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European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults 14 (2023) 3, S. 343-357



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Vesterberg, Viktor: Citizenship, learning and social inclusion. An interrogation of EU-funded welfare projects in Sweden - In: *European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* 14 (2023) 3, S. 343-357 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-272184 - DOI: 10.25656/01:27218; 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.4328

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-272184>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:27218>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



<http://www.ep.liu.se>

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Citizenship, learning and social inclusion. An interrogation of EU-funded welfare projects in Sweden

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to gain knowledge about how people engaged in EU-funded social initiatives targeting poor EU migrants in Sweden reason about the meaning, hardships, and possibilities they ascribe to the concept of social inclusion. The empirical material consists of a key policy and interviews with staff involved in these social initiatives. The analytical approach is constructionist, inspired by Foucault, focusing on how target groups are constructed, problematised and governed as learners not yet socially included in society or the labour market. In the concluding discussion, the results are discussed in relation to Levitas' thoughts on social inclusion. Key results indicate that discourses on the national and EU level can both facilitate and hinder learning and social inclusion for vulnerable citizens. The article concludes that free mobility within the EU makes belonging and responsibility a complex issue for those engaged in learning for social inclusion.

Keywords: EU migrants, learning, social inclusion, citizenship

Introduction

Social inclusion has been one of the EU's key policy concepts for decades (Schierup et al., 2015). With the goal of counteracting social exclusion and facilitating inclusion for various vulnerable groups, numerous initiatives have been launched and policies formulated in the EU (Schierup et al., 2006). EU policies influence the national welfare politics in the member states, and an increasing political focus on social inclusion is a part of the *Europeanisation* of member states' social policies (Jacobsson & Johansson, 2019). Various EU funds, such as the *European Social Fund* (ESF) and the *Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived* (FEAD), provide tools for the EU to exercise political influence at the local and national level (Scheurer & Haase, 2017). One crucial aspect of the Europeanisation of national welfare politics is the ongoing projectification of welfare,



propelled not least by the financial structure of EU funds such as ESF and FEAD, where local actors can apply for funding for various welfare projects (Brunila, 2011). Throughout the 2010s, an increasing number of poor and vulnerable people from the EU's eastern member states, often with Roma identity, have migrated to Sweden in search of income (Roman, 2018; Swärd, 2015; Mešić & Woolfson, 2015). For a long time, migrants have been a prominent target group in European social inclusion discourse, not least with regards to recognition of prior learning and skills that could enhance inclusion (Lodigiani & Sarli, 2017). Roma populations have become a specific target group for learning practices initiated by the EU, and EU funds are recurrently used to improve the living standards of Roma populations throughout Europe (European Commission, 2020).

One prominent way of supporting the inclusion of marginalised groups in the EU is to provide learning opportunities, as lifelong learning is a central concept in EU policy discourse. EU-citizens are encouraged to become active citizens, engaged in lifelong and life wide learning (Simons & Masschelein, 2007; Popkewitz et al., 2007). The EU-parliament, the European Council and the Commission have together formulated a policy document that states the *social pillars of the EU*. The first social pillar is concerned with lifelong learning:

Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training, and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market. (European Commission, 2018, p. 11).

The close connection between labour market, inclusion and learning in the quote indicates that the discourse on social inclusion in the EU revolves around labour market participation as a means of counteracting exclusion and poverty.

The problem of visible poverty is not new in Sweden. At the end of the nineteenth century, in Europe as well as in Sweden, political debates about the so-called *social question* revolved around the increasing poverty and vagrancy (Ulmestig, 2007). The mobility of poor people has been considered a political problem in Europe and in Sweden for a long time (Ericsson, 2015; Juverdeanu, 2021; Montesino Parra, 2002) and has been portrayed as problematic regarding the negative effects on welfare systems and labour standards (Hansen & Hager, 2010; Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016). After the second world war, extensive policy measures have been launched to assimilate Roma people into Swedish society (Montesino & Olsson Al Fakir, 2015). In recent decades, in Sweden as well as other parts of Europe, this discussion has often come to focus on people from Eastern Europe, not least poor EU citizens categorised as Roma (van Baar, 2018; Hansson, 2019). The right of EU citizens to move freely between the member states makes the mobility of poor people in contemporary Europe a complex issue for the national welfare states.

