



EUROPEAN UNION  
European Social Fund

*jobs and new opportunities*  
**for all**

A BETTER WORKING LIFE MAKES USE OF EVERYONE'S SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL,  
REGARDLESS OF GENDER, ETHNIC ORIGIN, CREED, DISABILITY, AGE OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

## **Learning environments ..... 4 – 17**

A school that doesn't marginalise	6
Everyday learning for all	12
Learning without end	14

## **Social enterprises ..... 18 – 29**

A staging post into the community	20
Human value added and new jobs	24
Everyone has a potential	27

## **Asylum and Integration ..... 30 – 37**

Social exclusion on the increase among asylum-seekers	32
Uncertain fate, exclusion and ill-health	36

## **All Clear ..... 38 – 49**

Discrimination through de-visualisation	40
Discrimination makes everyone a loser	44
We must have a permissive climate ...	46

## **Social responsibility ..... 50 – 57**

Giving everyone a chance	52
Social responsibility creates new jobs	56

## **Gender equality ..... 58 – 65**

A driving school for gender equality	60
In control of one's life	64

## **New Paths ..... 66 – 77**

Partnership for youth employment	68
Partnership and quality assurance	72
Many stools to fall between	74

## **Partnership ..... 78 – 85**

Broad-based diversity promotion	80
The art of succeeding with development	84

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Ragnhild Larsson, Ulla Lundström and Mats Utbult

english translation Ordväxlingen, Roger Tanner

graphic production Contactor Marknadskommunikation

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photo FotoKenne Reklamfoto AB, Elisabeth Olsson

Wallin, Hasse Eriksson, Le Carlsson, Thor Lindgren,

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# Preface

MANY PEOPLE ARE UNEMPLOYED DESPITE HAVING BOTH HIGH QUALIFICATIONS AND VALUABLE EXPERIENCE. THE REASON MAY BE AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND OR A DISABILITY, GENDER OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION, DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL OR GETTING ON IN YEARS. THE SAME FACTORS ALSO RESULT IN EMPLOYEES BEING UNFAIRLY TREATED IN THE WORKPLACE AND NOT BEING ABLE TO DO THEMSELVES JUSTICE.

EQUAL is the biggest diversity commitment in the history of the EU. Never before have resources been mobilised on such a scale to create a more open working life. For six years now, all over Europe, experiments have been in progress with new ways of tackling discrimination and exclusion in the employment sector. This work has been organised into development partnerships (DPs) in which agents not normally co-operating with each other have tackled various tasks together. More than a thousand people have taken part in the 70 Swedish DPs.

Hundreds of players from business enterprise, public authorities and NGOs have co-operated on equal terms. During the same period nearly 2,000 DPs have been active elsewhere in Europe, many of them with associates in Sweden.

Here in Sweden we have gathered experience from DPs and kindred activities into eight National Theme Groups,

so as to achieve the greatest possible impact on structures, policies and thinking habits. The eight groups are tasked with disseminating results and with influencing politicians, officials and policy-makers at all levels.

This publication is a presentation of the Theme Groups. Interviews with people connected with the theme work alternate with examples of DPs and more general information about the National Theme Groups.

One European programming period will shortly be succeeded by another, and the journey towards a more open working life in which everyone can participate continues. The European Social Fund will go on working until at least 2013 to create work and new opportunities for all.

The Swedish ESF Council

# Learning environments

What is happening to learning in modern working life? And what about the transition between education and employment? How can informal, learning in everyday life and the workplace be interlinked with formal learning and the education system? And above all, how can we create a diversity of learning in which everyone can be included and no one is discriminated against or marginalised? This is the point of departure for a theme group focusing on learning.

“We are engaged in the collection, analysis and dissemination of experience concerning the genesis of learning and the build-up of knowledge,” says National Theme Group Learning’s Co-ordinator Stefan Ekenberg.

“Based on interaction between researchers and practitioners, we want to identify and define learning environments and at the same time develop concepts and methods for describing formal and informal learning. In our theme group we have above all occupied ourselves with informal learning, the type of learning occurring spontaneously, unexpectedly and without prior planning.”



# A school that doesn't marginalise

SCHOOLS CANNOT ACQUIESCE IN MORE AND MORE PUPILS BEING EXCLUDED BEFORE THEY HAVE EVEN ENTERED WORKING LIFE. SCHOOL-FATIGUED, TRUANT-PLAYING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS MUST BE ENTICED BACK TO THE CLASSROOM.

“WE MUST GIVE THESE STUDENTS TOOLS FOR COPING WITH THEIR LIVES,” SAYS MARGIT DANIELSSON, HEAD TEACHER OF ULLVIGYMNASIET, KÖPING. THE ODDS ARE HUGELY STACKED AGAINST THOSE STUDENTS WHO LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL WITHOUT A PROPER LEAVING CERTIFICATE. HEALTH PROGRAMMES AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS ARE AMONG THE MEANS WHICH ARE BEING EMPLOYED, AS WELL AS CHANGES TO STRUCTURES AND ATTITUDES WHICH AT PRESENT ARE EXCLUDING AND DISCRIMINATING AGAINST STUDENTS IN SCHOOL.

No more school dropouts. That is the aim of the three-year development project DROPIN at three high schools in the County of Västmanland. At present some of the schools in that county fall below the national average for compulsory school achievement.

In the background are the Västmanland Intermunicipal Association, the City of Västerås, the Municipality of Sala, the Municipality of Köping, the Employment Service in Köping, Sala and Västerås, the County Labour Board and the Diocese of Västerås, all of which have been disturbed by the growth during recent years in the numbers of pupils in county schools playing truant, changing study programmes or coming to school without attending lessons.

At the same time more and more students are dropping out of high school without leaving certificates.

Ullvi High School, one of the schools concerned, has nearly 1,150 students taking 14 different high school programmes,

17 per cent of whom leave school without having qualified for higher studies. 25 students taking the individual programme had more than 40 per cent absenteeism. At the same time, 13 per cent of the compulsory school pupils had failed to achieve pass marks in one of the three core subjects Swedish, English and mathematics.

These figures do not come as any surprise. The past few years have witnessed a growth of the “Corridor Programme”, as it is sometimes called, in county schools, just as in many other parts of Sweden.

“The underlying situation is a complex one,” says psychologist Håkan Edlund, who carried out the mapping survey. “Lack of motivation or else medical, psychological and social circumstances can be at the bottom of it, added to which, many of the students have individual learning difficulties. In a word, these students’ situation seems to prevent them getting on at school.





### **Security and community experience in the school corridor**

One question asked in the survey was why the students came to school if they still didn't attend lessons.

Håkan Edlund replies: "The students' answers indicate that school nevertheless gives them a fixed point, a kind of basic security and sense of belonging. So schools still have an important task to perform.

"These students have no workplace to go to, many of them live with a single parent and have no social network. School has to fill the vacuum. School offers social participation, a square meal and leisure activities."

Even students playing truant opted to attend some of the lessons.

"Which lessons they choose to attend often has to do with the teachers and which people give them notice and affirmation," says Håkan Edlund.

Another survey in the Life and Health project, at the Centre

for Clinical Research, showed that students performing less well also feel less well. There is a serious risk of these students lapsing into crime, unemployment and physical and mental illness.

Exclusion in turn can augment the risk of getting sucked into a lifestyle which in many ways is destructive.

"We realised we had to do something," says Head Teacher Margit Danielsson of Ullvi High School. In various ways we now had to create understanding for these youngsters, motivate them to complete their high schooling, while at the same time creating alternative paths into the job market, for example with the possibility of alternating between studies and work experience."

### **Motivation vanished**

Modesty and Martin, two of the Ullvi students who were in the risk zone, say that the school environment and the way





in which students are treated by teachers and other school staff also make a difference here.

The students are not the only ones in school who can victimise and harass one another and create a school environment which makes many people unhappy. The Life and Health survey showed many students feeling that they were also victimised by teachers and other school staff, and Modesty and Martin agree with this.

“I’ve been unhappy in school ever since my third year,” says Modesty. “Either I played hooky or else I sat through lessons without doing anything. I don’t really know how it all started, but something happened in school that made me feel I had no business being there. Then I lost all my motivation and just didn’t want to go to school at all.”

Martin believes that his unhappiness with school started in the fifth year. He did badly in lessons and began to be branded as disruptive.

“I just thought everyone was against me whatever I did. I was always playing truant. In the senior level classes I attended hardly any lessons at all.”

Martin says that for several years he felt harassed and that it made no difference what he did. Once a troublemaker always a troublemaker. And Modesty recognised the pattern from her own experience.

“It was as though rumours always preceded me,” she says.

Martin and Modesty are both of age, although they are still going to school, and this makes them particularly attentive to the way in which they are treated by other adults at school.

Ingar Byström-Karlsson is school nurse at Ullvi, and students playing truant are sent to her for an initial health check and interview.

“Sometimes teachers express themselves carelessly and perhaps say something half-seriously, half in jest. But hearing that sort of thing in front of the rest of the class can be a tremendous ordeal to a sensitive 16-year-old. Then perhaps they snap back and get really angry. They can feel degraded. A person who is degraded won’t co-operate. Of course, a student

can behave badly and be impolite, but then it is important to remember that rudeness may conceal fear. Hence the tough attitude.

“Unfortunately there are structures in school which are clearly discriminatory. Discriminatory structures and attitudes create ill-health and must be done away with.”

### **Strong points and interests – important building bricks**

At the school health reception a health check is carried out first, combined with an individual interview in which the school nurse and the student together discuss what is wrong. At the same time they discuss different strengths and interests the student has which can be developed further. Lack of a sense of coherence cause many to disbelieve their ability to influence their situation.

“The students mustn’t leave my reception feeling ‘taken down a peg or two’. I want them to feel strengthened by their talk with me and to leave here feeling that there is a lot to build on,” says Ingar Byström Karlsson.

“I want to feel respected by the teacher,” says Modesty. Like an adult. It’s no fun, being treated like somebody you can’t identify with.”

Ullvi High School has been engaged in health-promoting school development for several years and has now drawn up an action plan suggesting a number of educational activities to create a better study environment round the students. Through these activities it is hoped to change attitudes among student, teachers and other school staff.

### **Anti-discrimination plan**

Among other things the action plan includes conflict solution methods for communicating better with school-fatigued youngsters, value exercises to give the participant a better insight into cause and effect, and role to visualise oppressive conditions.

A web-based interview tool for health-promoting talks between adults and students is to be developed, at the same



*"I just thought everyone  
was against me whatever I did."*



time as students taking the individual programme will be offered more support, e.g. in the form of personal coaching.

Today both Modesty and Martin are active members of DROPIN. They have attended supportive individual interviews with the school nurse in the school health reception and both have succeeded in getting at least some of their unaccepted diplomas given a higher ranking. Martin is in the second class of high school, and Modesty is in her first year of a child care programme.

“Now that I’ve been accepted for this programme,” says Modesty, “I feel I’m doing something I want to go on with. I want to work with children, and so school has been much more fun. Then again, I know there will be a job waiting for me after school.”

### **Equipment for living**

Life Skills are an obligatory subject on the individual programme at Ullvi High School, aimed at enhancing the students’ knowledge and self-knowledge. In the teaching of the subject, norms and conflict resolution are discussed so as to make the students better equipped for coping with life.

“We aim to build up their self-confidence in various ways,” says Head Teacher Margit Danielsson, “but we don’t get through to everyone. Many of the truants don’t even come to the individual programme.” She sees a problem in there being so few alternatives to traditional schooling on offer.

The school is now going to step up its collaboration with employers and public authorities so as to find more work experience opportunities and alternative working approaches which could be combined with shorter school days. Parental support and wider competence development for school staff are also part of the vision for the future. ■

# Everyday learning for all

HOW IS LEARNING BEING CHANGED BY MODERN WORKING LIFE? WHAT HIDDEN AND OPEN LEARNING GOES ON IN THE WORK-PLACE, IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY? HOW DO YOU CREATE A LEARNING DIVERSITY WHICH WILL BENEFIT EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF GENDER, ETHNIC BACKGROUND, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR DISABILITY?

These are some of the many questions being discussed within the National Theme Group Lär ("Learn"), is collecting, analysing and disseminating experience to do with ways in which learning is created and knowledge built up through new methods and environments. Working life today makes heavy demands on high competence and good opportunities for continuous learning. There is also a growing need for knowledge and competence to be constantly updated and freshly minted. Both research and practice are supremely involved in creating practical opportunities for learning and with developing this competence.

March 2005 saw the beginnings of the National Theme Group Lär and a long-term joint project about learning, with researchers and practitioners working together on the subject of learning environments for formal and informal learning for the future. Essentially, this National Theme Group is tasked with:

- Highlighting learning environments in the workplace and everyday life.
- Deepening reflection and theorisation about learning.
- Developing methods for the documentation of learning.
- Developing new forms of dissemination, meeting points and arenas.
- Influencing structural and institutional conditions conducive to informal learning and competence development in life and universal employment.

The Theme Group's basic idea is that, up till now, a lot of learning has been hidden and invisible. An effort is therefore being made, based on co-operation between researchers and practitioners, to identify and define these learning environments,

while at the same time developing concepts and methods for describing the processes of formal and informal learning.

The researchers are linked through the Larena research network and are active at the National Institute for Working Life, the Universities of Linköping and Örebro, Luleå University of Technology, Jönköping University and the National Centre for Lifelong Learning (Encell). The Theme Group is hosted by Luleå University of Technology.

Lär wants to deepen reflection and theory about learning and its preconditions in working and everyday life. Above all, the group has concentrated on informal learning, which until now has been little explored. One way of formalising this informal learning is by creating opportunities of validation, another of the fields which the National Theme Group is addressing.

For the first half of 2005, attention was concentrated mainly on adult learning in the following fields:

- Open learning – learning centres, their importance for regional growth and sustainable development.
- The workplace as a learning environment – documentation and highlighting of informal learning in the workplace.
- Learning systems, infrastructure and better, simpler access to adult learning.

In addition, Lär has devoted much of its work to the situation for young people. The focus group "Young people, schools, working life" is to explore what happens in the transition between young people's education and working life. New projects relating to young persons are on their way into the Theme Group, presenting new opportunities for reflection and theorisation

about young people's learning processes. During the year the Theme Group, together with other players in the employment sector, organised a series of seminars entitled "The workplace as a learning system – a challenge to Sweden." The series has been documented in working reports.

The National Theme Group Lär organised, in association with Kista Open Academy, a seminar on learning, diversity and gender at KTH (the Royal Institute of Technology) in Kista and took part in a diversity convention arranged by the Västernorrland County Administrative Board. The group also took part in activities connected with the year's HSF55 in Östersund and with the Göteborg Book Fair.

In August 2005 the Larena research network hosted an international conference in Kiruna in which researchers from Australia, Canada and Sweden gathered for an interchange of experience relating to learning in the workplace. What implications does technical progress hold for learning? What can the advances of high technology, represented in Kiruna, for example, by the Esrange space station, mean for learning and creativity in the region? Can they actually save the employment situation? The Lärrixdag ("Learning Diet") series of conferences, to be arranged during 2006 by the National Theme Group Lär, is intended to build bridges between formal and informal learning and establish meeting points for practitioners, researchers and policy-makers. The Theme Group has published a series of working reports entitled Lärande reflektioner ("Learning reflection"). Titles (in Swedish) include:

- Lowered learning thresholds and shortened teacher distances.
- Changing conditions for adult learning.
- Learning and growth, but how?
- Learning run wild.

In addition, with funding support from the National Theme Group, a book has been published, entitled (in Swedish) "The Adult Anthology – a primer of adult learning" (ed. Borgström & Gougoulakis, 2006). Other reports and particulars of material

published can be accessed on the Theme Group's website.

The Theme Group's activities also include a study entitled (in Swedish) "Learning centres as locomotives of local and regional development", investigating how six municipalities are working through their learning centres to create new opportunities and environments for adult learning with clear links to local and regional job markets and growth. The questions to be addressed by the Larena research network concern schools and educational development, working life and learning in the workplace, and opportunities of in-service training and trade union activity for disabled and marginalised categories.

Answers are needed to a large number of questions relating to validation. There is great confusion as to what validation really amounts to. The National Theme Group Lär will therefore be working to shed light on this matter and will be discussing ways in which validation can and should be related to formal education or other alternative knowledge concepts.

On an overarching, structural level, Larena will also be identifying basic issues connected with the transformation of democracy, ethnic aspects included. On whose terms, for example, are information and knowledge – in a word: power – distributed?

Other pivotal themes concern the impact which technical progress is destined to have on organisations and, accordingly, on the way in which work is organised. How are knowledge of learning, their structure and content, being changed by the utilisation of IT resources? ■

## NTG Learning environments

- Chair: County Governor Ingegerd Wärnersson, Blekinge
- Secretariat: Luleå University of technology  
Stefan Ekenberg, stefan.ekenberg@larena.se  
www.ntglar.se



## A voice about learning environments

# Learning without end

“LIFE IS AN UNENDING PROCESS OF LEARNING, FROM THE MOMENT OF BIRTH TO THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. LEARNING TAKES PLACE IN ALL PERSON-TO-PERSON ENCOUNTERS, WHEREVER THEY OCCUR. EVERY DAY PEOPLE LEARN SOMETHING NEW WITHOUT EVEN BEING AWARE OF IT.”

