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# **Case Studies of Good Practice for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and the Promotion of Equal Treatment in the Workplace**

Sweden

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**CASE STUDIES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR THE  
PREVENTION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND  
XENOPHOBIA AND THE PROMOTION OF  
EQUAL TREATMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

**SWEDEN**

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## PREFACE

In accordance with the objectives presented in the European Foundation 'Proposal of a Compendium of Good Practice for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and the Promotion of Equal Treatment in the Workplace' the Swedish national case studies aim to identify and examine examples of policy programmes and plans of action which can be of help in the development of good organisational praxis.

The case studies have been chosen to include a public sector employer and a major trade union organisation.

The cases examined are located in the Greater Stockholm region. Stockholm has a population of 1,8 million people, fifteen per cent of whom are immigrants or have parents with an immigrant background. Labour market statistics in Sweden indicate an over-representation of immigrants within industry and the public sector. Health services have traditionally been a very large employer of immigrant labour, mainly in catering, cleaning duties, and auxiliary staff.

Case 1. Stockholm County Council (SLL). SLL has a detailed and comprehensive set of goals, detailed guidelines, organisational arrangements and personnel who are to inform, monitor and prevent ethnic discrimination. The policy of SLL is found in its programme for immigrant and refugee questions. The goals of SLL include: the recruitment of employees with language and cultural skills; the utilisation of already existing competence among personnel; training and information in immigrant and cultural issues for employees; and attempts to ensure that the competence of highly-educated immigrants is utilised.

Case 2. The Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO). TCO is Sweden's largest union for white-collar professional employees. The double role of the trade union is examined. The union is an employer governed by labour market legislation which prohibits ethnic discrimination. It is also responsible for establishing good practice and educating TCO members employed in other organisations. Within the context of the second case study the report also briefly examines two companies which employ TCO members and where TCO policy might be applied.

The cases focus upon the following themes: Policy formulation and content, implementation and evaluation; the target groups for whom policies are intended, and the level in the organisation where they are meant to have an effect; the reasons put forward to explain the need for and existence of the policies; and the effects of the policy programmes where these can be ascertained.

The material on which the cases studies are based draws on documentation from the organisations examined including official anti-discrimination policy guidelines and programmes, reports and inquiries, and follow-up studies and evaluations. In addition, material has been gathered through interviews with key personnel involved in drawing up policies and policy proposals and who have responsibility for disseminating information and implementing existing policy.

In all cases the organisational representatives who were contacted and interviewed were very positive and helpful, even in those instances where personnel were unsure if they had anything valuable to say or were uncertain about whether they were in command of all the necessary

facts needed to answer questions. The only practical difficulties which arose were in the form of delays when someone was new at the job and had to check with colleagues or refer inquiries on to other personnel.

The aim will be to compare the goals of the organisations and what they feel ought to be done with the possibilities offered by the situation in which they find themselves. In short, given certain contexts and preconditions what are good policies to strive after in order to combat ethnic discrimination and xenophobia ?

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Immigrants and Immigration*

According to the National Immigration Board (*Statens invandrarverk*, SIV), there is no generally accepted definition of immigrant in use today in Sweden. The widest definition includes all people who were born in another country and their children. This definition yields 1.6 million immigrants, though many in this category would not define themselves as such. A narrower definition includes foreign citizens born abroad. This definition gives a total of 0.4 million immigrants in Sweden. 'First generation' immigrant usually refers to persons born abroad, regardless of whether they are foreign citizens or have acquired Swedish citizenship. Persons born in Sweden, but with one or both parents born abroad, comprise second generation immigrants according to this usage.

In mass media and administrative contexts the term immigrant is a collective noun used to describe sometimes very different categories of people. The common denominator for these individuals is that they have foreign backgrounds. According to the National Immigration Board the term 'foreign citizen' is often used as a synonym for 'immigrant' or as a definition of an immigrant (SIV 1994). In administrative contexts the concepts of 'foreigner', 'asylum seeker', 'refugee', 'foreign born', and 'foreign citizen' also figure. Other terms which overlap with or are used to denote people with foreign origins are, for example, 'language minorities', 'new ethnic minorities', 'national minorities' or 'immigrant Swedes'.

When asked the question 'What do you first think of when you hear the word immigrant?', 19 per cent of the respondents in a nationally representative survey answered that they thought of people from southern Europe and 20 per cent associated the word with the Middle East. Nordic countries, western Europe and eastern Europe were noticeably under-represented (Lange 1994). It is possible that the term immigrant is used in daily conversation to stand for otherness in society. If it is the case that immigrants and Swedes comprise two mutually exclusive categories of individuals, then it is relatively easy for immigrants to be defined in contrast to what is traditionally understood as being 'typically Swedish'.

The different and the non-Swedish thus seem to inform the concept of 'immigrant'. A risk therefore exists that phenotypic differences, and other external markers, will increasingly come to signify who is seen as an immigrant. The concept of immigrant (*invandrare*) was introduced in the 1970s to replace the term foreigner (*utlänning*) and to make strangers and foreigners more familiar, but the meaning of the term has shifted and is now associated with the alien and the different. Indeed, there are many commentators who argue that the term immigrant actually increases antagonism and contributes to a 'Us' and 'Them' situation (SIV 1994).

Post-war immigration to Sweden can be divided up into four distinct phases each with its own characteristic type of immigration and immigrant. According to Westin's (1996) classification, the first phase covers the years 1940 to 1948, and was dominated by refugee immigration from neighbouring countries. The second period witnessed immigration from Finland and southern Europe during the period 1949 to 1971 when the modern welfare state was growing and the post-war economic expansion created a growing need for workers. The common Nordic labour market was established in 1954 at the same time as Swedish companies began an active policy of recruiting workers from countries like Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. The Trade



Union Confederation's concern for future wage development and competition for vacant jobs led to demands that non-Nordic workers had to have employment and resident permits in order before arrival in Sweden. The non-Nordic labour immigration ceased in the beginning of the 1970s (Hammar 1991; SCB 1991).

