.³³³ In discussions on mental health, there are often two groups that are distinguished: adolescents and grown-ups.

Research on the mental health of immigrant youngsters in Oslo provided mixed results.³³⁴ A study by Brit Oppedal and others on Norwegian-Somalis illustrated that young people with origins in Somalia and Sri Lanka reported better mental health than other groups.³³⁵ In analysing the causes of these differences, various psychosocial risks and resources were explored. Risks included problems with school work, intergenerational conflicts and children’s worries about their parents, whereas resources included self-sufficiency and perceived support from family and friends.³³⁶ Perceived discrimination and ethnic identity crisis are often included in studies of the mental

³³² Johansen, “Care for Infibulated Women”, p. 517.

³³³ Dawit Shawel Abebe, Lars Lien and Karin Harsløf Hjelde, “What We Know and Don’t Know About Mental Health Problems Among Immigrants in Norway”, *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health*, November 2012 (hereafter, Abebe et al., “Mental Health Problems Among Immigrants in Norway”), 1-8.

³³⁴ Abebe et al., “Mental Health Problems Among Immigrants in Norway”.

³³⁵ B. Oppedal, E. Røysamb and S. Heyerdahl, “Ethnic Group, Acculturation and Psychiatric Problems in Young Immigrants”, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 46 (2005), pp. 646–460 (hereafter, Oppedal et al., “Ethnic Group, Acculturation and Psychiatric Problems”).

³³⁶ B. Oppedal, “Psychosocial Profiles as Mediators of Variation in Internalizing Problems Among Young Immigrants with Origins in Countries of War and Internal Conflicts”, *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 5 (2) (2008), pp. 210–224 (hereafter, Oppedal, “Psychosocial Profiles as Mediators”).

health of youth, and Somalis score high on those,³³⁷ but Oppedal argued that “a major part of their everyday lives is concentrated on developmental tasks that are common for all children and adolescents regardless of ethnicity, and in particular issues of family interaction and school activities”.³³⁸ The fact that Somalis reported the most positive status within the family domain, with lowest levels of family risk factors and highest levels of family support, may help explain the healthy profiles of Somali youngsters.³³⁹

Yet other studies suggest that migrant young people face increased mental health problems that are related to a greater risk of acculturative stress, high levels of perceived discrimination and identity crisis, parents’ war experiences and the occurrence of several acute infections.³⁴⁰ Some of the differences in results related to the fact that there are great differences between groups and it is thus highly problematic to talk about migrant youngsters’ mental health. Furthermore, most studies do not distinguish between immigrants and children of immigrants, who face very different challenges.

Studies more clearly indicate a higher risk of mental health problems among adult immigrants, related to poor social support, deprived economic conditions, multiple negative life events and past traumatic experiences, particularly for refugees.³⁴¹ There has been some focus in Norway on the fact that Norwegian-Somalis, and especially Norwegian-Somali men, have problems, and the mental health services have also found them difficult to assist.³⁴² As Box 11 illustrates, their other problems make it hard to find those who need help. Another problem, as Karin Harsløf Hjelde has pointed to, is that Norwegian-Somalis who suffer from mental illness in Norway will not normally visit a doctor but will find other types of help.³⁴³

The tools used for measuring mental wellbeing are not always appropriate. A study comparing results for different groups, including Somalis, cast doubts on the validity of

³³⁷ Oppedal et al., “Ethnic Group, Acculturation and Psychiatric Problems”.

³³⁸ Oppedal, “Psychosocial Profiles as Mediators”, p. 226.

³³⁹ Oppedal, “Psychosocial Profiles as Mediators”, p. 227.

³⁴⁰ Abebe et al., “Mental Health Problems Among Immigrants in Norway”.

³⁴¹ Abebe et al., “Mental Health Problems Among Immigrants in Norway”.

³⁴² Dagens Medisin, “Vanskelig å Hjelpe Somaliske Menn” (Difficult to Help Somali Men), 11 May 2006, at dagensmedisin.no/nyheter/vanskelig-a-hjelpe-somaliske-menn/ (accessed 24 November 2013).

³⁴³ K. Harsløf Hjelde, “Somalieres Forståelse av Psykisk Helse, Sykdom og Behandling i Eksil: Konsekvenser for Psykisk Helsearbeid (Del II)” (Somalis’ Understanding of Psychological Health, Illness and Treatment in Exile: Consequences for Psychological Health Work, Part II), *Tidsskrift for psykisk helsearbeid* (Journal of Mental Health) 5 (1) (2008), pp. 24–33.

findings because of the illiteracy among respondents.³⁴⁴ This study noted that modern society takes written competences for granted, which of course has consequences for those who are illiterate.

8.1.3.3 *Substance Abuse: Khat*

Khat is another thing that is focused on by the media and to a lesser extent also in governmental policy and practice. While female circumcision and khat are certainly topics of discussion in the Norwegian-Somali community, they were rarely discussed in the Open Society Foundations focus groups. Instead, many of the discussions concentrated on the encounters that Norwegian-Somalis had with the health and social protection system. Although khat abuse and its consequences affect Norwegian-Somalis, the stigmatising way khat has often been debated in Norway leaves very little room for an open airing of views involving Norwegian-Somalis and relevant Norwegian actors.

Norwegian-Somalis are by and large the only group of people using khat in Norway. While khat use and abuse have been studied widely, there is no convincing academic evidence on the physical and even social implications of khat.³⁴⁵ The physical evidence is simply not good enough, as insufficient systematic medical research has been conducted, possibly because khat is considered a minority drug with little attraction to wider communities.³⁴⁶ Warsame Ali and Manmeet Kaur also point out that studies find it difficult to prove clear causal relationships because users may have had pre-existing psychological health problems.³⁴⁷ The problem with identifying clear causal relationships with social problems is that khat abuse is one of many factors contributing to difficult living conditions.³⁴⁸ Most research suggests that khat and other drug abuse must be seen in a wider context.³⁴⁹ There are wider concerns that

³⁴⁴ M. Jakobsen, N. Sveaass, L. E. E. Johansen and E. Skogøy, *Psykisk Helse i Mottak: Utprøving av Instrumenter for Kartlegging av Psykisk Helse Hos Nyankomne Asylsøkere* (Psychological Health in Asylum Centres: Testing of Instruments to Map Psychological Health of Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers), Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (Nasjonalt Kunnskapssenter om Vold og Traumatisk Stress), Report No. 4/2007, Oslo, 2007 (hereafter, Jakobsen et al., *Psykisk helse i mottak*).

³⁴⁵ See Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), “Khat: a Review of its Potential Harm to the Individual and Communities in the UK”, at gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/144120/report-2013.pdf (accessed 24 November 2013).

³⁴⁶ W. Ali and M. Kaur, “Khat og Helse: En Kunnskapsoppsummering” (Khat and Health: A State of the Art Review), Welfare Administration Oslo (*Kompetansesenter rus-Oslo*), 2013 (hereafter, Ali and Kaur, “Khat og helse”).

³⁴⁷ Ali and Kaur, “Khat og helse”.

³⁴⁸ A. Schafft, *Evaluering av Prosjektet 'Yrkesmessig Rehabilitering av Somaliere i Khatbruker-miljøer'* (Evaluation of the Project ‘Occupational Rehabilitation of Somalis in Khat Use Environments’), Work Research Institute Report, (Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet AFI-notat) 5/2010, 2010 (hereafter, Schafft, *Evaluering*).

³⁴⁹ Ali and Kaur, “Khat og helse”; Schafft, *Evaluering*.

need to be addressed in strategies for dealing with khat abuse, one of which is trying to restore meaningful everyday life after long periods of waiting during the asylum phase³⁵⁰ followed by not being in a position to make any contribution to society. This situation is not relevant only to khat abuse but also refers to other drug use. A holistic approach is necessary (see also Box 11).

8.2 Child Welfare Services

There was a case where Child Welfare Services came three days before the family was travelling. This was a single mother ... and Child Welfare Services came with the police. They took the kids, handcuffed them ... two teenagers. The kids were still in pyjamas and were not allowed to change. This is a real trauma that ruins these kids for ever. You can imagine the scene in that house. As it turned out, there was no risk of circumcision for the girls; the reporting came from an unreliable source. But that doesn't help: the damage is already done.³⁵¹

This subsection focuses on the Child Welfare Services (*Barnevern*) and their relationship with the Norwegian-Somali community in Oslo. The duty of the Child Welfare Services is to guarantee that all children and young people have access to care, safety and opportunities for growth and development.³⁵² Here its implementation and impact in the Norwegian-Somali community in Norway are described. Children's welfare in the country generally is considered very important. Norway ratified the UN's Convention for the Rights of the Child in 1991 and incorporated it into Norwegian law in 2003.³⁵³ The rights of children are centrally anchored in many laws,

³⁵⁰ Freng and Lund, *Ventefasen, Rus og Livsinnhold*.

³⁵¹ Key informant interview with Hassan Yunis, 11 February 2013. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

³⁵² M. Moufack, "Et Sensitivt Barnevern. Om Ikke-vestlig Foreldres Opplevelse og Erfaring med Barneverntjenesten" (Sensitive Child Welfare Services. Non-Western Parents' Experience with Child Protection Services), Masters thesis, Social Work, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), 2010 (hereafter, Moufack, "Et sensitivt barnevern").

³⁵³ V. Bunkholdt and M. Sandbæk, *Praktisk Barnevernarbeid* (Child Protection Services Work in Practice), Gyldendal Akademisk, Oslo, 2008 (hereafter, Bunkholdt and Sandbæk, *Praktisk Barnevernarbeid*).

policies and programmes.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Open Society Foundations research has concentrated on Child Welfare Services because the research suggests that there are many difficulties raised between Child Welfare Services and Norwegian-Somali parents, which are closely linked to some of the issues discussed in this report, such as identity and belonging. The strong correlation between young people having contact with Child Welfare Services and criminality suggests links with the police and security as well.³⁵⁵

First, data are presented on child welfare, and then the various issues in the relationship between Child Welfare Services and the Norwegian-Somali community will be explored: a lack of trust; poor communication and information sharing; and intercultural competence. These plague many Norwegian institutions responsible for social protection, including for example NAV.³⁵⁶ The section then addresses the difficulties that Norwegian-Somali parents experience in raising their children in Norway. The section continues with a presentation of initiatives that aim to improve the relationship between Child Welfare Services and the Norwegian-Somali community. It might be interesting to find out whether these and other initiatives could be expanded and similar approaches could be developed in other social protection fields as well.

³⁵⁴ Bunkholdt and Sandbæk, *Praktisk Barnevernarbeid*; H. Fauske, *Barnevernets legitimitet i det senmoderne samfunn* (Child Welfare Services' legitimacy in the late-modern society), Teaching Note (*Arbeidsnotat*) No. 69, University College Lillehammer, 1999; NOU, *Barnevernet i Norge. Tilstandsvurderinger, Nye Perspektiver og Forslag til Reform* (Child Welfare Services in Norway. Evaluations of Its Condition, New Perspectives and Recommendations for Reforms), State Management Service for Information Management (*Statens Forvaltningstjeneste Informasjonsforvaltning*), Oslo, 2000; NOU, *Kompetanse Utvikling i Barnevern. Kvalifisering til Arbeid i Barnevernet Gjennom Praksisnær og Forskningsbasert Utdanning* (Competence Building in Child Welfare Services. Qualification to Work in Child Welfare Services Through an Education that is Close to Reality and Research-based), Administration Services Information Management (*Departementenes servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning*), 2009; White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*.

³⁵⁵ Ø. Evensen, "Ikke-vestlig Minoritetsungdom og Kriminalitet" (Non-Western Minorities and Crime), *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning* (Journal of Youth Research) 9(2): 63-89, 2009, p. 82 (hereafter, Evensen, "Ikke-vestlig Minoritetsungdom og Kriminalitet").

³⁵⁶ An ongoing research project at Fafo analyses the interactions between Norwegian-Somalis and NAV, at fafo.no/pro/aik-nav-blir-norge.html (accessed October 2013).

8.2.1 Facts and Figures

Statistics Norway, commissioned by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion has analysed a range of Child Welfare Services statistics over the years.³⁵⁷

A recent study found that children and young people aged between 0 and 22 years with an immigrant background (immigrants and children of immigrants) are more likely to be in contact with Child Welfare Services than those without an immigrant background. In 2009, 501 Somali immigrant children and 383 children of Somali immigrants were clients of Child Welfare Services, making Norwegian-Somalis the third- and fourth-largest group (at 10 percent and 8 percent) of the total number of children receiving services.³⁵⁸ Compared with the total number of Norwegian-Somali children in these groups, this represented 80 out of 1,000 Somali immigrant children and 48 out of 1,000 Somali children of immigrant parents.³⁵⁹ Corrected for the population size, the contact of Norwegian-Somali children with Child Welfare Services was in the seventh and 10th positions. Other countries with larger percentages of children in Child Welfare Services were Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea and Russia.

Child Welfare Services are involved with the welfare of children for many reasons, including “conditions in the home and special needs”. This category relates to circumstances in which Child Welfare Services wish to help a family through a range of preventative measures, such as economic support, a support person, a place in kindergarten, a place in after-school activities and leisure activities. This sort of assistance is carried out in cooperation with the family.³⁶⁰ Economic support and support for leisure activities are more frequently offered to children with immigrant background than to those without.³⁶¹

Child Welfare Services may also be involved where there is a risk of neglect or abuse by parents. This may include parents who have problems with substance abuse or psychological problems. Neglect and abuse are rare but more commonly reported

³⁵⁷ L. Allertsen and T. Kalve, “Innvandrerbarn i Barnevernet 2004” (Immigrant Children in Child Welfare Services 2004), Statistics Norway Report 2006/19, 2006; T. Kalve, *Innvandrerbarn i Barnevernet* (Immigrant Children in Child Welfare Services), Statistics Norway Report 1999/11, 1999; T. Kalve, “Innvandrerbarn i Barnevernet: Oftere Hjelp, Men Færre Under Omsorg” (Immigrant children in Child Welfare Services: More Frequent Help, But Less in Care Services), *Samfunnsspeilet* 2/2001, 2001; T. Kalve and T. Dyrhaug, “Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009” (Children and Youth with Immigrant Background in Child Welfare Services 2009), Statistics Norway Report 39/2011, 2011 (hereafter, Kalve and Dyrhaug, “Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009”).

³⁵⁸ Kalve and Dyrhaug, “Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009”, p. 9.

³⁵⁹ Kalve and Dyrhaug, “Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009”, figures 2.2 and 2.3.

³⁶⁰ City of Oslo Department of Cultural Affairs and Business, letter to Open Society Foundations “Comments on draft report”, ref 201303620-3..

³⁶¹ Kalve and Dyrhaug, “Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009”, ps. 35 and 22.

among immigrants; substance abuse is four times higher among non-immigrants, whereas psychological problems are a more common reason for Child Welfare Services involvement among immigrants.³⁶² In the category of neglect and abuse, various issues affecting immigrant youth may cause the involvement of Child Welfare Services: forced marriage, FGM and serious restrictions of young people's freedom (extreme control).³⁶³

A final category that may lead to intervention by Child Welfare Services is behaviour, in terms of "socially deviant behavior" and criminality, and is much more common for children with an immigrant background, particularly boys. The data show that the largest number of interventions on these grounds, in absolute numbers and percentages, relate to immigrant children aged between 13 and 17.