Poor people, often with Roma identity, from Eastern Europe frequently exercise the core right of EU citizenship – free movement and the right to reside in any EU member state for a period of three months (Yıldız & De Genova, 2017). Thus, poor peoples' mobility in the EU poses complex issues of belonging and deservingness in relation to the norms about who the ideal mobile EU citizen is. As Carmel and Sojka (2021) argue, norms of belonging in transnational settings, such as internal EU migration, produce complex ethnicised and class-related discourses about who belongs where. I contribute to this discussion by scrutinising how poor EU migrants in Sweden are governed as learning subjects in social inclusion measures. How people engaged in social initiatives discursively produce their target groups and actively negotiate (and sometimes even reject) the dominant discourses on the social problems they are engaged in is often overlooked in research, according to Cabot (2013). Codó and Garrido (2014) also stress

the importance of interrogating how people engaged in learning activities for vulnerable groups tend to position and construct the targeted learners.

In this article, I focus on how the target group of poor EU migrants are constructed as in need of learning to become socially included in society and the labour market. In doing so, I also contribute to a scientific discussion about how different rationalities of governing (Foucault, 2007; Rose, 1999) construct specific target groups, as they are problematised and governed as lifelong learners (see Fejes & Nicoll, 2015; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Masschelein et al., 2007).

Previous studies that depart from Foucault and focus on learning practices that target marginalised groups in Sweden have, for instance, examined how the unemployed are disciplined through various activation measures (Hörnqvist, 2008), how job seekers ought to learn to become employable (Fogde, 2008) and how discourses on employability relate to lifelong learning (Fejes, 2014). Studies that specifically interrogate how learning practices targeting marginalised groups seek to foster social inclusion seem to be rather scarce. However, one study by Fejes and Dahlstedt (2017) adopts a Foucauldian perspective in analysing social inclusion measures targeting newly arrived migrants in Sweden. The conditions between the target groups of newly arrived migrants and marginalised EU citizens in Sweden vary considerably. Asylum seekers and third country refugees are in a different relation to the Swedish welfare state as they have several rights (access to Swedish for immigrants courses, establishment support from the Employment Office, support from the social services) that EU immigrants do not. Another similar study that departs from Foucault and analyses migrants in Sweden has been conducted by Milani et al. (2021). They show how migrants are socialised into specific norms and values related to discourses of 'Swedishness'.

Against this background, the aim of this article is to gain knowledge about how people engaged in EU-funded welfare projects targeting poor EU migrants in Sweden reason about the meaning, hardships, and possibilities they ascribe to the concept of social inclusion. Inspired by an analysis deriving Foucault's (1991, 2007) thoughts on the rationalities of governing, as developed by Rose (1999), I adopt an analysis that focuses on how the target groups are constructed and problematised as learners and governed towards becoming includable.

Empirical material and research method

The empirical scope of this article is welfare projects funded by FEAD. These projects seek to enhance the living conditions of poor EU migrants residing in Sweden by working with social inclusion measures (FEAD, 2018). FEAD is part of the Europe 2020 strategy, which supports activities that seek to reduce poverty and combat social exclusion. The total EU budget for FEAD is approximately EUR 3.8 billion. In Sweden, the FEAD budget was approximately EUR 8 million during the programme period 2014–2020. In Sweden, the FEAD fund is administered by the Swedish ESF council, which is a governmental authority (FEAD, 2021).

To ensure anonymity of the projects and interviewees, I deliberately give rather vague information about the projects. Various actors could seek funding from FEAD and the projects were owned by municipalities, the Swedish church, independent churches, and civil society organisations. Some projects worked with outreach activities, meeting their target groups out on the streets. Other projects met their participants in places they knew their target groups were visiting, such as churches and shelters.

The activities of the projects vary, but broadly speaking, they focus on providing health and societal information to their target groups. In addition, the projects provided opportunities for their participants to wash clothes and shower.

The professionals engaged in FEAD projects have varying degrees of working hours in their projects, where some worked full time and some part time. Volunteer workers also provided the projects an important staff resource, for instance, there were nurses and doctors who provided health information to the project participants.

Five FEAD projects were active in Sweden when the empirical material was gathered for this study. This material consists of 16 interviews with staff, project leaders and other persons engaged in all five projects funded by FEAD at the time the interviews were conducted. The FEAD projects were active in all parts of Sweden, from east to west and north to south. Two interviews were carried out by telephone and 14 in person. The interviews took place at the interviewee's workplace.