The third phase of immigration was characterised by family reunification and refugee immigration from third world countries during the period 1972 to 1989. In the 1970s, immigration was dominated by South American refugees who fled as a result of the military coup in Chile. But in the 1980s the picture changed and most of the asylum-seekers came from the Middle East. The number of people in need of asylum increased several fold toward the end of the 1980s. The war between Iran and Iraq was a major reason for this. In 1989, non-Nordic migration accounted for 70 per cent and non-European immigration for half of the total immigration to Sweden (SCB 1991).

The fourth and final phase of immigration began in the early years of the 1990s and was mainly in the form of refugee immigration from former Yugoslavia, with over 30,000 seeking asylum each year. This led to a tightening of asylum regulations from a more liberal interpretation of the meaning of political refugee to a narrower definition based on the Geneva Convention. In 1994, the number of people who immigrated to Sweden was 74, 000, a somewhat higher figure than the 54,000 in 1992 (SOPEMI 1995). Nine per cent of immigrants were from Nordic countries in 1994, 65 per cent came from other European countries, the majority from former Yugoslavia, and 26 per cent from countries outside Europe.

One in ten people resident in Sweden in 1994 were born abroad. Around half of them were foreign citizens, the rest were naturalised Swedes. Around one quarter of all foreign-born are of Finnish origin, Europeans from countries outside of the Nordic area account for approximately one third of all persons born abroad (SOPEMI 1995).

In Sweden, legislation dealing with immigrants is divided up into the legislation which regulates the entry of foreigners into the country, the 'immigration regulation policy' (*invandringspolitik*), and the legislation and policies which regulate the lives of immigrants and refugees who have been granted admission and a residence permit the 'immigrant policy' (*invandrapolitik*).

Seen in an international perspective, Sweden has adopted a generous immigrant policy. The difference in terms of political, social, and civil rights between citizens and non-citizens has been kept to an absolute minimum. Access to social services, education, healthcare, and, after 1976, the right to vote in local and regional council elections, are legal entitlements. With few exceptions there is no formal exclusion of immigrants or refugees from the major institutions of the Swedish welfare state and society. There have been efforts made to ensure that immigrants be served by the existing welfare state services and specific policies for immigrants, with the exception of specific measures reserved for refugees during their first year or so in the country, have been kept to a minimum.

In recent years, however, there have been changes in the general tone of the Swedish immigration regulation policy. The traditional stress upon solidarity with refugees seems to have weakened to some degree. Due to the sudden and dramatic increase in refugee immigration, the suitability of the traditional immigration regulation policy has been called into question. These developments have been seen as signalling a harder policy and one more in line with what is perceived as the 'European' situation. In 1991, the populist 'New Democracy'

party was elected to the Swedish Riksdag partly on an anti-immigration mandate. The party did, however, lose its seats in parliament in the next general election in 1994.

The arrival of refugees since the late 1980s has coincided with several important changes in Sweden: industrial restructuring, work practice changes, the decline of the traditional Swedish Model, and more general cultural and social changes within the population as a whole. One symptom of this is the greater visibility of racist and neo-nazi groups in Sweden. This is a development shared with a number of other European countries. In addition, there are the country's financial and economic difficulties most evident in the current unprecedented, high levels of unemployment. The role played by the labour market in these developments cannot be under-estimated. It is undeniably the case that high unemployment and the attendant economic insecurity can and do provide a breeding ground for social discontent, not only among the majority population, but also among immigrant minorities.

## ***1.2 Immigrants in the Swedish Labour Market***

Compared with the native population immigrants are employed to a much greater extent in manufacturing industries, restaurants and hotels, and in cleaning and maintenance work. They are employed to a lesser extent than Swedes in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (see Ekberg 1988, 1993).

In Table 1, the distribution of native and foreign citizens by sector and gender is shown for 1992. The proportion of foreign citizens in relative terms is higher within manufacturing industry, retail industry, hotels and restaurants, and slightly higher within the public sector. There are, however, differences between national groups.

**Table 1 Citizenship and Employment Sector together with Gender by Percentage**

	All Workers			Foreign Workers		
	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both
Agriculture and forest	4	1	3	2	1	1
Mining	-	-	-		-	-
Manufacturing industry	26	11	19	34	17	26
Utilities and water	1	-	1	-	-	-
Construction	11	1	6	6	1	4
Retail, restaurants and hotels	13	14	14	16	13	15
Transport and communication	10	5	7	7	4	-
Consultancy	10	9	9	6	6	6
Public admin. and other services	22	58	40	26	56	41
Miscellaneous	2	1	2	2	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ÅRSYS 1992, SCB.

The period 1980 to the mid-1990s has been exceptional in Swedish labour market history. The number of people in work increased throughout the entire 1980s only to fall dramatically in the beginning of the 1990s. This recession has had serious consequences for the employment levels of immigrants.

Immigrants in Sweden today suffer from higher levels of unemployment than the native population. Their relative workforce participation is also much lower. The problem is especially acute for more recent refugee immigrants from outside of Europe.

Until the 1970s, when unemployment had been very low, the majority of immigrants had a good chance of providing for themselves. Today, the situation is very different. An important change, which partly explains the poor showing of some immigrant groups in the labour market, has been the replacement of labour immigration by refugee immigration. In addition, changes within working life and the kinds of demands made upon employees has meant increased difficulties for job-seekers without a suitable education and good skills in the Swedish language, and what is often seen as the necessary cultural capital. Other factors behind the exclusion of immigrants from the labour market include structural changes within the labour market and economic developments, the individual cultural and social characteristics of immigrants themselves, the failure of the Refugee Reception Programme to integrate refugees into Swedish society (Bäck and Soininen 1993a, 1993b), and ethnic discrimination have all been mentioned.

