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MIGRATION IN THE NORDIC POLITICAL DISCOURSE.
TOWARDS A REVISED APPROACH

The aim of the paper is to deliver a short description followed by an evaluation of the political discourse about migration in three Nordic countries: Denmark, Sweden and Finland. Migration for long decades, if not centuries, constituted a common phenomenon in the northern reality – first as mass emigration of the Nordics, mainly to the North America, later as foreign labor immigration to Scandinavia. The intensive movement of people was slowed down by the two World Wars, but it never stopped entirely. Thus, the proposition that migration has co-created Scandinavian societies seems to be largely justified. Possibly, to similar extent as for other nations like the Irish, the Germans, the Britons or the French.

The presence of foreigners, especially when long lasting or permanent, affects traditional structures, forcing society to reconstruct, reorganize and reformulate existing interaction patterns. This in turn requires much energy, money and time to give the social, economic and political spheres a proper, functional shape. If not, the results can be quite dramatic like in the case of France or Germany, that have been struggling for decades to create cohesive societies. Multiculturalism as a policy and strategy has not brought expected outcomes, as the gaps between autochthons and (im)migrants still exist, causing tensions and escalating mutual animosities.¹

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¹ E.g. riots and anti-immigrant violence in France, Sweden, Germany and Norway <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/27/us-sweden-riots-idUSBRE94Q0E620130527> (retrieved: 20.12.2013). These xenophobic attitudes are observed also in Russia <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/anti-immigrant-riots-in-moscow-highlight-tensions-a-927792.html> (retrieved: 20.12.2013). In October 2010 the German Chancellor Angela Merkel during a meeting with members of the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) made a statement

The methodology applied in this paper is based on qualitative analysis of selected public statements of right wing politicians in Denmark, Sweden and Finland (years 2008-2014) – statements that particularly in the time of economic austerities gain more public attention than usually.

MODERN IMMIGRATION TO NORDEN – A BRIEF ACCOUNT²

Denmark's geographic location make this country a natural transfer passage for goods, services and people between Scandinavia and continental Europe. From the late 1850s the movement intensified due to the dynamically developing Danish agriculture and food industry. A similar trend can be observed today, although the primary cause of immigration are now high living standards and well developed social security mechanisms. Trying to control immigration flows the state introduced a dedicated immigration policy that did not close doors for high skilled workers, but reduced chances for getting a stay – and work permit for low skilled immigrants.³

The growing number of immigrants (including refugees) forced the authorities to regulate this already multicultural scene. Thus, in 1999 Denmark adopted an *Integration Act* which was supposed to help the newcomers to integrate into mainstream society. The law guaranteed state supported access to education, professional and personal development. The immigrants were encouraged to learn the Danish language, the country's history, customs, and familiarize with its politics, economy and culture. Six years later the parliament adopted another plan called *A New Chance for Everyone*. The plan included such objectives as: increasing immigrant employment, raising qualifications through vocational courses and getting the local authorities more involved in the process of integration. A continuation of these actions was provided in a project titled *Society of Opportunities. New Goals*.⁴ It was developed in 2007 with the aim of helping

on the failure of the German policy of multiculturalism; Angela Merkel: "This approach has failed, utterly failed" <http://www.dw.de/chancellor-merkel-says-german-multiculturalism-has-utterly-failed/a-6118859-1> (retrieved: 20.12.2013).

² The term *Norden* applies to five countries: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Island, and is broadly used in the public Nordic discourse.

³ In the beginning of the 1980s immigrants constituted 2% of the population, in 2007 nearly 9% (source: *The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs*).

⁴ *Society of Opportunities. New Goals*, Government Platform 2007, http://www.statsministeriet.dk/publikationer/UK_reggrund05/index.htm (retrieved 14.01. 2014).

to establish multicultural, integrated society where all sides i.e. natives and newcomers, men and women would actively participate. However, the plan was much easier to write than to put into practice. Experience showed that the integration process was not smooth and easy. First of all it required significant financial resources to organize adequate infrastructure, deliver knowledge about cultures involved, understanding of mutual needs, and last but not least, good will and patience.