I have interviewed eight project leaders, one project co-worker, three steering group representatives, two project coordinators and two officials employed at the Swedish ESF council, working with the administration of FEAD. These various positions had, to varying degrees, direct contact with the target groups. Project co-workers were the ones who had the most day-to-day contact with the projects' target groups. Some of the interviewed project leaders were also engaged in practical learning activities targeting the poor EU migrants, while other project leaders had a more administrative role. Steering group representatives and officials at the ESF council did not have close contact with the target groups. What these interviewees had in common was that they all, from their different perspectives, could provide important insights into the FEAD project activities. Hence, the selection of interviewees was made due to their knowledge and understanding of FEAD and the projects in which they were involved.

Project leaders were the category I interviewed the most. The reason for this is that they had a significant impact on their projects' activities and a broad understanding of their projects' relation to FEAD. The project leaders had frequent contact with FEAD staff in Sweden and therefore also had important insights into the regulations and norms framing their project activities. In addition, the interviewed project leaders provided suggestions about other persons engaged in their projects who could provide me with important reflections about their projects.

The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that they followed certain themes, based on my research questions. The interviews were conducted according to scholarly-accepted ethical guidelines in social research, which in short entails that the interviewees were informed about the aim of the study. They were also informed that they, at any time, were free to cancel their participation in the research and quit the interview. Further, all interviewees were informed that they should be anonymised and that the interview material only should be used for research purposes. The study has moreover been ethically vetted.

A potential shortcoming regarding this study is that no interviews were conducted with the target groups. The main reason for this choice is ethical, as I was advised against interviewing project participants by project leaders. This advice was motivated by a worry that the trustful relationships the projects had created with their target group could be damaged if an unknown person approached their participants and asked questions.

During the interviews, I encouraged the interviewees to reflect upon their projects in relation to wider EU policy concepts such as social inclusion and learning and how FEAD and EU policy affected their activities. The interviews revolved around questions concerning how they worked with social inclusion, who their target group was, what they saw as the main problems for their target groups and what they believed their project

participants needed, not least in terms of learning. For this study, three different but similar interview guides were used: one for project staff in leading or senior positions (project leader, co-ordinator, steering group member); one for project co-workers and staff engaged mainly in the day-to-day practices of the projects; and one interview guide for two government officials employed at the Swedish ESF-council.

The interviews, carried out in 2018-2019, lasted approximately one to two hours, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The total amount of transcribed text consists of 276 Word pages. After transcription, all interviews were coded into nodes using NVivo, a computer software program designed specifically for qualitative data analysis. The nodes were created by carefully reading all transcribed interviews and categorising the material. The empirical material was then categorised according to the interview questions and the research question, but also more inductively by building on ideas from the interviewees' narratives. In total, the interviews were categorised into 90 main nodes and 12 sub-nodes in NVivo. All empirical quotes in this article have been translated from Swedish to English by the author.

In addition to the interviews, the key Swedish FEAD policy (FEAD, 2018) has been analysed to gain a broader understanding of the political ambitions of FEAD in Sweden. FEAD (2018) is the operative programme constituting the national political interpretation of the European Commission's (2015) guidelines about what FEAD should focus on in the EU. The goal of FEAD in Europe was to fund projects targeting those worst off in society. In Sweden, this group was defined by the ESF as EU migrants who are staying in Sweden but who do not have access to the national welfare system.

Analytical approach

Departing from a constructionist approach, I conduct an analysis inspired by Foucault (1991, 2007) and others who have developed his thoughts on the rationalities of governing and how social problems are constructed in policy and practice (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). This analytical approach draws attention to how targets are constructed, problematised and governed.

A first step in this analysis is to identify *who* the target group to be included is. I also analyse how social inclusion/exclusion is constructed as a problem for the target group and *why* they are being excluded from society and the labour market, according to the interviewees and the FEAD policy. Further, I analyse *how* members of the target group are being governed, as learning subjects, towards social inclusion. I interrogate what the target groups are constructed as excluded from and what they ought to learn to become included, according to the interviewees.

Learning is, from this perspective, a matter of governing that has been previously analysed with approaches inspired by Foucault (see Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Masschelein et al., 2007). Learning and governing are both a matter of 'conducting the conduct' of oneself and others (Foucault, 1991, 2007; Rose, 1999). Thus, governing the learning subjects becomes an issue of facilitating learning for the target group. Against this background, the practices I am studying are social pedagogy practices since they seek to address issues of inclusion/exclusion in a changing society by creating learning opportunities for marginalised groups (Cedersund et al., 2021).