### ***1.3 Policies against Ethnic Discrimination***

Of the three goals of Sweden's immigrant policy, 'equality', 'freedom of choice' and 'partnership' (see Hammar 1985), the first is of special importance for labour market policies. When equality was first adopted as an immigrant policy goal in 1968, it was taken to be self-evident that immigrants would have the same opportunities in the labour market as Swedes.

The basic rules which are to ensure equality and protect against ethnic discrimination are found in the constitutional law (*Grundlagen*). This forbids discriminatory legislation and discrimination by the authorities. In the constitutional law all people are classed as being equal and have the right to equal treatment. Legislation may not be passed which discriminates against a citizen on the basis of the so called 'ethnic factor' which includes race, skin colour, national and ethnic origin, religious faith and membership of a minority.

In addition to these basic rules, there are also criminal laws. These deal directly or indirectly with actions or utterances which are racist or discriminatory in some way. Of central importance here is the law forbidding '*hets mot folkgrupp*', the incitement to violence or agitation against a national or ethnic group (Chapter 16, 8 § of the Penal Code). The law covers freedom of expression, however, not the labour market. There are also legal provisions which make it illegal for businesses to discriminate in the provision of services and in granting access to public assemblies (Chap 16 9 §). But these provisions do not apply to the relationship between a private employer and an employee. The public sector, is, however, covered by the law.

State employers are bound by the constitutional law to employ someone on the basis of merit. Anyone who feels that they have been treated unjustly has the right to appeal. Positive special treatment of individuals is permissible if they possess a skill, such as bilingualism on account of their ethnic background, which is needed for a job.

Sweden has ratified three international conventions of direct relevance to questions of ethnic discrimination: the 1962 ILO Convention 111 concerning Discrimination in Occupations and Employment, the 1971 UN International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1971 UN International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Ethnic Discrimination. Other conventions and agreements which are or have been binding for Sweden and which include provisions stipulating fair treatment of foreign workers are The European Convention on Social Security, ILO Convention 143, The Common Nordic Labour Market Agreement and the 1993 EC-EES agreement.

In 1986, the Swedish parliament passed the 'Law Against Discrimination with special reference to the labour market'. The law condemned ethnic discrimination but did not forbid it. The law also set up the office of the Ombudsman for Ethnic Discrimination (DO) (Chapter 2 15 §, 20 §).

In the same year the government restated the immigrant policy goals in order partly to redefine them. The original immigrant policy goals adopted by Parliament in 1975 had been interpreted by some as encouraging group-based ethnic politics. However, in 1986 parliament decided that immigrant groups do *not* have the same status as 'ethnic minorities', i.e. the native Lapps (the Samer). The latter are recognised as an ethnic minority group with special needs and interests protected by the constitution. Immigrants, according to the government's interpretation of the law, have no such automatic constitutional entitlement to group-based rights. It is also possible to see this interpretation as a denial on the government's part that immigrants in general comprise a special social grouping in need of special protection or with the right to special treatment.

### **The 1994 Law Against Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life**

On July 1, 1994 the law against ethnic discrimination in working life, which incorporates and extends the range of the 1986 law, came into force. According to the Government white paper, the law is designed to provide protection against cases of ethnic discrimination in working life which are directly offensive to public conceptions of justice [*allmänna rättskänslan*], and where the element of discrimination plays an obvious [*påtaglig*] part .' (Regeringens Proposition 1993/94:101).

By discrimination the law means unjust treatment or an insult to personal integrity on the basis of the so called 'ethnic factor'. For this to have occurred, there must have been a causal connection between the employer's actions or failure to act and the ethnic factor. It must be possible to establish that the employer would not have acted as he/she did, i.e. refused to hire, paid lower wages, etc. if the job applicant or employee had been of the same ethnic background as other applicants or employees. It is therefore necessary to establish on what grounds the employer acted as he/she did.

The law also stipulates that employers are not allowed to impose disadvantageous conditions of employment such as paying an employee a lower salary than others with the same work solely on the basis of the ethnic factor. Nor may an employer discriminate in the sphere of

management, for example, by selecting only members of the native workforce for further training. It is also illegal for an employer to make redundant or dismiss an employee on the basis of the ethnic factor. As this is a question of special treatment, a comparison with how the other employees are treated must always be made. The prohibition against ethnic discrimination in the labour market is a matter of civil law, which means that an employer who breaks the law can be liable to pay compensation to the discriminated party. An employer cannot, however, be sentenced to pay a fine or to a term of imprisonment as is the case if someone is refused entry to a restaurant or is barred from renting accommodation on the basis of the ethnic factor. These offences are covered by criminal law.

The 1994 law applies both to those who are seeking employment and those who are already employed. According to paragraph 8: 'An employer may not unfairly deal with an applicant by rejecting [him/her] on the basis of his or her race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin or religious conviction.' But Paragraph 9 of the law states that: 'An employer may not unfairly deal with an employee on the basis of his or her race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin, or religious conviction by applying disadvantageous employment or other conditions, manage or assign work in a way which is obviously (*påtagligt*) disadvantageous for the employee, or give notice, or dismiss, make redundant, or take any other comparable action against the employee.' (Regeringens Proposition 1993/94: 101). Put bluntly, the 1994 law actually *allows* ethnic discrimination to take place up to the point where its consequences becomes too obvious.