The percentage of children receiving support from Child Welfare Services³⁶⁴ in the three categories (immigrants, children of immigrants and non-immigrants) is lower in Oslo than it is in the rest of the country. Still, the total number of children who receive support is higher simply because one in three children in Oslo has an immigrant background, compared with 9 percent in the rest of the country.³⁶⁵ It is unknown whether the weighted lower number in Oslo is due to a lack of resources, a deliberate strategy of less interference and fewer cases. The fact that the statistics include preventative measures for asylum seeking families in asylum centres and housing of unaccompanied minors, which are far more common outside Oslo, may also affect the difference.³⁶⁶ A study from Statistics Norway that compared the quality of regional Child Welfare Services found that in general the quality of the work in larger communities is better than in smaller communities,³⁶⁷ which may be linked to learning and scale effects in Child Welfare Services. Child Welfare Services in a city like Oslo have much better competence in cooperating with migrant communities than their colleagues in smaller towns.³⁶⁸

³⁶² Kalve and Dyrhaug, "Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009", ps. 38.

³⁶³ See for example BLD, *Handlingsplan mot Tvangsekteskap, Kjønnselemløstelse og Alvorlige Begrensninger av Unges Frihet (2013–2016)* (Action Plan Against Forced Marriages, Female Genital Mutilation and Severe Restrictions of Freedom of Youth (2013–2016)), BLD, Oslo, 2013, p. 25 (hereafter, BLD, *Handlingsplan*).

³⁶⁴ These statistics include housing of unaccompanied minors coordinated by municipal Child Welfare Services and preventative measures in asylum centres (comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013).

³⁶⁵ Kalve and Dyrhaug, "Barn og Unge med Innvandrerbakgrunn i Barnevernet 2009", tables 8.1 and 8.2.

³⁶⁶ Comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

³⁶⁷ Henningsen and Kornstad. *Variation in the quality of regional child services*. Statistics Norway Discussion Papers No. 681, 2012, p. 25.

³⁶⁸ Comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

8.2.2 The Relationship between Child Welfare Services and the Norwegian-Somali Community

I have been in contact with Child Welfare Services myself. They have come to our house because of my son. We have been in close contact with them both for good and for bad, but mostly good. Like the others said before, I was also very sceptical of Child Welfare Services at first. That fear disappeared after I got to know them.³⁶⁹

According to a number of Open Society Foundations research participants, the relationship between Child Welfare Services and the Norwegian-Somali community is problematic. Four main types of problems were identified by several of our informants: first, a lack of trust on both sides; second, informants suggested that both parties suffer from poor communication and insufficient information-sharing; third inadequate intercultural competence in Child Welfare Services; fourth, insufficient culturally or religiously appropriate solutions for those cases where children need to be placed out of the family home.³⁷⁰

A lack of trust is widespread and misunderstandings are great on both sides. According to Open Society Foundations research participants, what happens is that Child Welfare Services have a picture of a family, and will act on the basis of that picture. For example, case workers are on the alert for physical abuse and circumcision of girls, so that they will look out for Norwegian-Somalis who go on holiday during the school summer holidays. This can lead to a situation where Child Welfare Services act too quickly, with drastic actions and conclusions.

In Norway the child protection law provides children with independent rights, starting from what is in the child's best interest, which may clash with family structures where the parents decide what is in the child's best interest.³⁷¹ The involvement of Child Welfare Services, taking the child's best interest principle as a starting point, runs the risk of being seen as overriding the rights of the parents. This is a problem in any child welfare case that addresses neglect, abuse or misbehaviour, especially in non-Norwegian families. According to the City of Oslo, while norms and regulations are the same for all residents in Norway, this does not mean that solutions need to be the same and the City of Oslo works actively with measures that take people's social and cultural background into account.³⁷²

On the other hand, Norwegian-Somalis also have a predetermined picture of Child Welfare Services and some of the fears and stories are quite extreme, particularly

³⁶⁹ Kadra Ali, Open Society Foundations focus group on child welfare services.

³⁷⁰ Comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

³⁷¹ City of Oslo Department of Cultural Affairs and Business, Letter to Open Society Foundations "Comments on draft report", ref 201303620-3.

³⁷² City of Oslo Department of Cultural Affairs and Business, letter to Open Society Foundations "Comments on draft report", ref 201303620-3., follow-up conversation.

among those who have only recently arrived in Norway. There is the perception, for example, that Child Welfare Services want to take people's children because they do not have children of their own and want to raise them. There is a real fear and uncertainty about the fact that strangers can come and take children from their families, a fear that increased after debates on this matter in the Norwegian and Somali media.³⁷³ Furthermore, information is often obtained from within the community rather than from official Norwegian sources, and information spreads really quickly among Norwegian-Somalis across the country.³⁷⁴ Irrespective of the sources of and the accuracy of fears and uncertainties, perceptions in the community will have real-life impacts on their actions. Child Welfare Services and other governmental organs need to proactively address these perceptions. In order to improve dialogue with Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, the City Government has recommended arranging local dialogue meetings about child welfare. Several districts have arranged meetings discussing matters of potential mistrust.³⁷⁵

Many of those interviewed for the Open Society Foundations research who have been in touch with Child Welfare Services suggest that it is crucial to engage with them, rather than to withdraw. Khadija Hussein, a married woman in her 40s, recalls:

An employee of the children's ward at Ullevål Hospital wrote a kind of letter of concern about my son, and we were contacted by Child Welfare Services. At first I was unable to sleep, the fact that the social welfare services were involved in the case disturbed me terribly. We were well received by them however, and they came to visit us home several times ... I have experienced both advantages and challenges with Child Welfare Services; they have observed that I am a good mother. It is important not to run from them when they get in touch with you and your family. One has to take time to get to know what this is about and how they can help you.³⁷⁶

The second big challenge is that the communication between Child Welfare Services and the Norwegian-Somali clients is problematic and there is insufficient information on both sides. As a member of the children and youth unit at a mosque explains:

There is a lot of fear of Child Welfare Services among Somalis. We try to reduce this by spreading information and creating dialogue. Somalis hear a lot about Child Welfare Services from [Somali and other] media; negative reports have created many misunderstandings. Most of those who received concern messages and are in contact with Child Welfare Services do not talk about that openly.

³⁷³ See for example nrk.no/nyheter/norge/1.7652151 (accessed 24 November 2013).

³⁷⁴ Comment from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

³⁷⁵ City of Oslo Department of Cultural Affairs and Business, letter to Open Society Foundations "Comments on draft report", ref 201303620-3.

³⁷⁶ Khadija Hussein, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

They keep it within their nuclear family and ask us for help when it is almost too late.³⁷⁷

Because there is limited knowledge among Norwegian-Somalis about Child Welfare Services, they often act, or more accurately fail to act, in ways that leads to a case unnecessarily getting out of hand. A family may not realise how serious it can be not to collaborate and not to engage with Child Welfare Services by not responding and waiting until the case has already got out of hand. Although information about Child Welfare Services is provided in different places, what is crucial is whether people relate to that information, can absorb it and trust its source. Often, the women affected would rather call friends to verify what they have learned from a meeting with Child Welfare Services. There are a lot of individual cases and rumours that contribute to misinforming parents, and there are not many positive stories being told in the community.

One reason people try to verify information after meetings with Child Welfare Services is because of actual communication problems due to the language. Not only are interpreters not always available, but also, those who are being used are often not state-authorised. The interpreters used are not as qualified and may get key issues and central terms wrong. Fardosa Roble, who is a student in the field and has done internships in Child Welfare Services, explained:

I have taken part in many cases where the interpreter did not manage to interpret or interpreted incorrectly. This is problematic as many misunderstandings arise then. To give an example: once we had a meeting with a family who had one of their kids placed in an institution. Child Welfare Services felt that this youth should come home again after a short period. We [Child Welfare Services] asked the parents to sign a letter which said that they accepted that, but the interpreter interpreted the opposite to what we said to the parents. He said, "Your signature is a confirmation that you will give authorisation to Child Welfare Services." I intervened as what was translated did not match what the letter said. Most of the interpreters that Child Welfare Services and the municipality use are not authorised, which is problematic. Regular interpreters understand both languages well, especially Norwegian, but there are very many Norwegian concepts which are difficult to translate into Somali and that are often translated wrong. An authorised interpreter is better and should be used more.³⁷⁸

The information that both parties share with one another may also be limited. At times Child Welfare Services fail to ensure that parents are kept informed; Norwegian-Somali parents at times deliberately do not share information that they fear will

³⁷⁷ Yusuf Abdirahim, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

³⁷⁸ Fardosa Roble, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

damage them. Ismail Hindise, who worked as a minority adviser at a secondary school when on leave from the police, told us the following story:

When I worked at the police in Hovseter borough, I was involved in a case of a father who had a big problem with his son. They agreed to meet at the police station. The son, who was 17, turned out to have had a couple of engagements with Child Welfare Services already. So I had to call the case worker and ask her why she did things like that: Why did she not involve the parents but instead go behind their backs to talk only to the boy? The case worker indicated that there were language problems, but I argued that she was supposed to use an interpreter then.³⁷⁹

Similarly, parents are also not always open with Child Welfare Services. A number of participants in the focus group discussion on Child Welfare Services indicated that few parents would admit that they had hit their children, and those who did admit this fact generally did so very late in their engagement with Child Welfare Services. This has implications for the kind of assistance they get. While one of the reasons for the lack of openness is the fact that Norwegian-Somali parents may not fully understand the consequences of admitting this and have very low levels of trust in Child Welfare Services, their lack of openness at the same time leads to the case worker also having very low levels of trust in the parents. A similar issue is the case with single mothers, who often do not inform Child Welfare Services of the kind of support they get from their ex-husband, family members and others. This may have implications again for the kind of support they receive from Child Welfare Services.

A third complication in the relationship between Child Welfare Services and Norwegian-Somalis that our research participants identified is the insufficient intercultural competence in some sections of Child Welfare Services. The functioning of Child Welfare Services in an increasingly multicultural Norway has been the subject of an important political debate for quite some time, and various challenges have been acknowledged and measures have been taken.³⁸⁰ While this requires improving the intercultural competence of those working in Child Welfare Services, at the same time, as Holm-Hansen et al. point out, it is important not to start from a perspective of difference and culturally-driven explanations.³⁸¹ Instead, what is important is to have a good understanding of the situation at home, just like in other cases. This means having sound knowledge about the concrete socio-economic challenges that clients live

³⁷⁹ Interview with Ismail Hindise, 7 March 2013.

³⁸⁰ Moufack, *Et Sensitivt Barnevern*; J. Holm-Hansen, T. Haaland and T. Myrvold, *Flerkulturelt Barnevern. En Kunnskapsoversikt* (Multicultural Child Welfare Services. A Knowledge Overview), Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning, NIBR) Report 2007, p. 10, 2007 (hereafter, Holm-Hansen et al., *Flerkulturelt Barnevern*).

³⁸¹ Holm-Hansen et al., *Flerkulturelt Barnevern*.

with here and now, combined with a willingness to understand that many immigrants analyse their children's problems differently from what one is used to in Norway.³⁸²

The Open Society Foundations research participants likewise stressed that there are difficulties with the levels of knowledge and understanding that case workers have on the situation of Norwegian-Somali clients, leading to culture clashes. As Yusuf Abdirahim from the unit for children and youth in a mosque pointed out:

Some pedagogues in Child Welfare Services, especially those who have their education from outside Oslo, have great knowledge about the Norwegian family and issues related to it but they have limited insight in how Somali families function. This is also the case for institutions; it seems as if they have insufficient cultural capital when it comes to minority families. There are still many issues they do not know and do not quite master.³⁸³

This is something that has been acknowledged and has led to changes in child welfare training programmes in Norway, in particular in Oslo. However, the impacts of these reforms will take some time to become visible.

Another problem for both Child Welfare Services and Norwegian-Somali parents and children is that there are not enough Norwegian-Somali foster parents and emergency shelter homes.³⁸⁴ When Norwegian-Somali children are placed into the care of non-Muslim families, this makes the parents fearful. The problem is twofold: first, there are insufficient numbers of Norwegian-Somali families willing to take in children with family-related or behavioural problems. Second, the requirements of these children may disqualify those who are willing to take them in, at the cost of having sufficient placement homes where Norwegian-Somali children can maintain their language and religion.

8.2.3 Parenting in Norway: Differences and Difficulties in Child Raising Among Norwegian-Somalis

Before, the term "violence in upbringing" was used, especially in relation to minority families. This was about violence or what some called "physical discipline" that children experienced in the home. People had a milder relation to this. Nowadays the term "violence in close relationships" or "family violence" is being used and the law says that it is forbidden to hit or physically punish children.³⁸⁵

While there is often insufficient knowledge about Norwegian-Somali families within Norwegian institutions, likewise many Norwegian-Somalis – and in particular those

³⁸² Holm-Hansen et al., *Flerkulturelt Barnevern*, p. 16.

³⁸³ Yusuf Abdirahim, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

³⁸⁴ Source for this paragraph: comments from the roundtable, 18 September 2013.

³⁸⁵ Fardosa Roble, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

who have recently arrived – have insufficient knowledge about Norwegian parenting practices. Furthermore, the office of Child Welfare Services is new to many Somali immigrants as this does not exist in Somalia, so they have limited knowledge about what Child Welfare Services are and what they do. On top of this, there are clear differences in parenting practices between Somalia and Norway, which contributes to the fact that some Norwegian-Somali parents have difficulties raising their children in Norway.

According to Open Society Foundations research participants, many of the Child Welfare Services' cases are people who have not been in Norway for long. Other aspects that define these families are that their household economy is problematic and the parents are struggling or absent. A number of cases are single mothers who struggle with handling all their responsibilities or do not have the tools to guide their children, and in particular boys, in Norway. They have to focus on basics like food and dressing rather than other parts of caring, or are not in a position to focus on the needs of all their children. As Ibrahim Ali put it in a key informant interview:

These mothers do what they can from their point of view and based on what they are used to from their own upbringing; but this is not good enough for Child Welfare Services. For example, younger kids may be depending more on their older siblings than on the mother. Furthermore, parents are more concerned about girls: they put more effort, girls have to come home more and such. Boys can do more what they like.³⁸⁶

Boys especially have problems, a situation which is also partly related to the fact that they often lack a role model, because either the father is absent or he is not very engaged with the raising of the children. As Ibrahim explains of a number of fathers he has worked with in Child Welfare Services cases:

Most of the fathers I worked with asked me "Do you know how to get a job?", when I came to talk about parenting. Many of them used to be somebody in Somalia, but cannot do a lot here in Norway. They lost part of their manhood, have low self-esteem. In most cases, the household finances are the wife's responsibility; it is almost as if they get an allowance, which they use to smoke or chew khat. The mothers have the responsibility to take care of the home. The fathers are only involved when something bad happens, when the police is involved, for example ... They are here because it is best for the kids. But they have nothing to offer them. The only thing they can do is tell them to go to school and get a job.³⁸⁷

One of the concerns discussed in the focus group on Child Welfare Services was using physical ways of discipline by hitting a child. A number of research participants explained that this was the way that children were raised in Somalia, and that people

³⁸⁶ Interview with Ibrahim Ali, 26 March 2013.