Despite some obstacles and turbulences, implementation of the integration strategies inscribed in laws and national plans allowed to obtain the following goals:

- the number of unemployed immigrants went down,
- the number immigrants of employed by private employers increased,
- Danish entrepreneurs were highly satisfied with the work performed by immigrants (76% of private employers and 79% of public employers), and
- the percentage of young people of immigrant descent who decided to continue studies in secondary school increased.⁵

A survey carried out by Catinét Research brought additional confirmation of positive changes in building a cohesive multicultural society: in 2001, 39% of immigrants had Danish friends and colleagues, in 2005 more than 50% of them declared having native Danes as close friends.

Contemporary Danish society in the first decades of the 21st century is no longer homogeneous and undergoes similar transformations as its Nordic neighbours – towards a multicultural and multi-ethnic community.

Sweden experienced decades of intensive migratory movements since the early 1850s. The outgoing flows (mainly to both Americas) shaped the demographics of future Swedish society. Return migrations occurred in a relatively small scale and did not compensate for the loss of the work force. Thus, a century later, in the 1950s the state began to import foreign workers, first from Europe and later also from outside the continent. As a consequence of these political decisions Sweden evolved from a homogeneous country to a country with multi-ethnic and multicultural characteristics where about 15% of the nearly 10-million population is constituted by (im)migrants and their children.⁶ The diversity of ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic and other minority groups required a specially designed framework. Taking this into account, subsequent Swedish governments tried

⁵ Statistics Denmark, <http://www.statistikbanken.dk/statbank5a/SelectVarVal/saveselecti ons.asp> (retrieved 14.01. 2014).

⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/SWEDEN.pdf> (retrieved 10.01. 2014).

to develop a model of social, political and economic relations that would guarantee everyone in society – whether native or with foreign roots – full participation in the public life. This strategy was based on an egalitarian approach and differed significantly from the strategies applied in France or Germany where *Gastarbeiters* were supposed to work on fixed-term contracts and return back to their countries of origin after contracts' expiry. However, they often did not, choosing instead to stay and establish “new” homes both in material and psychological sense.

Formation of a multicultural, now relatively cohesive community (compared to other European multi-ethnic societies) was not easy and of course did not happen right away. As in the case of Denmark, it took time, money and active participation of all administrative levels: national, regional and local. The objective to include immigrants as mainstream partners in society constitutes one of the pillars of the modern Swedish integration policy. Analysing current state of affairs one may conclude that Sweden, even if not achieving all of the set goals, is still relatively successful in incorporating immigrants into society. According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) the country ranks at the top position.⁷ This can be explained as resulting from a combination of some basic principles, inter alia: respect for racial, ethnic, religious and cultural differences, equal treatment of all individuals on the labour market and immigrants' right to a language course in Swedish (if needed also in native languages of the immigrants) financed by the state.

The immigrant policy (*invandrarpolitiken*), was inspired by the Canadian policy of multiculturalism and focused on 1) equality on the labour market, 2) freedom of practising migrant's native customs and adapting to the Swedish culture in immigrant's own pace, 3) cooperation of natives and migrants on all levels: national, regional and local.

The economic crisis that struck Western markets in the early 1990s brought severe changes in the Swedish concept and practice of integration. Sweden decided to tighten regulations for economic immigrants giving instead more space and shelter for refugees, fleeing mainly from the Balkans (former Yugoslavia) and the Middle East (Iraq). This humanitarian approach was supported by the vast majority of society and received strong political support. At the same time in the case of economic migrants a growing reluctance could be observed. Public bitterness and resentment towards the

⁷ Sweden occupies the first place among 31 other countries included in the survey, <http://www.mipex.eu/countries> (retrieved 10.01.2014).

internal and external policy of the governments dominated by the social-democrats facilitated right wing parties to expand their potential. One of the examples of this trend was *New Democracy (Ny Demokrati)*, a political party using populist slogans about the necessity to protect Swedish market and economy from the influx of foreign workforce so that to secure jobs for native Swedes, or to protect Sweden against groups representing different, foreign and thus incongruent cultures.