SAYS INGEGERD WÄRNERSSON, BLEKINGE COUNTY GOVERNOR AND CHAIRPERSON OF NATIONAL THEME GROUP LÄR. LEARNING, AS SHE SEES IT, IT A PRIVILEGE WHICH MUST INCLUDE EVERYBODY, AND SO WE NEED A HOLISTIC VIEW OF LEARNING, WHICH AT PRESENT WE LACK.

Learning need not be dead straight or conscious. When Ingegerd Wärnersson herself graduated from teacher training college, she had no idea that she would one day be head of the County Administrative Board in Karlskrona. County Governor – what ought she have studied to qualify for that job? Or what study programme ought she to have taken to qualify as minister for schools, a post she was appointed to at the end of the 90s?

No, a likelier bet was that, being a junior school teacher, she would improve her qualifications and get a headship. Which she did.

“I’ve always been happy in the school community, but I’ve always been looking for new challenges. My ten years at Örtagård School in the Rosengård district of Malmö set the pattern of my life. That was where I whetted my curiosity and acquired a taste for developing the unfamiliar. Örtagård was a fantastic, multicultural school with a dynamic head teacher.”



Her office at the County Administrative Board is on the fourth storey, overlooking one of the big shopping streets in the centre of Ronneby. Piles of bumf clutter the table, screaming for attention. It doesn’t seem to worry her much.

### From hazardous goods to driving licence

“When I took over as County Governor in 2002 I didn’t know much about the workings and doings of a county administrative board. Every day I’ve had the opportunity of learning loads of things which I knew absolutely nothing about before. About hazardous goods and environmental management, driving licence eligibility requirements, children in institutions, rehabilitation of alcoholics, gender equality promotion and so on. I feel privileged.”

Parallel to being County Governor and chairing National Theme Group lär, she keeps up her interest in foreign affairs.

She chairs the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO, and this too brings unheard-of opportunities. For knowledge, quite definitely, is communicated as soon as people come together. Ingegerd Wärnersson learned that much in early years, working as a study circle moderator.

“In the study circles people learned both from books and from the experience which every participant brought with them. If I could have a wish granted, it would be to see more study circles again. The study circle is a tower of strength of Swedish popular education. I think that kind of learning is more important than ever in today’s knowledge society, now that we are having to find many different forms of learning.”

Ingegerd Wärnersson would like to see a more flexible distribution of working time over the active years between 20 and 67, with the family situation exerting more influence than at present. Who is to say that everyone wants to work equally hard throughout their working life?

“A job market of that kind could take us one step closer to a changed form of learning.”

Today even the EU Commission is stressing the importance of lifelong learning, and that, Ingegerd Wärnersson claims, is something which Sweden, as a prime mover of this issue, can take pride in. But learning from the cradle to the grave depends on us actually safeguarding universal entitlement to basic skills, in quite a different way from what we have been used to doing.

### **High school the very foundation**

“When I was a child, some of my classmates left school after only seven years. Others packed up their books when they were 16 and took the junior secondary school certificate. True, quite a number went on to high school (‘upper secondary school’), or perhaps a vocational education programme, but high school today is the sine qua non of lifelong learning.

“So if you have a school that makes its students school-fatigued, you have a problem. Variation is an important duty of schools. There must be alternative basic educational opportuni-

ties. Schools simply mustn’t let these young people down.”

Adult learning has also changed, of course. In order to stay on in working life, with all its perpetual changes, we have to keep on upgrading ourselves. And so, Ingegerd Wärnersson maintains, whatever the workplace, adult education is a matter of necessity for everyone.

“We are under very great pressure to keep on producing while taking new products on board. It is no longer enough for an industrial worker to know their job, they also need a huge amount of technical knowledge, they have to be able to read manuals, speak English and so on. It’s like that in most jobs. Demands for multiple competence are growing all the time.”

Lifelong learning, she points out, has to be established. Within National Theme Group lär she now wants to bring about an evaluation of all the different learning reforms, to see which ones best correspond to the needs of young persons and adults for wider competence.

It is above all projects concerning young persons and schools that National Theme Group lär now wants to concentrate on.

### **Bringing out the potentialities of the individual**

“We try to find different ways of working from those generally used in schools. In pre-school people are aware that children are different and have different learning patterns. But then somehow that gets forgotten. Schools will have to change their activities so as to accommodate the individual aptitudes and conditions of all the pupils.”

She describes an National Theme Group lär project which she is observing in Kallinge, in the Province of Blekinge, aimed at teaching senior level compulsory school pupils who, for various reasons, are school-fatigued, to assume responsibility. In this project the pupils alternate between practical work and theory. Their objective is to build a working aircraft together with their teacher.

“This doesn’t mean just building any old aircraft, it must be aircraft that can fly, and so part of their responsibility is to





make sure it won't crash. A tough assignment for youngsters who previously haven't been motivated for school at all.

On that project the school collaborated with a number of interest organisations, and they learned from each other. The adult men who, perhaps for the first time in their lives, now had dealings with youngsters who were up against it, also learned something. The youngsters on the project were as keen as mustard, which in turn gave encouragement to the interest organisations."

Of course, not everyone who can't make a go of their schooling can start building aircraft, as Ingegerd Wärnersson is the first to admit, but she believes in more efforts at making the outside world a tangible component of school work.

"This is a path that deserves to be explored, especially in dealing with unmotivated pupils. It often gives them the stimulus they need in order to feel useful."

### **What do practical study programmes lead to?**

One of the incoming items on Ingegerd Wärnersson's big desk is a study in which researcher Sofie Wallin has mapped the job market for youngsters completing practical study programmes in high school. She has not yet had time to study the results, which are to be presented at a "Sector Teach-in" in Växjö.

Another survey, in Blekinge, was undertaken in association with the Counties of Kalmar and Kronoberg. There the researchers toured the region, asking: "What jobs do you think there will be in 10 or 15 years time? What training needs do you see for the future?"

"Most of the meetings then arranged between schools and entrepreneurs turn out to be very constructive indeed. Companies can present their wants and the view they take of schools. And schools in turn have the opportunity of testing their thoughts. We need to get closer together. Wholeness and partnership are very big concerns of mine. I think we have been working far too vertically over the years and have constructed all our systems accordingly. We have to start asking ourselves what we want these systems for."

As Chairperson of National Theme Group Lär she sees that the 150,000 residents of Blekinge are talking a lot about learning and competence development at present. Competence Councils have been formed together with neighbouring countries, and new thoughts and experiences are being tested at conferences, meetings and seminars.

"I am also trying to work deliberately with everyday learning, both here at the County Administrative Board and in other allied organisations. Every month all employees attend briefings at the County Administrative Board, where they all have the chance of briefly explaining to each other what they are engaged on. It's enormously instructive and exciting."

On top of all this, County Governor and National Theme Group lär Chairperson Ingegerd Wärnersson has started a comprehensive process of discussing basic values in the county, with great emphasis on diversity and gender equality issues.

"It is our duty, not only to create sustainable organisations but also, as a colleague of mine put it, 'sustainable people'. That is absolutely essential if we are to achieve good growth and ongoing development. Equal dignity is a watchword of Swedish politics. Everyone must be given equal opportunities in life. But many of our fellow human beings with non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds are excluded from society.


"When these people came here we weren't good enough at finding out what they brought with them. We meant very well indeed, but we did not make their experience the starting point and foundation. This is an important point to bear in mind, so that we won't go making the same mistake in future." ■





# Social enterprises



A sepia-toned photograph showing a person's back and head in the lower-left foreground, wearing a dark cap. They are using long-handled pruning shears to trim a tree. The background is a dense canopy of leaves, with some branches in focus and others blurred. The overall mood is one of quiet, focused labor in nature.

We have to tackle the problems of exclusion and alienation in all their various forms, whether they be due to illness, unemployment, early retirement or anything else. This is the starting point of a theme group supporting projects in the social economy, i.e. activities coming in between the private enterprise of the market economy as such and the activities of the public sector.

“Social enterprises are patient, inspiring workplaces where people have the chance of growing,” says Eva Arvidsson, MP (Soc. Dem.) and Chairperson of the National Theme Group Social Enterprise.

# A staging post into the community

KARIN'S DAUGHTERS IS WHERE WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN HABITUAL CRIMINALS AND DRUG ABUSERS TOUCH DOWN BEFORE STEPPING OUT INTO REALITY. ONCE THEY HAVE DECIDED TO MAKE A FRESH START, THIS IS WHERE THEY CAN TURN FOR SOCIAL TRAINING AND GOOD COMPANY.

"HERE YOU LEARN TO BE STRONG IN YOURSELF AND TO STRENGTHEN YOUR IDENTITY AS A WOMAN," SAYS CO-OPERATOR CATHARINA HÅKANSSON. THE NEWCOMER TO KARIN'S DAUGHTERS FINDS OTHERS, INCLUDING SOME STAFF MEMBERS, WITH A BACKGROUND SIMILAR TO HER OWN. SECURITY TOGETHER WITH PEOPLE WHO GENUINELY UNDERSTAND. THIS WEAVING AND CRAFT CO-OPERATIVE CAN HIVE OFF NEW ACTIVITIES AND, IN PRINCIPLE, KEEP GROWING INDEFINITELY.

The place is Hamngatan 5, Gothenburg (Göteborg), with big shop windows facing the docks. Cargo vessels, variously flagged, are berthed along the quayside. A little further out, the glittering expanse of the open sea. You could hardly wish for an apter prospect, full of freedom, expectation and optimism.

Inside, the kitchen is a hive of activity. The day's lunch is being prepared, to an accompaniment of laughter and merriment. In the workshop a group of women are trying their hand at tufting felt for slippers, while others are checking the tension of a weave set up in one of the looms.

Karin's Daughters is where young women just out of prison or with a life of drug abuse just behind them inspire one another with renewed hope. Anyone with a referral from the Prison and Probation Service or their social worker can come here for a few hours every day to weave, work with clay, cook or just practise being sociable.

"For many of them, this is their first-ever experience of a

normal social context," says Catharina Håkansson. For someone who has done time or drugs, Karin's Daughters can be the first staging post on the way to a new life. Here they can practise working, build up a new identity and meet others who have been in the same situation as themselves – and made a go of it.

Karin's Daughters was started in 2003 by six women with personal experience, either of drug abuse or of living with a drug abuser. The project forms part of the Way Out EQUAL partnership.

The immediate aim was to create work training opportunities, but it was also hoped to change attitudes towards this group of women at risk. In 2003 and 2004 four parallel social working co-operatives were set up in the same Gothenburg partnership, the other three being Villa Solberg, Café Solberg and Studio Ateljé Trädet. Surrounding these co-operatives are a number of NGOs and public authorities supporting their activities.

"The idea," says Magdalena Hernnsdorf, "is for the women eventually to stand on their own two feet, for each to become

■ The real punishment comes after the prison sentence. At Karin's Daughters people can soften the harshest moments with weaving or other craft activity.



strong enough in herself to go on to a regular job, get education or whatever. Up till then, they can get work training with us. Each of them has one of us in the co-operative for a personal contact, partly for drawing up a personal action plan.”

Before Karin's Daughters started, work experience opportunities in Gothenburg were practically unobtainable for this group of women. Today Karin's Daughters has a framework agreement with the social services and the Prison and Probation Service, which pay for the women's work training opportunities. Altogether fourteen women have, within differing lengths of time, been rehabilitated back to working life from here.

Participation and responsibility are important components with Karin's Daughters, a prime concern being the establishment of fixed routines for meetings and planning of activities.

“Simple little things like – what are we going to shop? Who does the cooking? What shall we do together and what individually? Structure means a lot to these women. Sometimes

you have to curb your inspiration, so as not to go starting up five new things at once. We put a lot of training and effort into finishing what we've started,” says Catharina Håkansson.

### Focus on possibilities

Another thing that makes Karin's Daughters unique is that experiences which in other workplaces are only seen as problems can here be counted as resources.

“Here you can talk about having a record of substance abuse,” says Catharina. “Often these experiences are difficult to put into words, but we have former drug abusers with similar experiences who know how to be supportive.”

“If you've been on drugs for twenty years, that's half yourself,” says Magdalena. The jargon you picked up often stays with you long after you've kicked the habit. With us there's no need for pretence, and many people find security in that.”

After a time, the person who has been helped can herself



*“Here you can talk about having a record of substance abuse.”*





become a facilitator for someone else.

“Feeling that you in turn, with your experience, can help someone else who is getting away from drugs is one hell of a kick,” says Catharina.

She herself is a living example of the possibility of changing one’s life. She served eight years in prison and knows what it is to come out again to practically nothing. As she puts it:

“That’s when you really get punished. When the whole of the reality you’ve been trying to suppress suddenly crashes down on top of you.”

At Karin’s Daughters many of the difficult moments are dispelled by weaving or practising other crafts. Many women who have been on drugs have a pent-up need for creativity which finds an outlet here. Two meals a day are prepared at Karin’s Daughters, and everyone mucks in. The co-operative also includes a café, which again offers work training opportunities. The co-operative will shortly be starting up another activity, code-named Halfway House Villa Karin, which again will be a separate business with its own finances. Homeless women will be offered accommodation there, which in turn will generate new opportunities for work training.

#### **A new mass movement**

Catharina Håkansson says she is convinced that Karin’s Daughters can go on hiving off indefinitely.

“Perhaps it might even develop into a new mass movement. We’ve devised a way of helping people to help themselves, with the Prison and Probation Service, the Social Insurance Office, the Employment Service and the Municipality of Gothenburg interacting efficiently. There’s a big enough need. Those who don’t stay on to join us as co-operators can start co-operatives and self-help groups of their own.”

But who is Karin? “She’s the one who made it all happen,” Catharina Håkansson explains. Karin was one of the pioneers at Vävstugan, Gothenburg, where the seeds of the activities now run by Karin’s Daughters were first sown.

“Karin was a down-to-earth woman who taught us the arts of both weaving and living. Inspirational and dedicated, but now retired. We wanted to carry on in her spirit and show that there is a way back, so long as you have a drug-free environment and supportive people around you. The Karin’s Daughter co-operative has both those things, which is why rehabilitation here actually works.” ■



## Facts about social enterprise

# Human value added and new jobs

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE HAS COME TO BE AN OPTION FOR THOSE WHO TODAY FIND THEMSELVES AT THE BACK OF THE QUEUE FOR THE JOB MARKET. IN SEVERAL PLACES IN EUROPE, ENTERPRISES OF THIS KIND HAVE LED TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NEW JOBS. IN SWEDEN TOO, THE NUMBER OF NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IS GROWING. THE SOCIAL ECONOMY HAS PROVED TO HAVE A UNIQUE CAPACITY FOR FINDING CREATIVE ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS AND GENERATING HUMAN VALUE ADDED.

People in danger of permanent exclusion constitute an increasing group in Sweden:

- 350,000 people under 60 are drawing permanent disability pensions.
- 130,000 are living permanently on social allowance or livelihood support.
- 36,000 have been out of work for over a year.
- 26,000 are in prison, homeless or in substance abuser care.

There is a huge demand for support and special initiatives on behalf of these people, whose needs are provided for neither by the market nor by the public sector. Hence the formation of the National Theme Group Social Enterprise.

Social enterprise refers to firms started with the aim of creating job opportunities for people who have special difficulty in entering the job market. Firms which adapt their operations in various ways to the needs and aptitudes of their employees but which are still competitive as regards the quality of their goods and services.

They include companies which have succeeded in providing job opportunities for people who have been drug abusers, who have criminal records or who for other reasons are in need of special support or rehabilitation services in order to return to work.

The social enterprises are independent of the public sector, but their activities are often conducted in close collaboration with municipalities, the Social Insurance Office or the Public Employment Service.

Mostly these are firms owned by their employees and operating on a democratic basis. Their profits are ploughed back into their operations or invested in other operations of a similar kind.

The National Theme Group Social Enterprise is working together with a number of Development Partnerships which in various ways are committed to developing social enterprises. The Kooperativa Utveckling i Sverige association is also an active member of this Theme Group.

The overriding aim is to improve the prospects of discriminated groups establishing themselves in the employment sector through social enterprise.

To achieve this the Theme Group wants to bring about changes in labour market, integration, social, industrial and taxation policies. As part of this effort, analyses are to be made of the human and socio-economic effects of social enterprise, partly through “socio-economic accounting”.

Together with NUTEK (the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth), the members of the Theme Group are to spend three years analysing the experience gained through these social enterprises, in order to draft proposals and gather knowledge which will then be disseminated to policy-makers and the various sectors concerned.

#### **The following examples can be quoted from the Theme Group Social Enterprise:**

■ The Egenmakt för Framtiden organisation has since May 2002 been running Basta Arbetskooperativ as a joint project together with the Lund University School of Social Work and the NGO FUNK.