³⁸⁷ Interview with Ibrahim Ali, 26 March 2013.

often do not know alternative approaches to disciplining their children if they cannot do it physically. As Khadija Hussein said: ‘My grandmother was hit by her mother, my mother was hit by my grandmother and I was hit by my mother. That is how we are disciplined and how we discipline.’³⁸⁸ The distinction between physical discipline and family violence is important to make, as in the first case the most important measure may be to provide the family with other tools to discipline, whereas in the second case, the safety and security of the child is central. Currently, this distinction is not always made:

Kids in daycare can say “My daddy beat me”, which may be true but it also may just mean that the dad yelled at them. Then, you at times see that Child Welfare Services comes into the picture urgently. When it is a Somali, they at times are more likely to take the kid, whereas normally they do a proper background check when they get a concern notification. In the case of Somalis, that doesn’t always happen.³⁸⁹

One method that is used by Norwegian-Somalis when young people, particularly boys, develop behavioural problems, is to send them back to Somalia or East Africa.³⁹⁰ This can be a way of preventing Child Welfare Services from taking the children from the home as well as a way of handling difficult behaviour. In some cases, when there are family members in East Africa to take care of them, this arrangement may actually help to improve the behaviour of the child. In other cases, the outcome is not as positive:

I know a boy who was moved to Somalia at 16, after he had started to engage in criminal activities. Surprisingly, he wanted to go there himself. He lived there for one year and was socialised by his uncle, for whom he developed a great deal of respect. His uncle took on the role of a father in Somalia, telling him stories and tales on the way to the camels; teaching and guiding him. The boy learned new skills. Here in Norway, fathers don’t have skills to teach the kids. The children often feel that their parents don’t know anything, even though they might have many skills.³⁹¹

8.2.4 Initiatives

Many initiatives have been started by government institutions, the mosque, private actors and civil society in order to improve the situation. Tawfiq Islamic Centre (TIS),

³⁸⁸ Yasmin Abdulahi, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

³⁸⁹ Interview with Hassan Yunis, 11 February 2013.

³⁹⁰ The project ‘Long Stays Abroad’ analyzes this issue. It is carried out by the Institute for Social Research (ISF) on behalf of IMDi. The research findings are expected to come out in early 2014. For more information, see socialresearch.no/Projects/Ongoing-projects/Long-stays-abroad-among-children-and-adolescents-of-immigrant-background-during-Norwegian-primary-and-secondary-education (accessed 24 November 2013).

³⁹¹ Interview with Ibrahim Ali, 26 March 2013.

the mosque used by Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, has a Child and Young Peoples Unit that works closely on issues relating to the Child Welfare Services. It is run by volunteers of various ages with personal and professional expertise. The unit was established in 2011, at a time when there had been conflicts between Somali families and the Child Welfare Services. The mosque leaders felt the need to take on a bridge-building role between Norwegian-Somalis and Norwegian authorities working on these cases. The unit provides information to Norwegian-Somalis, and guidance and assistance to Norwegian-Somali parents with Child Welfare Services cases; it also engages with the Norwegian authorities. Events have been organised at the mosque which have been very well attended. The unit aims to raise awareness in the Norwegian-Somali community about the Child Welfare Services' function and ways of working through meetings, and at the same time, it engages with the Norwegian authorities to raise awareness. They met people at the Ministry, who stated that they were glad to see the mosque had taken this initiative, and they were invited to a seminar for Child Welfare Services employees on how Child Welfare Services can improve its intercultural competence.

The Change Factory (*Forandringsfabrikken*) is an organization that aims to inspire those who help children and young people in Child Welfare Services, the psychological health system, drug care, prison, schools and leisure activities to really listen to children and young people. To this end it has set up activities and programmes to improve the quality of Child Welfare Services.³⁹² The Change Factory invited young people with a minority background who receive assistance from Child Welfare Services to share their experiences and give advice to Child Welfare Services. The project included 70 young people from across Norway aged 12–22 years, and discussions were also held with Child Welfare Services and in cooperation with Save the Children. One of the results is a brochure that includes the many experiences shared and advice given to Child Welfare Services.

Etnisk Utsikt is a private company that develops individual, family-based measures on assignment for Child Welfare Services or social offices in municipalities. This includes limited, short assignments or long-term, heavier assistance measures for families or individuals.³⁹³ In Oslo, case workers often have too many cases, and have had the practice of transferring some of the most demanding cases to private companies like Etnisk Utsikt.³⁹⁴ Recently, however, the City of Oslo changed this practice and now only in rare cases solicits external expertise, so that only those cases that genuinely

³⁹² See e.g. Karen e. Svendsen, "barnevernet har jo redda livet mitt" (cps saved my life), *fagbladet*, 4 may 2013, at fagbladet.no/helse_og_sosial/article6639482.ece (accessed 24 november 2013). See www.forandringsfabrikken.no/kurs-og-foredrag/forandringsforedrag/barnevern/ (accessed 2 December 2013).

³⁹³ See etniskutsikt.no/ (accessed 24 November 2013).

³⁹⁴ For more on the privatisation of child welfare services, see H. Bogen, *Privat Drift av Omsorgstjenester. Gjennomgang av Nyere Forskning* (Private Management of care services. Review of Recent Research), Fafo Report no. 2011:22, Oslo, 2011.

require external competence are requested from outside. While this meant a number of private companies had to close down, Etnisk Utsikt has a special competence as they focus on minorities and mostly Norwegian-Somali cases.

9. POLICING AND SECURITY

We have not had social unrest like in Malmö, Göteborg, London, Paris; even though, if you look at the fact that there is a strong stigma towards Somalis in the media and if you look at Somali living conditions, it is clear that there is a significant level of discrimination. And yet, there is little unrest. Why is that the case? Is it because we have a welfare state? Because Somalis still live a relatively OK life, because Norway does not have any real ghettos?³⁹⁵

This section discusses the situation of Norwegian-Somalis in relation to criminal justice and policing. The section begins with a focus on the general facts and figures in Norway and Oslo, and some of the main causes of concern now and in the future. It then looks at the relationship between the police and immigrant groups like Norwegian-Somalis, in particular in terms of the police's approach to addressing some of the main security concerns in society. One of those is the issue of youth criminality. In light of the findings discussed in other areas of this report, there is particular focus here on this issue.

9.1 Introduction

Reports on policing and security in connection with immigrant communities stress that Norway is safe, as is Oslo compared with other cities. However, immigrants seem to be overrepresented in crime statistics. Some of the literature does not distinguish between different country backgrounds, but rather distinguishes between immigrants and non-immigrants.

While the main focus of current research is on crime statistics, there is little or no information on Norwegian-Somalis (and indeed other minority groups) as clients of the police. For example, there seem to be little data on how Muslim citizens are protected and what policies and processes have been put in place to address anti-Muslim violence and hostility. The question of how the police can provide better services to new Norwegians, including protection and safety measures matching their needs, does not seem to be guiding much of the research. This may be particularly pertinent in light of the attacks on 22 July 2011 and is in itself an important finding. Open Society Foundations interviews likewise confirm that the focus is mainly on immigrants in Norway as offenders of various types rather than as citizens in need of safety and security.

One exception is research by Statistics Norway on how much immigrants face exceptional exposure to violence and threats compared with the population as a

³⁹⁵ Interview with key informant, 30 January 2013. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

whole.³⁹⁶ Frants Gundersen et al., in a study based on police data of registered offences, suggest that immigrants are overrepresented as victims of crimes. For example, men of non-Western immigrant background have a 30 percent higher chance of being victims.³⁹⁷ This study suggests that attacks on ethnic Norwegians are mostly perpetrated by other ethnic Norwegians, while immigrants are targets of attack from both ethnic Norwegians and other immigrants. The survey of living conditions among immigrants in Norway shows that on average immigrants are not more likely to be victims of crime. However, this average figure conceals significant variations between groups.³⁹⁸ In this study, Norwegian-Somalis report low levels of victimhood in terms of neighbourhood problems, theft and average levels of violence.

9.2 Some Facts and Figures: Research on Crime Rates

Crime statistics provide a backdrop against which to understand public debate on crime and security as well as the relationships between Norwegian-Somalis and the police. Various studies have pointed out that even though people who do not have minority backgrounds are responsible for the largest share of recorded criminal offences in Norway, people with minority backgrounds are overrepresented in crime statistics.³⁹⁹ These studies also acknowledge that the media debate on crime statistics is problematic as there is not enough knowledge about the facts. At the same time, this debate has important implications for crime policies.

Research also contributes to these discussions. Furthermore, data collection categorise individuals as groups in ways that are assumed to be relevant for crime statistics. For example, studies on the criminal activities of non-Western immigrants compared with the general population are very common but also highly questionable because they assume internal cohesion and external differences between these two groups. The Norwegian-born children of immigrants are at times also considered in the analysis as part of the non-Western immigrant group, which further emphasises the difficulties of such a categorisation.

³⁹⁶ K. Henriksen, "Violence and Threats", in Blom and Henriksen, "Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006" (hereafter, Henriksen, "Violence and Threats"); F. Gundersen, U. Haslund, A. E. Hustad and R. J. Stene, "Innvandrere og Nordmenn som Offer og Gjerningsmenn" (Immigrants and Norwegians as Victims and Perpetrators), Statistics Norway, Oslo-Kongsvinger, 2000 (hereafter, Gundersen et al., "Innvandrere og Nordmenn som Offer og Gjerningsmenn").

³⁹⁷ Gundersen et al., "Innvandrere og Nordmenn som Offer og Gjerningsmenn".

³⁹⁸ Henriksen, "Violence and Threats".

³⁹⁹ White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*; Evensen, "Ikke-vestlig Minoritetsungdom og Kriminalitet" (Non-Western Minorities and Crime), *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning* (Journal of Youth Research) 9 (2), 2009, p. 82; T. Skardhamar, L. R. Thorsen and K. Henriksen, "Kriminalitet og Straff Blant Innvandrere og Øvrig Befolkning" (Criminality and Punishment Among Immigrants and the Rest of the Population), Statistics Norway, 2011 (hereafter, Skardhamar et al., "Kriminalitet og Straff Blant Innvandrere og Øvrig Befolkning").

Norwegian-Somalis are among the groups with the highest number of offenders in Norway, together with people from a range of other countries.⁴⁰⁰ A study by Torbjørn Skardhamar et al. found that for the period 2001–2004, offenders with an immigrant background from Somalia represented 23 percent of the total offenders. Weighted for age and gender, place of residence and employment, the figure went down to 13 percent (compared with 5 percent for the rest of the population). In 2005–2008, on the other hand, the figures were almost 15 percent without adjustments, and 8 percent adjusted (compared with 5 percent for the rest of the population).⁴⁰¹ Somali offenders in prisons in 2005–2008 represented just over 3 percent of the total of people in prison (adjusted for age and gender, just below 2 percent). This compares with 0.8 percent of the total of the rest of the population, although percentages were similarly high for immigrants from Kosovo, Morocco and Iran.

Studies on crime statistics seek to explain the overrepresentation of immigrants, and in particular non-Western immigrants, in these statistics. One point made is that it is likely that specific groups of immigrants, because of the demographic profile of the population (such as a high proportion of young men), are more likely to have a higher proportion of people engaged in criminal activities. Research has shown that in general, young men commit more crimes than women and older men; more criminal behaviour is associated with big cities or greater urbanisation; and poor living conditions, low levels of education and unemployment also increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour.⁴⁰² Weighting needs to be done to correct for the uneven composition of different national groups in Norway. Overrepresentation in crime statistics is significantly reduced if one takes into account the composition of each group – in particular for groups with a strong overrepresentation.

Another hypothesis to explain overrepresentation in crime statistics is that immigrants may have a higher chance of being caught because police are on the look-out for them.⁴⁰³

9.3 The Relationship Between the Police and Norwegian-Somalis

While the relationship with the police is not too bad, marginalised groups often do not know their rights and some policemen are also not good in guaranteeing people's rights. When they pick up a Somali boy from East (Oslo), they might

⁴⁰⁰ White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*; Evensen, "Ikke-vestlig Minoritetsungdom og Kriminalitet"; Skardhamar et al., "Kriminalitet og Straff Blant Innvandrere og Øvrig Befolkning".

⁴⁰¹ Skardhamar et al., "Kriminalitet og Straff Blant Innvandrere og Øvrig Befolkning", figures 6.1 and 6.5.

⁴⁰² White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*; Skardhamar et al., "Kriminalitet og Straff Blant Innvandrere og Øvrig Befolkning"; L. R. Thorsen, S. Lid and R. J. Stene, "Kriminalitet og Rettsvesen 2009" (Criminality and the Justice System), Statistics Norway, 2009 (hereafter, Thorsen et al., "Kriminalitet og Rettsvesen 2009").

⁴⁰³ Skardhamar et al., "Kriminalitet og Straff Blant Innvandrere og Øvrig Befolkning".

not follow all the procedures as they should, but that is not going to happen when it is a Norwegian boy from West (Oslo). There is the fear that the parents know their rights and can sue, which is not something a Somali single mother can do.⁴⁰⁴

This section explores the relationship between Norwegian police and ethnic minorities both as a potential explanatory factor for overrepresentation and as an important topic in its own right. The Oslo police force is run by the government, the Department of Justice and the Police Directorate. Many innovative measures have been set up in Oslo, such as the SaLTø model (Box 16), but research points to problems between the police and minorities, including Norwegian-Somalis. Research by Ragnhild Sollund on the stop-and-search practices of the Norwegian police⁴⁰⁵ has found that these practices are often conducted based on stereotypes about the appearance of offenders and generalisations from experience in police work, which lead to minorities being stopped and searched disproportionately. As Mohamed Abdi described in a key informant interview, when talking about stop-and-search practices on the motorway:

They stop you and ask for your driver's licence. But as soon as they get your name they go into their register to find out if you have engaged in criminal activities. Then they can search all those who are in the car. But they can also get people out of the car for no reason ... without a criminal background. They do that ... they stop people.⁴⁰⁶

Ethnic minorities experience the Norwegian police's practices as racist because of the way people are (often repeatedly) stopped and asked for identification documents, which is felt to be offensive and discriminating because of the lack of satisfactory explanations for the checks. The mutual stereotypes reinforce one another and relationships between the police and ethnic minorities are often strained. Mohamed Abdi explained:

The police drive around a lot in immigrant neighbourhoods, they are visible. They frighten people by being visible. But there are other measures where they come to schools to meet kids, let them play with the handcuffs and such so that they get a good relationship and feel safe with the police. In that way it is good that the police is visible. But not by driving around footpaths and small roads. Because when you see police, you think something is going to happen. People in that area think something is going to happen so they are afraid the whole time.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Ismail Hindise, 7 March 2013.

⁴⁰⁵ R. Sollund, *Tatt for en Annen: En Felstudie av Relasjonen Mellom Etniske Minoriteter og Politiet* (Taken to be Someone Else: A Field Study of Relationships Between Ethnic Minorities and the Police), Gyldendal, Oslo, 2007 (hereafter, Sollund, *Tatt for en Annen*).

⁴⁰⁶ Open Society Foundation key informant interview.

⁴⁰⁷ Open Society Foundation key informant interview.

The relationship between the police and minorities generally is influenced by the fact that very few Norwegian police officers have a minority background. Efforts are being made to improve the recruitment numbers of minorities, but this is recent and is not easy either.

The relationship between the police and Norwegian-Somalis and other minorities is also affected by long-term policies for crime reduction, which are affected by the structural factors explaining the overrepresentation of minorities in the crime figures. Examples of structural factors are poverty, great income disparities and low inclusion rates in the labour and housing markets.⁴⁰⁸ Strategic thinking on policing and security acknowledges the relationship between crime and, *inter alia*, poverty and social inequality, and is based on a holistic approach.