The law has other limitations. The protection the law affords covers all those employed by both public and private employers. However, it does not apply to discrimination by work colleagues and customers. Neither does the new law cover all stages of recruitment. It is confined to the actual decision whether or not to employ an applicant.

Critics have argued that the legislation should also include cases where a suitable applicant is not even called to an interview or any other circumstances where an applicant has clearly not received equal treatment. If someone with an Iranian background calls an employer about a vacancy and informs the employer of his or her ethnic identity, then it is not considered to constitute discriminatory behaviour according to the provisions of the 1994 law if the employer answers that the company will not consider employing 'foreigners'.

The new 1994 law against ethnic discrimination has now been in force for almost three years. Opinions are divided as to whether it has had any substantial effect on discrimination. One of the main goals of the 1994 law is to alter attitudes. The government has argued that the legislation needs to be given time to work and that it can then be evaluated. In the Spring of 1997, however, the Integration Minister ordered an inquiry into the current law and the possibility of a new, tougher law against ethnic discrimination.

#### ***1.4 Labour Market Measures***

Swedish labour market and employment policy has traditionally stressed the need for full employment. This has been achieved through the creation of measures, such as retraining, education, and the active placement of job-seekers. The National Labour Market Board has also attempted to strike a balance between the demands of the labour market and the skills of the workforce. This attitude has informed relations between immigrants and the labour market authorities. A wide range of what can be called positive action measures (but not positive discrimination, see Jewson and Mason 1992) within the more general traditional labour market policy framework have been directed at immigrants for many years. These have included

special retraining schemes, educational programmes, and work experience for individuals. But there have also been more general attempts to influence relations between major actors in the labour market, such as more intensive contacts between companies and the employment services. Ethnic discrimination has not been the focus of these programmes. For this reason, perhaps, there has been little evidence of anti-discrimination campaigns in workplace. Up until 1995 information had been produced which condemned racism in general terms, but usually not as it can manifest itself concretely in specific workplaces and organisations (Soininen and Graham 1995). Most emphasis has been upon the cultural resources immigrants represent, the improvement of working conditions, and language skills.

The Swedish way of tackling the problem of high unemployment among immigrants has, then, been the traditional labour market policy of a wide range of active labour market measures and schemes. The existence of ethnic discrimination is rarely mentioned by the labour market actors until the mid-1990s.

### ***1.5 Immigrants as a Cultural Resource***

During recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the attention paid to immigrant businesses and their development in Sweden. The Swedish Employers' Federation (SAF), has stressed the importance of immigrants starting their own businesses as one solution to the problem of high immigrant unemployment. SAF had no explicit policy on the subject of immigrants in the work force or on the subject of ethnic discrimination until 1994. In its 1994 prognosis 'The Way to Growth' SAF states: 'The competence of immigrants as fellow workers or entrepreneurs, is to be exploited to the full'. There is also a section in a document on labour market policy entitled 'Immigrants must get a chance in the labour market'. The report notes that immigrants suffer unemployment rates double those of Swedes, that they are more likely to be on sick leave and take early retirement, but that they are on average more highly educated, and are more likely to start their own businesses.

SAF has paid most attention to the problems facing immigrant entrepreneurs in a number of articles in its member newspaper 'SAF tidningen'. The key to success, it is argued, is a better climate for small businesses in general, i.e. new rules for hiring and dismissing, incentive schemes, lower initial pay, and lower company taxes (SAF March 10,1995:13). The role of immigrant businesses has also been discussed by the parliamentary Immigrant Policy Committee in its 1995 report (SOU 1995).

Numerous newspaper articles have also been devoted to the topic of immigrant entrepreneurs. Among other things the debate has centred on the cultural resource which immigrants represent. A resource that not only enables immigrants to start their own businesses, but can also provide Swedish companies with much needed cultural skills in, for example, contacts with foreign customers (e.g. *Svenska Dagbladet*, 22 May 1995; *Dagens Nyheter* 14 December 1996; *Dagens Industri* 8 March 1997). The economic benefits of a culturally diverse workforce is also an argument that has been put forward by Sweden's Discrimination Ombudsman for employing immigrants. Arguments of this kind reappear in the following case studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### CASE STUDY 1: STOCKHOLM COUNTY COUNCIL (STOCKHOLMS LÄNS LANDSTING, SLL)

#### 2.1 *Stockholm County Council (Stockholms Läns Landsting, SLL)*

The following case study examines some of the Stockholm County Council policies and projects created and put into effect by the Council to improve the employment opportunities and working conditions of immigrants. After briefly outlining the organisational structure of SLL, the study turns to the question of information within the organisation and the attitudes of employees to the Council as a place of work as these are presented in a recent survey. The case study then goes on to examine in some detail the County Council's 'Action Programme' for immigrant and refugee questions which has served as a point of reference and guide for many of those who work with immigrant questions. The study also presents results from follow-up studies of how the programme has worked in practice. It concludes with an evaluation of the SLL programme.

The Swedish county councils, or *Landsting*, comprise the second or middle tier of government in Sweden. They lie below the national government, the *Riksdag*, and above the municipalities (sing. *kommun*). The primary responsibility of the county councils is healthcare (although the municipalities do have certain healthcare responsibilities of their own) and public transport.

Stockholm County Council (SLL) is responsible for the Greater Stockholm region which is divided up into 24 municipalities and Stockholm city. Over 300.000 people in Stockholm are immigrants out of a total population of almost 1.8 million people. In December 1995, immigrants comprised 18.5 per cent of the population in Greater Stockholm (for Sweden as a whole the figure is 11.6 per cent). In the municipalities with the largest immigrant populations ('immigrant' includes Swedish citizens born abroad, foreign citizens born in Sweden, foreign citizens born abroad) immigrants comprised 35 per cent of the total population, but only 8 per cent in municipalities with small immigrant populations.