Basta, with a staff of about one hundred, offers wall-to-wall solutions based on skilled work, housing and a rewarding leisure for people looking for a way out of drugs and crime. Everyone working and living in the enterprise – managers and workers alike – has had drug problems to a greater or lesser degree.

■ The Kullen Co-operative sells rehabilitation services and runs a restaurant, a catering business and a cleaning and property

caretaking department on the Baronbackarna housing estate in Örebro. Some of its hundred or so members are employed within the co-operative, while others attend courses or take part in activities of various kinds.

■ The Vägen ut! (“Way Out”) partnership offers people with experience of substance abuse and/or crime a new way of finding employment and earning their own livelihood. Several co-operatives have been started up through this project, and between them they now provide job opportunities for twenty or more former criminals and drug abusers.

■ The co-operatives sell rehabilitation opportunities and run halfway house accommodation for men leaving prison.

Vägen ut! also runs a special scheme for discharged women prisoners and is collaborating with a research project at Göteborg University.

■ SLUP, the Stockholm County Development Partnership for Social Economy, is another instance of wider co-operation between authorities and smaller agents in the social economy. This scheme forms part of the Stockholm County Administrative Board’s regional action plan for promoting the social economy. Work has proceeded in the following three sub-sectors:

■ The Mersmak project has as its overarching aim and vision the facilitation for persons with disabilities of a good life in all respects.

NESE (“New Economy and Social Entrepreneurship”) aims to enable discriminated persons to change their lives. ethnic associations, for example, have successfully started co-operative elderly care enterprises through a unique form of co-operation between administrative authorities, the public sector and these NGOs.

The intention is for these projects eventually to stand on their own two feet. NESE co-operates transnationally with develop-

ment partnerships in Italy, the UK and Germany, also in the social economy.

To improve the employment prospects of disadvantaged groups in the job market, the Theme Group Social Enterprise has identified a number of obstacles needing to be dealt with in order for development to be possible. This implies both legislative changes, changes of attitude and the modification of economic conditions.

At individual level, the system of livelihood provision must be improved and more knowledge gathered concerning the operation of a successful social enterprise. Owing to lack of co-ordination between the Social Insurance Office, the Public Employment Service, social services and, to some extent, Samhall where individual livelihood is concerned, a lot of people today are being shunted back and forth between different provider systems.

#### **Other questions now being discussed:**

How can a municipal strategy be framed which will promote socio-economic enterprises? Do the balance sheet and income statement in the annual report give a fair picture of the efficiency and community usefulness of the social enterprise? How can it be made clearer that the law already supports the use of social criteria in public procurement? How can the social added value created by social enterprises be presented in accountancy terms?

A process of analysis is underway in the task forces which have been set up within the Theme Group. Through brochures and other publications, seminars and conferences, the Theme Group is continuing to identify and describe the experience gained.

To disseminate that experience, work on the creation of regional networks will be intensified, and so will efforts to influence politicians and policy-makers, and with them the future of social enterprise. ■

### **NTG Social Enterprise – a path to the labour market**

- Chair: Eva Arvidsson, MP
- Secretariat: NUTEK (the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth)  
Eva Johansson  
eva.johansson@nutek.se

A voice about social enterprise

# Everyone has a potential

SOMETIMES IT TAKES SO LITTLE FOR SO MUCH TO HAPPEN. THAT IS A MOTTO WHICH EVA ARVIDSSON, MP (SOC. DEM.) AND CHAIRPERSON OF NATIONAL THEME GROUP SOCIALA FÖRETAG, RETAINS FROM HER TIME IN TEACHING.

“I HAVE ANY NUMBER OF GOOD EXAMPLES SHOWING HOW BLOODY-MINDED YOUNGSTERS CAN, FOR INSTANCE, LEARN PERCENTAGE CALCULATION IN 40 MINUTES, IF ONLY THE CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT. SOMETIMES SOMEONE JUST SEEING THEM IS ENOUGH. SIMILARLY, WE HAVE TO CREATE PATIENT AND INSPIRING SOCIAL WORKPLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW.”

Eva Arvidsson says that to her the chairpersonship of National Theme Group Sociala Företag is first and foremost concerned with everyone's right to a job. That may not sound very controversial. More like something that a lot of people would endorse wholeheartedly. But the question is, do we really mean what we say?

“Do we really mean everyone? Do we also include substance abusers, criminals, the long-term sicklisted and other disadvantaged groups in the job market? Or do we only mean those who are unemployed, sicklisted and without work for the moment? And if so, who cares about those at the bottom of the ladder?”

Eva Arvidsson maintains that when politicians and union leaders demand entitlement to jobs for all citizens, for the most part they make an unconscious exception for these marginalised groups.

“Those who are really on the bottom rung of the ladder don't have a chance of employment.”



As a politician she finds it embarrassing that we don't concern ourselves more with the groups who are most disadvantaged. We cannot, she insists, go on excluding people – everyone has the same entitlement to a dignified existence. The underlying idea of National Theme Group Sociala Företag is to help these people to climb the ladder by their own efforts.

## Helping people to help themselves

“To me it's obvious that everyone has a potential. It may not be so obvious in all life's different phases, but it's there all the same,” says Eva Arvidsson when we meet in between Riksdag (parliamentary) debates.

Eva Arvidsson has many irons in the fire. She speaks rapidly and passionately. Everyone's entitlement to a life of dignity, she says, is not a project. To her it is a fundamental principle which has been with her all her life.

Both as a compulsory school teacher, as chairman of the Nynäshamn social welfare committee and now as a Social

Democratic MP and a member of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs. The concept is simple. Helping people to help themselves.

“A job is the sine qua non of a dignified existence. A job has everything – colleagues, laughter, happiness, community experience, development. Work, quite simply, is the ticket of admission to social contexts, it confers identity. But, mark my words, what we’re doing has nothing to do with charity. Instead it’s about harnessing the existing potential and creating added value. Human added value.

“We mustn’t forget that even in this group there are people with a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience which they aren’t using,” she says.

### **Increasing potential for social enterprises**

All over Europe, more and more social enterprises have been started in recent years, but in Sweden this form of enterprise hasn’t really caught on. Eva Arvidsson says that the true meaning of social enterprise still tends to be misunderstood.

“Financially, social enterprises are run on the same lines as other businesses. The only real difference is that the profit from a social enterprise is always reinvested in a way which everyone can profit by. Contrary to what many believe, there are big profits to be reaped here as well. By society, the individual and the enterprise.”

Today there are getting on for 500 social enterprises in Sweden, and Eva Arvidsson believes it is perfectly possible to get more such enterprises to survive.

“Once again I’d like to point out that if we are serious in Sweden about everyone being entitled to a job, then we must see to it that laws, rules and regulations are put in place which promote these ends. The obstacles must be removed. My main challenge as chairperson is to work in various ways to create these better conditions.”

In fact Eva Arvidsson was already putting the same thoughts into practice at the beginning of the 90s, as chairperson of the Nynäshamn social welfare committee. She recalls how one

day she decided to do something about the expenditure on substance abuses, which was simply skyrocketing.

“We invited the substance abusers to a breakfast meeting to discuss how to create a caring chain: ‘This is how it is, this is how much it costs and the effects are zilch. We simply can’t go on like this, we must find better solutions. What do you suggest?’”

### **Reinforcing people’s own strength**

The substance abusers realised that Eva Arvidsson was in earnest and not just penny-pinching. Proposals included starting an activity resembling the Italian labour co-operative San Patrignano, which was based on entirely voluntary involvement. The Swedish alternative was code-named Basta: enough is enough!

Basta’s rehabilitation philosophy was based on using the members’ own work and new structures to reinforce their innate capacity and prospects of finding their way back into working life. Building up our own Basta in Nykvarn, on the outskirts of Södertälje, took four years. Today it’s one of Sweden’s most successful social enterprises. I’m hugely proud of having played a part in starting this labour collective, which has given hope to so many people.”

The Basta labour co-operative and social enterprise now employs about 80 people, mostly former substance abusers, on a number of successful business operations ranging from horse breeding to carpentry, a boarding kennel, graffiti clearance etc. Basta now grosses more than MSEK 20. The surplus is all the time ploughed back into the business for its further development.

So how, as Chairperson of National Theme Group Sociala Företag, does she go about paving the way for more social enterprises?

“I’m always on the boil. It’s no good sitting back and expecting problems to solve themselves. There’s no let-up. You have to seize opportunity on the wing and raise issues concerning a wider job market for all.”





■ *The obstacles must be removed if Sweden is serious about everyone being entitled to a job, says Eva Arvidsson.*

In all discussions, Eva Arvidsson tries to start off with a discrimination perspective.

“That way the consequences of decisions are made very clear indeed. If we take this decision it will spoil things for this group. For example, if we let all the independent schools start up that are wanting to, before long we will have depleted municipal schools. That in turn will mean more segregation, and so it isn’t a good decision.”

Seven private members’ bills from Eva Arvidsson’s hand are now waiting to be processed by the Riksdag in the spring of 2006. The Social Democratic Congress has passed a resolution in favour of pressing the issue of social enterprises. But above all she is pleased with the text which her national project group managed, after a great deal of lobbying, to get included in the Government’s action plan.

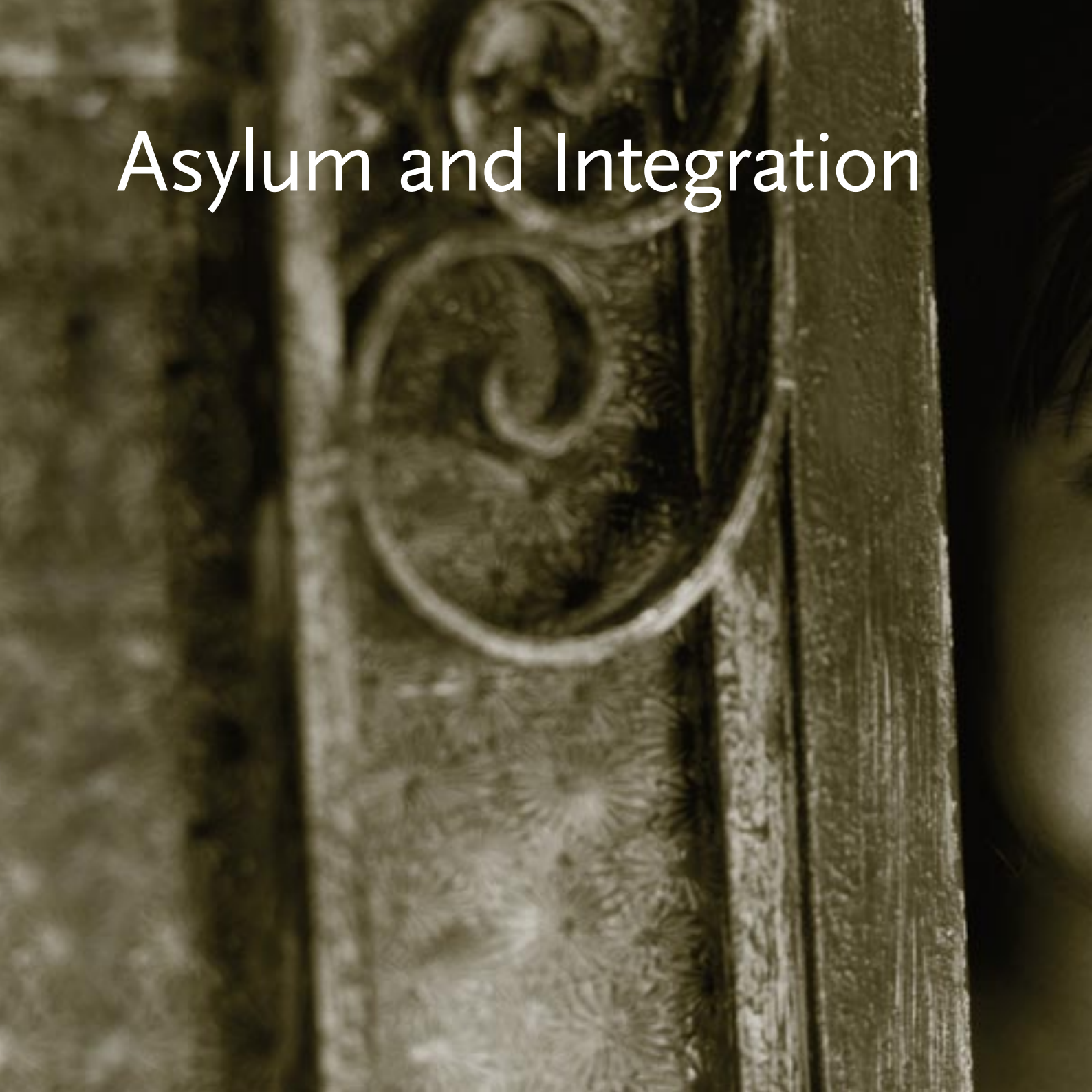
“It’s a big success for us, the Government making room for words about the advantages of social enterprises in this action plan, which is now being passed on for discussion by the EU. Moving on from here, we have something to refer to.”

And the obstacles? “We have moved fast, we have succeeded in a great deal and we are happy for that, but we feel we still have a lot to do. Social enterprise as a player in the employment sector hasn’t yet taken root in people’s minds. Neither among politicians nor among officials on different levels. It is important that we should make AMS (the National Labour Market Board) and the Social Insurance Office see the benefits involved here. It’s our job to disseminate knowledge about these enterprises, and we’re doing so for all we’re worth.

“At the end of the day, the future of the social enterprises will very much depend on how much is known about them in the municipalities. It’s our duty to ensure that the information gets through.”

The Procurement Act, on the other hand, as she sees it, poses less of a problem for the future of the social enterprises. “The buyer doesn’t have to make price the prime consideration. It’s equally feasible to give pride of place to a good business idea that creates human added value. In other words, to give priority to the social enterprise.” ■

# Asylum and Integration





Big changes have occurred in Swedish asylum and refugee policy in recent years. Today many asylum-seekers have to face a long and uncertain waiting period, often resulting in ill-health. Preliminary figures show between 10 and 25 per cent of in-patient equivalents in certain counties to be occupied by asylum-seekers.

“In Sweden,” says Anna Wessel, who chairs the National Theme Group Asylum and Integration, “we tend to regard immigration as a problem, not as an opportunity for achieving a more prosperous enterprise sector. We have been and remain much too bad at harnessing the asylum-seekers’ knowledge and experience. No-one benefits by that. Like it or not, asylum-seekers become a part of society. And I’ve come to the conclusion that integrating people while they are here is the better proposition, because they will cling to their hopes of being allowed to stay here in any case. An important part of that work concerns giving everyone a fair chance of entering the job market.”

# Social exclusion on the increase among asylum-seekers

“I THINK IT’S IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE COMING TO OUR COUNTRY AND ENTITLED TO REMAIN HERE SHOULD FEEL WELCOME IN OUR SOCIETY. BUT UNFORTUNATELY ASYLUM-SEEKERS TODAY ARE LOOKED ON MORE AS A PROBLEM THAN A RESOURCE, WHICH IS DEEPLY DEPLORABLE.”

THUS ANNA WESSEL, CHAIRPERSON OF NATIONAL THEME GROUP ASYL (ASYLUM AND INTEGRATION), WHO SEES A GREAT NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE RECEPTION GIVEN TO ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN SWEDEN.

Parallel to chairing the National Theme Group Asylum and Integration, Anna Wessel heads the Asylum Division of the Swedish Migration Board, which makes her ultimately responsible for the implementation of Sweden’s national policy on asylum and reception of asylum-seekers.

Can these two hats be worn simultaneously? Is it feasible, being Head of Division at the Migration Board responsible for implementing government policy on asylum and reception, and at the same time representing National Theme Group Asylum and Integration with its demands for radically improved reception arrangements?

Isn’t there a serious risk of the issues being brought to a standstill, the task becoming impossible and very little being possible to achieve?

These questions prompted a good deal of discussion within National Theme Group Asylum and Integration before Anna Wessel was appointed Chairperson. After much thought she herself came to the conclusion that she would have no problems coping with both assignments at once. Even though, primarily,



she considers herself a civil servant, and as such duty bound to comply with the Migration Board’s guidelines, it is also her duty to encourage debate on future changes.

The dual assignments of National Theme Group Asylum and Integration Chairperson and Head of the Migration Board’s Asylum Division, she maintains, have given her the opportunity of doing just that.

“My role, as I see it, is not necessarily to defend existing systems. I also want to be able to influence developments. In the community we need to discuss how we are to take care of our asylum-seekers. And even if my task in that discussion is to defend the Migration Board, I do not see it as my task to stonewall proposals coming from other quarters. On the contrary, I want to see the broadest possible discussion of these issues, because I am convinced that that will lead to better solutions.”

## Personal experience and commitment

Anna Wessel holds a degree in public administration and social work and for most of her professional life has worked



in municipal social services. Her interest in refugee issues was aroused at the beginning of the 1980s, when she was working in the Municipality of Bjurlöv, between Malmö and Lund, and was unexpectedly given charge of a Vietnamese family who had fled to Sweden. Or perhaps her involvement goes back further still, to the beginning of the 1970s, when, as family education officer in the same municipality, she found herself working with a group of non-Nordic Roma who had migrated here to escape the Soviet invasion of Poland.