The government's strategy on the prevention of crime, focusing on community, safety and cohesion, is a clear case in point.⁴⁰⁹ The strategy suggests that the welfare policy perspective on preventing crime needs to focus on inclusion through work, education and housing. Likewise, in the Oslo Police report on challenges in Oslo, increasing social differences linked with immigrant background are identified as prime causes.⁴¹⁰ Greater collaboration with other government institutions to prevent criminal careers and the creation of parallel societies is required; some are already happening, for instance youth prevention programmes.

Radicalisation and violent extremism are high on the agenda for the security forces in connection with certain groups of non-Western immigrants. This became more urgent in October 2013, when it was alleged that a Norwegian-Somali was one of the alleged perpetrators of the terrorist attack on the Westgate shopping centre in Kenya. The (then) Ministry of Justice and the Police's Action Plan mentions a range of types of violent extremism, stressing that radicalisation can happen in any type of ideology or politics.⁴¹¹ The Action Plan mainly focuses on radical Islam:

Even though autonomous groups, extreme and violent animal rights activists and violent demonstrators are part of the problem, it is particularly radical

⁴⁰⁸ Oslo Police Politidistrikt, *Oslo h2022. Fremtidens Kriminalitetsutfordringer i Oslo* (Oslo 2022. Future Criminality Challenges in Oslo), Oslo Police, Oslo, 2013 (hereafter, Oslo Police, *Oslo 2022*).

⁴⁰⁹ Government of Norway, *Regjeringens Strategi for Forebygging. Felleskap, Trygghet, Utjevning* (The Government's Prevention Strategy. Community, Safety, Cohesion), Government of Norway, Oslo, 2009, at www.regjeringen.no/upload/JD/Vedlegg/Rapporter/Forebyggingsstrategi.pdf (accessed 24 November 2013) (hereafter, Government of Norway, *Regjeringens Strategi for Forebygging*).

⁴¹⁰ Oslo Police, *Oslo 2022*.

⁴¹¹ Ministry of Justice and Police (Justis- og politidepartementet), *Felles Trygghet, Felles Ansvar. Handlingsplan for å Forebygge Radikalisering og Voldelig Ekstremisme* (Collective Safety, Collective Responsibility. Plan of Action to Prevent Radicalisation and Violent Extremism), Oslo, 2010, p. 9 (hereafter, Ministry of Justice and Police, *Felles Trygghet, Felles Ansvar*).

Islamists who are born in Norway who are representing something new and thus pose a challenge as to how to manage this.⁴¹²

The plan specifies that radical Islamism is a very marginal phenomenon in Norway and elsewhere, and focuses on the need to increase knowledge of the phenomenon. It draws on experiences that the Norwegian police have had with handling extreme-right movements. It also discusses the importance of a holistic approach to prevent exclusion from society. Thus, the prevention of radicalisation is not the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and the Police, but is also the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Equality. As the majority of those who become radicalised are young men, measures for youngsters are given a great deal of importance.

9.4 Youth Criminality

In my view, the most important issues one needs to take into account is that it is crucial to know the community; that one is present all the time; and that one draws clear boundaries from the beginning. In the neighbourhood where I worked as a policeman, I involved the parents and focused on putting the youth club in order. It is often a small group of youth that spoils it, with only a few who are bossy and up to trouble and who take the rest with them. So you work with them specifically, and you also immediately investigate cases. Those kids quickly learned that they would be in trouble if they did something wrong. And at the same time, you have to understand that they are just engaging in these things because they are angry with society.⁴¹³

In an extensive study on non-Western immigrant youngsters and criminality, Øystein Evensen concluded that this group only had a marginally higher likelihood of being charged than those with a majority background once the data were for a range of factors.⁴¹⁴ As others have shown as well, any overrepresentation is reduced when demographic and social risk factors are corrected for. Youngsters with minority backgrounds are simply more exposed to mechanisms that increase the risk of being charged. In a similar vein, research data from the Young in Oslo project, based on self-reported experiences with violence, illustrate that immigrant youngsters are more exposed to and engaged in violence, but this can be explained by the fact that they live in city districts with higher levels of violence.⁴¹⁵ In general, this study found that the most significant differences in the living conditions of youngsters relate to which part of Oslo they lived in.

⁴¹² Ministry of Justice and Police, *Felles Trygghet, Felles Ansvar*, p. 9.

⁴¹³ Interview with Ismail Hindise, 7 March 2013.

⁴¹⁴ Evensen, "Ikke-vestlig Minoritetsungdom og Kriminalitet", pp. 81–82.

⁴¹⁵ T. Øia, *Ung i Oslo 2012. Nøkkeltall* (Young in Oslo 2012. Key Numbers), NOVA, Oslo, 2012 (hereafter Øia, *Ung i Oslo 2012*).

Youth criminality is one of the chief concerns of the police force, for example, the existence of youth gangs, a number of which consist of gang members with backgrounds from a specific country of immigration. The Oslo Police predict that gangs are going to play a bigger role in the future.⁴¹⁶ A report puts this in the perspective of a segregated Oslo and quotes a former gang member, Amir:

I went from being no one, to being someone who everyone feared and respected. Of course that felt good for someone who had been bullied and often had to be beaten because he was a Paki and smelled of garlic.⁴¹⁷

However, not all agree that there is in fact a gang problem among Norwegian-Somali youth. Mohamed Abdi argues:

Those are not gangs, even though they like calling something a gang. They are more groups of between four to seven individuals, not 20 to 40 that say they form a gang. They are just groups, friends, a group of friends with similar interests. They go out together, maybe meet competitors and get into fights with others but they are not gangs. Times are different now; it is about money. There are not enough opportunities for youth ... there are youth clubs but nothing specific that is directed at these groups.⁴¹⁸

There are several innovative programmes and measures in Oslo that are aimed at preventing and addressing the issue of gangs and other forms of youth criminality. However, these all start from certain preconceptions⁴¹⁹ of the causes of youth criminality. Some studies mention the Gaza demonstrations⁴¹⁹ as a turning point, where the situation could have easily got out of hand, but collaboration between different stakeholders led to an improvement of conditions and greater investment in preventative measures. The Oslo police had a number of difficult meetings then, that made them reach out and that they learned from.⁴²⁰

One of the areas identified as important for intervention is the school environment, where there is a risk that pupils may suffer violence, threats and bullying. IMDi has appointed 40 counsellors for pupils with minority backgrounds in secondary and junior high schools, who work on a number of topics prioritised by IMDi, including pupils' well-being in school, forced marriages, circumcision of girls, extreme control (by parents of their children), violence and public disturbance. The focus is clearly on individual and group characteristics rather than social issues. This means that these

⁴¹⁶ Oslo Police, *Oslo 2022*.

⁴¹⁷ Oslo Police, *Oslo 2022*, p. 26.

⁴¹⁸ Open Society Foundation interview.

⁴¹⁹ Demonstrations took place in Oslo at the turn of 2008-2009, to protest Israel's incursion into Gaza. Many young people were arrested, and the demonstrations are said to have awoken young Muslims politically, see www.forskning.no/artikler/2012/november/341172 (accessed 2 December 2013).

⁴²⁰ Key informant interview, 30 January 2013.

counsellors, for example, can scrutinise the relationships of Norwegian-Somali parents and their children, but they can do far less about the exclusion and discrimination that pupils suffer in the educational system (see section 5). Another area where intervention is necessary is youth activities outside school, such as in sports and youth clubs. While such activities are under increasing financial pressure, there are parts of the city where there are limited leisure activities offered to young people.⁴²¹ One successful initiative for preventing criminal activities and drug abuse among children and youth in Oslo is SaLTo (See Box 16).

⁴²¹ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

Box 16. SaLTo: Together We Can Build a Safe Oslo⁴²²

The SaLTo model is based on collaboration between municipal and national partners. It is based on a partnership between Oslo municipality and the Oslo police district to engage in crime prevention work among children and young people. The actual work on the ground happens at the level of city districts, with a range of partners, a coordinator in all city districts and in the city centre. In the period that SaLTo has operated, at a time when the city population has been growing rapidly, crime figures have gone down significantly.

SaLTo focuses on safe and inclusive schools; narrow and focused follow-up with young offenders; prevention, knowledge-building and preparedness for extremism and violence; prevention in Oslo centre with reference to certain groups and areas; developing good role models for those in the age group 18–23 (SaLTo+); provision of information, methods and competence development and knowledge-sharing. Within each area, specific measures are taken. For example, the Oslo Red Cross provides courses for youngsters in street mediation.⁴²³

9.5 Conclusion

In this section we have seen that most of the data available for policing and security focus on immigrants as perpetrators of crime rather than on the experiences of minorities in the criminal system. Research has been trying to explain the overrepresentation of non-Western immigrants in crime statistics, and largely finds that this overrepresentation disappears partially or fully when the data are corrected for a number of demographic and socio-economic factors. We suggest that more research is needed, however, on other aspects of the experiences of immigrants in Norway with policing and security.

There seems to be a focus on prevention activities, and in Oslo there are a number of innovative initiatives for youth, where the police work with other actors. These are

⁴²² Oslo Police, *SaLTo Handlingsprogram 2012–2015. Kriminalitetsforbygging for Barn og Unge i Oslo* (SaLTo Plan of Action 2012–2015. Crime Prevention for Children and Youth in Oslo), 2011 (hereafter, Oslo Police, *SaLTo Handlingsprogram 2012–2015*); Oslo Police, *SaLTo Årsmelding 2012. Kriminalitets- og Rusforbygging Blant Barn og Unge i Oslo* (SaLTo Annual Report 2012. Crime and Drug Prevention Among Children and Youth in Oslo), 2012 (hereafter, Oslo Police, *SaLTo Årsmelding 2012*); Oslo Police, *Barne- og Ungdomskriminaliteten i Oslo. Rapport Laget av Oslo Politidistrikt og Oslo Kommune Basert På Data fra 2011* (Child and Youth Crime in Oslo. Report by Oslo Police District and Oslo Municipality Based on 2011 Data), 2012 (hereafter, Oslo Police, *Barne- og Ungdomskriminaliteten i Oslo*). See www.salto.oslo.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

⁴²³ See www.rodekors.no/distriktssider/oslo/aktiviteter/oppvekst1/gatemegling (accessed 24 November 2013).

models that can be explored further for their value in other cities, as they seem to bear fruit in Oslo. However, part of the explanation why there is little unrest in Oslo is because of the good economic situation there and the low levels of youth unemployment. As such, it is crucial to continue working with these issues, because there is no guarantee that economic conditions will continue to be good.

Norwegian-Somali youngsters often feel they are not understood to be part of the Norwegian society because of their skin colour, irrespective of whether they are born in Norway or not. It has also been noted that there are many structural inequalities that Norwegian-Somali youngsters face which complicates not just their sense of belonging but also their inclusion in the labour market and elsewhere. Exclusion and class inequality in Oslo, divided between the east and west of the city and coinciding with housing blocks of immigrants and non-immigrants, will need to be addressed in order to prevent far greater social security problems in the future.

10. PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

I have good experiences from the political system in Norway, the parties and how the system is built up. I have experienced a lot of positive things based on how the system works. I also have positive experiences from civil society and Somali organisations. It has energised me to help Somalis integrate. It has given me inspiration. It is rewarding to know I am helping a Somali.⁴²⁴

This section explores the participation of Norwegian-Somalis in civil society, politics and policymaking. It explores Norwegian definitions of who is a citizen of the country and what citizenship entails, and discusses the fact that Norwegian-Somalis have one of the highest numbers among immigrants of acquired Norwegian citizenship. The section continues by looking at civic participation at the neighbourhood level, through organisations and in the political sphere.

10.1 Norwegian Citizenship

The rules of Norwegian citizenship are determined in the Norwegian Nationality Act, LOV 2005-06-10 No. 51, which came into force on 1 September 2006.⁴²⁵ This law states that one can obtain Norwegian citizenship through birth (*ius sanguinis*), in case of adoption or through application. As a general rule, one needs to have lived in Norway seven out of the last 10 years in order to be able to apply for citizenship, but for some categories of people (including various groups of children and stateless persons) this requirement is reduced to five years or even less. Another general requirement is the renouncement of previous nationality.⁴²⁶

Once obtained, citizenship offers a range of advantages, including the right to live and work in Norway,⁴²⁷ which provides a sense of safety for those who fear being sent back to other countries – something particularly relevant for Somalis and other refugees. Citizenship furthermore provides the right to a Norwegian passport and the right to be given protection by Norwegian authorities abroad. This is again central for Somalis, many of whom do not have documents that allow them to travel freely. Citizenship is also central for participation in and influence on central democratic decision-making processes in society.⁴²⁸ This includes the right to vote in national elections (the right to

⁴²⁴ Shukri Mahmoud, Open Society Foundations focus group on participation and citizenship. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

⁴²⁵ Citizenship Law (*Statsborgerloven*), see lovdata.no/all/hl-20050610-051.html (accessed 24 November 2013).

⁴²⁶ For a critique, see T.H. Sagmo and M.B. Erdal, “Mindre Norsk med To Pass?” (Less Norwegian with Two Passports?), NRK Ytring, 24 March 2013, at nrk.no/ytring/mindre-norsk-med-to-pass_-1.10958806 (accessed 24 November 2013).

⁴²⁷ Pettersen, “Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap”.

⁴²⁸ Pettersen, “Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap”, p. 7.

vote in local elections is obtained after three years of living in Norway, irrespective of citizenship), as well as the right to run for office in national elections.

A report that analyses trends in the figures of Norwegian citizenship attainment⁴²⁹ shows that the number of acquisitions of Norwegian citizenship increased between 1977 and 2011. This is related to the general rise in immigration to Norway. In 2008, the naturalisation rate slowed, a trend that is likely to continue due to the new language requirements in the Norwegian Nationality Act 2013. Under the new law, after 1 September 2013, everyone aged between 18 and 55 years applying for Norwegian citizenship who has the obligation to participate in Norwegian and social courses in accordance to the Introduction Programme, must fulfil his or her duty according to that law. For some, this means a duty to complete 600 hours while others need to have completed 300 hours of tuition in the Norwegian language.⁴³⁰ Official statistics show that it is particularly people with a refugee background and those who come for family reunification (with refugees and others) who obtain Norwegian citizenship. The fact that refugees score highly may to some extent be explained by the fact that this is a category of highly motivated people who have lost the protection of their government and thus have lost many of their rights as citizens and have difficulty travelling with their existing travel documents.

10.2 Civic Participation in Neighbourhoods and Organisations

Vogel and Triandafyllidou⁴³¹ define active civic participation as people:

giving a voice to societal concerns, e.g. by engaging in political parties, local committees, parent associations or migrant lobby organisations; and/or organising solidarity and self-help, e.g. by taking leadership functions in religious associations, ethnic associations or informal self-help networks.

In this and other publications,⁴³² the concept of civic participation has largely been used in reference to migrants being active citizens in their country of settlement. Active citizenship has been defined as:

⁴²⁹ Pettersen, "Overgang til Norsk Statsborgerskap".

⁴³⁰ Letter from BLD to Open Society Foundations "Somalis in Oslo – Merknader til Rapport" (Somalis in Oslo – Comments on the Report), 2-10-2013.

⁴³¹ D. Vogel and A. Triandafyllidou, "Civic Activation of Immigrants: An Introduction to Conceptual and Theoretical Issues", POLITIS Working Paper No. 1, 2005, p. 11.