Stockholm County Council employed approximately 54, 000 people in the Stockholm region in December 1994<sup>†</sup>. Of these employees 9,598 were foreign citizens or naturalised Swedes (Stockholms läns landsting 1994). Almost 18 per cent of personnel were born abroad of whom 78 per cent were women. The largest immigrant groups were Finns (2,223), Norwegians (301), Chileans (200), Turks (147), Iranians (131) and Danes (124). Foreign and naturalised citizens are of tradition over-represented among kitchen and service personnel (68 per cent of the personnel), and among cleaning staff (73 per cent of personnel).

SLL has no special terms of employment which only apply to immigrants. The so called 'Employment Guarantee' for SLL employees promises that no employee will lose their job before 1998. This guarantee was introduced in the face of major job losses as a result of financial cut-backs. The guarantee can, however, entail placement in another job or retraining. Refusal to move or attend retraining courses can result in dismissal.

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<sup>†</sup> This total does not include employees within SLL's various companies, such as public transport.

## **2.2 SLL: Organisation**

Stockholm County Council is controlled by an elected council (*Landstingsfullmäktige*) and governing board (*Landstingsstyrelsen*). Healthcare services are the responsibility of the Healthcare Committee (*Hälso- & Sjukvårdsnämnden*) which is responsible for the nine healthcare boards which cover different areas in the county and ten hospitals. Dental healthcare has a separate board of its own.

### **Reference Group for Immigrant Questions**

The central organisation with responsibility for immigrant and refugee questions is the Reference Group for Immigrant Questions which was set up in 1977 partly in response to the new Immigrant Policy Goals which had been adopted by parliament in 1975.

The role of the Reference Group is to monitor SLL, to take the initiative and draw up policy. It is also a consultative body to which matters dealing with immigrants can be referred. Twelve of the fourteen group members are elected political representatives from the political parties and are appointed by the governing board. Group members work in different sectors of SLL and Stockholm County Federation of Local Authorities. There are also two union representatives present. The Reference Group is served by the Immigrant Secretariat.

### **The Immigrant Secretariat**

The Immigrant Secretariat has an executive role. It is the responsibility of the Secretariat, among other things, to prepare and put into effect the Reference Group's directives and to deal with internal and external contacts when these involve immigrant issues. The Secretariat provides advice on immigrant questions within the County Council and also gives advice to external organisations and authorities. The Secretariat also monitors work with immigrant groups in the different sectors of the Council's operations. The Secretariat's staff consists of four full-time employees and one person engaged as a project worker.

The Secretariat is also responsible for following up and evaluating policies and initiatives and reporting back to the Reference Group where the Secretariat is also represented. As much of the Secretariat's work involves the creation and dissemination of information to SLL personnel, the state of information policy within the Council's organisations is not without interest.

## **2.3 Information in SLL**

A policy or programme of action which aims to change attitudes and behaviour can only be effective if it is disseminated and understood throughout an organisation. The state of information policy and practice is therefore important. Lack of an effective information policy can act as an obstacle in the way of policy implementation.

In 1996, a questionnaire was distributed to 3000 employees in order to find out about the effectiveness of information policy in SLL. The response rate of 73 per cent was relatively high. The results revealed an information gap between management and employees. They also provided information about the general opinions about SLL among employees (SLL 1996a).

The following picture of SLL among personnel emerged from the survey. Many employees are uncertain about how changes will affect them and their place of work. Many in management



positions do not feel that they are sufficiently well-informed about all of the questions which interest them. This is described in the report as a failing as it is management's responsibility to inform personnel. Sixty per cent of employees regard SLL as centralised, insecure and bureaucratic. Only 13 per cent of employees felt that SLL was open to changes and 11 per cent that SLL is a competent organisation.

This rather negative picture must, however, be understood against a background of major organisational changes within SLL during the last decade which may have contributed to general dissatisfaction and unease. For example, costs must be reduced by 17 per cent during the period 1996-1998. Management tends to have a more positive picture of SLL as an organisation, but many managers feel that SLL is not open to change.

The survey also asked employees what part of SLL they identified with most: one's own place of work, department or to SLL as a whole. Sixty per cent identify primarily with their own department or work unit and only 8 per cent with SLL as a whole. Perhaps not surprisingly, identification with SLL as a whole is most widespread within the central administration. Those who work in public transport identify with their own sphere of operations and managers with their own departments. Among nurses 70 per cent identify with their own work unit, 22 per cent with their department or sector and 8 per cent with SLL. Among other personnel - including cleaners and auxiliary staff among whom immigrants are over-represented - 63 per cent identify with their immediate place of work or work unit, 29 per cent with their department or sector and only 8 per cent with SLL.

A majority of employers want to know how central decisions will affect their own work and department. Ninety per cent feel that planned changes are quite or very interesting, and 96 per cent want to know how central decisions will affect their own sector or department. However, a majority, 81 per cent, feel that SLL is poor at providing this kind of information.

Although there is no breakdown of the statistics into immigrant and native Swedes, the fact that personnel in unskilled jobs identify most strongly with their immediate workplace and work group does tell us something about immigrants in SLL as it is in these jobs that immigrants are heavily concentrated. The opinion among employees that decisions reached centrally are not adequately explained for personnel, and that the exact consequences of organisational changes are not fully understood will be taken up later when an example of contracting out is presented in order to examine its consequences for immigrant cleaning personnel.

#### ***2.4 SLL's Policy Programme for Immigrants***

This section provides a summary of the main points contained in the County Council's programme 'Immigrants and Refugee Policy Action Programme' (1993) (*Invandrar- och flyktingpolitisk handlingsprogram*). The programme is intended for all of the organisations which comprise SLL. It provides a general framework which can then be adapted to local needs and circumstances.