The crisis of 2008 and its aftermath created circumstances conducive for extreme parties to take advantage and strengthen their position on the internal political scene. In their populist discourse meant to attract voters similar arguments are heard: protecting Sweden and its culture against foreign elements brought from outside of the country.

Finland followed similar patterns of migration as its Nordic neighbors. The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century were characterized by intensive flows out of the country, mainly to the North America, but also to Australia and New Zealand. The so called ‘push and pull’ factors (e.g. famine, unproductive agriculture, soil deficit and work deficit; work opportunities in new emerging markets) drained the country out of young labor force dooming it for stagnation or in the best case a very slow and unsteady development. Geopolitical environment determined by the USSR’s strong influence was another hindrance to allow the Finnish economy to use its full potential.

The situation started to change in the late 1970s when the country began switching its economy to the production of modern technologies. Two decades later, in 1991 with the Soviet Union’s collapse, the way to free unrestricted development and progress was fully open.

Intensive cooperation with other Nordic countries on all fields allowed Finland to catch up with in spheres: political, social and cultural. As a consequence of this, the turn of the 20th and the 21st century brought significant changes especially in terms of demographics. The Finnish economy, flourishing and gaining power offered plenty of opportunities to work and live. Very high living standards attracted economic migrants mainly from Europe but also from outside the continent, thus at the beginning of 2009, until then predominantly monoethnic Finland had nearly 156 000 foreigners living in the country, i.e. a little over 3% of its population.⁸

In 1997, in anticipation of the increasing immigration *Eduskunta*, the

⁸ http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2009/01/vaerak_2009_01_2010-09-30_kat_001_sv.html
Medborgarskap (retrieved: 1.12.2013).

Finnish parliament, adopted a legislative document on the principles of the immigration and integration policy. According to the guidelines enclosed in the act, integration should be based on mutual cooperation, partnership and active participation of both sides, autochthons and newcomers. Additionally, the immigrants are supported by the state to cultivate their traditions and customs as long as they do not stand in contradiction to the Finnish constitution.

Analysing the Finnish integration policy one may find strategies and programmes very similar to those applied by other Nordic countries. Best practices and mechanisms that proved successful are implemented with some modifications adjusted to the specific features of the Finnish social and political systems. The past 15 years made Finland an attractive destination for immigrants, delivering new opportunities and fostering new potentials but at the same time also creating new challenges. One of the major problems currently experienced in Finland is a persistent and high rate of unemployment among immigrants and their descendants. The percentage of unemployed immigrants is much higher than among indigenous Finns – 14.5 as compared to 6.7.⁹ Lack of work followed by a frequent use of welfare benefits diminish immigrants' active role in the integration process and leads to their marginalisation and partial exclusion from mainstream society. Unfavourable market and economic conditions create a climate conducive for radical attitudes and political parties calling to reduce immigration and keep Finland for 'true Finns'.

REVISED APPROACH TO (IM)MIGRATION POLICIES AND (IM)MIGRANTS

The problem of migration and migration policies constitutes one of the major themes undertaken not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world. The United States, Canada, Australia and other countries that have built their history on immigration are particular sensitive to give the policy proper shape, designed according to country's current needs. Debates how to construct social and economic order including foreigners occur also in Scandinavia. However, a change in the rhetoric can be observed. The discourse tends to be more radical and sharp containing statements until

⁹ *Population and migration – International migration – Migration and unemployment, Foreign-born unemployment rate relative to native-born unemployment rate*, OECD Factbook 2010: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistic.

2008 not often heard. The shift came with the global crises and with the austerities applied by the states to protect the national economies. The gradually introduced cuttings in spheres like social protection, education, health care etc. made mainstream societies prone to accept populist slogans in which the immigrants were depicted as those heavily dependent on state support, in large numbers unemployed claiming prolonged benefits.

Denmark provides a useful example in this regard. The recovery plan for the Danish economy after the financial upheaval of 2008, presented by Prime Minister Rasmussen in 2010, proposed several major changes, inter alia: 1) introducing more stringent procedures for legalization of stay of non-EU citizens on Danish soil, 2) making more restricted access to the system of social services for immigrants already residing in the country, 3) reducing benefits for long unemployed individuals to stimulate them to actively search for work and to find employment, 4) modifying procedures for entering the country for non-EU citizens, favoring high-skilled workers.