Later, in 1989, she was to gain first-hand experience of emigrating to a completely new country, albeit under relatively luxurious conditions.

“My husband got a job in Washington and I went with him despite not having a job to go to. We stayed for four years and we certainly didn’t live the life of asylum-seekers, we were privileged. All the same, I experienced the difficulty of becoming professionally established when coming from another country – useful experience which has helped me to understand what it’s like starting all over again in a new country,” she says.

She joined the Migration Board in 1987. A lot has happened, she observes, in the almost twenty years that have passed since then. In those days the Migration Board had a much clearer remit which included full responsibility for asylum-seekers. That is to say, responsibility for asylum cases, accommodation, social support, schooling and health care.

“Since then the basic trend has come to be for the state to be financially responsible for reception while other mandators are responsible for schools, the county council for medical care and the municipal social welfare committee for housing and living expenses, just as with other citizens.

### **More debate about refugee issues**

“Refugee accommodation mustn’t be provided in big barracks. Instead we must rent flats in ordinary residential areas where there is mixed residence. That has many advantages, but it calls for a great deal of co-operation and requires everyone to know what is required of them,” Anna Wessel concludes.

How would she like to pursue refugee issues in order to improve reception arrangements?

“Above all I would like to broaden the debate. Much of it so far, unfortunately, has centred round whether or not individual seekers should be granted asylum. There is no discussion of what happens next, about the different conditions encountered by the asylum-seekers who are permitted to stay here.”

This became particularly apparent, she points out, during the amnesty debate which flared up recently. True, the debate led to the passing of temporary legislation and to many asylum-seekers being given the chance of staying here, but no one at political level, she observes, had any strategy for looking after people once their permits had been granted.

“I don’t mean to say that the temporary legislation was wrong, what worries me is the consequences of its implementation, not least in view of what is happening on the fringes of our big cities. There we can see a growth of social exclusion. People who have spent years waiting in our reception units lose patience in the end. They want to get started quickly with their lives, and so perhaps they opt for moving to a relative in Södertälje or Tensta. But if no one has made preparations for receiving them, all you get is a growth of overcrowding, unemployment and social exclusion in these areas.”

### **Greater integration needed**

“Asylum reception must be improved, Anna Wessel observes. Refugees must be accorded a better reception. First and foremost, the asylum-seekers allowed to settle here must be made to feel that they are a resource and not primarily a problem to the host country. To bring about improvements in this respect, several initiatives will have to be deployed, not least during the difficult waiting period. People coming to this country must be made to feel welcome, and easier access to the job market is an important means to this end.

National Theme Group Asylum and Integration is vigorously pursuing the matter of improved reception arrangements, which, she says, is an issue it has very near at heart.

Anna Wessel observes that, due to the great number of applications that are turned down, it has previously been a deliberate policy in Sweden not to integrate people. There is a point here, but the policy is counter-productive, since the majority of asylum-seekers spend a long time in Sweden anyway.

“Whether we like it or not, asylum-seekers become part of the community. I’ve come to the conclusion that it is better to integrate people while they are here, because either way they cling to the hope of being allowed to stay here. Those who have been able to work or study during the waiting period are better equipped to deal with the difficulties which can arise later on, for example if they are forced to return home.

“But the majority of asylum-seekers have a tremendous inward strength, a power to try and change their lives. We don’t make use of this. If anything I’d say we make it difficult for these people to show what they are capable of. The people coming to us as asylum-seekers want to pull their weight. They want to earn money and send money back to their countries of origin, and very many indeed are worried about friends and relatives they left behind.

Today, so we’re told, you can’t get a job without knowing Swedish. And so we offer Swedish language courses as the only option. But for many newly arrived asylum-seekers, perhaps a job will do far more good than a language course. There are other ways of learning Swedish – hands-on at work, for example.”

### **Training while you wait**

“Better opportunities must be created for people with foreign diplomas. In the USA I also learned not to be so sceptical of people with foreign qualifications. In Sweden, engineers and others have to qualify all over again, from scratch, which in many ways is a sheer waste of human resources.”

Anna Wessel feels that we should be able to offer vocational training programmes during the waiting period on a completely different basis from the present one.

“Vocational education of that kind could be serviceable both in the receiving country and in the country of origin or its

counterpart, in the event of re-emigration or an asylum application being turned down. A person whose application has been refused can still benefit from the training when returning to their country of origin.”

The quality of reception includes health issues. The asylum period must be as meaningful as possible. This has priority, because the project group want to put greater emphasis on more flexible solutions, especially for refugee children – schooling, for example. As Chairperson she will call for an experimental scheme of summer schools under Theme Group auspices, to speed up the integration of socially motivated refugee children.

“Summer holidays are a miserable time for many refugee children. Why not organise summer classes for those who need and want them? The Theme Group could encourage that kind of experimentation.”

### **Immigration a possibility**

Just how bad are we at taking care of asylum-seekers in Sweden? In the actual business of reception, Anna Wessel believes we are better than many other countries. But we do less well at integration, because we expect people to be assimilated.

“We find it hard to accept a person choosing different solutions than we do. I don’t mean to say that we should accept oppression or abuse of women. There are norms in society which we have to be quite emphatic about. But we have failed to understand that immigration also presents us with great advantages.

“Recently I heard former Migration Minister Jan O. Karlsson made a very interesting comparison between Australia and Sweden. Australia in 1945 had roughly as many inhabitants as Sweden. Just like the USA, Australia is an immigrant nation that has always had a high immigration rate, and not just during the post-war era. Today it has a population of 21 million and practically no unemployment. Sweden has been trying since the mid-sixties to limit immigration, and unemployment here is much higher. We see immigration as a problem, not as a chance of creating a flourishing business economy.” ■





## Facts about Asylum and Integration

# Uncertain fate, exclusion and ill-health

INTERNATIONALLY, SWEDISH REFUGEE POLICY HAS LONG ENJOYED A REPUTATION FOR BEING GENEROUS AND COMPASSIONATE. IN RECENT YEARS THAT IMAGE HAS COME TO BE CHALLENGED MORE AND MORE OFTEN. MANY ASYLUM-SEEKERS FACE A LONG WAIT, DEFICIENT LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND WIDESPREAD ILL-HEALTH. THIS IN TURN HAS GENERATED A BURGEONING TRADE IN ILLEGAL DOCUMENTS, AS WELL AS INEFFICIENT RECEPTION PROCESSES.

The situation is not specific to Sweden. Asylum-seekers in many parts of Europe are living under similar conditions, and the conviction has long existed that the democracies of Europe must find a way of together coping with asylum and migration issues.

The basic idea has been that the EU countries share a common responsibility for looking after fugitives in a decent manner and giving them sanctuary. The different national systems must therefore be harmonised. Asylum reception today varies considerably from one EU country to another. Failing a uniform policy for dealing with asylum and refugee issues, it is widely feared that all concerned may find themselves up against very serious problems.

Against this background the National Theme Group on Asylum Issues was formed, with the Swedish Migration Board as project owner. The steering group includes representatives of other authorities, the European Refugee Fund and various projects addressing asylum issues.

The aim is to try to improve system and policy in various ways and to contribute towards knowledge production and opinion formation in the asylum sector.

Of the 17,530 asylum-seekers coming to Sweden in 2005, 24 per cent were women, 76 per cent men and 4,798 children. They came from countries where there was war, oppression and environmental disaster. Most asylum-seeking families in

recent years have come from countries such as Iraq, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iran, Russia, Bulgaria, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan and Turkey. Some of them have been stateless. A total of 8,076 permanent residence permits were issued in 2005. About 90 per cent of those whose application were refused by the Migration Board appealed to a higher instance.

Asylum application processing times have a vital bearing on the physical, mental and social health of asylum-seekers. A preliminary assessment by the Government investigator indicates that between 10 and 25 per cent of in-patient psychiatric care beds in certain counties are occupied by asylum-seekers. This ill-health also affects the individual person's future prospects of integration and of occupational or educational success.

The National Theme Group Asylum and Integration is working with opinion formation, analysis and networking. One of its important tasks is to compile factual material for influencing government departments, national authorities and NGOs.

There are many questions to be pondered. What happens in the asylum and integration process, what changes are taking place in the systems surrounding them and how does this affect asylum-seekers? How do case officers address these questions? How do their thoughts differ from the thoughts of people staffing asylum receptions and of the asylum-seekers themselves? And moreover, what fears and expectations



are prompted by the newly formed migration courts and their impact on the asylum process?

Another important part of the Theme Group's work is to organise seminars and conferences and to build up networks of practitioners, decision-makers and researchers. Seminar topics hitherto have included the following. What strategies does the asylum-seeker choose for coping with the time of waiting and uncertainty? How are the asylum-seeker's family and children affected, can the reception system be improved for asylum-seekers during the waiting period, what good project ideas are there and how can they be translated into regular activity?

### **Integrating reception – from asylum reception to settlement**

In this project an enquiry has been made to see, among other things, whether there is any difference between rhetoric and practice in asylum reception. What are the limits to the welfare state's inclusion of asylum-seekers? What regulations and motive forces govern the actions of national authorities?

### **While we are waiting**

An interview survey about asylum-seekers' thoughts concerning their uncertain fate, social exclusion and future. How does the individual function in a situation characterised by waiting, uncertainty and limited opportunities of influencing one's own future? What are the strategies that the individual chooses, or is forced to choose, under these circumstances?

### **Waiting under influence**

How are asylum-seekers and their health affected by the waiting period? This study aims to improve the state of knowledge concerning things influencing the asylum-applicant, in both a positive and a negative sense, during the reception period.

Another research project, code-named "Three Systems", is due for conclusion and reporting at the new Year 2007. Its purpose is a comparative study of the three systems of refugee reception in big cities. A series of seminars is also being planned in association with CEIFO, with special emphasis on

neglected areas of research in asylum and refugee policy. The results will be published in a new series of reports, Asylmotagande i fokus.

Greater emphasis is also being put on the utilisation of experience and best practices from transnational co-operation within the European Social Fund and the European Refugee Fund.

The Theme Group has a website addressed to practitioners, researchers, decision-makers and other interested parties. visitors can share in current research and debate, best practices and experience at both national and EU level. The database at present contains about a hundred documents, e.g. concerning European and national asylum and refugee policy and employment policy. Through it one can also order the brochure entitled (in Swedish) "Theme asylum and integration" and the research digest "Uncertain fate?" (also in Swedish only).


Asylum and Integration will shortly be expanding its activities so as also to cover the field of integration, hence the new name. This widening of activities will mean the Theme Group capturing more projects and new policy fields and research fields being integrated with its work. A discursive analysis will be inaugurated in order to examine concepts, theses, theories and political manifestos in the integration sphere. The Theme Group also intends articulating a gender equality perspective in its project and programme activities. Improved input knowledge on this subject will be compiled. ■

### **NTG Asylum and Integration**

- Chair: Anna Wessel, Head of Department, the Swedish Migration Board
- Secretariat: the National Migration Board  
Christian Råbergh  
christian.rabergh@temaasyl.se  
www.temaasyl.se

All Clear





Keeping quiet so as to fit in. That is what many homosexuals and bisexuals do at work. But being able to be oneself at work is a human right and an important occupational safety and health issue. The National Theme Group All Clear (Fritt Fram) wants to create a better working climate in which everyone so wishing can be frank about their sexual disposition, without being ostracised, losing career points or perhaps even losing their job. Studies have shown that half of all homosexuals and bisexuals conceal their sexual orientation from their fellow-employees, and that as many as nine out of ten in a number of occupations do the same in their business dealings or in relation to clients.

“We are working for more open, secure and permissive workplaces where everyone feels respected and is allowed to be themselves. There must be a limit to the amount of intolerance an employer is prepared to tolerate from employees,” says Brigadier Bengt Axelsson, who chairs the All Clear steering group.

# Discrimination through de-visualisation

“ONE MEMBER WHO HAS CHOSEN TO LIVE OPENLY AS A HOMOSEXUAL TOLD ME THAT SHE DOESN'T DO SO ALL THE TIME AND EVERYWHERE. IT ISN'T A SIMPLE CASE OF EITHER-OR. SHE HAS TO TEST THE AIR IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND CONTEXTS TO SEE IF SHE DARES TO. I WISH EVERYONE COULD FEEL SECURE ALL THE TIME IN BEING THEMSELVES. WE HAVEN'T GOT THERE YET, BUT WE'RE WORKING ON IT.”

SAYS HELENE HELMINEN, UNION REPRESENTATIVE OF NEARLY 3,000 MEMBERS IN BOTKYRKA, WHO WORKED ON THE EQUAL PROJECT HOMO AND BISEXUALS IN THE CARE SECTOR, WHICH KOMMUNAL (THE SWEDISH MUNICIPAL WORKERS' UNION) HAS FOLLOWED UP WITH ITS OWN BROAD-BASED TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR UNION OFFICIALS.

Training programmes were provided for about 70 managers and employees in caring services, using study material produced by the EQUAL project. As far as the municipality is concerned, the project is over, but Kommunal has continued and is now working to give union representatives in all branches of local government activity the necessary competence for addressing these issues.

“The fact is, I'm pleasantly surprised by the unambiguously positive response,” says Helene Helminen. “We have shown films which have aroused strong feelings and we have had lively discussions. Altogether about 70 union representatives are affected.

The whole thing now is so firmly established. Questions of sexual orientation are part of what one has to think about as manager and union representative. No one should need to suffer discrimination.”

At the same time she sees that, in the workplaces where Kommunal members are employed, the causes of unhappiness among homosexuals and bisexuals can be more elusive. Out-

right discrimination is rare, but the mere assumption that all women have a man – or want one – can make lesbian women feel unsure of themselves and ignored in the workplace.

“That feeling has to be taken seriously,” Helene Helminen continues. “We must be more alive to the diversity existing in our workplaces and find different ways of keeping this discussion alive.”

## **From non-issue to issue**

“I've heard people say: ‘We don't have any problem, there aren't any homosexuals here.’ And then I ask: ‘How do you know? Have you really raised the question in your workplace?’

The thing is to change it from non-issue to issue,” says Maria Karlsson, who has been engaged by the Swedish Teachers' Union to work on the EQUAL project “Beneath the Surface”, which targets the school community.

She herself has been a temporary teacher and has visited many schools as RFSL (Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights) education officer.





She herself has been a pre-school teacher for some years now. “There are no doubt people who feel we have so many other pressing issues, so why should the union spend time talking about conditions for homosexuals in the workplace?” she says.

This is still quite a new issue for the unions, but when the law prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation was passed in 1999, this gave the unions a tool with which to begin tackling these issues. Top-level trade unionists put them firmly on the agenda: during the first year of the EQUAL projects, LO (Swedish Trade Union Confederation) Chairman Wanja Lundby-Wedin gave the opening address at the Pride Festival and Sture Nordh of TCO (the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees) published a debate article declaring this a vital union concern.

All Clear can be said to go further than the legislation, adopting a proactive stance in its training and opinion formation activities for the workplace, but the legislation helps to place those activities on a firm institutional footing.

### **Everyone wants to belong to the group**

Queers in uniformed occupations aren’t the only ones to suffer palpable oppression. Examples of the same kind are also to be found in schools.

“I know people who work in schools,” says Maria Karlsson, “who are overtly homosexual and have been told by superiors no to be so ‘provocative’.” Crude jokes about queers are few and far between in day nurseries and common rooms. There the commonest response is silence, ostracism.

“It can be hard to show ways of tackling silence. It’s up to the individual to judge whether it’s a ‘good silence’ with no vestige of aggression or contempt. In schools people sometimes say: ‘Why should homosexual colleagues fear any negative reaction from us?’ But how are they to know that colleagues don’t react in a negative way?

Women are expected to love men. You don’t need to talk about it, here it’s self-evident that we’re all hetero. But when a new colleague arrives wearing a ring, for example, then instead of





asking 'What does your husband do?' one can ask: 'What does your partner do?' It's little things like that which can make it easier or harder to stand up for who you are.

"I spend a lot of time with teachers. Some are accessible to everyone, some only to colleagues, and others want to keep themselves to themselves when they're at work. Some say: 'Why should I talk about myself to the other members of staff?' We often discuss questions of that kind, and I really can't give a simple answer to what's right and what's wrong. For my own part I think having 'white patches' when talking to my colleagues makes me feel uncomfortable. And the more people that show who they are, the more the norm will be changed. But when I started working in day nursery, even though it's been many years since I came out, I could get butterflies in my stomach at first, wondering: 'What will people think? Are there any who think I'm unsuitable for working with very young children?' We all want to belong to the group at work, and there is a fear of not being allowed to join in any more if everyone knows."

In her view one should never put anyone under pressure and never tell others about a person who hasn't come out themselves.

"For many people this is a process they have to go through at their own speed. No one else is in my shoes. Nobody can tell what things are like for another person."

Maria Karlsson notes the progress which has nonetheless been made, in a somewhat longer perspective.

