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The role of research in developing migration policies

Good morning and welcome to this first cluster meeting here in Oslo. I hope you enjoyed yesterday's conference and the dinner at Olympen in Greenland - one of our key multiculti areas of Oslo. Today's topic is:

The role of research in developing migration policies - We have chosen this topic as the question of the relevance of research for policy makers is at the forefront of discussion in the EMN. I remind you in this regard of EMN's July workshop on *Formats - to suit policymakers* as well as EMN's ongoing refinement of objectives for work program 2012 which now stands as follows: *to better inform policymakers by improving further its capacity to provide ….information of relevance to policymakers in a format they require; increasing the EMN's responsiveness to policymakers needs*.

Thus, I take it that today's theme is *relevant* for all of us. It is also *important* as most policymakers like to present their policies as knowledge/Research based. Many policymakers use research to *justify* policies. Some use research for policy development. The latter/Research for policy development, is what we have in focus today as justification post hoc may easily end up as politicized research and ideology. We want the opposite namely more research based politics.

Our main concepts, *research and policy*, can for the purpose of simplicity preferably be understood in a broad and more popular way: *Research*, as systematic knowledge production. *Policy*, as ways of doing things, action plan etc. If we deconstruct the concepts further, research and policy can be rephrased as *knowledge and action,* in temporal terms *is and ought*.

About the relation between research and policy, is and ought, I like to highlight the following:

We are dealing with uncertainty and risk: There is no link of *necessity* between knowledge and action/is and ought. Irrespective of the quantity and quality of knowledge at hand, you can never safely predict the end results of an action/policy. Things may work out in an unexpected manner – in worst case even in disaster. As we learn it from the wise people: The way to hell may very well be guided by the best of intentions.

Knowledge about social reality – in short *social facts* - does not refer to a reality governed by determinism/necessity. Choice between a, b, c, d etc. - in short freedom of action - is always more or less a part of human existence, depending on resources, power, status etc. This applies also on aggregated political levels. Thus, using knowledge to inform policy development and implementation involves uncertainty and risk as human action in general. So, what can we do with a social science based on such unsecure grounds if we want to deliver applied research to policy makers?

Accept it, be more daring and go for a balanced risk approach: Recognizing uncertainty and risk as elements of any knowledge about social reality inspires a more well founded, yet bolder and more clear cut approach to knowledge production. Risk and uncertainty drives knowledge producers to search wider and deeper to strengthen their propositions on more firm ground. Hopefully, it also drives them to induce more clearly the implications of their research findings to usable knowledge for policymakers.

What is usable knowledge for policymakers: This indeed is the underlying question of our cluster meeting here today. I will propose some general, hopefully more provocative statements up front:

1. Usable knowledge for policy makers is knowledge which involves action alternatives or knowledge from which action alternatives can be derived. This, I will maintain, also applies for descriptive exercises. These are more useful if they are based on generative models indicating the tendencies and directions of change and not only describe social reality as a static entity.

2. Formats of research reports produced for policy makers should be short and concise focusing on findings and action alternatives implied. Such reports should also contain clear cut conclusions about which findings have most relevance for the stake at hand with which degree of uncertainty and risk for possible policy development proposals. Recommendations will then evolve more as a matter of course.

Some may object to these ideas as representing some form of *social engineering*. I would say "not so". Determinism is denied in principle and freedom of action, uncertainties and risks are key elements of the research approach supported here. The political system is also seen as an autonomous sphere where decisions are reached based on inputs from a variety of sources: values, power, knowledge, interests, resources, the political game in itself etc. Politics can never be reduced to an outcome of knowledge.

Now, let us proceed to see how today's agenda will handle the issue of *usable knowledge.*

Vigdis and Jan-Paul from Institute of social research have been requested to induce policy relevant lessons from yesterday's conference. This exercise will do two things: First,

hopefully enlighten us about the political action implications of yesterday's conference. Secondly, disclose what our researchers understand as usable knowledge for policymakers.

Deputy director general of Norwegian directorate of Immigration Mr. Frode Forfang will start the next session on *What role does research based knowledge play when developing policies.* He will be followed by NCP colleagues from Sweden and Austria. The session will be reflections on experience so far. What have been used? What do we need? What are perceived as usable knowledge?

We conclude with a more operational session on *What are effective strategies and mechanisms for making research based knowledge useful for policy development?* Here we have an intervention from NCP Austria. Others are invited to come up with their smart ideas on how to produce more usable knowledge for policy makers.

Now Vigdis and Jan-Paul. The floor is yours. What are the political implications of yesterday's conference?