The proposed changes were supposed to repair state finances and to fulfill the EU obligation to reduce the budget deficit from 5% to 3% of GDP. The savings were obtained by the cuts in public expenses inter alia:

- cutting unemployment benefits from 4 to 2 years,
- reducing child allowances (1 billion DKK in 2013),
- reducing subsidies for interpreters in hospitals, administrative offices etc. (15 million DKK in 2013).¹⁰

In terms of the numbers, however, these actions, do not seem to generate sufficient budgetary savings. They may rather constitute a part of a much broader strategy to repair national budget, causing in some cases severe doubts in terms of effectiveness. Reduction in child allowances for instance hit mainly immigrant families often with more than three children.

The revised approach to immigration displays some features indicating that the state authorities take into account the voice of a powerful populist party *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF). The party has been present on the internal political scene since 1995 and currently constitutes a significant political force in the Danish parliament. It is also present in the European Parliament.¹¹ Thus, ignoring DF would diminish chances for the ruling politicians to stay in power. A similar conclusion was expressed by a Danish

¹⁰ Ch. Lehmann, 2010, *Dansk Folkeparti tog alle stikkene hjem* [in:] Information. dk, Politik&International, 25 May 2010, <http://www.information.dk/234273> (retrieved: 11.01.2014).

¹¹ <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Europaparlamentet> (retrieved: 16.01.2014).

daily national newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* stating that the government bowed to the influence of DF and decided to repair the budget of the state at the expense of immigrants and their descendants.¹²

The leaders and ex-leaders of DF (Kristian Thulesen Dahl, Søren Espersen, Pia Kjærsgaard, Peter Skaarup) opt in their rhetoric for dividing the welfare state costs among all its residents, also immigrants.¹³ In addition, those of them who stay permanently unemployed claiming unemployment benefits, should leave the country. To make the political message even stronger, Peter Skaarup, gave a concrete example, stating that the national budget would save about 24 billion DKK if work performed by immigrants was equally effective as work performed by the natives.¹⁴ These words seem to have fallen on a fertile ground and a growing support for the party could be observed.¹⁵

The suggestion that immigrants are prone to abuse the Danish welfare system and are reluctant to integrate into Danish society contributed a hostile social climate and stimulated minority groups to lock themselves in ethnic enclaves with evident physical and social boundaries.

Over the past two decades Denmark's political landscape has changed dramatically. The change is evident also in the public discourse on immigration. Symptomatic are such events as Islamist's reaction to Prophet Muhammad cartoons published by *Jyllands Posten* in 2005 and the attempt to murder the cartoons' author, Kurt Westergaard. More radical discourse is often portrayed as freedom of expression, and constitutes a frequently occurring element of the populist rhetoric. During the national election campaign in 2007 the DF presented a poster referring to the controversial drawings of Prophet Muhammad's head, with the following captions underneath: "Freedom of speech is Danish, censorship is not", and "We stand our ground on Danish values". Similar arguments referring to freedom can also be found in other, non-immigration related areas of public life, e.g.

¹² H. I b, *Bedre plan trods grimme tidsler på udlændingeområdet. En folkelig genopretning* [in:] *Berlingske Tidende*, 25 May 2010, <http://www.bt.dk/politik/helle-ib-en-folkelig-genopretning> (retrieved: 28.08.2013).

¹³ L e h m a n n, 2010, *Dansk Folkeparti tog alle stikkene hjem*, <http://www.information.dk/234273> (retrieved: 27.12.2013).

¹⁴ P. S k a a r u p, 2010, *Dansk Folkeparti redder velfærden*, 26 May 2010. http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Dansk_Folkeparti_redder_velf%C3%A6rden__8549_835.asp (retrieved: 27.12.2013).