Partly in response to the parliamentary decision of 1975, which laid out the goals of the Swedish immigrant policy, SLL decided that an organisation was needed to co-ordinate, monitor and take the initiative in immigrant questions. The new organisation was also to act as a consultative body and make policy suggestions. In 1977, an immigrant programme was produced which served SLL until 1988. In September 1988, the Council decided that the

Reference Group should produce a new immigrant and refugee programme for SLL. The old programme from 1975 was out of date. The greater number of refugees in Sweden meant, among other things, that new initiatives within the provision of healthcare services were needed. Refugees had not even been mentioned in the 1975 programme. A report from 1985 'Immigrants Employed in the County Council' served as the basis for the new programme.

The programme states that the County Council is to work for a multilingual healthcare service. Special importance should be attached to making use of the language and cultural competence of staff. As part of its recruitment policy, SLL describes bilingual employees as a resource. They can, for example, act as interpreters in the health service for patients who have difficulty expressing themselves in Swedish.

The programme also states that all personnel ought to have basic knowledge of immigrant and cultural questions and to understand the significance of culture in meetings between people. This is relevant both for relations between healthcare personnel and patients and between personnel themselves. The Council is therefore to invest in multicultural understanding. Locally this can take the form of integrating cultural issues into internal training, examining the need for special educational materials for specific groups, or producing material for personnel education on the subject of cultural understanding.

All the SLL employees, according to the programme, ought to have a minimum knowledge of the Swedish language and Swedish society. The need for special language training needs to be noted by work supervisors. This can be done by drawing up a plan for employees who lack the necessary language skills, and by making it possible for personnel to combine language study and work.

Immigrants are to have access to information and an introduction to work which is comparable to that provided for other employees. The SLL programme considers it to be the employer's duty to ensure that immigrant personnel have fully understood the information they have been provided with, especially when it concerns safety regulations. In some cases Swedish alone will be insufficient in which case interpreter services and the translation of written material may be necessary.

The programme states that SLL has examined the position of immigrants in the Council's employ and found them to be a neglected resource. SLL's official aim is to see to it that the competence of highly-educated immigrants is utilised and in co-operation with other authorities make available the support and education required to provide immigrants with work which matches their qualifications. Co-operation with the employment services can provide highly qualified immigrants with work experience within their own area of competence.

The programme states that SLL is to give immigrants the opportunity to acquire skills from Swedish working life and to make it easier for them to establish themselves in the labour market. Measures which can be taken include developing contacts with employment services, the labour market boards, the provision of training places and work introduction schemes, the initiation of projects for unemployed immigrants, and continual attention to the specific problems facing immigrants in the Council's annual employment plan.

Ethnic discrimination is taken up in the programme:

'No one may be subjected to negative special treatment on the basis of ethnic background in the case of, among other things, promotion or training within the Council's places of work.'

However, there is no special policy which deals with discrimination or grievances. Any problems that do arise are to be dealt with first of all by union representatives.

The programme also notes that many immigrant employees work in areas where they are more likely to suffer from work-related injuries or illness. This requires special attention, preventative measures and continual monitoring in order to ensure that immigrants are not forced to retire early because of work-related ailments.

## ***2.5 The Healthcare Board's Policy Programme for Healthcare***

Stockholm County is divided up into nine areas each with its own healthcare board which is responsible for managing local healthcare services. The local healthcare boards are answerable to the central Healthcare Board (*Hälso- & sjukvårdsnämnden*, HSN). Hospitals are also answerable to the central board, but operate independently of the local healthcare boards.

The local healthcare boards and committees within the Greater Stockholm are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the central immigrant programme through setting up and developing their own plans of action for immigrant/refugee matters and continually evaluating them. These local initiatives are to be based on the Healthcare Board's own programme for immigrants and refugees which draws upon the central programme produced by the Immigrant Secretariat.

Each healthcare board must regularly - i.e. at least once every third year - evaluate their programme. When putting together the programme the opinions of immigrant organisations must be sought, and the views of trade unions consulted whenever the Council's responsibility as an employer is involved. Immigrant questions must receive attention in annual budgets and planning. At least one person should act as a contact person with responsibility for co-ordinating and advising on immigrant matters. The programmes should be sent to the Immigrant Secretariat.

The initial stage of formulating the current programme for healthcare was a two-day conference in February 1993. Twenty-five individual contact persons for immigrant questions from healthcare areas, hospitals and the central Healthcare Board (HSN) staff took part in the conference. The work continued afterwards in co-operation with contact persons for immigrant/refugee questions from each healthcare area and hospital. Within HSN the project was anchored in a special working group made up of representatives for the different healthcare areas.

A programme proposal was sent out on referral to all major hospitals, healthcare regions and a large number of authorities and organisations which were given the opportunity to express their opinions. The programme was designed so that its goals could be achieved within the existing budget limits. The healthcare regions and hospitals were asked to judge if they could meet the demands of the programme within their existing budgets.

In all, 33 replies were received by the central Healthcare Board including seven from healthcare areas and seven from the major hospitals. Voluntary organisations, other county council organisations and municipal and national authorities were also represented among the replies. Five of the healthcare areas answered that they could work according to the programme guidelines within their existing budgets, while three believed that this would be possible at least to some extent.

The HSN programme is built up around the central SLL programme, but it is written with the needs and demands of the healthcare services in mind. In the final healthcare programme each chapter begins by stating a policy goal. This is then followed by a factual text which spells out the content of the goal in more detail. It is stressed in the text that the programme ought not to be seen as a static document. Rather the aim is for the document to act as a practical instrument for achieving good practice in immigrant and refugee matters. The programme is divided into four sections: 'Healthcare today', 'Healthcare as a service organisation', 'Healthcare as an employer', and 'The refugee programme'. The third section is most relevant here.