In *discussing the results* from the Foucault inspired analysis, I employ three analytical tools elaborated by Levitas (2005) for analysing social exclusion – RED, MUD and SID. I use these concepts to broaden the analysis on the different meanings ascribed to learning and social inclusion by the interviewees and in the analysed policy. From a RED – *redistributionist discourse* – perspective, the problem of social exclusion is a

problem of poverty and inequality produced by society. Hence, the political solution to the problem of exclusion from a RED perspective is concerned with creating a more equal society regarding wealth and other resources. MUD – *moral underclass discourse* – connotes an understanding of social exclusion as primarily a matter of culture and morale among those positioned as excluded. From a MUD perspective, disciplining the poor (Soss et al., 2011) becomes a prominent solution to the problem of social exclusion. The *social integrationist discourse* – SID – constructs social inclusion as a matter of participating in the labour market. The proposed solution to the problem of social exclusion becomes a matter of enhancing the employability of marginalised and excluded groups (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). Although Levitas (2005) elaborated her perspective on social inclusion/exclusion in the political context of New Labour in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, I find that the concepts of RED/ MUD/SID provide important insights into dominant discourses on social inclusion/exclusion in the contemporary EU as well.

The following questions guide the analysis: What are the target groups constructed as in need of to become socially included? Why and how are they constructed as being socially excluded from the labour market and society? What problems are the target groups facing in Sweden, according to those who are engaged in FEAD projects? What should the target groups learn, according to the interviewees, to become included in society and the labour market? What techniques of governing are deployed to facilitate learning and inclusion for the target groups?

Results

Defining the target group

The main policy guidelines for FEAD-funded activities in Sweden can be found in the policy document *Operative programme for social participation for persons who are worst off* (FEAD, 2018). In line with the analytical approach, I adopt in this article (Foucault, 2007; Rose, 1999), I now shall pay attention to how the target groups are defined, constructed and problematised. In the analysed policy, FEAD's target group is defined as EU citizens who are not engaged in economic activities and not entitled to financial assistance from the Swedish welfare system.

Economically inactive EU/EES citizens seem to have a particular problem, which means that initiatives targeting this group of people ought to be shaped according to their specific circumstances. Against this background, Sweden has chosen an operative programme for social participation [...] with the aim to aid socially vulnerable persons who do not have the right to support and help according to the Social Services Act (FEAD, 2018, p. 2).

A key formulation recurring in the policy is 'economically inactive EU/EES citizens'. According to Eurostat's glossary (Eurostat, 2020), the economically inactive population consists of those outside the labour force, who are neither employed nor listed as unemployed. In FEAD's policy document, this target group is further consolidated through an EU legal discourse. In the quote below, vulnerable EU citizens are contrasted with other migrant groups in Sweden, such as asylum seekers.

When it comes to economically inactive persons who stay in Sweden on a so-called EU legal basis, for a shorter period than three months, a comparative basic support is missing. EU citizens who stay temporarily in Sweden have, according to praxis, a right only to emergency assistance. Hence, initiatives targeting economically inactive persons who stay

in Sweden on a so-called EU legal basis are missing. Therefore, the fund for European aid in Sweden is targeting this population (FEAD, 2018, p. 4).

In this policy, the target group is defined according to their lack of economic activity. However, this discourse is not uncritically repeated by the persons who work in the FEAD-funded welfare projects, as we can see in the following quote from a project leader reflecting on the concept of ‘economically inactive citizens’.

It is not something that we have, I think I recognise it when you mention it, but it is not a term that is used, from my perspective. [...] They [the target group] should be economically vulnerable. That is what they should be. [...] It [being economically inactive] is not something that we have taken into consideration (Project leader, FEAD project 1).

Here, we can see that the Europeanisation of social policy is not a neat top-down activity. Rather, the policy discourse of the EU is negotiated and sometimes, as we see, rejected by the local professionals who put the policy into practice. A more common label for the FEAD projects’ target group is *vulnerable EU citizens/migrants*, which is frequently used by the interviewees. Another project leader reflects on the need to know who their target group is.

Yes, we call them [their target group] vulnerable EU citizens. [...] We need to know who we can consider our target group, which we have met. Mostly it is Roma people from Romania and Bulgaria (Project leader, FEAD project 2).