¹⁵ *Denmark's populist on the rise* <http://www.dw.de/denmarks-populists-on-the-rise/a-17238507> (retrieved: 13.01.2014).

gender and equality.¹⁶ However, the concept of freedom does not seem to apply to all spheres, as evident for example from the case of border controls briefly introduced by Denmark in 2011. Being a Schengen zone member, Denmark still imposed such controls, as it was explained, to keep “criminals from Eastern Europe” and “illegal migrants” away.¹⁷

As in most countries, also the Danish internal (and to some extent external) policy is being shaped taking into account public opinion, strongly influenced by main political actors. For the time being, the voice of the far right parties is still present but will probably lose on importance once economic situation stabilizes and improves. Although the worsening material status may radicalize an individual’s attitude, constructing a liberal socio-cultural climate can counteract these populist and dangerous trends.

The crisis of 2008 launched a discussion on the necessity to introduce strict reforms, also in immigration policy, and not only in Denmark but also in **Sweden**. The need for an open public debate concerning immigration was stimulated by several arguments including: lack of transparent procedures related to the admission of immigrants (likewise refugees) into the country, incomplete data in terms of financial costs involved in the integration process and imprecisely stated tax revenues paid to the state budget by immigrants.¹⁸

An analysis of Swedish media and political discourse over the past years (2008-2014) indicated that public opinion in Sweden had already been seeking for a long time a profound revision of the Swedish immigration policy. Social protection system, for decades so generous, started to weaken due to an increasing burden associated with the growing needs of continuously rising number of immigrants.

The origin of the trend can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s. The second half of the twentieth century was characterized by public discourse

¹⁶ G. Fouché, *Danish election ad reignites Muhammad cartoon controversy*, The Guardian, 25. Oct. 2007,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/oct/25/muhammadcartoons.gwladysfouche> (retrieved: 13.01.2014).

¹⁷ M. Steininger, *Denmark imposes new border checks to keep out immigrants, 'criminals'* CSMonitor, 5. Jul. 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2011/0705/Denmark-imposes-new-border-checks-to-keep-out-immigrants-criminals>(retrieved: 13.01.2014).

¹⁸ On the governmental web page <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/17468> have been collected most popular questions and answers regarding a common perception of immigration, immigrants and integration. This selections of Q&A aims to provided information to shape a proper understanding of the above mentioned phenomena, based on research and not on myths or wrong assumptions.

animated by media and politicians, in which immigrants were portrayed as individuals in need of protection and special state aid, because they originated mostly from developing countries. This image was vivid over a long time and influenced attitudes of many Swedes. Crucial for understating this socio-cultural approach was the fact that Sweden, becoming a welfare state in the 1950s and 1960s intended to modify its international image, shaped until then by Sweden's controversial *neutrality* during WW II.¹⁹

The present criticism of immigration policy results from the fact that eight out of 10 asylum seekers – according to the UN definition – are de facto not refugees.²⁰ A broad range of terms and a multiplicity of denominations lead to clerical misinterpretations in the proper recognition of the status of immigrants. Variety of expressions similar in meaning contribute to obstructing proper management of migration flows.

Another important question relates to the costs of current migration policy, which remain as estimates only and thus foster numerous speculations about their actual level. Large spread in assessed expenditures, can partly be explained by changing intensity of immigration flows between years and by differences in the statistical approaches applied (eg. including or excluding refugees, migrants' children born outside or in Sweden etc.).²¹

The notion of cohesive society constitutes one of the key components of a competitive economy. Integration thus remains one of the areas where a country's strategic development is pursued.

In the last decade, research carried out by state institutions responsible for integration, delivered data indicating that half of the male refugees who arrived in Sweden in 2003, remained without any occupation at least for five years upon the arrival. In the case of females the percentage was even higher: 60-70%, depending on the ethnic group.²² This enormous but unused human potential turned into a growing cost for society, and made integration

¹⁹ Declaring neutrality towards all parties of the conflict, Sweden was in a position to make economic agreements with each of them, thus causing controversies worldwide.

²⁰ G. Sandelin, *Journalisterna mörklägger sanningen om invandrarna* [in:] "Dagens Nyheter", DN.se debatt, 8 April 2008, <http://www.dn.se/debatt/journalisterna-morklagger-sanningen-om-invandrarna> (retrieved: 11.01.2014).