⁴³² See, for example, M. Aleksynska, "Civic Participation of Immigrants: Culture Transmission and Assimilation", Munich Personal RePEc (Research Papers in Economics) Archive (MPRA) Paper No. 7674, 2007; C. Horst, "The Depoliticisation of Diasporas from the Horn of Africa: From Refugees to Transnational Aid Workers", *African Studies* 72 (2) (2013) pp. 228–245 (hereafter, Horst, "The Depoliticisation of Diasporas"); D. Vogel (ed.), *Highly Active Immigrants. A Resource for European Civil Societies*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2008.

people's capacity to take an active role in public affairs, whether through formal democratic structures, through the press, through public debate, through associations, political parties, trade unions, local clubs and societies or simply through informal networks and mutual aid among neighbours, friends and family.⁴³³

From a Somali perspective, the concept of *astur*, as described by Safia Abdi Haase,⁴³⁴ is central in this respect. *Astur* encourages people to take responsibility for other members in their society and also functions as a form of control over the norms that guide members of the society in daily living. "*Astur* is often used to compel both men and women to be modest in life; that is to be kind and respectful to the elders, the culture, the religion and, most of all, society in general."⁴³⁵ It requires people to help those in need, but it is also used as a yardstick to measure how well people fit into society. According to Haase, "*astur* is a strong virtue that binds Somali people together, yet sometimes may lead to conflicts".⁴³⁶

It is important to stress that civic participation in Oslo, on the neighbourhood and city level, focuses both on the concerns of the Norwegian-Somali community and on other concerns. Participation is important for the city as a whole, not just for its Norwegian-Somali residents.

On the local level, many research participants agreed that Norwegian-Somalis did not engage sufficiently in their neighbourhood, although there is a great variation in levels of participation. Local engagement is about taking part in education and work, as well as about active participation in kindergartens, schools, with neighbours, in voluntary activities (*dugnad* in Norwegian). It is about encouraging children to participate in sports and other activities. Focus group participants were asked about how best to increase the involvement of Norwegian-Somalis in local participation mechanisms and decision-making processes, and Shukri Mahmoud, a 40-year-old Norwegian-Somali from Østensjø city district, suggested:

They need to engage themselves more. Many parents for example never show up to parents' meetings. They should take more responsibility: we are in Norway, not in Somalia. We often think that the society is for others. The "I stay in Norway but do not live in Norway" mentality.⁴³⁷

⁴³³ G. Chanan, "Active Citizenship and Community Involvement: Getting to the Roots", Eurofound Discussion Paper, Eurofound, Dublin, 1997, p. 1.

⁴³⁴ S. Haase, "Bonding and Bridging – A Case Study of Four Somali Women's Organisations in Norway, Oslo. Their Roles, Activities and the Collaborations Existing Between Them", Masters thesis at Faculty of Social Sciences, University College of Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, Haase, "Bonding and Bridging").

⁴³⁵ Haase, "Bonding and Bridging", p. 12.

⁴³⁶ Haase, "Bonding and Bridging", p. 14.

⁴³⁷ Shukri Mahmoud, Open Society Foundations focus group on participation and citizenship.

It was felt that Norwegian-Somalis needed to be proactive and engaged in society. Many research participants pointed out that this is currently not the case for a number of reasons. Access to information and knowledge, as well as language skills and awareness of rights and obligations are prerequisites for engagement. Information is about empowering people: "If people experience racism but do not know the system, they cannot do anything about it." At the same time, there is wide variation between different groups of Norwegian-Somalis in terms of their level of engagement. Many speak Norwegian fluently and have a good understanding of their rights and obligations as well as how society functions. While a lack of information and knowledge is seen as a concern for a part of the Norwegian-Somali community in Oslo, affecting their ability to participate in society in their day-to-day lives, there are many Norwegian-Somalis who do have the knowledge and skills, as well as the wish, to actively engage in society. There are a number of factors that affect people's ability and willingness to engage, including socio-economic background, level of education, gender, age and length of stay in Norway.

On an individual level, there is a concern that there are many educated Norwegian-Somalis who do not use their competence to help solve problems that Norwegian-Somalis have. As Ardo Matan, a 50-year-old woman, suggested:

Many Somalis both possess knowledge and education, but there is still little unity and engagement. We need more and better cooperation! There is a big difference between Norway and Somalia when it comes to culture, religion and social relations. The Norwegian authorities have little cultural competence about Somalis and minorities generally, whereas Somalis have little knowledge about Norway and Norwegian culture.⁴³⁸

So the perception is that Norwegian-Somali professionals, who have the knowledge and education, should function as bridge-builders between Norwegian and Somali society. Another point that was stressed in this respect is that these Norwegian-Somalis should not just help, but also advocate for the Norwegian-Somali community in the media and other areas (see also section 11). They should function as spokespeople on behalf of the community in many fields.

This line of reasoning suggests that every Norwegian-Somali's civic participation in Norway should be focused on the betterment of the Norwegian-Somali community, which of course is problematic. At the same time, there are many engaged individuals doing exactly this on an individual organised level. Many have set up organisations for the purpose of assisting their community. In 2008–2009, there were 150 registered Somali organisations in Norway, the large majority focusing on the situation of the Somali community.⁴³⁹ Many Norwegian-Somali youngsters, for example, have been

⁴³⁸ Ardo Matan, Open Society Foundations focus group on Child Welfare Services.

⁴³⁹ C. Horst and M. H. Gaas, "Diaspora Organisations from the Horn of Africa in Norway: Contributions to Peacebuilding?", PRIO Policy Brief, Oslo, 2009 (hereafter, Horst and Gaas, "Diaspora Organisations").

very active in extracurricular activities, like student groups and homework support. The SSF over many years has played an important role in organising motivational seminars to encourage Norwegian-Somali youngsters to opt for higher education, as well as hosting debates on a range of topics to get its members to engage (Box 5).⁴⁴⁰

A study on four Somali women's organisations in Norway identified different activities that these organisations engage in, including providing knowledge-based training for women (language courses, courses about rights and obligations in Norway), organising seminars and offering skills training.⁴⁴¹ These organisations were mainly set up to address some of the problems that Somalis, particularly women, face in Norway. Efforts were often geared towards "preparing members for successful integration into the Norwegian community so that they can contribute fully to national activities".⁴⁴² While these and many other initiatives contribute to providing participants with the resources and skills to participate more actively in society, they also provide the initiators and active members with a great deal of experience and knowledge about local participation in Oslo, as Kassim Ali pointed out:

I feel that I have gained experience and I have been able to learn what happens politically and in civic terms because I have been active in Somali and other organisations. I felt I was making a contribution. At times I was told that I am a role model, and I noticed that myself. It is also about the social aspects and the fact that you have a group you spent a considerable amount of time with. A group with which you work together for certain causes. It is social, while at the same time you work together and contribute something. I also felt that I got an understanding of Norwegian politics, as well as how Somalis are managing in society, when I became active in SSF and other Somali organisations. Those are experiences from the early phases of my life. I want to get back to that phase because I feel I could have done more. But because of the negative aspects that I will get back to, I did not manage to do more.⁴⁴³

The negative aspects that Kassim referred to are also described in various studies.⁴⁴⁴ The first difficulty is that activities are not well organised and coordinated, using voluntary workers in organisations that receive little or no funding for their activities. Those involved do not have relevant management or project leadership training or experience, although there is great variation in the levels of professionalism and activities between organisations.

⁴⁴⁰ See also somaliskstudent.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

⁴⁴¹ Haase, "Bonding and Bridging".

⁴⁴² Haase, "Bonding and Bridging", p. iv.

⁴⁴³ Kassim Ali, Open Society Foundations focus group on participation and citizenship.

⁴⁴⁴ Haase, "Bonding and Bridging"; Horst and Gaas, "Diaspora Organisations"; C. Horst, Rojan Ezzati, Matteo Guglielmo, Petra Mezzetti, Päivi Pirkkalainen, Valeria Saggiomo, Giulia Sinatti, and Andrea Warnecke, "Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development. A Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers", PRIO Policy Brief, Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, Horst et al., "Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development").

Members mostly engage in their work after regular working hours, often combining it with many other responsibilities. Nasir Mohamed argued in this respect: "Voluntary work does not work. You are engaged in too many things from the start and how good can a voluntary organisation be then? If there were people who get paid, a lot would be achieved."⁴⁴⁵ Organisations can receive financial support from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (BLD), IMDi and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation NORAD, although it rarely covers salary costs but rather offers funds for seminars, study trips, activities for participants etc.

The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion provides grants to immigrant organisations and other NGOs both locally and nationally. Officials at IMDi stated that grants are given to operate local immigrant organisations and voluntary activities that contribute to participation, dialogue and interaction. They argue that the aim of granting funds to support local immigrant organisations is to strengthen the participation of the immigrant population locally and provide access to social networks. Grants for voluntary activities aim to create meeting-places and activities in local communities across various population groups. Both these grants aim to contribute to increasing trust and a sense of belonging in society.

Besides the practical and professional aspects of running an organisation, by far the biggest challenge is understood to be the lack of cooperation and united action among the different initiatives. Many Norwegian-Somali individuals and organisations in Oslo dedicate their work to the local Norwegian-Somali residents. While they often have common goals, in terms of dealing with problems that these Norwegian-Somali residents face, they do not cooperate well together. Many pointed out that the community is very divided and needs to act in a more unified way. Both within and between organisations, many conflicts arise and mistrust is a common feature. Conflicts may be related to socio-economic background, gender, generation, political perspective and clan. For example, there are many organisations that work on the same themes, but are based on clan and thus do not work cooperatively or merge: for the younger generation this is not easy to deal with, as Ubah Harun, a University College student, underscores:

I was part of an organisation but decided to withdraw because there were so many clan and internal conflicts. For someone like me who does not know what clan is, it is difficult to take sides. So I decided to withdraw. I feel that was very negative because when I decided to withdraw I got to see from the outside how bad it actually was. I get sad about it because this situation still continues. At times when people want to participate, there are others who ruin it for them by doing a lot of strange things. It is difficult to explain, but by saying stuff they force others to stop participating.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Nasir Mohamed, Open Society Foundations focus group on identity and belonging with young men.

⁴⁴⁶ Ubah Harun, Open Society Foundations focus group on participation and citizenship.

While there have been a range of initiatives that have aimed to coordinate activities, build consensus and create dialogue, few have been successful. In particular the numerous attempts to create umbrella organisations have not led to desired results and display a range of problems.⁴⁴⁷ A more innovative approach, set up and implemented by the Nansen Peace and Dialogue Centre (NPDC), focuses on leadership and strengthening individuals' capacities to act as leaders (See Box 17).

Civic participation often takes a different shape when it involves the younger generation – in particular those who were born in Norway or came to Norway when they were very young and have lived there for many years. For many of these young people, it is not easy to relate to clan issues because they often lack both the in-depth knowledge and the experience with the clan as it functioned in Somalia to fully understand a clan-based identity. This leads them increasingly to work together as youngsters, avoiding cooperation with the older generation because of the internal conflicts that commonly arise. At the same time, without the full understanding and support from within the Norwegian-Somali community, they also may be less able to deal with some of the concerns faced by Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo.

⁴⁴⁷ Horst et al., "Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development".

Box 17. Leaders of the Future (*Framtidas Ledere*)

Framtidas Ledere is a programme that was based on the experiences from the Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue's (NCPD) work with the Somali diaspora in Norway, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through that work, NCPD saw low attendance from women in its workshops and courses. NCPD decided to set up a women's leadership programme to empower Somali women to take responsibility to lead projects and processes both in Somalia and in Norway. The main topics the programme focused on include general leadership, project leadership and management, networking, communication, conflict management and dialogue.

The program consisted of five seminars between autumn 2012 and spring 2013, including a trip to London to gain experiences from comparable organisations working with Somalia and the Somali diaspora. The idea behind the London trip was to give the participants the opportunity to get connected to organisations that are engaged in their community both in Somalia and abroad, as well as building an international network. Visiting these organisations gave the participants insight into how to lead themselves and others in their community and how to initiate change processes.

10.3 Political Participation among Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo

In Norway, municipal elections are held every four years, with the last one occurring in 2011. Each political party nominates a list of candidates, and voters can vote for a party and its preferred candidates as well as for personal candidates (including those from other parties). After the number of seats won is determined, the number of personal votes determines which candidates will take the seats. In the local elections in Oslo, a number of Norwegian-Somali candidates got their seats through high numbers of personal votes.

Statistics on voting show that Norwegian-Somalis have a high voting rate compared with other groups of immigrants, taking into account the fact that they are a very young group in Norway. In the local elections in 2011, there were 9,111 Somali immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents who were allowed to vote, and of that number, 50.2 percent voted (46.5 percent among men, 54.1 percent among women).⁴⁴⁸ This compares with an average of 42.7 percent for all immigrant groups and 63.6 percent for the whole population, also slightly higher for women than men. A report on the political engagement of immigrants and the second-generation children of immigrants also highlights the active participation of Norwegian-Somalis, with one of the largest percentages of participation in elections, with a high percentage

⁴⁴⁸ See Statistics Norway, at ssb.no/a/kortnavn/vundkinnv/tab-2012-03-01-01.html (accessed 24 November 2013).

of young Norwegian-Somalis participating and a high number of representatives across the country.⁴⁴⁹ While it is often seen as counter-intuitive that Norwegian-Somalis participate more in democratic processes than other groups of immigrants, considering other integration indicators,⁴⁵⁰ this is not a pattern unique to Norway.⁴⁵¹ The strong awareness of the importance of political organisation is not at all new to Somalis.

Among candidates for city councils around the country, there were 59 (39 men and 20 women) with a background from Somalia. In the Oslo City Council, there are now three Norwegian-Somali representatives (two women and one man), all representing the Labour Party. There are other Norwegian-Somalis who act as vice-representatives, representing other parties. While Norwegian-Somalis make up 2 percent of Oslo's residents, they command 5 percent of the council seats.⁴⁵²

This is certainly one of the success stories of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, and there are opportunities and strategies available; there are also clear challenges for all those involved. Norwegian-Somalis have high expectations of their representatives after voting them in, and often consider they are not met. There is a sense that those in political positions are from an elite which does not consider the plight of those at the bottom, but rather pushes its own political agenda forward.

The Somalis in the City Council said they would renew! That was the slogan during the campaign. But I do not feel that those who are representing Somalis have done anything for Somalis. The three in the City Council have different backgrounds so they could have united Somalis, but they have not done that. So I do not feel represented well enough even if I am proud that they are there.⁴⁵³

The idea of being representatives or spokespersons for the Norwegian-Somali community in Oslo, however, does not acknowledge the fact that the Norwegian-Somali community is in fact extremely diverse. Furthermore, there are contradictory political realities at play, which form another challenge concerning achieving full political participation. On the one hand, it is not possible to meet the needs of the Norwegian-Somali community because representatives work within a fixed party programme and are representatives for all residents in Oslo, not just Norwegian-Somalis. On the other hand, representatives often feel that they are seen as minority

⁴⁴⁹ K. Trondstad and J. Rogstad, *Stemmer de Ikke? Politisk Deltakelse Blant Innvandrere og Norskfødte med Innvandrerforeldre* (Don't They Vote? Political Participation Among Immigrants and Norwegian-born with Immigrant Parents), Fafo, Oslo, 2012 (hereafter, Trondstad and Rogstad, *Stemmer de Ikke?*).

⁴⁵⁰ Trondstad and Rogstad, *Stemmer de Ikke?*.

⁴⁵¹ In the US elections, for example, the large Somali community in Columbus, Ohio, mobilised with clear voting recommendations for all posts available, from the presidential candidate down to the local candidates.