The interviewee states that their target group is mostly Roma from Romania and Bulgaria. The question of whether the target group is vulnerable EU migrants with a Roma identity is a recurring issue when the project leaders reflect on their projects. In the policy text governing FEAD’s priorities in Sweden, Roma as a potential target group is not mentioned at all. During an interview with an official from the Swedish ESF council who worked with the administration of FEAD, it became clear that he did not want to see FEAD as a ‘Roma fund’. The interviewed official was aware that some of the projects they funded recurrently described their target group as being Roma. However, the interviewed project leaders were careful not to exclude participants based on not being considered Roma.

It is important, I had some problems with that to begin with; the target group is socially and economically vulnerable EU citizens, or EU migrants. They don’t have to be Roma, they don’t have to be from those countries [Romania, Bulgaria] at all (Project leader, FEAD project 1).

Defining a target group is a crucial first step in constructing and problematising a delimited population at which social initiatives can be directed. We have seen that the target group, as formulated in the FEAD policy, is based on the lack of economic activity. The project leaders add the issue of Roma identity, which is described as common among the target group, but does not in itself constitute a basis for being a targeted group for their projects.

Problematising the target group

Now we shift our attention to how the problems of the target group are constructed by the interviewees and what they are portrayed as in need of to become socially included in society and the labour market. The answer from one of the project leaders to the direct

question about what she saw as the major problem for their project's target group was direct and clear: 'Poverty!' (Project leader, FEAD project 5).

Poverty is recurrently raised among the interviewees as one of the main problems haunting their target group. The discussion on poverty is frequently nuanced and connected to wider issues such as (lack of) education; as one project leader puts it 'they [the target group] are completely excluded from the housing market and from the labour market, which are two of the most fundamental prerequisites for living a humane life' (Project leader 1, FEAD project 3). After stating the exclusion from housing and labour opportunities, the same interviewee gave a specific explanation of this idea, which rather problematises the target group based on discourses of cultural deviance and Otherness – 'They have a totally different structure of values to us, which often builds on a collective [identity among their target group], which makes it very hard.'

Problem representations of the target group, which build on discourses of culturalised Otherness, widening the gap between 'us' – the majority, and 'them' – the targeted groups (Anderson, 2013). Here, the target group is constructed as in need of certain interventions due to their ethno-culture, which is constructed as not being aligned with that of a 'normal' European or Swedish identity, in which a specific view of the individual self is taken for granted (Rose, 1999).

What I feel is important in this project, is that we are working with very shy people who have a totally different way of viewing the world than we have. [...] One does not see oneself as an individual [in the target group], but one sees oneself as part of a group (Project leader, FEAD project 3).

A view of the free individual as an autonomous being in relation to other groups and society is central in Western countries (Rose, 1999). As noticed above, the target group of the FEAD projects is constructed as suffering from poverty and thus in need of economic resources. In addition, the target group is portrayed as being culturally different from majority society and thus needs to adapt to certain prevailing norms, such as primarily perceiving oneself as an autonomous individual and not first and foremost as a part of a collective group.

Exclusion of the target group

A similar, but slightly different, question regarding the construction and problematisation of FEAD's target group concerns the interviewees' discourses on why the target group is being socially excluded from the labour market and society. This issue concerns the problems the vulnerable EU migrants are facing in Sweden according to those who are engaged in FEAD projects. Here, Roma identity is once again highlighted by the interviewees in reflecting on the hardships of their project participants.

We have a very good awareness that you can be poor and live in misery and be a Romanian, or whatever you are, but if you in addition to that are Roma, then it becomes a particular racism, which they are trying to work with in Romania and Bulgaria, but there's a long way to go.

Researcher: I wonder if this antiziganism is apparent in Sweden as well?

Steering group member: Yes, yes, yes (Steering group member, FEAD project 2).

This interviewee reflects on how poverty and racism might interact, particularly when the target group is identified as Roma. The interviewees describe a 'particular racism' that

targets Roma in both countries their target group usually come from (Romania and Bulgaria) and Sweden, where they seek an opportunity to provide for themselves and their families. When I asked another interviewee if their project participants with Roma identity had faced harassment in Sweden, the answer portrayed a harsh reality, with violence and hatred targeting the Roma participants.

