



# **DIMENSIONS OF EQUALITY IN A GOOD SOCIETY**

**Stockholm, 14-15 April 2011**

Conference Program

## **Background and aim**

The market liberal notion of equality is primarily based on individual performance and achievement – an equality of opportunities and rights rather than outcome. However, this liberal understanding of *equal rights* has often come to be interpreted as *individual responsibility*. The structural crisis of market liberalism today is not necessarily followed by a crisis of the idea of equal rights. But boundaries within the discourse of equality are still rather narrow and tend to be marginal debates on a couple of percentage points up or down in a progressive tax system. Any universal alternative understanding of equality within a market system needs to critically reflect and assess the competitive necessities of markets while reconciling these with a normative vision of equality today.

The Nordic states have long served as examples of societies which build upon a foundation of a comprehensive idea of equality. These models combined – and compared to many other countries – still reach a high degree of equality while promoting economic growth and efficiency. However, the architecture of these models has become more and more fragile. The development of a holistic notion of equality must be based on the analysis of the roots of increasing inequality in direct interplay with a conception of the role of the market.

In this conference we aim not only to analyze the concept of equality, but also to locate it within a wider framework of a new social and democratic political agenda, which was first set out by the debate on a Good Society. For that purpose we will elaborate on four dimensions of equality: the philosophical, economic, social and integration dimension.

### **Time:**

April 14: 17:00-20:00

April 15: 09:00-16:30

### **Venue:**

April 14: Kulturhuset, Studio 3, Sergels Torg, Stockholm

April 15: City Conference Center/Dansens Hus, Barnhusgatan 12-14, Stockholm

### **Organizers:**

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**April 14**                      **Venue: Kulturhuset**

**17:00**                        **Opening Address**

**17:15**                        **Public panel discussion / reception**

**The philosophy of equality**

What is the promise of equality in liberalism and how did it fail (if it did)? What is the reference unit of equality and in how far can or must such a reference unit be universal or contingent? What are the major dimensions of equality in the context of an interdependent, international market society? What is the current state of the art in the field of progressive political philosophy on the issue of equality?

Speakers:

Gesine Schwan, Professor and President of the Humboldt Viadrina School of Governance, Berlin

Bo Rothstein, Professor, Gothenburg University

Thomas Pogge, Professor, Yale University

Moderators:

Christian Kellermann and Kajsa Borgnäs

**19:00**                        **Snacks and Drinks**

**April 15**                      **Venue: City Conference Center**

**09.00**                      **Introduction**

Henning Meyer, SEJ

**09:15**                      **Panel 1: The economics of (in)equality**

Rising income gaps are just one expression of increased economic inequalities within and between European societies. While there was a catching-up process between the richest and the poorest countries in the EU until around 2005, this trend was reversed with the outbreak of the financial crisis. Income inequalities within and between countries are increasingly threatening the stability of the European Union. Various targeted economic policies by individual countries increase the competitive spirit based on growing inequalities and imbalances within the EU. The dimensions to be discussed in this panel are threefold: First, it will be explored, to what extent and of which quality inequalities within and between the European societies exist today and what their trend is. Second, the disputed relationship between equality and (economic) efficiency will be discussed. Thirdly, policy options will be developed to increase equality within the framework of productivity and reasonable competitiveness.

Speakers:

Michael Dauderstädt, Chief Economist, Friedrich Ebert Foundation,  
Bonn/Berlin

Daniel Lind, Chief Economist, Unionen

Rory O'Farrell, Researcher, ETUI

Moderator: Lena Sommestad, professor, Uppsala University

**10:45**                      **COFFEE BREAK**

**11:15**                      **Panel 2: Equality and integration**

In this panel, we aim at critically reflecting the relationship of increasingly debated integration issues against the background of equality issues. What is the connection between the increasing inequality within and between societies, and increased migration? Is there a connection between ethnic diversity and the legitimacy of equalizing institutions (welfare state/ redistribution/ universal public services)? Or: Is there a potential trade-off between a more open and accommodating approach to migration and integration, on the one hand, and the maintenance of a robust welfare state, on the other hand? How do inequality and right-wing populism interact? What policies and lines of argument would social democracy and trade unions have to bring forward within the integration debate? How can a progressive policy for equality and integration be created?

Speakers:

Rene Cuperus, Director for International Relations, Wiardi Beckman  
Foundation

Nick Johnson, Smith Institute

Nils Holtug, Professor, University of Copenhagen

Moderator: Victor Bernhardt, editor, Arena

**13:00**                    **LUNCH BREAK**

**14:00**                    **Panel 3: Social Equality**

Equality has increasingly become a derivative of efficiency. Social policies and welfare provisions are mainly regarded in their function of producing costs and inefficiencies. During the latest economic crisis a rhetoric rebound of “the social” could be observed by the anti-cyclical function of so-called automatic stabilizers – the market-term for social policies. Balancing economies by stabilizing private consumption and employment rates became a positive spin in mainstream discourses without having to refer to the social productivity of “equalizing” measures. In this panel we want to discuss the value of social policy in itself. We want to reflect under current (economic) conditions, whether and which social policy actually increases equality. Which social policies might currently cement existing inequalities? What are the features of “the neo-social” and how are we to interpret “activating”/“preventive” social policies in the notion of the multiplicity of the dimensions of equality (gender equality, health etc.)? The goal of this panel is to define “the social” as a prerequisite for equality today.

Speakers:

Irene Ramos Vielba, Fundacion IDEAS

Frank Nullmeier, Professor, Bremen University

Emma Lennartsson, Chief Economist, Swedish Municipal Workers' Union

Moderator: Love Hansson, Friedrich Ebert Foundation

**16:00**                    **Closing address**

Kajsa Borgnäs, Christian Kellermann

**16:15**                    **End of Conference**

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