⁴⁵² Oslo City Council, at utviklings-og-kompe

⁴⁵³ [tanseetaten.oslo.kommune.no/oslostatistikken/innvandringparticipation and citizenship](http://tanseetaten.oslo.kommune.no/oslostatistikken/innvandringparticipation%20and%20citizenship).

politicians only. This may include being asked for explanations of why Somalis behave in a certain way, and not being taken seriously.

The individuals concerned have different strategies to balance the expectations of the Norwegian-Somali community with the political realities they face, and some of them have become highly adept in the art of political lobbying and coalition building. A Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) film shows one of the representatives presenting her situation in light of the political struggle that Norwegian women have fought over the last 100 years, from when they were allowed to vote.⁴⁵⁴ Strategic thinking is an important aspect of the political quest towards change, and may need to take place across parties, especially as the Labour Party that all Norwegian-Somalis in the City Council represent is in opposition in Oslo. If, moreover, an issue does not match the party programme it is very difficult to initiate change. As Kassim Ali explained:

One needs a lot of time in the beginning. In the context of the party, one can try to change the party programme, come with propositions, make alliances. It does not help to just think about the interests of Somalis. One has to change one's choice of words. It for example will not say that it is important to introduce quota for Somalis, but it could say that we should introduce quota for minorities. To influence processes, one needs sufficient time, contacts and a good network.⁴⁵⁵

A final challenge is that, just like in the case of Norwegian-Somali organisations, Norwegian-Somali politicians also have conflicts based on socio-economic background, gender, generation, political perspective and clan, on top of personal differences. Opportunities for constructive contributions to transformations are lost when those in power positions cannot work together.⁴⁵⁶

10.4 Transnational Citizens

Our focus on Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo and their active participation in local and national contexts is incomplete. Although the concepts of civic participation and active citizenship have mainly been used in relation to migrants' activities in the country in which they settle, migrants also give a voice to social concerns and organise solidarity and self-help beyond the borders of their country of residence. In fact, Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo are part of a wider Somali diaspora and many are very engaged with and aim to actively participate in Somalia. This engagement is not necessarily a contradiction of their engagement in Oslo and Norway, but rather an extension of the

⁴⁵⁴ NRK, "Makt og Motstand" (Power and Resistance), at nrk.no/skole/klippdetalj?topic=urn:x-mediadb:18896 (accessed 24 November 2013).

⁴⁵⁵ Kassim Ali, Open Society Foundations focus group on participation and citizenship.

⁴⁵⁶ Input from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

same civic engagement – just with a different geographical focus. As Roble Isah illustrates:

I have always been focused on education, whether this is in Norway or in Somalia. I used to be responsible for finances at the Somali Student Association (SSF). Our focus was on education and I helped provide homework support to Somali pupils in schools. If I talk about Somalia, what is positive is the support I provide to help the resource-weak, with a focus on competence building. Anything from rehabilitating schools to supporting youth with sports activities.⁴⁵⁷

So while transnational engagements with Somalia can be interpreted as a form of civic participation in the country of origin, it is also civic participation in the country of settlement. Chanan defines active citizenship as people's capacity to take an active role in public affairs.⁴⁵⁸ Public affairs are not just those that relate to national matters, but also those that have an international focus. The formal and informal structures that enable people to take an active role in public affairs likewise are not confined by national boundaries. Accordingly, if Norwegian-Somalis are to be accepted as citizens of Norway, their transnational engagements with Somalia can be understood as active contributions to public affairs in Norway. Such engagements greatly affect daily lives in Oslo as well as conditions in Somalia.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ Roble Isah, Open Society Foundations focus group discussion on civil and political participation.

⁴⁵⁸ G. Chanan, "Active Citizenship and Community Involvement: Getting to the Roots". Eurofound Discussion Paper. Dublin: Eurofound, 1997.

⁴⁵⁹ J. Carling, M. Erdal and C. Horst, "How Does Conflict in the Country of Origin Affect Remittance-sending? A Mixed-method Study of Financial Priorities and Transnational Obligations Among Somalis and Pakistanis in Norway", *International Migration Review* 46 (2) (2012), pp. 283–309; C. Horst, "The Transnational Political Engagements of Refugees: Remittance Sending Practices Among Somalis in Norway", *Conflict, Security and Development* 8 (3) (2008), pp. 31–339; C. Horst, "A Monopoly on Assistance: International Aid to Refugee Camps and the Neglected Role of the Somali Diaspora", *Afrika Spectrum* 43 (1) (2008), pp. 121–131; Horst, "The Depoliticisation of Diasporas".

11. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

I lived in London for a good part of my life and I feel that Somalis are similarly represented in the British media as they are here in Norway. It seems as if Somalis do not manage to get away from the stereotypical media images. Somalis came to the United Kingdom earlier than they came to Norway and I still find it odd how quickly we got a bad but similar reputation in a range of countries like for example the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom.⁴⁶⁰

This section starts by describing the experiences of the Norwegian-Somali community in Oslo with reporting on Norwegian-Somalis by the local media and what impact this reporting has on the community. It also discusses the level of engagement of Norwegian-Somalis with the media and journalists. While media reporting is overwhelmingly negative, a number of Norwegian-Somalis are engaged with the media and journalists to counter these negative stereotypes, both as interviewees and through op-eds or blogs. At the same time, there are individuals who often engage with the media and are seen to be negative spokespersons for the community, as they focus solely on problems or take a negative approach. Norwegian media often relate to those few individuals as representatives instead of asking Norwegian-Somalis for their personal experiences as residents of Norway,⁴⁶¹ or drawing on a much wider network of Norwegian-Somali professionals and experts on specific topics. There follows a consideration of the media sources that Norwegian-Somalis rely on for news and information about local, national and international issues. This includes Norwegian-Somali media, some of which broadcast similarly negative stereotypical images about Norway and Norwegians. Finally, a number of initiatives are described that create a more inclusive and diverse media coverage of the Norwegian-Somali community in Norway.

11.1 The Invisible Everyday Life: Reporting on Norwegian-Somalis by Norwegian Media

Somalis are being talked about either as problems or as people that we too often problematise. Both are equally bad. It is not common to talk about Somalis as ordinary participants in society.⁴⁶²

Immigration and integration are popular topics in the media, and are by and large discussed as problems that the country faces. A government report on immigrants in

⁴⁶⁰ Liban Nuur, Open Society Foundations focus group on media. All names of focus group participants are pseudonyms. See the discussion under Methodology on selection and use of quotations.

⁴⁶¹ Roundtable comment, 18 September 2013.

⁴⁶² Ifrah Bashir, Open Society Foundations focus group on media.

the media argued that the media in Norway are creating Islamophobia while the everyday lives of immigrants remain invisible.⁴⁶³ The way in which the topic is discussed publicly affects the processes of inclusion or exclusion, and immigrants' sense of belonging. For example, what it means to be Norwegian is delimited through the use of the terms "immigrant" and "Norwegian" as opposites, which does not allow individuals to be both immigrants and Norwegians at the same time. The underlying definition of the Norwegian "we" does not include people who have immigrated to Norway.⁴⁶⁴ Worse still, children of immigrants are most often incorporated into the category of immigrants as well.

At the same time, it is important to stress that the word "immigrant" does not actually refer to all those who have immigrated to Norway. Research on immigrants in the media in 1996 and 2003⁴⁶⁵ showed that immigrants from Western Europe and the United States are generally represented as individuals, and rarely portrayed as immigrants. The word "immigrant" is reserved for people coming into the country from Africa, Asia and East Europe and is constructed as a problem, for example immigrants "not following Norwegian norms and rules, being resource-weak, needing assistance and being poorly integrated".⁴⁶⁶ While the situation seems to be improving and there is an increase in positive stories, especially about sports and culture,⁴⁶⁷ there is still a long way to go towards a more balanced and diverse picture.

A media analysis based on Norwegian media, including newspapers, electronic media, radio and television, concluded that Somalis are by far the most discussed group.⁴⁶⁸ The same conclusion was drawn in a systematic analysis of media reports and policy documents on remittances between 2000 and 2008.⁴⁶⁹ The largest share of these were concerned with remittances as an element in terrorism and crime. A review of media

⁴⁶³ IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier: Mediaskapt Islamfrykt og Usynlig Hverdagsliv* (Immigrants in the Norwegian Media: Media-created Islamophobia and Invisible Everyday Life), IMDi Annual Report 2009, Oslo, 2010 (hereafter, IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier*).

⁴⁶⁴ IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier*, p. 13.

⁴⁶⁵ M. Lindstad and Ø. Fjeldstad, *Pressen og de Fremmede* (The Press and the Foreign), IJ-forlaget, Oslo, 1999; M. Lindstad and Ø. Fjeldstad, *Av Utenlandsk Opprinnelse – Nye Nordmenn i Avisspaltene* (Of Foreign Origin – New Norwegians in the Newspapers), IJ-forlaget, Oslo, 2005 (hereafter, Lindstad and Fjeldstad, *Av Utenlandsk Opprinnelse*).

⁴⁶⁶ M. Lindstad and Ø. Fjeldstad, "Pressen som Norskhetens Portvokter" (The Press as Gatekeepers of the Norwegian), in IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier*, p. 24 (hereafter, Lindstad and Fjeldstad, "Pressen som Norskhetens Portvokter").

⁴⁶⁷ Lindstad and Fjeldstad, "Pressen som Norskhetens Portvokter".

⁴⁶⁸ V. Falkenberg and K. Nilsen, "Lite Brukt som Kilder" (Little Used as Sources), in IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier*.

⁴⁶⁹ C. Horst, M.B. Erdal, J. Carling and K. Afeef, "Private Money, Public Scrutiny? Contrasting Perspectives on Remittances", *Global Networks*, forthcoming 2014.

coverage of remittances from 1999 to 2008⁴⁷⁰ showed that there are three most discussed topics about Somali remittance sending: crime, cultural practices and lack of integration. These “function as explanations for each other, yet the relationship between these factors has never been systematically investigated or precisely defined”.⁴⁷¹

Elisabeth Eide and Anne H. Simonsen⁴⁷² have also come to similar conclusions based on many years of research into the media’s representations of immigrants. They argue that Somalis, being one of the most recent groups in Norway, have received a lot of negative attention. Statistics are quoted to illustrate that they have the highest unemployment, use most social benefits, do worst in schools, have high levels of criminality, and engage in forced marriages, FGM, khat chewing and violence.⁴⁷³ Studies clearly show that the Norwegian-Somali community in Norway receives an enormous amount of negative attention and is often used as an example of the fact that integration is failing.⁴⁷⁴

Since the academic evidence is so strong, it should not come as a surprise that those interviewed for the Open Society Foundations research were very aware of this negative image in the media, and were affected by it. When asked to list negatives and positives about how Norwegian-Somalis are reflected in the media, they highlighted the same themes noted by research: Norwegian-Somalis are described as unengaged in society, violent, unemployed, abusing social benefits and poorly performing in education. Specifically Somali challenges like khat and FGM are discussed as well. As Sara Osman, a pupil in upper secondary at Søndre Nordstrand city district, says:

Somalis are exposed in the media and represented as uncivilized, unintegrated and not taking part in society. We are also given the impression that we are the cause of the fact that we are not part of the society.⁴⁷⁵

Another aspect considered problematic both in research and among those interviewed relates to the shifting underlying definitions of the Norwegian “we” in media discussions. One study characterised it thus:

⁴⁷⁰ A. I. Engebriksen and Ø. Fuglerud, *Kultur og Generasjon. Tilpasningsprosesser Blant Somaliere og Tamiler i Norge* (Culture and Generation. Adaptation Processes among Somalis and Tamils in Norway), Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 2009 (hereafter, Engebriksen and Fuglerud, *Kultur og Generasjon*).

⁴⁷¹ Engebriksen and Fuglerud, *Kultur og Generasjon*.

⁴⁷² E. Eide and A. H. Simonsen, *Mistenkelige Utlandinger. Minoriteter i Norsk Presse Gjennom Hundre År* (Suspicious Foreigners. Minorities in the Norwegian Press during 100 Years), Høyskoleforlaget, Kristiansand, 2007; E. Eide and A. H. Simonsen, “De Vanskelige Journalistiske Valgene” (The Difficult Journalistic Choices), in IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier* (hereafter, Eide and Simonsen, “De vanskelige Journalistiske Valgene”).

⁴⁷³ Eide and Simonsen, “De vanskelige Journalistiske Valgene”.

⁴⁷⁴ IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier*.

⁴⁷⁵ Sara Osman, Open Society Foundations focus group on media.

The main rule appears to be simple: when journalists discuss people linked to crimes or other negative circumstances, they turn to terms that indicate that the people in question do not belong to the Norwegian community. But when immigrants are successful, they do not have to have stayed in the country for long before they are promoted to Norwegians.⁴⁷⁶

Mohamed Abdi, a runner who took part in the Youth Olympics for Norway's athletics team, in a 2001 interview with *Aftenposten* asked:

Who am I really? When I run the 800 metres for the youth national team, I am a Norwegian. But when the media run headlines about Somalis, people come up to me and ask whether I am a drug dealer or child kidnapper. Then I'm all of a sudden a Somali.⁴⁷⁷

The same theme was discussed among the Open Society Foundations focus group participants, creating some debate. Artists like Noora Noor and Mo were highlighted as examples of people who were systematically described as Norwegian-Somali, and the entertainment world was praised as possibly one of the most inclusive sectors in Norway. The general sense was that people who stand out for some positive role in Norway are entitled to represent Norwegianness, whereas those engaged in negative activities only represent the Somali. However, this was challenged by Ifrah Bashir, who argued:

It is a myth that at times the Somali background is undercommunicated. Because it is the Somali background that is highlighted in stories about these individuals. This idea of "Look, Norway has fostered a football player with a Somali background, against all odds." We are brown and our background is clear, one cannot ignore that fact.⁴⁷⁸

As analysed above, the problematic way in which the media often portray Norwegian-Somalis has further implications as it is linked to perceptions about Somalis in the wider society and so affects the processes of exclusion and feelings of belonging. The media both plays on and creates many prejudices, as there are many in Norwegian society who do not actually know any Norwegian-Somalis. It is important to look at the extent to which Norwegian-Somalis engage with the media and journalists and whether this engagement affects the picture.

11.2 Engagement of Norwegian-Somalis with the Media

Norwegian-Somalis engage with the Norwegian media in a number of different roles: they are journalists or writers; sources of information for journalists; and they are representatives and critics of the Norwegian-Somali community. In the first role, as

⁴⁷⁶ Lindstad and Fjeldstad, "Pressen som Norskhetens Portvokter", p. 23.

⁴⁷⁷ Quoted in Lindstad and Fjeldstad, "Pressen som Norskhetens Portvokter".

⁴⁷⁸ Ifrah Bashir, Open Society Foundations focus group on media.

journalists and writers, there are a few examples but not many. Anne Fogt and Nazneen Khan-Østrem identify two problems here: first, that this is not a profession with a high status among many immigrant communities; and second, that those who do make it are most often expected to write about issues related to immigrants and integration.⁴⁷⁹ They compare this with the situation of female journalists in the 1970s and 1980s; not only did women have to push themselves into covering political and economic topics, but when they did, they made a further difference by diversifying the sources they used and particularly relying more on women.⁴⁸⁰ The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) has set up a trainee programme to increase the number of editorial employees with a migrant background (See Box 18).