Yes, it is stone-throwing; they threw burning bombs and stones at a camp. [...] and then it is these daily harassments, when one sits [begging], one is spat at, one gets sexual invitations, someone kicks your cup. It's everyday antiziganism (Project leader, FEAD project 2).

Another interviewee had a similar reflection on the racism their target group faces on an everyday basis, concluding that: 'I mean, It's daily. Everyone who sits [begging] outside a shop, I would almost say daily, are facing something that one might call hate crime' (Project leader, FEAD project 4). The interviewee then goes on giving examples like the ones in the quote above; people are spat at, kicked, and have their hair pulled. Hence, when the target group of the FEAD projects is described as having a Roma identity, they are also related to a particular form of explicit and historically established racism – antiziganism (Selling, 2013) – which effectively hinders the project participants from successful social inclusion in society as well as the labour market, in both Eastern Europe and Sweden.

In sum, the problems experienced by the target groups of the FEAD projects are represented in three major ways. (1) As social exclusion grounded in poverty; (2) as cultural deviance propelled by a historically established racism – antiziganism; and (3) as primarily in need of work and housing.

Governing the target group towards social inclusion

In the following I scrutinise how the target group is governed as learning subjects towards social inclusion. In the previous section we saw that the target group was portrayed as in need of work and proper housing to become included in society and the labour market. What then are they constructed as in need of to learn to become included? And what are they constructed as excluded from? And into what community or what place are they to become included – in Sweden or elsewhere?

During the interviews, issues of civic rights and obligations were repeatedly evoked by the interviewees. For instance, the interviewee below draws connections between the learning of civic rights/obligations and empowerment. The discourse of empowerment is here formulated as a matter of knowledge about how society functions to improve the chances of the target group to influence their own situation.

We try to give education and raise competence, to increase their social inclusion and strengthen their empowerment. So, issues of civic knowledge, that is issues about how you can influence your own situation, what rights you have and what obligations you have. That is the focus (Project leader, FEAD project 4).

Further, the issue of learning civic rights is made more complex when connected to the mobility of the target group. The target group is implicitly constructed as needing to learn about their civic rights as their knowledge on this topic is portrayed as 'very low'.

Many of those we meet have a very basic, very low knowledge, both about the rights in their own country and of course, they know even less about the rights and opportunities in Sweden (Project leader, FEAD project 2).

The interviewee constructs the target group as belonging to another country, which has different civic rights than Sweden. Consequently, the target group is portrayed as having very poor knowledge about their rights in the country in which they temporarily reside, in this case Sweden. How then, are the FEAD projects trying to facilitate such learning? Here, one crucial aspect concerns legitimacy for the projects' activities among the target group. Since participating in FEAD's activities is in no way compulsory for the target group, the projects spend considerable energy reasoning about how to become relevant for their participants. One prominent technique the projects use to create such legitimacy among the target group is to practise a kind of bottom-up strategy. This strategy is based on a will to gain information from the target group themselves – what do they need and want?

What did we call it, when we interviewed them [the target group], the mapping! It was very good and very interesting to involve them and hear – What do you think? What would you like to have? Many of them have never been asked that question. [...] The only thing that came up was that they wanted to learn Swedish (Project staff, FEAD project 2).

The will among the target group to learn Swedish indicates a potential will to be included in Swedish society. However, inclusion in Swedish society is portrayed by the interviewees as being hindered by dominant political discourses about the target group as not belonging to Sweden.

FEAD has chosen to not have the perspective that they [the target group] should establish themselves here. Because if they should [establish themselves here], then labour market measures and housing should have been a part [of FEAD's activities]. I find that pretty clear from Sweden – 'You are here temporarily, we shall support you in your temporary stay. Then you are going home.' I think that is pretty clear (Head of steering group, FEAD project 2).

The interviewee talks about a dominant political discourse in Sweden that constructs the projects' target groups as not belonging to Swedish society. The interviewee does not assign this exclusionary discourse to any particular political party or organisation. According to the interviewee's interpretation of the rules of the FEAD fund, they are not allowed to work with inclusion through labour market measures nor facilitate proper housing for the target group. This puts the FEAD projects in a tricky situation, as they want to be relevant to their target group and need to be compliant with the hand that feeds them – i.e., FEAD. Another interviewee formulates this paradoxical situation in a striking way, as she says that:

What inclusion in a country means, is often work to begin with. A place to stay in order to live and provide for one's most basic needs, and we have not really had permission to focus on those things. So, how is one to work with social inclusion for a target group that is not really allowed to be included? It is very hard (Project co-ordinator, FEAD project 2).