"In 1979 homosexuality was still classed as a disorder in the records of the National Board of Health and Welfare. Then a group of homosexuals went there, sat down on the stairs and insisted on that classification being removed. Other activists phoned up and reported sick.

That attracted attention and helped to persuade the National Board of Health and Welfare, on the basis of proven science, to delete homosexuality as a disorder. Many brave people through the years have stood up and helped to make things happen. Things are moving forward, even if progress is sometimes slow. And things don't move forward by themselves." ■

## Facts about All Clear

# Discrimination makes everyone a loser

BEING ABLE TO BE YOURSELF EVEN IN THE WORKPLACE IS A HUMAN RIGHT. AND YET MANY EMPLOYEES PREFER NOT TO BE FRANK ABOUT THEIR HOMO- OR BISEXUALITY. SO THE NATIONAL THEME GROUP ALL CLEAR IS CONTINUING THE WORK WHICH WAS STARTED IN EARLY ESF PROJECTS TO HIGHLIGHT THE DISCRIMINATION OCCURRING IN SWEDISH WORKPLACES TODAY FOR REASONS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION. THE AIM IS TO CREATE A WORKING LIFE IN WHICH EVERYONE CAN SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT THEIR IDENTITY WITHOUT RISKING HARASSMENT, LOSS OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES OR PERHAPS EVEN THE SACK.

For several years now, under European Social Fund auspices, a number of employers, unions and interest organisations have been co-operating against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. More than 8,000 people in a hundred workplaces underwent training in the “Homo- and Bisexuals in the Care Sector” and “Norm-Giving Diversity” projects during the three years the projects lasted. The projects focused on the armed forces, the police, the Church of Sweden, elderly care and pre-school education.

The National Theme Group All Clear is working to disseminate experience from those projects further, the aim being to create more open, secure and appealing workplaces where everyone can feel respected and is allowed to be themselves. Workplaces where everyone feels good.

Most activities in the earlier projects were conducted at public sector workplaces. The Theme Group is now also addressing the private sector. A new field of activity concerns new ways in which local government employees can respond to residents.

Sexual orientation in the workplace is a new issue to employers, unions and employees alike, but this is not to say that it has lacked urgency until now. The findings hitherto presented in the study “Working conditions and vulnerability”, presented by the National Institute for Working Life, makes clear that a large group of people conceal their sexual orientation at work.

Another interview-based study, undertaken in association with Karlstad University, points to the same thing. A large group of people are unhappy at work because the working climate stops them from being themselves.

More than 50 per cent state that they do not speak openly to their fellow-employees about their everyday lives – whom they live with or would like to live with. Especially if it is a same-sex person.

More than 90 per cent of pre-school and elderly care personnel choose not to be frank with children and parents or patients and families.

27 per cent of homo- and bisexuals feel that homosexuals are a subject of disparaging remarks where they work. Only 9 per cent of heteros have this experience.

The Theme Group All Clear has compiled training material describing the hidden structures behind the negative attitudes, at the same time presenting facts about the legislation which exists and about condition for homo- and bisexuals in the present-day job market. The aim is for the issue of sexual orientation to be made an integral, natural part of regular activities. All Clear is using several different methods of dissemination and opinion-formation.

An exhibition is currently in progress, produced jointly by the Museum of Work, the Theme Group and the National Institute for Working Life. Its title, in Swedish, is: “The norm



pinches – surely everyone at work’s hetero?” The exhibition illustrates the hetero norm, i.e. the norm that pinches, whatever the employee’s sexual orientation. Starting at the Museum of Work in Norrköping, the exhibition moved to the Malmö Museums and the Cultural Centre in Stockholm, going on to Södertälje and Örnköldsvik among other places.

Meanwhile the Theme Group All Clear is continuing to arrange training programmes and publish material for those wishing to organise training at their workplaces about being homo-, bi- or heterosexual in the workplace.

All Clear is also the title of a training tool, used with the aim of creating more open workplaces in which everyone is treated with equal respect whatever their sexual orientation. This tool includes a video containing five dramatised scenes from different workplaces, a course manual and a CD ROM of films and concrete self-test questions.

The material has been compiled by the projects “Norm-Giving Diversity” and “Homo- and Bisexuals in the Care Sector”, in association with the Office of the Ombudsman against Discrimination on grounds of Sexual Orientation (HomO). It has been initially used to raised the standard of knowledge, for example, in the police, the armed forces, caring services for the elderly and pre-school education, but it was designed to suit workplaces of all kinds.

The publication “Included” (in Swedish) has been produced to inspire union representatives to address these issues. Sexual orientation has not been a union concern before, but this publication now includes special study material for union representatives who want to be more proactive on behalf of homosexual members. The books comes from “Homo- and Bisexuals in the Caring Sector”, which was produced jointly by the Swedish Municipal workers’ Union, LO (the Swedish Trade Union Confederation), RFSL (The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights) and the SKTF union organisation.

“Straight Talk” is a book written in association with two Equal projects outside Sweden, namely in Finland and the Netherlands.

It seeks, at European level, to inspire commitment on the part of employers, union representatives and interest organisations. A Swedish edition, Rakt på sak, is available for downloading.

The Theme Group All Clear has produced a concentrated phrase book, Ord som taggar, for those who are uncertain how one should or should not express oneself on the subject of homosexuality. Like all the other study material, this can be ordered through the Theme group’s website.

To disseminate the results of the research undertaken in partnership with the two EU projects in the armed forces, the police, the Church, elderly care and child care, the Theme Group All Clear has produced a book entitled (in Swedish) “Norms in the hetero-factory”, which argues that, most often in the workplace, the norm is for all workers to be heterosexual and everything else to be deviant. The book describes what happens in a work environment with strict, discriminatory preconceptions, how exclusive those structures can be and how they can be experienced by those who are excluded.

A documentary film about norms and uniforms, entitled (in Swedish) “Uniformity, diversity and love”, has been produced on behalf of the project “Norm-Giving Diversity. In this film, distributed with support from the Theme Group All Clear, we accompany a priest, an Air Force captain and a detective chief inspector in their working and everyday lives. ■

### NTG All Clear – about sexual orientation

- Chair: Brigadier Bengt Axelsson, Swedish Armed Forces
- Secretariat: Swedish Armed Forces, Anette Sjödin  
anette.sjodin@rfsi.se
- Gunnar Svensson  
integratia@swipnet.se  
www.frittfram.se

A voice about All Clear

## We must have a permissive climate in which everyone feels comfortable

“IF THERE ISN’T ROOM FOR EVERYONE TO BE FRANK ABOUT WHO THEY ARE AND HOW THEY LIVE, THEN PEOPLE HAVE TO FILTRATE AND ONLY SHOW PARTS OF THEMSELVES. WE MUST CREATE A NATURAL ATTITUDE WHERE EVERYONE CAN BE SECURE AND SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT THEIR PARTNERS.”

SAYS BRIGADIER BENGT AXELSSON, AGED 50, A MEMBER OF THE TOP MILITARY COMMAND ASSISTING THE SUPREME COMMANDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE STEERING GROUP OF THE NATIONAL THEME GROUP ALL CLEAR (FRITT FRAM).

As a military man, Bengt Axelsson belongs to the engineers – the people who build bridges instead of blowing them up. During his 30 years’ service he has among other things alternated between commanding ever-larger units in Eksjö and serving as a teacher and course moderator at the School of Gunnery and Engineering.

Since 2003 he has been Education Inspector General to the Swedish Armed Forces, and as such ultimately responsible for the training and education of all military and civilian personnel in the Swedish defence establishment.



Since 2002 the Swedish Armed Forces have given 8,000 civilian employees and conscripts training on homophobia, heteronormativity and everyday measures to counter discrimination. This was part of the EQUAL project “Norm-giving Diversity”, which, together with a sister project, “Homo and Bisexuals in the Care Sector”, has now initiated “All Clear”.

Bengt Axelsson joined the All Clear steering group last spring, succeeding the HR Director of the Swedish Armed Forces, who changed jobs. He has now taken over as Chairman, succeeding Maud Jansson of the Swedish Trade Union

Confederation (LO), who is scaling down her EQUAL commitments in this sector.

“In the steering group we have drawn up a plan with a number of overarching themes, the key words for 2006 being dissemination and influence, We will be offering a wide range of activities, including exhibitions and trade fairs, our film and our printed publications – a Chinese menu of policy measures.

“All Clear will have a certain amount of research commitment, together with other co-financiers, partly in order to codify experience of different methods for tackling different forms of discrimination.”

All Clear also aims to exert influence at national level, which Bengt Axelsson instances with the importance of work environment surveys including questions about the frequency with which people are humiliated and discriminated against at work on account of sexual orientation.

He explains that there are two possible ways in which workplaces and NGOs can join in All Clear. There is a core of participants actively involved in some form of project, and an outer circle for all those interested who have previously conducted a project or are contemplating doing so. The outer circle takes part in a competence network which works in seminar form, using a combination of knowledge-gathering and discussion.

### **Outreach activity and employer perspective**

“We will be engaging in outreach activities and making contact with businesses,” says Bengt Axelsson, “because up till now it is public sector bodies that have had projects in this field.”

In All Clear’s contacts with private employers, there is probably no disadvantage in the chairperson being an employer or in management. Bengt Axelsson can see and explain the importance of working against discrimination from an employer’s perspective. One motive for the Swedish Armed Forces qua employer to bank on this is their desire to compete for the best talents as conscripts and employees. And this, Bengt Axelsson maintains, ought to be reason enough for all employers:

“A job applicant’s sexual orientation shouldn’t make any difference whatsoever. We must have a permissive climate where everyone can feel comfortable working in the organisation.”

Another motive for employers is the efficiency gains which can be achieved in the workplace by tackling these issues.

“People who are humiliated and discriminated against remain in poor mental shape longer than a lot of people who have had physical illnesses. And conversely, a lot of people can find more motivation, security and job satisfaction in a positive and permissive climate.”

### **Can’t afford rotten apples who won’t change**

Bengt Axelsson visited the 2005 Pride Festival when the film about “Norm-giving Diversity” was screened, and he also took part in one of the festival’s highlights, the Friday night party.

“I was surprised at the Pride campus being so well-organised – like everyone else, I’m riddled with prejudice. I thought Pride was more a mutual admiration society, and I was pleasantly surprised by all the seminars. There is so much more to Pride than the carnival procession: it’s a wonderful mixture of serious and festive.”

The Swedish Armed Forces had a tent at Pride, staffed by people from the Recruiting Centre and the HoF Society, which is an independent HBT network within the Swedish Armed Forces. HoF organised a seminar about the American armed forces’ “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which expressly forbids homosexuals to perform military service.

In the spring of 2005 the Swedish Armed Forces also supported a manifestation against homophobia and intolerance, organised in Stockholm by RFSL (The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights). Not all defence establishment employees are overjoyed about the Armed Forces’ initiatives in this field.

“I sometimes get taunted about us being so politically correct only because we want our organisation to be law-abiding. That kind of remark betrays ignorance about the armed forces being a politically controlled activity having defence of





democracy as its ultimate purpose. It would be a disaster if we weren't under the law," says Bengt Axelsson.

This is all the more important now that we are being engaged for more and more international missions to protect individual persons and safeguard human rights. Homosexuals and women in other cultures have a completely different position, and we must be prepared to protect them. And to do that we must have credibility on our home ground."

When the Swedish Armed Forces started "Norm-giving Diversity", there was talk of the military here being 20 years behind the rest of working life, and perhaps it is not true to say that they have caught up in the meantime. The interesting thing, says Bengt Axelsson, is not to compare oneself with others but to the pursuit of an ideal. But in that pursuit there are inhibiting factors.

"This is about working with values, and there are a lot of people who either won't or don't spend time on such things. Some just don't care, while some units are overtly homophobic.

Certain individuals set the tone of things, and the commanders' attitudes are crucial."

Bengt Axelsson stresses that there must be a limit to employers' toleration of certain employees' intolerance, because it adversely affects other employees and, ultimately, the whole operation.

"Last spring I circulated an open letter to Armed Forces employees, together with Inspectors General of the three service arms, in which we said among other things that our organisation had no room for rotten apples.

Some people felt that we overlooked the cultural, organisational and structural factors involved. Now all three factors exist, but it isn't factors that degrade people.

That's done by individuals. If those individuals realise they are behaving wrongly, there is scope for them to revise their thinking and behave properly. But if they do not have that insight and intent, then as employers we cannot afford to keep them on in the organisation!" ■



# Social responsibility

Many enterprises are assuming a social responsibility and entering into voluntary commitments. This is not a form of charity, it is good business. Harnessing the competence and capacity of employees creates commitment among them and contributes towards corporate success. So a good HR policy can play a very important part in recruiting and retraining customers.

“Taking social responsibility is nothing to make a fuss about,” says Eva Skog, IVF (Industrial Research and Development Corporation) project leader and co-ordinator of the National Theme Group Corporate Social Responsibility.



# Giving everyone a chance

ASSUMING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY NEEDN'T BE THAT MUCH OF A BIG DEAL. SO THEY SAY AT SÖDERTÄLJE TAXI AND AT ELLCO FOOD IN KÄVLINGE, NEAR LUND. IN THEIR SEPARATE WAYS THEY WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR PEOPLE WHO MAY NEED EXTRA SUPPORT FINDING A JOB.

The Södertälje Taxi phone is answered by Anna Ingebritsen and Tiina Pyykönen, day and night. Tina found her way here as a passenger using the special transport service for people with mobility impairment. The taxi driver asked her what her plans were now that she was finishing school. Tina wasn't sure. "Why don't you put in for a job with us?" the driver said. And she did.

That was five years ago.

Anna, Tiina's colleague, was working for a company that Södertälje Taxi took over nine years ago. Both she and Tina use wheelchairs, and that's the only difference between them and the other employees.

On the customer side it's a great advantage, having two switchboard operators with first-hand experience of using the special transport service.

"Every day at work we have dealings with disabled customers," says Managing Director Therese Andersson. "We know that

they're just like you and me. Anna and Tiina are no more trouble than our other employees, if anything less so. They aren't off work more than others. Possibly they're more loyal than the others, because they appreciate having a job in the first place."

## **Community support not decisive**

Well, in that case, why do so many people with functional impairment have difficulty finding jobs?

"People with no experience of disabled persons only see problems. They don't see the individual, just the disability. That attitude is the problem. I don't understand why people see obstacles. Nearly all facilities nowadays have disabled access."

Climbing is the one thing Tiina and Anna can't manage, and so colleagues avoid putting things they need high up. The fax transceiver, for example. No big deal, in other words.

Therese Andersson believes that employers need informa-



tion and knowledge to make them start treating disabled job applicants like other people.

She does not believe community support to be decisive. True, the company gets a wage subsidy for Anna, but that's only because she already had one when she started here. Tiina has no wage subsidy, and none is needed as Therese sees it. The two of them perform just as well as any other employee.

Having two wheelchair-bound employees hasn't cost Södertälje Taxi a penny extra. When the company moved into new premises, care was taken to ensure that there was a disabled toilet and that the premises were wheelchair-accessible.

Therese Andersson insists that Södertälje Taxi makes no distinction between its employees.

"And besides, disabled people don't want special treatment."

### **Ambassadorial support**

Just over 540 km south of Södertälje, in Kävlinge, there is another company which assumes social responsibility. Ellco Food has occupied its present facilities, on the outskirts of Lund, since 1968. The Kävlinge unit has 27 employees manufacturing a variety of blood products for the food industry.

For three years now Ellco Food has been taking part in the Brännpunkt project, aimed at reducing exclusion and channeling long-term unemployed and sicklisted persons back into working life. The project is a joint undertaking by the Social Insurance Office, the social services, the Employment Service and various local employers.

The employers receive trainees for longer or shorter periods. To optimise their reception, one or two of the employees are trained as ambassadors.

Kent Persson and Mats Hansson work as ambassadors at Ellco Food. In addition to their duties as supervisors, they act as tutors to the trainees coming to the workplace.

The outcome of the trainees' spell here stands or falls by the response they get, and this is what makes the ambassador's work so important.

So far Kävlinge Lärcentrum has trained 80 or more ambassadors under the EU Brännpunkt project.

The purpose of the training is to highlight the psychosocial work environment and induce companies to develop "the good workplace".

Mats Hansson and Kent Persson had seven half-day training sessions spread out over a period of six months. Among other things they learned how employees themselves can prevent stress and other ill-health. They went over the existing routines for rehabilitation at the worker's own workplace and each associate's responsibilities towards his or her sicklisted colleagues. Interview methodology skills have given them tools for responding to the trainees.

"The course made it easier to understand people finding themselves outside the job market," says Mats, "and that makes it easier to help."

In addition to looking after the trainees, the ambassador is often an extra resource for the boss where HR issues are concerned and can serve as a sounding board for the other employees.

### **Small workplace an advantage**

Ellco Food does not have any job vacancies at present, but work experience trainees are willingly received. Even though the company has no permanent jobs to offer, a lot of the trainees find jobs elsewhere. Their work experience here also gives them an important reference.