The programme is very detailed as immigrant questions are of a type which need to be integrated into many different areas of the healthcare services. It is, however, recognised in the programme that it is not realistic to expect all employees to be able to make use of all of the programme. However, it is important that all employees know that the policy exists and that they understand the basic issues it deals with. A shorter version of the programme is planned along with information to increase employee awareness of its existence.

The programme suggests that every healthcare area and major hospital ought to consider drawing up a programme of its own. The intentions and guidelines found in the central programme (The Councils and Health Services') ought to be borne in mind when doing this. Agreements with private companies ought to take note of immigrant questions when contracts are drawn up. Programmes should also be designed so that they can be followed up. Follow-up studies can be in the form of personnel inventories, internal controls of the work environment, equality plans and annual reports.

Although the programme is meant to serve as a guide for the production of local programmes by the healthcare boards in the Greater Stockholm area, many of its goals are of a more general nature and ought to be applicable to everyone working within SLL.

The programme states that the personnel policy within SLL is the same for everyone: Its general goals are:

- Respect for employees as co-workers and individuals
- The opportunity for everyone to develop within their work and the organisation
- Management and organisation are to be characterised by pluralism and receptiveness, but also by efficiency and clarity of purpose.

There is no special treatment of employees because of their immigrant background. The programme is based on the assumption that the majority of healthcare workers with an immigrant background are linguistically, culturally and socially integrated into Swedish society and working life.

Immigrants should be integrated into personnel policy and different aspects of the work environment. The needs of the individual are described in the programme as the central starting point: 'An individual is always unique and "immigrant" ought never to be seen as an homogenous concept'. This is an attitude which ought to apply to everyone with or without an immigrant background. Employers can, however, take account of any special needs which may arise because of an employees' language, ethnic, cultural or social background and provide any necessary support.

### **Utilising and Developing Competence**

Good language skills in Swedish are necessary for high quality healthcare, the programme argues, and are important both for staff and patients. Healthcare services must therefore take a greater responsibility for the language abilities of employees. This ought to include encouraging and supporting employees who do not have Swedish as a first language to improve their language skills. The kind of educational possibilities that are available need to be reviewed and adapted to the needs of adult workers and the practical demands of their work.

There are therefore good reasons to make an inventory of the language skills which are present among immigrants with a foreign education and experience from abroad. This can, among other things, provide employers with ideas about how to develop individual employees. The programme states that a multilingual staff is desirable and something to work toward. It is very important that the language and cultural skills of personnel are utilised in a planned way. One of the reasons for this given in the report is the likely increase in the number of international contacts and exchange programmes in Sweden as a consequence of membership of the European Union.

Healthcare services ought to be able to offer healthcare in several languages. Each department should register which tasks and work duties require several languages or special cultural competence. Language and cultural skills should be seen as an advantage when applying to work in these areas

The programme also stresses the need for cultural competence and:

the ability to change perspective, having a feeling for cultural variety, flexibility, and the ability to see traditions as historical products and creative rather than unchanging and 'natural'. Such competence is naturally of particular value in caring professions - this is an approach which applies to both immigrants and native Swedes.

An obvious resource for the healthcare services are immigrants who have qualifications and a recognised license to practise, for example, as a nurse or doctor from their own country, which is equivalent to the same qualification in Sweden. The formal requirements for acquiring a Swedish license are set by the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Social Styrelsen*). This usually requires a period of practical training. The programme therefore stresses the need to provide immigrants in possession of high levels of skill and education with workplace orientation, training and practical experience. They ought to receive greater support so that they can work with the same kind of job as in their country of origin.

Efforts in the form of 'planning/development' meetings with employees should be used to find out what resources exist among those employees who already work in SLL. A plan to utilise their skills should then be drawn up. An example of this is a project entitled 'Hurry Up Project' which works to shorten the time needed for foreign nurses to be registered from four years to two.

The programme goes on to note that structural changes and reorganisation can demand special measures for employees with inadequate language skills or qualifications. Within the healthcare service a general trend toward more skilled employees has taken place. Reductions in the number of employees has, to a great extent, affected categories of unskilled personnel.

The programme also takes up the question of intercultural understanding in the workplace: 'All employees are to have basic knowledge of immigrant and cultural questions and understanding of the significance of culture in meetings between people'.

Knowledge is an important basis for an understanding of different forms of behaviour and contributes to tolerance and openness. Knowledge can be acquired in many ways. It can be provided through art, music, religion, etc. but also, of course, in the form of specific knowledge about immigration, ethnology, etc. Insight into and awareness of one's own attitudes increases the chances of understanding differences and one's own role in cultural meetings.

Cultural awareness and knowledge actually plays a double role within SLL, it informs and improves meetings with patients from different cultural backgrounds and working relations between members of staff.

The programme encourages everyone in SLL to work towards integrated work groups which are not isolated from one another. Initiatives that create meetings between people with different backgrounds whether they are organised at the workplace, by personnel organisations, sports clubs and similar should be encouraged.

Immigrants have the same rights and responsibilities as others, but they must also be given the same opportunities for job development, further education and management and supervisory training despite whatever initial handicaps because of language, culture or other circumstances they have.

The programme states that employers have a special responsibility to insure that personnel who might have some difficulty comprehending written or verbal information receive the help they need. This can be done either by formulating information as simply as possible or, if necessary, by using an interpreter. Documents detailing safety rules and of a legal nature may need to be translated.