As we have seen, the opportunities to facilitate learning and inclusion for the target group are problematised by the interviewees as being hindered by the dominant discourses and regulations of FEAD, and Swedish politics more generally, which are understood as more or less exclusionary towards the target groups of the projects. This further stresses the importance of not seeing Europeanisation as a simple top-down process, where EU policy is easily implemented in the member states. Rather, the people engaged in putting policy into practice are reflective and critically engage with the policies that frame their work with the inclusion of vulnerable EU migrants in Sweden.

Discussion

In the following discussion of the results outlined above, I focus on the limitations and possibilities of learning for social inclusion, targeting poor EU migrants in Sweden by using the concepts of redistribution discourse (RED), moral underclass discourse (MUD) and social integrationist discourse (SID) elaborated by Levitas (2005). In doing so, the results are related to an established theoretical perspective focusing particularly on the politics of social inclusion/exclusion (Levitas, 2005).

I have shown that the main policy guiding the FEAD projects problematised the target group in terms of their perceived lack of economic activity. In EU discourse, being economically inactive means to be outside the labour force, neither employed nor listed as unemployed. This strong focus on employment relates to the overarching discourse that Levitas (2005) calls the social integrationist discourse. From the SID perspective, which is dominant in the EU according to Levitas, combatting social exclusion becomes a matter of facilitating participation in the labour market by learning to become employable (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). However, the interviewees tend to see dominant political discourses in Sweden and the regulations of the Swedish ESF council as hindering their work with enhancing the employability of the target group. Here, I have identified a paradox – the SID of the EU is not aligned with FEAD policy and how the work of learning for social inclusion can be carried out in practice. Hence, the Europeanisation and projectification of welfare and social work in Sweden is not a simple top-down process; rather, policy is negotiated and can even be resisted by professionals engaged in practical social work (see Jacobsson & Johansson, 2019). How professionals engaged in social initiatives discursively produce their target groups and negotiate the dominant discourses on the social problems they are engaged in is frequently overlooked in research (Cabot, 2013). By interrogating how the actual people engaged in social support and education for vulnerable groups position and discursively construct their target groups, this article has contributed to knowledge about how the target group of poor EU migrants is constructed as in need of learning to become included in Swedish society and the Swedish labour market.

One of the major problematisations identified in the article is that of culturalising the target group as deviant Others. Problematisations of the target group as culturalised Others widens the gap between ‘us’ – the majority, and ‘them’ – the targeted groups (Anderson, 2013). The target group is positioned as deviant in relation to what is implicitly understood as a ‘normal’ European or Swedish identity. FEAD’s target group is represented as problematic, mainly due to what is portrayed as their strong collective identity, in which the individual has little space. Hence, the target group is positioned as deviant in relation to the dominant discourse of the free and autonomous individual (Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). Such a narrative draws upon parts of what Levitas (2005) has identified as a moral underclass discourse. From the MUD perspective, social exclusion primarily becomes a matter of culture and morale among those positioned as excluded. Here, disciplining the poor (Soss et al., 2011) by means of moral corrections becomes the logical solution to the problem of social exclusion. Even though such disciplining has not been particularly visible in the empirical material, drawing on a MUD perspective in social inclusion work always risks strengthening the stigma of the groups one is trying to include. Thus, a MUD perspective can be seen as an obstacle for successful social inclusion.

Poverty and racism are identified by the interviewees as the two major obstacles for social inclusion of the target group. This view is similar to what Levitas (2005) has identified as the redistributionist discourse. From a RED perspective, the problem of

social exclusion is first and foremost a problem of poverty and inequality produced by society. In this discourse, the preferred solutions are to create a more equal society regarding wealth and combat the structural racism that hinders the inclusion of the targeted groups. Thus, a RED perspective focuses on changing the majority society rather than disciplining the vulnerable target groups themselves. This structural approach to social work is hindered by the organising of social initiatives as welfare projects strictly targeting learning subjects as individuals.