Mats Hansson and Kent Persson have been here for 16 and 18 years respectively. So far they have received seven trainees, for anything between a fortnight and six months. Some go straight into working full time, while others come perhaps for two hours a day. For one or two, just coming in for the daily coffee break can be sufficient.

Kent tells the story of a bloke who was unable to work because a work injury had made him incapable of heavy lifting. But he still arrived punctually at work for four weeks, his aim being to get out and meet people.



*"We've always made  
a policy of giving  
everyone a chance."*

“In a larger company things are more anonymous. Here you get more sense of community and more commitment. We’re like one big family,” says Mats. “Most people live in Kävlinge and know each other.”

Kent and Mats enjoy being ambassadors.

“We get a lot of appreciation in return. It’s fun to see how someone who has just sat quiet during the coffee breaks begins to join in the conversation more and more, plucking up courage to take their place.”

The ambassador also has to follow up the work experience with the trainee and go over what has gone well and what needs improving. The trainee too evaluates the workplace and the ambassador’s performance. Are they allowed enough responsibility? How do they get on with the personnel?

#### **A win-win situation**

Åsa Bengtsson says that it takes time and commitment from the company in order for work experience to succeed. Kent feels that having a trained ambassador is also important.

“There are a lot of things you think you know but don’t really have a clue about. We have to concern ourselves with these people. If they want to talk about something, you have to spare the time to listen to them.”

It sounds like a win-win situation. The workplace gets extra manpower, while at the same time helping someone who is unemployed to get back into working life.

“We’ve always made a policy of giving everyone a chance,” says Plant Manager Åsa Bengtsson. “The project has earned us favourable attention and a good reputation locally, which is also important to us. We’ve been given the opportunity of describing our operation and how we work.”

Another advantage is the network of companies and other workplaces that has been formed in the local community. During their training the ambassadors visited each other’s workplaces and gathered ideas on tackling HR issues.

Mats and Kent think it is a good thing that no party makes a financial profit out of the scheme. Otherwise, they believe,

companies would join in for the wrong reason.

Mats, though, points out the importance of the company making demands on the trainee.

“If he’s due to start work at seven, ten seven it is. That way he sees that this is a real workplace and not just therapy. People grow when we make demands on them and give them responsibility.”

Ellco Food has zero personnel turnover. No new employees have been taken on during the past three years, but when the time comes Åsa Bengtsson would have no qualms about hiring someone who has been long-term unemployed. ■

## Facts about Social Responsibility

# Social responsibility creates new jobs

FORWARD-LOOKING ENTERPRISES ALL OVER EUROPE HAVE DISCOVERED THAT STEPPING UP THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT IS A PAYING PROPOSITION. GOOD ETHICS AND INCREASED SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY GENERATE GOOD HEALTH AND LEAD TO MORE EFFICIENT, HEALTHIER WORKPLACES. IN THE LONG TERM THIS ALSO APPARENTLY HELPS TO MODERNISE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND TO MAKE IT MORE COMPETITIVE.

All over Europe lately, the role of enterprise in the community has been a topic of discussion. More and more companies, managers and employees are finding it essential for activities to be conducted with responsibility and social commitment, and for firms to assume a voluntary social responsibility transcending the scope of ordinary laws and agreements.

There are several reasons for this. One general point of departure is the objectives staked out in the so-called Lisbon Agenda for making Europe the world's most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy.

Globalisation too has heightened awareness of the economic, environmental and social importance of enterprise. Many feel that corporate success is hinging more and more on the company's reputation and its attitude towards both employees and consumers.

This has come to impinge on the view taken by companies operating abroad of child labour, the damage the company is liable to cause to the immediate environment and the degree to which human rights are respected in the country where the company operates. The responsibility assumed by the company for its employees and subcontractors can make an important long-term difference to the way the company itself is viewed by customers. A bad reputation can take a lot of getting rid off.

Corporate efforts to assume clear social responsibility are based on a desire to be perceived as decent and credible. Who wants to trade with an unethical firm if there are other options?

Experience suggests that investments in human capital and environment-friendly solutions beyond the call of current

legislation and agreements can help to make a firm more competitive. Similarly, commitment beyond the usual obligations regarding training, working conditions or improved management-worker relations can have a directly positive impact on the firm's productivity.

In this connection, great importance is also attached to transparency. Social responsibility on the firm's part and the development of alternative good local relations lay the foundations of both new markets and active co-operation with alternative development partners.

At local level too, there are a number of new stands which a firm has to take concerning, for example, the environment, health and working conditions.

The Theme Group FSA (Corporate Social Responsibility) is a network for Swedish companies and other agents who have chosen to focus on the way in which companies and employers can work with a greater element of social involvement. This Theme Group was founded by five Swedish development partnerships/projects together with a couple of other players, briefly presented below, wishing to actively pursue social issues with a bearing on working life and the employment sector. The Theme Group secretariat is hosted by IVF (the Industrial Research and Development Corporation), Göteborg.

### **Focal point – social enterprises in Kävlinge**

Development work in Brännpunkt ("Focal point") is aimed at achieving job market entry for people who at present are far out on the periphery, either because they have been ejected, have



never been admitted, have become long-term unemployed or are long-term sicklisted. Mentors and workplace ambassadors will provide these jobless persons with individual support. An improved work environment and a healthy working climate will put the personnel at the centre of attention, thereby strengthening the social role of enterprise. The method has produced good results and achieved widespread currency, e.g. in other municipalities. At the same time efforts are being made to find good methods for new co-operation routines between organisations, public authorities and business enterprise.

### **Town in partnership**

This is a development project aimed at business development, with companies helping each other to discover new possibilities and customer groups in a diversity perspective. The Rosengård, Biskopsgården and Rinkeby housing estates in Malmö, Göteborg and Stockholm respectively now have several enterprises which have begun to see the positive opportunities attendant on greater diversity.

### **The Umbrella project – opinion formation for diversity**

This project is designed to augment knowledge and interest on the subject of diversity in the workplace and to mobilise opinion against discrimination of every kind. Information and experience are being broadcast with the aid of an on-line newspaper, books and seminars, at the same time as efforts are being made to influence politicians, other policy-makers and the media.

### **DISI (Diversity in Swedish industry)**

This is a diversity project aimed at making Swedish industry more competitive, the object being to facilitate the utilisation of many different perspectives and types of experience among employees. The project is backed by Volvo Personvagnar and some of its subcontractors, Göteborg University, CEMPI (the Centre for Practical Integration and Diversity Studies) and IVF (the Industrial Research and Development Corporation).

The Theme Group Corporate Social Responsibility has delib-

erately tried to find new associates in order to extend its interface and communicate important experience. Seminars and meetings, publications and exhibitions are being used to disseminate knowledge of different ways in which companies can assume greater responsibility. The Theme Group is also addressing conditions and opportunities for small firms. Five main areas will be further analysed, starting with recruitment and workplace conditions. How does the company construct its profile for the successful applicant? How does recruitment proceed? And after it, what will workplace conditions, the working climate and the psychosocial work environment be like? And once the hiring has been settled, what workplace conditions, working climate and psychosocial work environment are in store?

The Theme Group Corporate Social Responsibility is also considering ways in which corporate trademarks and identity can be strengthened and improved with greater assumption of responsibility. Standardised guidelines are needed on ways in which firms can go about shouldering their social responsibility. Standardisation work to this end is in progress within ISO, the International Standards Organization. This first international standard will be non-mandatory.

The Group Corporate Social Responsibility is represented in the Swedish task force drafting the standard. The result, entitled ISO 26000, will be presented in 2008. Together with researchers from the LEO Group, Göteborg University, the Theme Group has produced a publication entitled (in Swedish) "EQUAL projects and corporate responsibility". ■

## **NTG Corporate Social Responsibility**

- Chair: vacant
- Secretariat: IVF (the Industrial Research and Development Corporation), Eva Skog  
[eva.skog@ivf.se](mailto:eva.skog@ivf.se)

# Gender equality

A close-up, profile view of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair. She is looking off to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is a textured brick wall. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting her features.

Equal opportunities in the workplace are still a long way off. Women and men today do not have the same chances of shaping their lives and society's. Discriminatory structures and attitudes cause people to be valued according to their gender, for better or worse. Positive or negative valuations can starkly vary, together with ethnicity, age, sexual disposition and functional impairment. Compare, for example, a young, Swedish, heterosexual and non-disabled man with an older, black, lesbian woman who is wheelchair-bound. Sad to say, it makes no difference to discriminatory structures and attitudes whether or not women and men are equally competent and talented. It is always gender that decides.

Says Margareta Eklund, one of the project leaders at the Gender School in Falun – one of the partnerships in the theme group addressing equal opportunities issues: "It seems as though gender equality needs to be stored in a specially suitable environment in order to survive. If the right conditions are lacking, development is liable to regress. In that sense, equal opportunities are a perishable commodity."

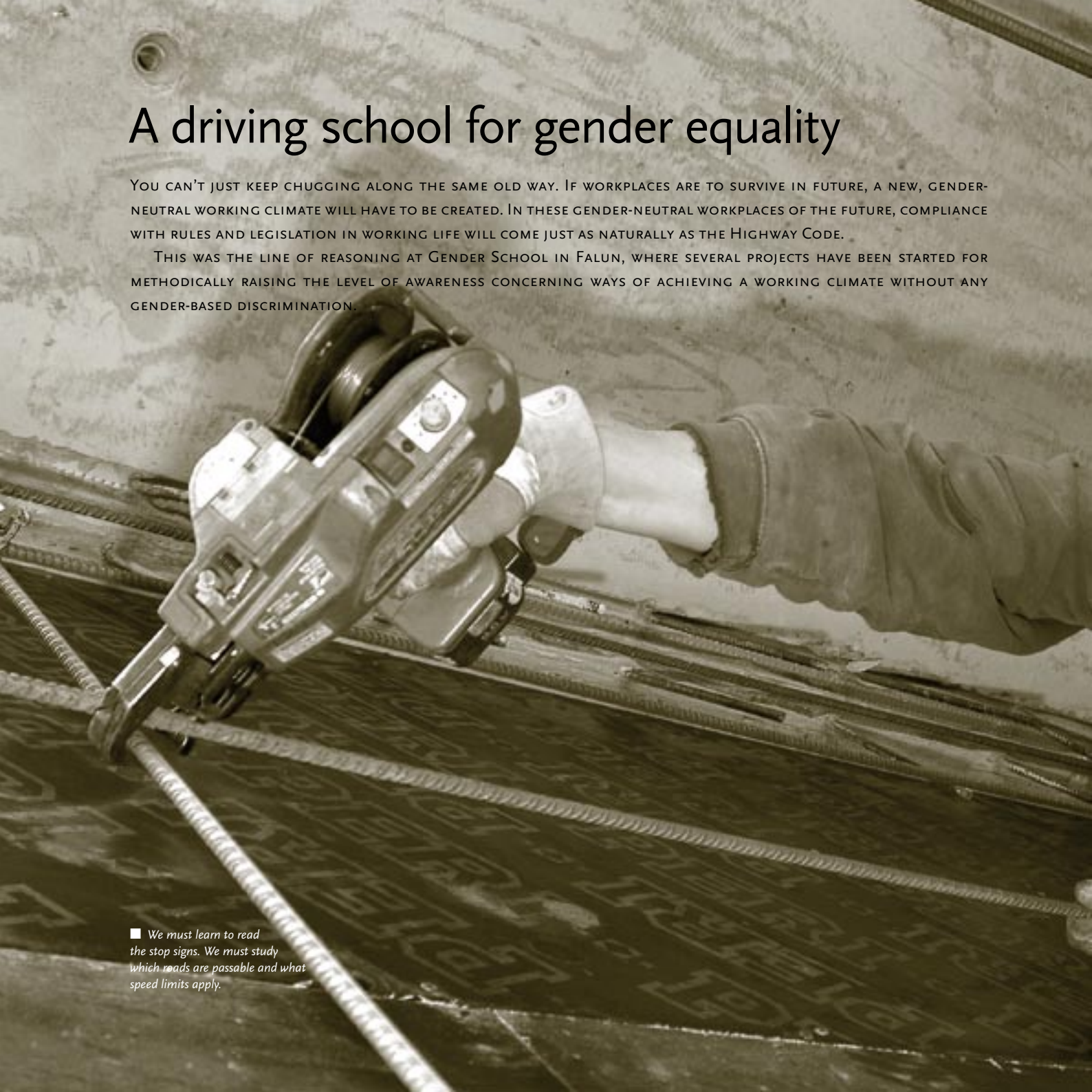




# A driving school for gender equality

YOU CAN'T JUST KEEP CHUGGING ALONG THE SAME OLD WAY. IF WORKPLACES ARE TO SURVIVE IN FUTURE, A NEW, GENDER-NEUTRAL WORKING CLIMATE WILL HAVE TO BE CREATED. IN THESE GENDER-NEUTRAL WORKPLACES OF THE FUTURE, COMPLIANCE WITH RULES AND LEGISLATION IN WORKING LIFE WILL COME JUST AS NATURALLY AS THE HIGHWAY CODE.

THIS WAS THE LINE OF REASONING AT GENDER SCHOOL IN FALUN, WHERE SEVERAL PROJECTS HAVE BEEN STARTED FOR METHODICALLY RAISING THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS CONCERNING WAYS OF ACHIEVING A WORKING CLIMATE WITHOUT ANY GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION.

A robotic arm, wearing a dark work glove, holds a power drill. The drill is positioned over a metal structure with several horizontal rebar rods. The background is a textured, metallic surface.

■ We must learn to read the stop signs. We must study which roads are passable and what speed limits apply.





“Why not introduce a gender equality driving licence for companies interested in something happening at last? Or better still, a nationwide mass movement for gender equality?”

Says Margareta Eklund, one of the project leaders at the Gender School in Falun – one of the projects under National Theme Group Equality Argus. Time, she argues, is not on the side of gender equality. Nothing is going to resolve itself. If anything, the contrary applies.

“It seems as though gender equality needs to be stored in a specially suitable environment in order to survive. If the right conditions are not in place, developments are liable to move backwards. Gender equality is a perishable good.”

But, she notes, there is nothing wrong with the laws and intentions. Substantial resources have been committed to gender equality, e.g. through the Breaker projects initiated by the Government. Between 1988 and 2003 a total of MSEK 350 was spent on training and recruitment measures for persons ready to make untraditional vocational choices. This, it was hoped, would equalise the balance of the sexes in the employment sector. But, despite all efforts to the contrary, the pattern remains unbroken.

Margareta Eklund says that this needs to be analysed.

“We must learn to interpret the stop signs. What is it that has so far prevented the development of more gender-equal workplaces? We must study which roads are viable and what the speed limits are. If gender equality promotion in the workplace is to succeed, previous experience will have to be pondered and fresh knowledge added. Above all, it’s the structures that will have to be altered.”

### **An open and a hidden gender market**

Under the Gender School project the project leaders hope to be able to make men and women aware of the gender-labelling that goes on at our workplaces. The gender marking that makes women and men go on moving in different spheres in the job market, that makes men look to industries dominated by men, such as construction and engineering, while women opt above all for service occupations in nursing and welfare.



■ Major Karin Wilhelmsson, who works with the Norrbotten Wing, F21, Swedish Air Force, is living proof that gender stereotypes in working life are not invincible.

It isn't the occupations in themselves that encourage segregation of the sexes. Research has shown that the cause if anything accommodates a subtle pattern of open and hidden forces interacting in a continuous process whereby the image of who gets the job is from the very outset closely bound up with so-called biological properties, and accordingly with a particular gender.

How do you get men to look for jobs in nursing professions? How can a management headhunt be made to highlight women instead of sifting them out? What does a career development look like that affirms the potentialities of both women and men? Much thought has been given to these questions within the National Theme Group Gender Equality Argus and Gender School.

"In addition," Marianne Lundberg continues, "we want to show that gender equality issues are not just women's concern and, accordingly, are not only concerned with women's adjustment to male structures, because this is an urgent social issue which men also have an interest in concerning themselves with."

#### **Influential employers looking for change**

In seven different part-projects the Gender School is now trying to find new methods of breaking down the gender boundaries of working life at structural level, so as to integrate the gender equality perspective with the daily round in the workplace. Associates comprise several of Dalarna's biggest and most influential employers: the National Road Administration, the Dalarna County Council, TCO, the Minerva

Foundation (a regional resource centre for the development of ideas and competence for women in Dalarna), the County Labour Board and VH Assistans (a privately owned company providing personal assistance to children, young persons and adults with functional impairment).

"In the long run," Marianne Lundberg continues, "we hope to create methods which will bring about lasting change all over Dalarna."

Work began in 2004 and will continue until 2007. The main focus of attention will be on three areas judged to have a very important bearing on the development of gender issues: leadership issues, recruitment and career issues.

"Together with the National Road Administration, and County Labour Board and the Dalarna County Council, we have been given a large area to test these issues in. This is a matter of big organisations where leadership training programmes are going on all the time. At the National Road Administration, which has the target of becoming a national authority with greater gender equality, the analysis carried out with the aid of the Gender School and a number of researchers has radically transformed ideas as to how leadership training programmes ought to be constructed.