²¹ S. Madon, A. Fridholm, *Vad kostar invandringen? – en studie om invandringens ekonomiska effekter i Sverige*; also <http://www.migrationsinfo.se/fragor-och-svar/vad-kostar-invandringen/>, and <http://www.temaasyl.se/Templates/Page.aspx?id=2541> (retrieved: 11.01.2014).

²² Sandelin, *Journalisterna mörklägger sanningen om invandrarna*, <http://www.dn.se/debatt/journalisterna-morklagger-sanningen-om-invandrarna> (retrieved: 11.01.2014).

doubtful in terms of its functionality. However, the established integration model seemed to be deeply enrooted in the habits, customs and the way state institutions, individuals and groups act. It was anchored in the theoretical assumption underlying and supporting decision making at national, regional and local levels.

The absence of an open and critical review of the (im)migration policy until 2008 can be explained by political correctness and a conviction that granting asylum to disadvantaged individuals is righteous and appropriate. Political correctness caused that migration issues were not perceived as subject for public debate, and remained reserved for researchers, academics or politicians to discuss the topic in their cabinets. To criticize immigration and integration policy required a lot of argumentative caution, courage, and skill, so that to avoid accusations of “hidden hostility towards immigrants” or even “hidden racism”.

Ideologically shaped rhetoric used until recently in the Swedish public debate distorted an earlier discourse about immigration, made it depart from reality, and turned into something artificial, constructed for the sake of political correctness. Thus, among the major challenges for today's migration policy in Sweden emerge urgent needs to modify and adjust to real life the socio-political discourse on immigration.

The far wing party Sweden's Democrats *Sverige Demokrater* (SD) has started the change in an exaggerated mode by using clear anti-immigration rhetoric.²³ Established in 1988 the party has gained more supporters and members over the years. Currently, after the parliamentary election in September 2014 SD constitutes the third force within *Riksdag*, the parliament, having 49 seats.²⁴

On the SD's official web site 15 priority policy related areas are listed, with immigration among topics such as democracy, nationalism, nation, culture and multiculturalism.²⁵ The party delivers a clear message that immigration should be strictly reduced to refugees granted asylum only for a limited time as long as the life-threatening conditions in their home country persist.²⁶ The humanitarian assistance for other individuals in urgent need should be undertaken on the spot where disaster or military fighting

²³ <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/invandring/>; <http://www.thelocal.se/8851/20071020/> (retrieved: 12.01.2014).

²⁴ <http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/ledamoter-partier/> (retrieved: 9.11.2014).

²⁵ <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/sverigedemokraterna-och-flyktingpolitik/> (retrieved: 12.01.2014).

²⁶ <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/invandring/> (retrieved: 12.01.2014).

occurred. Thus, a proper financial support to UN's actions should be used to help those in real need instead of support for those who were lucky enough to enter the EU and Sweden. In the case of immigrants living on the Swedish soil, Swedish language, culture and politics should become compulsory to learn. These elements are crucial in the process of building unified and coherent society and a competitive economy.²⁷

The concept of unity is clear present in SD's rhetoric and defined in detail in the party's program.²⁸ From this perspective, multiculturalism in all its versions and meanings appears strongly negated as a profoundly wrong political- and cultural concept, causing more problems and troubles than real benefits.

Finland is the only Nordic country which as an EU member state introduced the euro as its currency. The decision to do so had a very pragmatic grounds and was based on an assumption that it would quickly enhance Finland's position in terms of trade and service provision and that it would make the Finnish market more accessible for enterprises and individuals – including tourists. An overall good condition of the Finish economy, steadily strengthened since the late 1980's, turned out to be a very strong pull factor for immigration. Thus, since the middle of the 1990's Finland became a destination for newcomers looking for work and a place to settle. The growing number of immigrants was not a particular concern until 2008 when the global crisis began. In the new circumstances however, resentments against non-Finns increased and percolated into the public debate. The most frequently heard critical comments referred to open borders and emphasized urgent need to tighten immigration law and to make

²⁷ The quote in Swedish: "(...) Sverigedemokraternas nationalism är öppen och icke rasistisk. Eftersom vi definierar nationen i termer av kultur, språk, identitet och lojalitet, och inte i termer av historisk nationstillhörighet eller genetisk grupptillhörighet, så är vår nationella gemenskap öppen även för människor med bakgrund i andra nationer." [*translated into English by MB*: "Sweden Democrats' nationalism is liberal and not racist. This is due the conceptualization of the term 'nation' understood as culture, mother tongue, identity and loyalty, and not as nationality or race. Thus, our national community is open to people with backgrounds stemming from other nations."] <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/nationalism/> (retrieved 13.01.2014).