What then are the major discourses governing the learning subjects of the target group? First and foremost, these are portrayed by the interviewees as a matter of learning ones' civic rights and obligations, both in Sweden and in their 'home countries'. The target groups are governed as individual learners, primarily in a sense that constructs them as responsible for their own inclusion by learning their rights and obligations as citizens (see Miller & Rose, 2008; Simons & Masschelein, 2007; Popkewitz et al., 2007). Hence, to successfully govern the target group towards becoming included in society, civic education is highlighted in the interviews as a necessary first step. The implicit rationality in such discourse is that through knowledge of one's rights one can conduct one's behaviour towards becoming a full member of society, i.e., to become an included citizen. As an effect of the focus on civil rights, FEAD's target group in the interviews is constructed as excluded from citizenship. Two major citizenship rights are proper housing and work opportunities. The target group is positioned as excluded from both, and social inclusion is described as being hindered by the regulations of FEAD. Citizenship and social rights relate to Levitas' (2005) RED perspective, as citizenship is a matter of distributing equal social rights among the members of a society. However, one of the major obstacles to transnational work on social inclusion is the issue of belonging of the targeted groups. The EU's free mobility and the right for EU citizens to reside in the member states makes the issue of *who* is a citizen *where*, and what responsibility this entails for which welfare state, more complex (Juverdeanu, 2021). The question of where the target group belongs, where they should become included, also relates to the EU and free movement (see Yıldız & De Genova, 2017). The target group of FEAD's projects is by definition not Swedish citizens, but citizens from other EU countries who reside in Sweden. Poor EU migrants from Eastern Europe have been considered a socio-political problem in Europe and Sweden, not least regarding the perceived negative effects on welfare systems (Ericsson, 2015; Hansen & Hager, 2010; Montesino Parra, 2002; Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016). In Sweden, as well as in other parts of Europe, this discussion of poor EU migrants from Eastern Europe has often revolved around the category of 'Roma' (van Baar, 2018; Hansson, 2019). As shown in the article, the mobility of poor people in contemporary Europe poses complex issues regarding who is considered as belonging where.

The analysis showed that the target group members themselves potentially wanted to learn to become included in Sweden. However, this was portrayed as being hindered by dominant political discourses on vulnerable EU migrants in Sweden that highlight the temporality of their residence and a political will to exclude 'them' from Swedish society, as they are constructed as belonging somewhere else. This was perceived as a major obstacle for sustainable inclusion work by the interviewees. The idea that the 'official Sweden' does not want poor and vulnerable EU migrants from Eastern Europe bears traces of what Levitas (2005) calls the moral underclass discourse. The MUD perspective is concerned with order and morale, not least when it comes to the nation. In relation to the perceived morally sound community of the nation, the poor are positioned as morally inferior and deviant and hence cannot belong to the majority community according to Levitas (2005). In the empirical material of this article, the MUD perspective is not strong

or explicitly disciplining the poor as argued by Soss et al. (2011). However, the idea that the deprived, poor and vulnerable belong somewhere else and are positioned as deviant in the established welfare state of Sweden is implicit in the analysed discourses.

Conclusions

This article has focused on how people engaged in EU-funded social initiatives targeting poor EU migrants in Sweden reason about the meaning, hardships, and possibilities they ascribe to the concept of social inclusion. The results have shown that the target group is constructed, problematised and governed as learners that are not yet socially included in society or the labour market and that discourses on the national and EU level can both facilitate and hinder learning for social inclusion targeting vulnerable groups.

Future research on the learning for social inclusion targeting marginalised groups would gain from providing a target group perspective, i.e., to conduct interviews and fieldwork with the participants of welfare projects. Here, a longitudinal approach would be particularly useful to see how the experiences of learning to become socially included in society and the labour market evolves over time, from a participant perspective.

In deploying Levitas' (2005) three dominant discourses (MUD/SID/RED) on social inclusion/exclusion, I have widened the analysis of the learning practices. The logic of organising welfare as projects (Brunila, 2011) affects the ways in which the social initiatives can be carried out, facilitating a focus on the disciplining and learning of the individual, which is propelled by the SID and MUD perspectives. Projectification, with its focus on individuals, makes it harder to take a broader, structural approach in line with the RED perspective. However, as the results show, MUD/SID/RED should not be understood as three distinct and clearly separated discourses. Rather, they can be closely related, intertwined, and interact in the same policy area.

List of abbreviations

ESF: European Social Fund

FEAD: Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived

MUD: Moral Underclass Discourse

RED: Redistribution Discourse

SID: Social Integrationist Discourse

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

Funding

This study was funded by FORTE, Swedish research council for health, working life and welfare. Reference number 2017-01859.

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