Using a new gender perspective, the National Road Administration will be creating new opportunities for women to enter the organisation. Meanwhile the County Council is hard at work, together with ourselves, reviewing its career development with a view to recruiting more men for the future. Within the organisation they are also considering the possibility of other strategies for attracting more men."

Marianne Lundberg points out that alterations in the patterns of recruitment and career development impact on the entire organisation.

### **Lessons from different and European situations**

The Gender School is curious to see the conditions under which, for example, women managers with functional impairment have to work. How do they perceive their exposed situation

and what lessons are there here for others to learn?" We know that these women are subjected to discrimination in the job market. We hope to be able to find about ten women with functional impairment in leading positions and to be able to interview them in depth on the subject."

An important part of the work of the EQUAL programme is proceeding conjointly with other partnerships in the EU, through what is termed transnational co-operation. The Gender School is involved in two transnational partnerships.

One of them is "Hackers for Equality", together with Scotland and Slovenia, in which efforts are being made to devise models for a gender perspective on growth and leadership, so as to reduce discrimination and inequality in the employment sector of the Scottish Highlands and Islands. In another project, "Private Matter", together with Spain, Italy and France, the main concern is with conditioning attitudes so as to create new opportunities for women to enter the employment sector.

"Our strategy, says Margareta Eklund, in principal charge of Northern European transnational co-operation, "is to involve as many as possible in the national partnership. How do you go about creating growth in regions where unemployment is even higher than ours? How do you put a gender perspective on this? And what do you do to prevent women from lagging further behind in the employment sector? We have a lot of ideas and experience on the subject, but at the same time, of course, our region has a lot of useful lessons to learn from others.

"There is also a very powerful macho culture in the south of Europe that goes against gender equality in the workplace. Looking after children and old people is a "private matter" which men do not need to concern themselves with.

And before long it won't be necessary either, because in Italy today the birth rate is down to between 0.4 and 0.5 child per woman. Unless something is done about it, before long Italy won't have any manpower left." ■

# In control of one's life

CAN GREATER KNOWLEDGE GIVE US A NEW PERCEPTION OF ONE ANOTHER'S POSSIBILITIES? WHAT ROLE DOES LEADERSHIP HAVE TO PLAY IN WORKPLACE CULTURE AND RELATIONS? WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS EMPLOYEES? WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OUR EMPLOYERS? TAKING THESE AND OTHER QUESTIONS AS ITS STARTING POINT, THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND HAS TASKED HALMSTAD UNIVERSITY WITH RUNNING A NATIONAL THEME GROUP ON GENDER EQUALITY IN ORDER TO CURB THE MECHANISMS AT PRESENT UNDERLYING SEGREGATION OF THE SEXES IN WORKING LIFE.

The Theme Group is named Argus, after the giant in Greek mythology who was endowed with superhuman strength and, with his hundred ever-open eyes, saw everything that happened in the world around him. The name was chosen as an abbreviation for "Sustainable development in working life through an integrated gender perspective and global development". Argus is also the name of the university department running activities to do with the theme.

The mechanisms today governing segregation of the sexes at work have been thoroughly researched to say the least of it. Despite the policy documents drawn up by the EU to counteract the negative effects of gender prejudice on the establishment of women in large parts of working life, changes have not taken place at anything like the speed hoped for.

The Argus Theme Group is to ponder the gender equality concept itself. Perceptions of the concept are often very different. Some people regard gender equality as a power issue, others maintain it belongs to the private sphere, or that the gender equality issue has absolutely no relevance, gender equality, in their opinion, being already established.

The Theme Group is to address gender equality in terms of "power to shape one's own life", viewing this in relation to working life, the development partnerships and methods and models employed by other agents. In its analysis and strategy the Theme Group on Gender Equality is also to provide a holistic perspective with people at the centre of attention. Where the power structure issue is concerned, this means taking into

consideration women's and men's ages, sexual orientation, disabilities and ethnicity, because there are many factors capable of compounding inequality in men's and women's working conditions in the workplace. Women and men with a different sexual orientation, for example, are treated differently depending on whether women or men are in the majority in the workplace concerned.

Women and men with a different ethnic background also risk dual discrimination and exclusion. Age is another potential cause of unequal working conditions. A holistic perspective therefore means the dynamic of the gender equality concept covering more than the power perspective related to gender only. ■

## Argus will:

- Highlight gender equality as a field of knowledge and the relationship between theory and practice.
- Study, analyse, evaluate and disseminate methods of gender equality integration.
- Deepen reflection and theory development concerning gender, sex, gender equality, gender equality integration, intersectionality, which means examining points of intersection in power processes in relation to time and place. The relation between these concepts will also be studied.
- Propose strategic initiatives for promoting gender equality in society and working life.
- Quantify the impact, if any, of our initiatives on the policy fields and organisations concerned.





### NTG Argus – on gender equality

- Chair: Ingegerd Sahlström, Municipality of Halmstad, and one vacancy
- Secretariat: Halmstad University  
Suzanne Almgren Mason  
[susanne.almgren\\_mason@hos.hh.se](mailto:susanne.almgren_mason@hos.hh.se)  
[www.ntgequality.se](http://www.ntgequality.se)



# New paths

Is it reasonable that some people should be long-term unemployed or have to take early retirement because society cannot arrange their rehabilitation in time?

“No, of course not!” says Gerard Larsson, who chairs the National Theme Group New Paths into Working Life – Quality Assurance of Interaction. “We need more efficient co-ordination between different agencies in the community, so that people will not fall between two stools. The laws and structures which have been built up in the Swedish welfare system are failing to take care of all those who have several problems at once. Different authorities are working more or less independently of each other, according to their own timetables, with separate treasuries and by different guidelines. And when communication between them fails, it is often the individual person who suffers. The fewer different mandators there are involved in rehabilitation, the faster people can return to the employment sector.”





# Partnership for youth employment

THE HISINGEN DISTRICT AUTHORITIES IN GOTHENBURG (GÖTEBORG) ARE WORKING TO CO-ORDINATE THEIR EFFORTS TO HELP YOUNG PERSONS OVER THE BAR INTO WORKING LIFE. THEIR RECIPE: JOINT FUNDING, BETTER COMMUNICATION AND LESS TERRITORIAL THINKING. AND ABOVE ALL – PUTTING THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL FIRST, INSTEAD OF THE REGULATIONS OF ONE'S OWN ORGANISATION.

On the island of Hisingen the Employment Service and social services have been collaborating for several years now for the benefit of both young and mature unemployed who have had difficulty entering the job market. Starting with various experimental projects, the scheme has since 2004 existed on a more permanent footing under the aegis of the Göteborg Hisingen Co-ordination Association, alias DELTA.

The idea is really quite simple. Handling officers from the Employment Service, the social services, the Social Insurance

Office and health care services join together, and pool their resources, in order to give better, more effective assistance to unemployed persons seeking a foothold in the job market. Previously, holistic co-operation of this kind has foundered on the rock of jurisdictional boundaries, but a statutory amendment in 2004 cleared the field for authorities wishing to collaborate.

“It was clear to us that something had to be done,” says Ola Andersson, DELTA's chief handling officer, “because

otherwise more and more people were liable to get trapped in a sort of pass-the-parcel game, which in turn could mean prolonged exclusion and perpetual shunting from one authority to another.”

Hisingen has a population of over 125,000 with all kinds of backgrounds. Many of them are young people who, for various reasons, have had difficulty in finding jobs.

A lot of these youngsters dropped out of compulsory school or high school. Others lack motivation, have no responsible adults to back them up or else are poorly informed about the workings of society.

### **In the wake of unemployment – mental illness**

A mapping survey recently carried out by DELTA revealed a distinct rise in the incidence of mental illness among jobless youngsters on Hisingen. Depression, exhaustion, anxiety and phobias are growing more and more widespread among them.

Ola Andersson sees two main reasons for young people's employment difficulties. One is the raising of the bar for getting a job. The other is the growing complexity of young people's problems.

“Terms like mental illness and fatigue depression express symptoms of complicated, often elusive problems. Behind them, among other things, are structural changes in working life, integration issues and outmoded gender roles. This makes co-operation between authorities more vital than ever.”

To equip the youngsters for working life, the youth team at the Hisingen Job Mart (Arbetsmarknadstorget) has opted for collaboration above all with the Employment Service and the social services. The scheme is for youngsters aged between 18 and 25 whose problems are not excessively complicated and who, having failed to qualify for unemployment insurance compensation, frequently receive livelihood support from the social services.

Many of them have mostly had temporary jobs of brief duration, nothing permanent. To make them employable, these youngsters are often in need of co-ordinated initia-

tives from the social services and the Employment Service for a certain period.

The Hisingen youth team have been able to receive more than 700–800 youngsters annually, after the district authority concerned has decided that this joint activity can be of benefit to them.

The intention is for the youngsters taking part in the scheme to be able to sit down for tripartite discussions, together with social welfare officers and placement officers, and get an action plan drawn up for them. This is continuously followed up by the handling officers, whom the youngsters can meet at a weekly Open House where all comers are welcome.

### **All the money in one kitty**

Kerstin Sundquist, Senior Social Welfare Officer with the Job Mart youth team, sees many advantages in young persons with livelihood support being able to turn to the Job Mart instead of the social welfare authorities.

“A person walking into the Job Mart acquires a different role from someone visiting the social welfare office. Here, unlike the social services, we focus not so much on people's problems as on their potentialities. Here they meet someone who looks at them and listens to them, which emboldens them to be themselves. At the same time there is more insistence here on jobseekers themselves being active, which I think many of them appreciate.”

The youngsters fill out a form in which they consent to the authorities exchanging information with each other about their employment situation. Melanie Wallqvist, also a social welfare officer and handling officer with the Job Mart youth team, says that so far no one has objected on grounds of personal privacy.

“This doesn't mean that placement officers and social service officials are allowed to read each other's case records and notes, but rather that they can exchange information specifically concerning employment. Everything else remains confidential.”





She finds that the co-operation agreement has another important, educational function.

“Co-operation agreements make it clear right from the start that the purpose of the Job Mart is for the Employment Service and the social services to work together. Even if we don’t do so for all youngsters, we point out that this is the object of the exercise.”

Melanie Wallqvist says that openness matters. The Job Mart has a reception but no locked doors.

“The social welfare officer and placement officer used to occupy the same premises, or else be next door to each other, which made us even more of a team. Unfortunately that is no longer the arrangement, but I hope we will soon be able to return to that way of doing things. Sharing the working day together, each of you learns a lot about the realities the other has to cope with.”

### **Good results – but more initiatives needed**

The co-ordination outcome shows between 50 and 60 per cent of the youngsters receiving support to have some form of employment after leaving the Job Mart. So joint activities

have paid off handsomely from the viewpoint of individual and community alike. At present there is no scientifically reliable means of gauging the magnitude of the gains, but DELTA hopes to be able to present an assessment of this kind shortly.

The mapping survey which Kerstin Sundqvist carried out on DELTA's behalf, concerning young people's future needs on Hisingen, showed, however, that broader co-ordination activities, and many more of them, are needed, especially for young people whose problems are of a more composite nature and who cannot avail themselves of the initiatives currently on offer. Young people with a mental or physical disability and some form of substance abuse are especially disadvantaged.

“DELTA's next step,” says Ola Andersson, DELTA's chief handling officer, “will be to start a project on these dual diagnoses, with psychiatric services, the Employment Service and social services working together. Our present way of tackling these issues on Hisingen isn't effective. We have to give these people secure housing conditions and the support they need in order to enter the employment sector or be accepted for education or training. I see this partnership project as a way of developing our welfare society.” ■

## Facts about New Paths into Working Life

# Partnership and quality assurance

HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE A PARTNERSHIP IN WHICH DIFFERENT PLAYERS CAN JOINTLY OPERATE PROJECTS COUNTERACTING DISCRIMINATION AND EVERY KIND OF INEQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE? HOW DO YOU FIND NEW PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT AND METHODS FOR THIS WHICH ARE CERTAIN TO PRODUCE RESULTS AND CAN BE DEVELOPED FURTHER?

THE THEME GROUP “NEW PATHS INTO WORKING LIFE – PARTNERSHIP QA” WAS FORMED TO LOOK FOR MORE EFFECTIVE MEANS OF ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES.

New methods are needed to create workplaces which will no longer exclude large parts of the workforce. So far, efforts to combat discrimination and inequality in the workplace have been insufficiently successful. Diversity, one of the prerequisites of a creative working climate, known to generate both good growth and a good work environment, is still a long way off.

The Theme Group “New Paths into Working Life – Participation QA” was formed for the purpose of creating viable co-operation at regional and local government levels. More effective methods, it was hoped, would bring about better interaction between the Social Insurance Office, county councils, social services, the Public Employment Service and Komvux (adult education).

A lot of this Theme Group’s work will be concentrated on rehabilitation, a pivotal issue for many long-term sicklisted persons and others. Today they are often left in limbo after initially perhaps having been offered a brief rehabilitation period by the Social Insurance Office. Several months may then pass before the next agency takes over.

The Theme Group calls this a deplorable way of doing things. Instead they want everyone who falls ill, employed or otherwise, to know from the very first day what support they can get, and to be assured of that support being active and co-ordinated between all the agencies involved. The Theme Group finds it axiomatic that user groups should take part in their own process and that work should be guided by their needs.

The Theme Group's aim has been to make the invisible processes hitherto governing rehabilitation as conspicuous as possible, so that the obstacles now making it hard for many people to find work can be identified. But workplace structures also need to be changed so that disadvantaged groups of employees will be able to remain in working life. This can mean training about employees' rights, support in the form of an interview contact at the Social Insurance Office, or an inventory of relatives who can help out when needed.

The Theme Group also pleads the importance of remembering that one is dealing here with conditions which cannot be changed quickly. Someone who has been out of the employment sector for ten years will not return in ten weeks. Co-ordinating initiatives with so many people involved, on different levels and in different community activities, takes time. The imbalance between the different agents in terms of knowledge, objectives and methods can, moreover, lead to conflicts of interest which take time to resolve.

To accomplish these changes we need both best practices for inspiration and partnership between all the agencies involved. How did those who unravelled all the knots go about it?

"New Paths into Working Life – Participation QA" has selected five municipalities where partnership projects are now in progress. Together with researchers from Mid-Sweden, Örebro and Linköping Universities, the Theme Group is now studying these examples in order to devise models of viable co-operation for the future.

The Activa foundation in Örebro is one instance of long-term sicklisted and disabled people successfully tackling their own situation. This work, based on the individual person's own objectives, also includes co-ordinating community initiatives together with the jobseeker. A first step on the path to employment is the preparatory activity which among other things includes work training. This often takes place under individual auspices in a café, restaurant, bakery or administrative and industrial activity – in a word, wherever the opportunity of practical upskilling presents itself.

In the Municipality of Botkyrka a Municipal Partnership Association has been created to forge an alliance between the Social Insurance Office and the Public Employment Service and make it financially easier to get the local community's many immigrants into employment. How did they get the political system to provide the necessary resources?

The Municipality of Östersund has also been a front runner, with a labour market project in which people have entered different projects on wage subsidies. Here as well, a partnership project is being started by the county council, municipality, Employment Service and unemployment insurance fund.

The Municipality of Sundsvall is engaged on a partnership project codenamed Drivbänken ("Hotbed"), in which heads of administration have been actively constructing joint platforms from which people can be helped to move forward. Unconventional methods have been tested, such as the municipality paying the employers' share of the wage subsidy or offering open Komvux (adult education) tuition in core subjects.

Later on the Theme Group will be presenting a methods book on different measures leading to new paths into working life, with the quality of participation guaranteed into the bargain. Conferences and seminars are another method being used to highlight these issues. ■

### NTG New Paths into Working Life – Participation QA

- Chair: County Governor Gerhard Larsson, Västernorrland
- Secretariat: Municipality of Sundsvall  
Annika Bostedt  
annika.bostedt@sundsvall.se  
Sten-Olof Altin  
sten-olov.altin@y.lst.se

A voice about new paths

## Many stools to fall between

THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR ALLOWING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE UNEMPLOYED FOR LONG PERIODS OR TO TAKE EARLY RETIREMENT FOR LACK OF PROPER REHABILITATION. VIGOROUS CO-ORDINATION IS NEEDED BETWEEN DIFFERENT AUTHORITIES SO AS TO ALLEVIATE THE SUFFERINGS OF THESE INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE.

IN THE LONG TERM SOCIETY MAKES A CLEAR PROFIT, WITH NO EXPENSE, WHEN EXPENDITURE ON SICKNESS ABSENCE, SOCIAL ALLOWANCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT IS REDUCED, SAYS GERHARD LARSSON, CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL THEME GROUP NEW PATHS INTO WORKING LIFE – PARTNERSHIP QA.

Throughout his active career – as Under-Secretary of State and special investigator for the Government, and as Group President of Samhall – Gerhard Larsson has been actively concerned with rehabilitation issues and the growing number of people excluded from the employment sector.