²⁸ The quote in Swedish: „(...) Helt grundläggande för bevarandet och upprätthållandet av en livskraftig ideell sektor är förekomsten av ett starkt socialt kapital inom samhället. Detta förutsätter i sin tur en stark gemensam identitet.“ [Absolutely essential for the preservation and maintenance of a vibrant nonprofit sector [related to social economy, comment by MB] is the presence of a strong social capital within the community. This, however, requires a strong common identity.”] <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/den-ideella-sektorn/> (retrieved 13.01.2014).

welfare benefit rules more stringent when applied to unemployed foreigners. The strongest forms of protests against Finnish immigration policy occurred on the Internet. Not only in this particular case the Internet provided a convenient space for (mostly) unrestricted expressions. Social media and even official governmental web sites, allowing for comments, quickly became platforms for vivid exchange of views and harsh criticism of immigration.

Anti-immigration groups used the Internet to coordinate and inform each other about planned actions as well as to communicate their supporters across the web and the wider public. The established informal formations dedicated fora for publicizing populist arguments among their members and followers. Some of these activities were later described in the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper, which reported cases of politicians and journalists receiving threats for their liberal pro-immigration views.²⁹

Astrid Thors, Finnish Minister of Migration and European Affairs, experienced the resentments personally. One of the members of the populist party (True) Finns³⁰ (fin. *Perussuomalaiset*) expressed via Facebook his readiness and will to face all the repercussions connected with a potential assassination of the Minister. The threats were taken seriously by police who very quickly managed to identify the author and handed him over to prosecutors. However, even the immediate response of law enforcement agencies did not discourage other extremists to continue placing aggressive statements on the Internet.³¹

Other public protests of a more moderate character brought some changes in the immigration policy, more precisely in the asylum law. Since 2010 the law became more restrictive for family reunification in the case of political refugees. It is now much harder to successfully apply for a visa for the extended family, which affects in particular individuals from Arabic and Islamic countries.

Historically, anti-immigration attitudes have long tradition going back to the 1950s. At that time, anti-immigration slogans were expressed by the

²⁹ *Immigration experts face racist harassment, Helsingin Sanomat*, International on-line edition 16 March 2010, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Immigration+experts+face+racist+harassment/1135254452337> (retrieved 13.01.2014).

³⁰ In 2011 the party changed its English name from 'True Finns' to 'Finns'.

³¹ H. K a a r t o, *Death threats have become an everyday phenomenon. Atmosphere of blind rage colours Finland's immigration politics* [in:] "Helsingin Sanomat" 3 March 2010, [http://www.hs.fi/english/article/NEWS+ANALYSIS+Death+threats+have+become+an+everyday+phenomenon/1135253403519_\(retrieved+14.01.2014\)](http://www.hs.fi/english/article/NEWS+ANALYSIS+Death+threats+have+become+an+everyday+phenomenon/1135253403519_(retrieved+14.01.2014)).

Finnish Rural Party (fin. *Suomen maaseudun puolue*) strongest in the 1960s and 1970s. The party's charismatic leader, Veikko Vennamo, was a talented orator and strategist who was able to gather a significant circle of listeners and supporters. Vennamo's party descended from the internal political scene in 1995, however, his ideas survived and found their followers. One of them is Timo Soini, the leader of the True Finns today's populist party, which entered the parliament in 2003. Soini's persistent criticism of the EU and its financial institutions makes him popular among EU skeptics and those who oppose immigration. The crisis of the Greek economy, which seriously disturbed the euro-zone, has provided Soini with additional arguments against the EU, and also against the immigration policy pursued by Finland as an EU member. In today's Eduskunta, the Finnish Parliament, the Finns have 39 seats, which makes them the third power, just behind the National Coalition Party (fin. *Kansallisen kokoomuksen*), 44 seats, and the Social Democratic Party (fin. *Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue*), 42 seats.³²