Box 18. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation Trainee Project⁴⁸¹

The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) has since the beginning of 2008 been hosting a trainee project for multicultural journalists. The aim is to increase the number of multicultural editorial employees in the organisation. The first five trainees started their training in January 2008 and completed a six-month period of education in journalism and practical production in the media company. The ninth group of trainees was hired in 2013. The trainee period has now been expanded from six to 10 months. Somalis are one of the target groups of this programme, and a few Norwegian-Somalis have applied. In 2010, one of the Norwegian-Somali applicants was granted a trainee position.

NRK's goal has been to reflect multicultural Norway in its programmes, and one way to achieve this is to recruit and promote journalists with minority backgrounds. Furthermore, NRK wants to train talented journalists itself. Forty trainees have completed their education since the project started. Seventeen of the trainees now have full-time permanent employment at NRK and nine have temporary contracts. In 2009 NRK won the government's Multicultural Award for this project.

A number of young Norwegian-Somali women have managed to be taken seriously as writers. Ilham Hassan has had a regular contribution in *Morgenbladet*, where she has written pieces on a range of topics beyond integration and immigration, including education, local elections and the representation of Africa in the media.

⁴⁷⁹ A. Fogt and N. Khan-Østrem, "Journalistutdanningen i et Mangfoldssamfunn" (Journalism Education in a Diverse Society), in IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier* (hereafter Fogt and Khan-Østrem, "Journalistutdanningen").

⁴⁸⁰ Fogt and Khan-Østrem, "Journalistutdanningen", p. 73.

⁴⁸¹ Source: NRK email exchange with the author.

Norwegian-Somalis are active in various new media forms as well. Warsan Ismail, a university student and active member of SSF, has written her “Behind pink burkas and yellow mullah beards” blog since 2007 about a range of topics.⁴⁸² She reflects:

The blog and I received some attention partly because I also use Twitter a lot but it also gets responses like “Oi, she can write, a Somali girl, wow”. I feel such remarks are lame and I don’t care so much about it. But I have more positive media experiences, for example when I was interviewed by Dagens Næringsliv together with three other young bloggers. I have also been interviewed by *Morgenbladet* in my role as communication officer for the Somali Student Association, for a good piece that represented Somalis as a group that works hard and contributes to Somalia. I have also been interviewed in the student newspaper as a representative of the Socialdemocrats at the University of Oslo.⁴⁸³

Warsan Ismail referred to a long piece that the journalist Maren Næss Olsen wrote for *Morgenbladet* entitled, “It is a typical Somali thing to do good”, which was well-received in the Norwegian-Somali community. She had been asked to write a piece on the fact that “Mama Hawa”⁴⁸⁴ would come to Norway to receive the Nansen Refugee Award. She decided to expand the story when she read about the large sums of remittances that Norwegian-Somalis sent. In her view, this would not have been a story for any other community, except maybe in *Utrop*,⁴⁸⁵ but it was published since it was breaking stereotypes. She explained that she was interested in both challenging stereotypes and writing a good story:

There are the usual stories where one family is brought forward to illustrate something positive, a family that is doing good. Such stories are often just reinforcing stereotypes. But my evidence was very solid, and the story showed a different side of the Somali community ... The Somalis I spoke to were very happy to be contacted about a topic other than Islam, terrorism or khat. They were very open, surprisingly open considering the many bad experiences Somalis have had with the Norwegian media.⁴⁸⁶

The fact that she used existing contacts to introduce herself to others really made a difference. Often, Norwegian-Somalis who would be very capable of functioning as sources for pieces in the Norwegian media are quite reluctant to do so. Maqal, an Oslo-based Norwegian-Somali radio station, broadcast a radio debate in 2011 about Somalis

⁴⁸² See smagalsomalier.wordpress.com (accessed 24 November 2013). Warsan Ismail also writes for the newspaper *Morgenbladet*.

⁴⁸³ Warsan Ismail, Open Society Foundations focus group on media.

⁴⁸⁴ Hawa Aden Mohamed, who works to educate girls and women in Somalia; see the UNHCR website at unhcr.org/5058335d6.html (accessed 2 December 2013).

⁴⁸⁵ *Utrop* is a multicultural newspaper with a small readership.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Maren Næss Olsen, 24 January 2013.

in the Norwegian media. Listeners called in and mentioned a range of reasons why they could or did not want to engage with Norwegian journalists. Some indicated that they felt they did not speak Norwegian well enough or did not have the necessary background knowledge. Others asked, “Why should I be in the spotlight, why should I defend myself for all the problems that Somalis in Norway have?” And then there were those who had contributed before but had had negative experiences. Norwegian journalists face problems trying to find good sources.⁴⁸⁷

Some of the reluctance to engage might also have to do with the fact that other Norwegian-Somalis regard those who do appear regularly with scepticism. They are often treated as Somali “representatives” or “spokespersons” by journalists, which means that they are asked to comment on a wide range of topics that they are not necessarily experts on. Furthermore, those who are critical and speak on problems in the Norwegian-Somali community are quoted most, in line with the general media focus. A number of critical Norwegian-Somalis have stepped forward in order to challenge FGM practices, perceptions on homosexuality, etc., and these individuals – including Amal Aden and Kadra⁴⁸⁸ – have often been presented in debates where “immigrant opposes immigrant”.⁴⁸⁹ These women take similar positions to Ayaan Hirsi Ali in the Netherlands. While some agree that they deal with important matters in the Norwegian-Somali community, there has been a lot of resistance to their role in the debate. Fartun Bishar, a pupil in upper secondary from Gamle Oslo city district, commented:

Those people who have been in the media and wrote books have been deliberately selected by the media. Those books are exaggerated, some elements can be true but a part is exaggerated and presented as the truth ... The way the media exposes these books leads to the fact that neighbours believe a lot of strange things about Somalis. The fact that Amal Aden still receives prizes ensures that her books are discussed more.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁷ Comment from roundtable, 18 September 2013.

⁴⁸⁸ Amal Aden is the pseudonym of a Norwegian-Somali author who has written about problems in the Norwegian-Somali milieu and her own position as a Lesbian Muslim woman. Kadra Noor (Yusuf) is a Norwegian-Somali woman who carried a hidden camera to expose practices of FGM among Norwegian-Somalis.

⁴⁸⁹ Eide and Simonsen, “De vanskelige Journalistiske Valgene”, p. 48.

⁴⁹⁰ Fartun Bishar, Open Society Foundations focus group on media.

11.3 Norwegian-Somalis' Preferred Media Sources for News and Information

Odd F. Vaage reports that TV and the internet are the media most frequently used by the Norwegians, including immigrants.⁴⁹¹ While most immigrants who took part in the Statistics Norway study indicated that they found it easy to understand the news in newspapers, on the radio and on TV, the percentage that reads print newspapers and listens to the radio is considerably lower among immigrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America than the population as a whole. Various authors point out that this might also have to do with the fact that Norwegian newspapers do not cater to a multi-ethnic audience but write for the well-established, white middle class to which most journalists themselves belong.⁴⁹² *Utrop* tries to address this and caters to a more diverse audience, with staff members from more than 10 countries.⁴⁹³

While the Statistics Norway survey focused on those who had mastered the Norwegian language, of course another constraint is that not all immigrants are fluent in Norwegian. Many Somalis came to Norway without any formal education and thus struggle with reading. A lot of the news and information gathering is done orally, where information that is picked up from Norwegian, Somali and international media is passed on to others by phone. Somali and international TV (and radio) channels include BBC Somalia, Universal TV, Somali Channel and VOA Somali, and Hiiraan Online and other internet sites are frequently used as well. The phone, often called jungle telegraph, is used to update each other, discuss the news and countercheck whether one has understood things correctly.

Partly to address the need for oral communication, Radio Maqal (Box 19) was set up in February 2010. The founders aimed to create a meeting arena for Norwegian-Somalis where they could exchange information, discuss the issues that were important to them and cooperate. There are international and local topics, but the radio is a place free of clan and regional politics, focusing on Norwegian-based challenges and experiences. The founders were responding to the negative image of Somalis in the media and wanted to empower, help integrate and prepare people to encounter Norwegian media. Radio Maqal has discussed many of the same themes that are discussed in the Norwegian media, but from a more nuanced perspective. They have listeners calling in and discussing, for example, the misuse of social benefits, which then created an opportunity for dialogue and constructive debate. They have,

⁴⁹¹ O. F. Vaage, "Kultur- og Mediebruk Blant Personer med Innvandrerbakgrunn. Resultater fra Kultur- og Mediebruksundersøkelsen 2008 og Tilleggsutvalg Blant Innvandrere og Norskfødte med Innvandrerforeldre" (Culture and Media Use Among People with Immigrant Background. Results of Culture and Media Usage Survey 2008 and Supplementary Selection Among Immigrant and Norwegian-born with Immigrant Parents), Statistics Norway, 2009.

⁴⁹² Lindstad and Fjeldstad, *Av Utenlandsk Opprinnelse*, p. 31.

⁴⁹³ M. Vivekanantan, "Flerkulturell Journalistikk i Praksis" (Multicultural Journalism in Practice), in IMDi, *Innvandrere i Norske Medier* (hereafter, Vivekanantan, "Flerkulturell Journalistikk i Praksis").

furthermore, discussed topics like criminality, khat, FGM, gender issues, family life and integration.

As Amina Madar, one of the initiators stressed:

It is a greater responsibility than you think. With an organisation, maybe you organise a seminar here and there and that is it. But a radio is an immense responsibility ... We have a real influence on people. We need to think about our target group, finances, the effects we have on societal developments and such. It is important to be in close contact with our listeners, so we organise an annual meeting where we talk with our listeners about the radio we make.⁴⁹⁴

11.4 Initiatives to Improve the Media Engagement of Norwegian-Somalis

Since there are considerable challenges with the media's portrayal and engagement of immigrants in Norway more generally and among Norwegian-Somalis in particular, a number of initiatives have been taken. First, there are initiatives to address the fact that there are few visible minorities among journalists. Projects carried out by both NRK and the Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science at Oslo University College aim at increasing the recruitment of journalists with a multicultural background in mainstream media.⁴⁹⁵ Introducing a quota scheme for students from minority backgrounds, while addressing the problem, involves a number of problems including the danger of stigmatisation. Of course the fact that someone has a non-Norwegian background alone does not necessarily improve reporting. What is required is a perspective that is more sensitive culturally and respecting of diversity.⁴⁹⁶

Utrop tries to provide a more diverse picture of the new Norway from outside the mainstream Norwegian media. While this gives far greater freedom to really address topics of relevance for immigrants from a different perspective, it also means that impact is more limited as the readership is generally not mainstream Norway. Similarly, NRK has a programme that stimulates radio production in other languages, catering to the needs of communities like the Norwegian-Somalis.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Amina Madar, 13 March 2013.

⁴⁹⁵ Fogt and Khan-Østrem, "Journalistutdanningen".

⁴⁹⁶ Vivekanantan, "Flerkulturell Journalistikk i Praksis".

Box 19. Radio Maqal

Radio Maqal was set up in February 2010 by young Somali volunteers with different backgrounds in journalism, law and politics. The radio station is based on voluntary work and does not have any permanent staff members. The costs for rent of the studio and for the equipment are covered by EMI. Radio Maqal broadcasts every Saturday from 8 to 11 p.m. They are on FM radio in Oslo, but can be listened to online as well. On the internet they have about 4,000 listeners overall, half of those from within Norway.

Radio Maqal is one of many radio stations in NRK's multicultural local radio programmes, which broadcast in foreign languages in Norway. They follow the guidelines to deliver professional journalism, requiring them to be objective, informed about news and quote their sources. NRK provides them with the required courses and training to be able to offer good-quality radio programming.

Besides being a site for debate and entertainment, Radio Maqal has also been important as a source of information for Norwegian-Somalis. They endeavour to have Norwegian-Somalis with specific competences on their programmes and have thus also shown how many Norwegian-Somali experts there are in different fields. They regularly work together with a doctor who speaks on health topics. Radio Maqal also gets requests from Norwegian institutions that wish to provide and publicise information.

Finally, there are various civil society organisations that have focused on the Norwegian media and how it represents immigrants generally and/or Norwegian-Somalis specifically. One of those is the Leadership Foundation, which has a number of initiatives challenging negative stereotypes with positive stories, including on the Norsombro website for Norwegian-Somali bridge-builders (See Box 2).⁴⁹⁷ Another programme is their Top 10 (and Top 10 Youth), where each year the Leadership Foundation gives awards to 10 immigrants to Norway who have made an important contribution to Norwegian society.

⁴⁹⁷ See Norsombro.no (accessed 24 November 2013).

12. CONCLUSIONS

Like in many European cities, Norwegian-Somalis find themselves excluded in many ways in Oslo. This is despite the national government's comprehensive integration policy and the city government's decision on the opportunities that diversity offers, implemented through OXLO.⁴⁹⁸ These policies and initiatives show a great willingness to create the preconditions for an inclusive Norway and an inclusive Oslo.

The Norwegian-Somali community is the third-largest migrant community in Oslo, with a population of immigrants and Norwegian-born children of Somali immigrants of 13,184 as of 1 January 2013.⁴⁹⁹ With Oslo's total population at nearly 624,000, this means its Norwegian-Somali residents constitute over 2 percent of its population. The Norwegian-Somali community is a very young and very recent community, although the length of stay in Oslo is longer than elsewhere in the country: over 50 percent arrived in the city over seven years ago.⁵⁰⁰ While it is common to measure how successful integration has been by the performance of children of immigrants, in the case of Somalis in Norway it is too early to tell: the majority of Norwegian-born children of Somali immigrants are below the age of 10.

Nevertheless, this report has highlighted data which indicate that significant challenges remain in ensuring Somali integration in Norway. There is the low level of participation in the Norwegian labour market: in Oslo by 1 January 2013, only 40 percent of men and 23.1 percent of women aged 30–59 were employed.⁵⁰¹ In part this is due to the difficulties that arise from their lack of the formal qualifications that are needed in the labour market and the limited opportunities for unskilled employment in Oslo. It is also related to the realities of discrimination that research participants in the Open Society Foundations research experience and that systematic studies have also shown.⁵⁰² A further contribution to the low employment rate is the percentage of the group that is not regarded as economically active, and who are in fact engaged in various qualification programmes.

Irrespective of the causes, the consequences are that many Norwegian-Somalis find a large share of their income coming from social welfare, and two-thirds of the Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo may be said to live in poverty.⁵⁰³ This includes many of

⁴⁹⁸ White Paper No. 6, *En Helhetlig Integreringspolitikk*, Oslo kommune Byrådet 2012 Byrådssak (City of Oslo City Council) 152/12.

⁴⁹⁹ Statistics Norway.

⁵⁰⁰ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner".

⁵⁰¹ Statistics Norway.

⁵⁰² A. H. Midtbøen and J. Rogstad, *Diskriminering Omfang og Årsaker. Etniske Minoriteters Tilgang til Norsk Arbeidsliv* (Discrimination's Extent and Causes. Ethnic Minorities' Access to Norwegian Working Life), Institute for Social Research (Institutt for Samfunnsforskning), Oslo, 2012.

⁵⁰³ Pettersen, "Innvandrere i Norske Kommuner".

the larger families with children, of which quite a few are single-headed households. Poverty then is a feature in the lives of many Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, with poor housing, poor health and other social problems.

While socio-economic facts and figures for the Norwegian-Somali community thus look rather poor, statistics also point to high levels of political and civic participation. This is visible in organisation, voting, and the representation of Norwegian-Somalis in the City Council of Oslo: two women and one man in a total number of representatives of just 59.