Time and time again in his reports he has pointed out that people are in danger of falling between the different stools of a welfare system in which responsibility and finance are divided between a growing number of mandators. Another weakness of the system is that rehabilitation often takes too long, which in turn can tend to aggravate the symptoms.

As Chairman of National Theme Group New Paths into



Working Life – Partnership QA, Gerhard Larsson is now heading efforts to indicate more viable methods of getting people into employment quickly.

So far four major partnership projects have been set in motion within the National Theme Group operating with the support of temporary legislation. Taking part are the Hisingen District Authority in Gothenburg, the Municipalities of Sundsvall, Luleå and Karlskoga, and the Botkyrka Municipal Partnership Association. The outcomes will be analysed in due course and methods of quality assurance selected with the aid of researchers at the Mid-Sweden University and Örebro University.

“Within our National Theme Group,” says Gerhard Larsson,

“we want to focus particularly on young persons with some kind of multiple problem which has made it very hard for them to gain entry to the job market. Nowadays a functional impairment of some kind, a different ethnic background, substance abuse or other problems make obstacles to employment almost insuperable.”

### **Structural impediments**

Gerhard Larsson maintains that the laws and structures which have been built up in Sweden's welfare system are inadequate, above all from the point of view of people afflicted with several problems at once. They are liable to fall in between the mandators' different areas of responsibility, which can mean adequate rehabilitation either failing to materialise or coming too late.

Society has grown increasingly specialised, and when there are several mandators involved it is not certain that all of them will arrive at the same assessment of needs when a person is to be rehabilitated for employment. In particular, there is often a lack of chronological co-ordination. The state operating through the Employment Service, the state operating through the Social Insurance Office, the municipality operating through social service and the county council operating through medical care – all of them operate more or less independently of each other, to their own timetables, with different funding structures and with different operational guidelines.

“If, for example, someone with a mental functional impairment or a substance abuse problem is to be rehabilitated, the outcome will most often be poor, or non-existent, if there are several mandators involved. Each of the mandators, as a rule, acts well in terms of its own competence and resources, but most often the individual needs co-ordinated measures deployed by the different mandators simultaneously, not when the timing suits the authorities best but when help is needed most. This is not easy to change as the law now stands. Each mandate has its own priorities, finances and given targets. Barriers are built up and the interests of the individual can very easily fall between two stools.”

Gerhard Larsson believes that by co-ordinating their resources the authorities can achieve better results and faster rehabilitation, which will benefit everybody. Quality assurance of this partnership will require reforms. The present situation of five or six mandators is untenable. The number must be reduced, which in turn calls for legislation.

“If the county council today has money troubles and feels unable to pay for a psychiatrist or psychologist, it isn't the county council but the individual person who has to bear the consequences. The cost devolves instead on the Social Insurance Office, which has to pay our sickness allowance till the psychiatrist's or psychologist's waiting list has been shortened. Nobody gains by this.

“Adding together what this means in terms of human suffering and social insurance or social service expenditure, the total cost to the community is often higher than if the county council in the first place had financed an additional psychologist to meet the demand. Every mandator has its funding allocation to cover expenditure, and under this system the individual gets the rough end of the stick.”

### **Co-ordinated measures for the individual**

As Gerhard Larsson sees it, the fewer the different mandators involved in rehabilitation and the more efficient co-ordination between them, the more rapidly people will return to the employment sector.

“In our projects we are now trying to get representatives of these groups to pull together by putting political representatives, decision-makers and handling officers in the same room as so to minimise the barriers between them,” says Gerhard Larsson. “The whole idea is to create co-ordinated inputs and physical meetings where decision-makers from the social services, medical services, the Social Insurance Office and the Employment Service can get together with handling officers. Action plans are drawn up at these meetings, and the handling officers are then given a mandate to deploy co-ordinated measures on behalf of the individual.”



As an example he mentions the possibility of getting work training through the Employment Service, while at the same time undergoing treatment for substance abuse problems. If a joint rehabilitation plan exists, everything proceeds on a co-ordinated basis and everyone involved knows what everyone else is doing.

“We must aim to get one clearly responsible mandator, so that the individual can return to working life after being knocked out of it. Just one mandator in charge, and not four, five or six all in charge at once.”

Gerhard Larsson points out that Sweden is no longer an example to other Nordic and EU countries in the matter of avoiding the screening-out of people from the employment sector, and he sees a clear connection between a smaller number of mandators and a faster return to working life for the individual who has been ejected from it.

“Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany all have fewer mandators. Instead of four mandators, the employment service and social insurance service, for example, are joined together and parts of social services or parts of the social insurance service have joined forces with the employment service and collaborate as if they were all one organisation with one and the same cost accountability.

### **Instructive examples speak for themselves**

There are also instances of sickness allowance and compensation for medical care being paid out of the same kitty. This, says Gerhard Larsson, has the advantage of establishing clear connections.

“When the party responsible for there not being enough doctors and nurses also pays out sickness allowance, it becomes clear that putting resources in place to cure the problem is a more economical proposition than disbursing sickness benefits for long periods.”

What, then, is Gerhard Larsson’s vision of the future? What would he like viable partnership to look like in, say, five years time?

“Unfortunately you can’t just snap your fingers and argue for change. We must try to find compelling examples and carry out strong, concrete evaluations to show that the financial benefit of co-ordination is so great as to outweigh other systems which may be of advantage to the different mandators.

“But eventually I hope the barriers between mandators can be reduced. Preferably I would like to see fewer mandators, and one of them clearly in charge, for the benefit of people whose problems are of a more composite, multiple nature.” ■





# Partnership

Partnerships for Development and Growth have attracted growing attention recently. But what is a partnership? How does it really work and what does it really look like? How can different partners, who in the normal run of things do not co-operate with each other, be induced to pursue the same objectives and tackle different tasks together? How can problems, priorities and resources be defined and designed conjointly? These are some of the questions which the National Theme Group Partnership is concerned with.

When several partners with different perspectives interact, the results are often superior. The challenge connected with equal is that the partnership is expected to succeed in strengthening individuals who are disadvantaged in some respect, while at the same time influencing structures.

This makes it important to include user groups in the development process. These groups have often been excluded from development process by which they themselves are affected, and they can supply a competence which community representatives do not possess. One radical idea of this kind is a development partnership including representatives of municipalities, the Social Insurance Office, the Public Employment Service and a public agency. They want to give long-term unemployed and long-term sickness absentees a majority in their development partnership, such being the importance attributed to their particular knowledge and experience.”





# Broad-based diversity promotion

WHEN OUR UNDERLYING PROJECTS RAN INTO PROBLEMS WE SAW THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING MANY INFLUENTIAL ORGANISATIONS. THE IDEA OF A PARTNERSHIP IS BASICALLY FOR US TO GAIN MUTUAL ADVANTAGES, FOR ALL OF US TO HAVE SOMETHING TO GAIN FROM WORKING TOGETHER.” SAYS SOLGUN LUNDGREN, DP DIVERSITY IN VÄSTERNORRLAND CO-ORDINATOR.

The Diversity Partnership in Västernorrland has been working for three years now with the vision of creating a working life with no discrimination. Once every month, fourteen participants from different organisations have met on each other's premises to try and move forward one of the county's most important futures issues in a Development Partnership.

Five subordinate part-projects have been underway simultaneously. All of them have been concerned with developing methods and working approaches for harnessing diversity in the broadest possible perspective. The idea has been that differences area an asset and that everyone, irrespective of ethnic identity, age, sexual disposition, religion and any functional impairment, is an asset to the county's employment sector.

This vision did not arise in a vacuum. As in so many other parts of Sweden, the county's population is getting older, and a manpower shortage is expected in a few years' time when large numbers of people come up for retirement.

## **Job shortage creating opportunities for change**

The statistics show that something like 40,000 of the county's 244,000 inhabitants to be excluded today from the employment sector. 58 per cent are of foreign birth, while the corresponding figure for Swedish jobseekers is 78.4. And yet immigration has traditionally been very important for the development of the county's iron and, more recently, forestry and sawmilling industries.

In the Diversity in Västernorrland Partnership, these figures have been viewed as an opportunity, because calculations have shown that 44,000 new workers will need to be hired over a ten-year period.

“We neither will nor can retain the discrimination existing today,” says Solgun Lundgren, Co-ordinator of the Diversity in Västernorrland PD. “Those who have been marginalised due to ill-health must be rehabilitated and those who have migrated to our country but still not found jobs must be given work. We also have a big manpower reserve among people with functional impairment who have difficulty in entering the employment sector. But above all, we say that the present state of things is unacceptable.”

Solgun Lundgren points out the employment is a human right. That is why the Partnership has elected to focus on the vision of creating diversity in the county, although labour demand, of course, is also present in the background.

Some of the ground had already been prepared through the work inaugurated by Västernorrland County Governor Gerard Larsson in “Vision 2005 with perspective on 2010 Västernorrland affords opportunities and diversity”. But in the Partnership which began in the autumn of 2002 the participants saw a possibility of creating even better and more efficient working methods for diversity promotion on a broader basis.

## **Broad co-operation brings greater participation**

Fourteen representatives of county authorities, the public sector, trade unions, an employers' organisation and NGOs were in on the start. They included the County Labour Board, the County Administrative Board, the Social Insurance Office, the Swedish Sports Federation for the Disabled (SHIF) and the Five Minutes to Twelve Movement. Two municipalities, Sundsvall and Härnösand, have also been represented, together with an edu-

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RESPEKT FÖR TIDERNÄ.

STAMMEREN

KÄRA BRÖDER!  
TRAMPA INTE PÅ  
MATTAN MED  
SKORNA PÅ

MÜSLÜMAN KARDEŞ  
AYAKKABI İLE  
HALININ ÜZERİNE  
BASMA!





cational enterprise, the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning.

“It may seem a very rambling sort of development Partnership, with all the different target groups, but we chose to divide the work between many representatives so as to maximise participation and the dissemination of ideas among the organisations.”

Five different part-projects conducted within the DP have been concerned with strategies for changing attitudes in the workplace. They include a web-based training programme for immigrants wishing to improve their Swedish, a development project targeting Roma, a coaching project for persons with mental disabilities and a project for young persons suffering from mental illness. The Five Minutes to Twelve movement has taken part, together with Active Life, run by the Swedish Disability Federation (HSO).

Solgun Lundberg finds that the partnership kind of organisation offers the great advantage of achieving a far swifter impact.

“Our partnership has been broad but still not broad enough,” she says. “It worries us that we have had difficulty in getting the manpower representatives to join in. We have missed the employers’ organisations. It was also originally intended that we should have more NGOs taking part.”

### **Obligatory attendance and continuity**

How do you organise a good partnership?

“First and foremost you have to get to know each other well. Continuity has been important. And so we reserved two days at the beginning for getting to know each other properly and deciding the rules of the game. The obligatory attendance we decided on for meetings has been important, but it wouldn’t be truthful to say that we haven’t had our ups and downs. But even if the discussions were tough going at times, in the end we always arrived at the consensus which partnership requires.”

Solgun Lundberg is satisfied on the whole with the team spirit of her partnership.

“Our experience has taught us that everyone must take responsibility for their own participation. If you just sit there with a mandate doing nothing, it doesn’t work. Every participant

should also consider their role in the partnership. During the initial phase I think one should ask each and every one to declare his or her intention in entering a Development Partnership.

“This doesn’t mean that everyone needs to have the same objective,” she points out. In a partnership it’s diversity that counts, you dovetail with each other. The idea of a partnership is for everyone to have a hand in solving problems together.”

“The partnership has its limitations and it isn’t always easy to work out a consensus with so many representatives of different organisations involved,” says Solgun Lundberg.

“Sometimes it can be done, but sometimes when we come into contact with municipalities, which of course are politically controlled organisations, it can get difficult. A partnership can’t override the municipality’s political decisions or frames. We can only negotiate with them and say how we think the matter should be solved.”

### **More creative solutions to conflicts**

But she still thinks that the partnership as an organisational structure has worked better than expected.

“When we had the problem with the Roma we realised what a good thing it was, there being so many of us and our thus having access to so many different viewpoints. Then we could see that one and one made two. Even when the county council wanted to back out we benefited from being so many to help with the negotiating. In the end the county council did back out anyway, but we had a lot of support from each other in the partnership.”

The five projects conducted within the Partnership were concluded last autumn. Two of them are continuing under their own steam, while others are continuing in different forms. One now includes an additional municipality and is continuing in association with the Swedish Disability Federation, the Social Insurance Office and the Employment Service. Another is being deepened under the auspices of the National Theme Group New Paths into Working Life, with support from the Swedish ESF Council. ■



## Facts about Partnership

# The art of succeeding with development

QUITE A LOT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE PREREQUISITES OF PROJECT WORK, AND ALSO OF NETWORKING. BUT WHAT ABOUT PARTNERSHIP? HOW DO YOU MAKE PARTNERSHIPS, AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP ESPECIALLY, SUCCEED AS A FORM OF DEVELOPMENT WORK? THIS IS THE TOPIC WHICH THE NATIONAL THEME GROUP PARTNERSHIP HAS SET ITSELF THE TASK OF PONDERING.

There has been very little research about partnership, and yet the European Social Fund has laid down that it is through partnership that work must be organised. At first there were no instructions as to how this could be done. Every partnership has had to proceed by trial and error. In this way a lot of lessons have been learned and experience gained for the benefit of future development work organisations.

To support this process the National Theme Group Partnership has been tasked, together with researchers from Linköping University, with describing and in more general terms pondering the impediments and possibilities of partnership.

The method has been to problematise the partnership concept and, instead of presenting cut-and-dried answers, to ask questions encouraging reflection and further debate:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of partnership? When does it work and when doesn't it? Is partnership ever a good thing? Can you get further by thinking in terms of partnership than by addressing the issues in traditional project form?

The Theme Group Partnership has tried to analyse what goes on during the different phase of a development process.

What takes place during the introductory phase, once the work has got started, in the final phase and after the work has been concluded? These questions have, among other things, been made to focus on the importance of the membership mix in a partnership or the mechanics of feedback to the partners' own organisations. What decides whether or not the partnership achieves results, and if results are achieved, how can they be collected and passed on?

And what does partnership really mean? Is it merely a buzzword? Just one of many in the recent copious flora of words describing strategies for development: innovation systems, triple helix, cluster, network ...

So far analytical work in the Theme Group Partnership has resulted in a book entitled “On the Art of Developing Partnerships”, which tries to pin down the experience hitherto gained from 43 development projects within the European Social Fund. In it the Theme Group Partnership notes the absence of any exact definition of partnership, while agreeing that partnership can be an organisational form in which a group of players join forces on a matter of common concern, with each partner (on the basis of her or her competence, experience and resources) capable of contributing towards a development.

The book goes on to observe that partnerships are noticeably different from other forms of development work. Unlike a network, for example, a partnership has a problem area which needs to be resolved: most often the point is that no-one can get anywhere single-handed, and all parties concerned will benefit from a solution, i.e. from the occurrence of a development.

Another key factor of partnerships is that all partners feel that they are participants and have a common problem to solve. This is not always the case with a project, which is often directed with the aid of an industrious project leader who does much of the work himself. The partnership’s co-ordinator, as the name suggest, has more of a unifying function, but each individual partner’s contributions are important if development is to take place. As one co-ordinator puts it:

“The difference between a project and a partnership is that in a partnership you are not only prepared to change your surroundings, you must be prepared to change yourself too.”

If, for example, long-term sickness absence is being addressed in a partnership which includes employers, the Social Insurance Office, the Public Employment Service and unions, then clearly it is the organisations themselves that will have to change in order for something to happen. If the Social Insurance Office doesn’t change, then presumably nothing will happen,

and the same goes for the others involved in the partnership.

The Theme Group will be taking an extra close look at partnerships in a gender perspective. Being fairly non-hierarchic, is partnership a form of organisation that favours women?

Networks are based on voluntary participation and parity of status, with no one participant superior to the others. What do the power relations in a partnership look like? Are they connected with gender or are they affected more by the partnership’s extremely idiosyncratic combination of people on different levels?

The partnership will also be examined in terms of democracy. Can one get further by thinking in partnership terms than by pursuing the issues like just any traditional project? And if so, what are the premise of such thinking?

The great challenge facing the European Social Fund projects is that they are expected both to strengthen the position of disadvantaged individuals and to achieve structural impact. What happens when you have long-term unemployed, immigrants and disabled persons in the same groups as politicians and representatives of, say, the Public Employment Service and the Social Insurance Office?

How do you get such different cultures to meet on the same level? How do you achieve structural impact which is also based on the participation of disadvantaged groups? ■

## NTG Partnership

- Chair: to be announced
- Secretariat: National Institute for Working Life  
Mats Andersson  
[mats.andersson@apel.nu](mailto:mats.andersson@apel.nu)  
[www.ntg-partnerskap.se](http://www.ntg-partnerskap.se)



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**Swedish ESF Council**

Swedish ESF Council • Box 47141 • SE-100 74 Stockholm  
enquiries and switchboard • phone + 46 (0) 23-75 52 30 • fax + 46 (0) 23-75 52 40  
addresses and other phone numbers are listed on [www.esf.se](http://www.esf.se)