Alexander Stubb, Finland's Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade represents an opposite point of view, promoting the notion of immigration as a required mechanism to enhance the Finnish economy. In an interview given to the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* in March 2010, he stated that the ongoing anti-immigrant debate was not acceptable and that it was contradicting the overall interests of the state.³³ His opinion is shared by the earlier mentioned minister, Astrid Thors, who pointed that labor immigration remains a necessary tool and a solution for contemporary economic challenges.³⁴

In this context the increasingly critical attitude of the public towards foreigners may be problematic. Especially when the immigrants constitute only 3.4% of Finnish society – much less than in the case of neighboring Sweden.³⁵ It seems, however, that the resentments and anti-immigrants attitudes are growing among Finns, making the arguments of liberal parties unheard.³⁶

³² <http://web.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/parliament/parliamentarygroups/index.htm> (retrieved 16.01.2014).

³³ <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Foreign+Minister+Stubb+defends+immigration+and+multiculturalism/1135254813307> (retrieved 16.01.2014).

³⁴ <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Yet+another+parliamentary+debate+over+immigration+1135256503816> (retrieved 16.01.2014).

³⁵ *Årsöversikt över migrationen 2011*, Inrikesministeriet.

³⁶ *Survey: Finns' attitudes toward immigration have become more negative. Finns do not want to receive more immigrants during recession,*

<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Survey+Finns%E2%80%99+attitudes+toward+immigration>

CONCLUSION

The rhetoric applied by politicians representing contemporary far wing parties in Denmark, Sweden and Finland include critic statements about migration and national immigration policies. This discourse is very often attached to another crucial subject – (re)constructing of national identity, to some extent disturbed by influences from other cultures and different social orders brought into the Nordic space with immigrants. The populist message seems to gain increasingly more listeners and followers which is seen in the growing support for far wing parties. Their programs shaped in accordance with the populist voice of society depict a real state of the public mind, which especially in times of economic crisis, tend to become more extreme than usually. However, the economic turndown should not be seen as the only and single purpose of this situation. The strong position of the anti-immigration parties on the political scene can be associated with the crisis of media generally. The traditional ways of providing information have lost their efficiency, being partly substituted by the internet (social forums, blogs, platforms and associations for exchanging views, comments, attitudes etc). The virtual space offers broad and almost unrestricted possibilities not only to deliver extreme notions but also to gain support for them. This aspect, however, very crucial and interesting, goes beyond the scope of this paper and will be developed in another article.

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*MIGRATION IN THE NORDIC POLITICAL DISCOURSE.
TOWARDS A REVISED APPROACH.*

Summary

The article offers an inside perspective on the political and cultural context that has been shaping the discourse about immigration and immigrants in the Nordic countries for several years (2008-2014). The case of Denmark, Sweden and Finland serve to exemplify countries which still experience vivid debates on whether or not the immigration policy should be made more restrictive. Analyzing pro and con arguments used by several politicians and politically active individuals allows to identify radicalization of anti-immigration attitudes.

*MIGRACJA W DYSKURSYJ POLITYCZNYM KRAJÓW NORDYCKICH.
ZMIENIONE UJĘCIE*

Streszczenie

Artykuł stanowi próbę przybliżenia specyfiki kontekstu, w jakim od kilku lat (2008-2014) prowadzony jest dyskurs dotyczący imigrantów oraz ich obecności w krajach

nordyckich. Na przykładzie Danii, Szwecji oraz Finlandii zostały przedstawione rysy charakterystyczne sposobu argumentowania zwolenników oraz przeciwników liberalnej polityki migracyjnej. Analiza wybranych wypowiedzi polityków oraz osób aktywnych politycznie dostarczyła wniosków wskazujących na radykalizowanie się postaw niechętnych imigrantom.

Słowa kluczowe: migracje, dyskurs polityczny, kraje nordyckie.

Key words: migration, political discourse, Nordic countries.