Although statistics based on register data are well kept and reliable in Norway, and give a clear impression of the situation of Norwegian-Somalis in Oslo, this is only part of the story, of course. The most striking finding from the Open Society Foundations qualitative research has been the considerable prejudice existing against the Norwegian-Somali population in media and public opinion. Media portrayals of failed integration have consistently used Somali immigrants as an example, and the stereotypes reproduced affect the opinions of neighbours, teachers, prospective landlords, employers, NAV workers, Child Welfare Services personnel and politicians. They also have an impact on Norwegian-Somalis' sense of belonging.

The section on identity and belonging emphasised that many Norwegian-Somali youngsters lack a sense of belonging in Norway, even though their daily lives are very much grounded in Norwegian realities: ultimately, when asked about who they are and where they belong, Norwegian-Somali youngsters reproduce what Marianne Gullestad has called "imagined sameness", or the ethnic characterisation of Norwegian national identity. In this model, the failure to be seen as ethnically Norwegian undermines any sense of belonging. Experiences in everyday interactions in Oslo affect the extent to which young Norwegian-Somalis reproduce this model by creating an imagined otherness as a response to it.

In the section on education, a mixed picture of educational performance among Norwegian-Somalis in Norway is to be observed: there is the story of high drop-out rates but also the story of high levels of enrolment in tertiary education. What is crucial in understanding this complex picture, however, is what position each specific student started from, so that what is measured is the value added in terms of education. One question to explore is how best to provide Norwegian-Somali students with adequate educational advice. The SSF has taken on an important motivational and guiding role in this respect.

The section on employment goes into some detail to explain the low levels of labour market participation among Norwegian-Somalis. Part of the explanation relates to expectations of labour market participation: in Norway, more than in any European country, women are expected to participate in the labour market to the same extent as men are, which is for a host of reasons not the case for Norwegian-Somali women. Another part is related to the lack of options for workers who lack formal qualifications, which describes the situation of many Norwegian-Somalis. As a

consequence, they often face a very long and often demotivating road to employment when trying to enter the Norwegian labour market.

The section on housing illustrates the serious difficulties that Norwegian-Somalis have in finding suitable housing. This is caused by their lack of purchasing power and by the characteristics of the housing market. This market is defined by being a buyers' market, where Somalis have not yet found their place not only due to financial constraints but also by constraints on interest. The renting market, on the other hand, does not have large enough publicly-owned alternative, as is common in, for example, Sweden.

One of the main concerns in the Norwegian-Somali community is addressed in the section on health and social security: Child Welfare Services. There is a great deal of suspicion and miscommunication between Child Welfare Services and the Norwegian-Somali community, which has often been at the cost of finding good solutions for child-raising problems. Here the community is an important but often unreliable source of information. Various private and civil society actors have stepped in to address the issue, however, and the active engagement that the mosque, a Norwegian civil society actor and Norwegian-Somali individuals have shown here is a valuable lesson.

The section on policing and security explores in particular the relationship between the police and the Norwegian-Somali community. One of the areas of concern is youth criminality and preventative work in this field. The SaLTto initiative in Oslo, which is a collaboration by a range of public actors including the police and Oslo municipality, is an interesting proactive model that could be explored when tackling other issues of concern as well.

The high levels of civil and political participation of Norwegian-Somalis are described in the section on political participation and citizenship. Norwegian-Somalis are active citizens in their voting behaviour, in their participation in local political processes such as those in the City Council and in their engagement with civil society organisations. This means that there is a large range of actively engaged Norwegian-Somali citizens and residents of Oslo who are involved in issues that can benefit from their expertise. It is important not to focus on these experts as representatives of their community, but rather to acknowledge their expertise in a certain field, combined with their added advantage of being familiar with the Norwegian-Somali community.

The section on the media focuses on the media's images of Somalis, a topic that has appeared in the other sections as well. Many stereotypical images exist in Norway about Norwegian-Somalis, and those stereotypes affect their daily lives. Efforts to improve media portrayals is an important priority that should make use of existing resources in the Norwegian-Somali community, for example by mapping expertise and creating a greater pool of sources, and providing media training for Norwegian-Somalis. The potential bridge-building role of Somali media could also be developed.

Initiatives are being taken to produce a more inclusive society, one that is more in line with the government's White Paper on Diversity and Community or the Oslo City Council's decision document on the opportunities of diversity. The key to increased inclusion is often found in initiatives by individuals, for individuals. Inclusion is first and foremost about being seen and heard, so there is a need to re-humanise daily interactions that take place on behalf of inclusion. It is essential to recognise the tremendous day-to-day contributions that are taking place. The City of Oslo and the government have put in place a range of instruments and are working on their implementation. At the same time, engaged citizens contribute a lot of their time and efforts in pre-schools, schools, services and neighbourhoods to enable newcomers to find their place in society.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

The national government and the city government of Oslo have excellent frameworks in place to support changes towards a more inclusive society. The main challenge is how to better implement the various documents in practice and how to create greater awareness about their content both among citizens and authorities. The next step is to actively involve Norwegian-Somalis and those who interact with them on a daily basis in public policy and its implementation, in order to enhance both the efficiency and the legitimacy of Norwegian policy and its implementation. Success lies in creating structural opportunities that provide individuals with the tools to act. This might mean providing parents with alternative strategies for raising their children, or it might mean providing those in service offices with the tools to assist others in a more dignified way. These opportunities can best be created with input from the main stakeholders involved, including Norwegian-Somalis themselves.

13.1 Overall Recommendations

1. The City of Oslo and other stakeholders should strengthen their engagement with Somali and other immigrant community and faith organisations and community members by involving those with relevant experience and expertise and community networks as active partners in promoting integration, implementing the Eurocities Charter on Integrating Cities and delivering OXLO. This requires them to be mindful that engagement with the Norwegian-Somali communities should be at a level that brings them on board as active and equal citizens and residents of Oslo rather than passive recipients of state services.
2. Norwegians-Somalis are a vibrant, dynamic and engaged community across various sectors and issues. In order to ensure that this level of engagement is fully utilised and captured there is a need for this community to increase its capacity and skills, at the individual, civil society, and small-scale organisation level. A more qualified and professional set of Somali organisations can only be an asset to the city of Oslo.

13.2 Identity and Belonging

3. First, IMDi is working with the course providers selected for the Introduction Programme to review the recent evaluation. The follow-up should include engagement with ethnic and religious civil society organisations in order to take steps to ensure that resources invested in language instruction and other support deliver maximum results. The review should also consider evidence from language instructors and civil society organisations that provide other services and recommend measures to ensure that the services complement and reinforce the Introduction Programme.

4. Second, the City of Oslo should work with the Family Welfare Services and the Church's City Mission to provide increased support for parents who wish to have parental guidance training at an early stage of their stay in Norway. Such support should be set up as an exchange, where parents and trainers participate and learn from each other, to strengthen peer mentoring and create networks. One way of doing this is by implementing the International Child Development Programme (ICDP) or other relevant measures in the Introduction Programme, so that parents become safer in their parenting in Norway at an earlier stage.
5. Third, the City of Oslo should work with the Gamle Oslo District to review the evaluation of the Link Worker initiative, assess the feasibility and impact of replicating the initiative across Oslo and propose a suitable action plan for extending or expanding the project.

13.3 Education

6. IMDI should evaluate various assistance programmes to improve the educational performance of children from minority backgrounds, including those programmes created and supported by the government and civil society organisations. The City of Oslo Education Authority should then identify relevant Somali civil society organisations and work with them to expand existing supplementary homework assistance programmes in primary and secondary schools, including work with schools, education professionals and Somali community and faith organisations. These should consider the development of an action plan for supporting secondary-school students and school advisers working with Somali and other immigrant children.
7. The City of Oslo and IMDi should work with mentoring organisations and Somali community and faith organisations to identify effective models of youth mentoring and assist appropriate Somali civil society organisations to develop and secure funding to make mentoring available to Somali and other immigrant youngsters in Oslo.
8. The City of Oslo Education Authority should work with IMDi, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, associations of school leaders and Somali community and faith organisations to draw on current good practice and develop practical guidance for schools and community groups on helping parents, especially single parents, to engage with schools more effectively. The availability of parental support should be communicated via the information initiative recommended in section 8.

13.4 Employment

9. The City of Oslo should work with business organisations in Oslo to promote the Diversity Charter; to review the Charter and if necessary include guidance on religion in the workplace; and consider establishing a diversity quality standard for employers based on initiatives such as “Diversity Works for London”.
10. NAV and civil society organisations should work to develop support and guidance for NAV advisers on addressing the particular challenges faced by many immigrant job-seekers such as language needs, foreign qualifications, caring responsibilities, work experience outside Norway and unfamiliarity with recruitment and employment practices in Norway. This initiative should also assist immigrant civil society organisations to develop information and guidance on what to expect from NAV services and how to get the maximum benefit from those services. IMDI should assist people in a financial or facilitating role concerning foreign qualifications, caring responsibilities and work experiences in the field of employment for minorities.
11. The information initiative under section 8 should promote the new business centre being established in Grorud. Oslo business organisations should be helped to set up a mentoring scheme for immigrant entrepreneurs to complement and reinforce the activities of the new centre and other measures on immigrant employment.

13.5 Housing

12. The City of Oslo Housing Department should work with housing associations and private landlords to develop a quality mark for private rental properties that promotes equal access to housing.
13. IMDi is encouraged to support or commission research which examines the possibility of how, if or who could create a lettings agency built as a social enterprise, specialising in rent deposit schemes and long-term tenancies which would assist the sustainable housing situation of Somalis and other groups.
14. The City of Oslo should work with mortgage providers, Somali and other immigrant community and faith organisations to develop a plan for encouraging appropriate financial institutions to test the local market and assess the feasibility of offering Islamic mortgages in Oslo.

13.6 Health and Social Protection

15. The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the City of Oslo Child Welfare Service and other ethnic and religious specialist organisations. should ensure that communication with Somali and other minority families

includes a clear message that the focus of child welfare services is the overall welfare of the child and not only specific risks such as FGM, forced marriage, physical discipline and other practices that may be associated with the Somali community. They are encouraged to address multiple factors which may inhibit children, particularly from minority backgrounds, from accessing or benefiting fully from child welfare services. These factors should be addressed by:

- reviewing current child welfare practice and guidelines as they apply to Somali and other immigrant families and amending if required;
- reviewing and improving information materials on child welfare services for the Somali community;
- identifying and implementing the most effective methods for disseminating this information to Somali families;
- training volunteer child welfare champions in Somali and other immigrant communities to raise awareness of child welfare services and promote discussion of issues such as FGM, forced marriage and physical discipline in the Somali community.

13.7 Policing and Security

16. The City of Oslo should promote the SALTo programme as an example of good practice. Initiatives on parental support, education, child welfare and improved information for the Somali and other immigrant communities should seek opportunities to support and strengthen SALTo by expanding its links with families, the child welfare service, schools, Somali faith and community organisations and the Somali community.

13.8 Participation and Citizenship

17. A wide array of services for immigrant communities is provided by civil society organisations in Oslo. Information about these services and how to access them would be useful not only to immigrants but to other service providers as well. IMDi and the City of Oslo should work with Somali and other immigrant community and faith organisations to improve access to services provided by civil society organisations by the following actions:
 - The City of Oslo should map the services available in Oslo and existing ways of promoting access to these services.
 - IMDi should identify the most effective ways of communicating with immigrant communities, especially groups that may be harder to reach such as women, the elderly and those with limited Norwegian, literacy skills or internet access.

- IMDi should review the effectiveness of existing initiatives in Norway and the EU, including online service directories, community media, telephone advice lines, community champions, outreach, one-stop advice centres and others.
- The City of Oslo and other relevant organs should develop the most effective model for maintaining an up-to-date and complete directory of available services and ensuring that it is readily accessible to all members of immigrant communities.

13.9 Role of the Media

18. Media organisations and media professionals should develop initiatives to recruit Somalis who can mentor Somali community and faith organisations, activists, students and professionals on how to work with the media and establish contacts in the media who can help provide well-informed and balanced coverage of Norwegian Somalis, making use of good practice identified by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation.
19. Oslo civil society partners should work with Norwegian organisations for writers and media professionals to set up a media network of Somalis and media professionals who can create a narrative of Somali immigration that acknowledges the reality of the Somali experience in Norway, recognises the difficult starting point for most Somali immigrants and highlights positive stories, evidence of progress towards integration and the role of Somalis themselves in promoting integration.
20. The City of Oslo should work with Somali and other community media organisations to promote themselves to public bodies and other organisations as an effective way of communicating with immigrant communities; and should develop proposals for not only disseminating information but also for two-way communication that promotes a better understanding of policy and services among Norwegian Somalis and can inform the development of both policy and services.

ANNEX 1. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNEX 2. LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Abdulqadir, Ubah	Minority Adviser, IMDi; City Council of Oslo
Ahmed, Firdawsa	IFTIIN Somali-Norwegian Studies Center (Somalisknorsk kunskapssenter)
Ali, Warsame	National Centre for Minority Health Research (NAKMI)
Cooper, Lisa	Leadership Foundation
Eknes, Kjersti	IMDi
Engebrigtsen, Ada	NOVA
Farshbaf, Mehdi	NKVTS
Foss, Kirsti	Enerhaugen family counselling
Freng, Espen	City of Oslo, Knowledge Centre for Substance Abuse (Kompetansesentret Rus)
Hagi, Ali	Social worker (NAV); journalist
Holden, Kathrine	Police
Hashi, Saad	NAV
Hindise, Ismail	Police; former Minority Adviser, IMDi
Kartzow, Anders Huuse	Oslo University Hospital, Section for equitable health service
Kulmiye, Luul	Kulmiye translation services
Lidén, Hilde	Institute for Social Research (ISF)
Madar, Amina	Radio Maqal
Mohamed, Abdibased A.	Tawfiq mosque, unit for children and youth
Mohamed, Abdirahim	Etnisk Utsikt AS
Musse, Bashe	Oslo Kommune, City Council of Oslo
Olsen, Maren	<i>Morgenbladet</i>
Østby, Lars	Statistics Norway
Pettersen, Silje V.	Statistics Norway

Rathore, Anita	Organisation against Discrimination (Organisasjonen mot offentlig diskriminering, OMOD); Contact Committee for Immigrants and the Authorities (Kontaktutvalg mellom innvandrerbefolkningen og myndighetene, KIM)
Reichelt, Vilde	Centre for Health, Dialogue and Development (Primærmedisinsk Verksted, PMV), Church City Mission
Sandbæk, Miriam Latif	Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research
Seehausen, Christiane	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue
Seland, Marie	BLD
Skodvin, Tone	City of Oslo, Department of Cultural Affairs and Business
Szlatcheko, Timothy	BLD, IMDi
Teshome, Tewasen	BLD, IMDi

Minority communities – whether Muslim, migrant or Roma – continue to come under intense scrutiny in Europe today. This complex situation presents Europe with one its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity.

At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations, is a research and advocacy initiative which works to advance equality and social justice for minority and marginalised groups excluded from the mainstream of civil, political, economic, and, cultural life in Western Europe.

Muslims in EU Cities was the project's first comparative research series which examined the position of Muslims in 11 cities in the European Union. Somalis in European cities follows from the findings emerging from the Muslims in EU Cities reports and offers the experiences and challenges faced by Somalis across seven cities in Europe. The research aims to capture the everyday, lived experiences as well as the type and degree of engagement policymakers have initiated with their Somali and minority constituents.