The subject of ethnic discrimination is addressed by the programme:

'No forms of ethnic discrimination shall take place in healthcare services. Equal opportunities for immigrants can mean the need for special supportive measures. Personnel training is to strive to create practice which promotes equality and works against all forms of ethnic discrimination. '

In keeping with the 1994 Law against Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life ethnic discrimination must not occur in SLL workplaces. Personnel who are responsible must know about the law and follow it to the letter and act in keeping with the spirit of the law. Ignorance and a lack of willingness are not excuses for incidences of unintentional discrimination. It is therefore important to make a serious appraisal of the qualifications and competence of immigrants.

Personnel are also encouraged to intervene firmly if they see instances of harassment and discriminatory treatment. Expressions of intolerance and xenophobia are also to be prevented. Conflicts because of cultural and ethnic background can arise the programme recognises and the competence needed to deal with eventual conflicts due to cultural and religious differences ought to exist in SLL workplaces.

## ***2.6 The Dental Healthcare Services***

The dental healthcare services have a tradition of working with immigrant questions mainly in the field of personnel - patient relations. The views of the dental services were sent to the central Healthcare Board during the referral process for the healthcare programme for immigrant and refugee questions. Dental care staff consider it to be vital that the language skills of personnel are made use of. A register of multilingual personnel was produced in 1989 and brought up to date in 1990. A new edition has been produced. The register has been distributed to drug dispensaries, social services, immigrant organisations and dental healthcare centres.

The public dental care authorities have organised training in immigrant questions for staff. Special courses have been arranged for personnel with Swedish language difficulties. When staff are recruited in clinics in areas with large immigrant populations, 'consideration' is given to the language and cultural knowledge of applicants.

Several of the goals contained in dental care legislation presuppose personnel with cultural and language skills if the treatment and care of immigrant patients is to be effective. Using interpreters cannot replace the knowledge of staff about immigrants and refugees. Given this, special consideration ought to be paid to the cultural and language skills of job applicants. Training is to be offered to all personnel in immigrant culture and dental health. Although most staff have adequate skills in the Swedish language, management and supervisors must pay attention to those who require extra support with written and spoken Swedish and ensure that they are provided with the required training.

Further training for employees in cultural differences and contact is part of the HSN programme's second point, 'Multicultural understanding'. In order to meet these requirements, dental services believe that it is necessary to have a responsible organisation which co-ordinates the education, seminars, symposia, etc. As the dental services have pointed out, in a time of cut-backs there is a risk that this type of education will not receive priority. A clearer set of priorities is needed, perhaps in the form of a continual training in cultural/immigrant questions for all of the Council's staff.

## ***2.7 A Follow-up Report of the Policy Programme's Effects***

The Immigrant Secretariat carried out its own follow-up report of how SLL's programme for immigrant and refugee questions had affected practice within different aspects of healthcare. The report was published in March 1994 and entitled 'Active Follow Up'.

The final report found that the majority of contact persons in the different healthcare areas and hospitals do not have special time reserved for dealing with immigrant questions. The exceptions are the two contact persons at Huddinge Hospital who have 25 per cent of their time set aside for immigrant questions and the contact person in the West Stockholm healthcare area who has 15 per cent reserved time. As a result, contact persons do not normally possess a comprehensive picture of how immigrant questions are dealt with in healthcare organisations.

Contact persons are meant to act as co-ordinators and provide advice. They receive information from the Immigrant Secretariat and are consulted occasionally in matters of relevance for immigrants. While some contact persons are satisfied with their role and feel that they can influence immigrant issues, the report notes that others see their role as being unclear and lacking in any real influence. The report concludes that some contact persons find their role difficult to define exactly and are unsure about what they are meant to do in concrete terms.

The role of contact person is not generally seen as enjoying high priority in SLL by contact persons themselves. During a time of major changes other areas receive priority instead. Reorganisation also means that immigrant questions can quite easily be neglected and that the role of the contact persons can be reduced.

At the time the report was written, local programmes had been produced by two healthcare regions the South West Healthcare region and the Western Healthcare region, and by the Southern Hospital (*Södersjukhuset*) located in central Stockholm. The content of these programmes overlaps considerably, which is not surprising as they all build upon the guidelines contained in the Healthcare Board's general policy. Of particular relevance for the employees is the use of existing cultural competence, the need for qualified healthcare personnel with immigrant background in geriatric care, and monitoring the need for bilingual personnel.

Other healthcare regions have chosen to integrate immigrant questions into the general public healthcare programme rather than produce a separate programme specifically for immigrant questions. This is also true of the dental healthcare services.

Given that contact persons themselves do not possess a complete picture of the situation in the county it is not possible to provide an all inclusive account of what was happening in the county's different healthcare regions the follow-up report concludes.

At present a HSN follow-up study of the measures which have been taken is in progress, but will not be available until April 1997.



## **Other initiatives within healthcare**

Making better use of the language skills which exist among healthcare personnel has resulted in local registers of doctors who are multilingual which are compiled by the Healthcare Information Centre. Being registered in this way must, however, be voluntary for the individual employee concerned.

SLL has made attempts to make use of the competence which already exists among personnel by helping employees with a foreign nursing education to receive additional training so that they can work as qualified nurses in Sweden. Many in this category today are auxiliary nurses. Helping these nurses immediately provides SLL with bilingual staff and cultural competence and work expertise.

Some of the projects and measures which exist within SLL are at hospital level and are mainly responses to practical difficulties that have arisen in the course of day to day work, rather than in response to the content of programmes and guidelines. One such example of this occurred at Huddinge Teaching Hospital which lies south west of central Stockholm.

### ***2.8 Huddinge Teaching Hospital: The Work Attendance Project***

In September 1991, the central kitchen at Huddinge Hospital received funds for a programme of reorganisation. One of the reasons for this was that problems had arisen due to lack of effective communication between the 100 full-time staff in the kitchen who represent 28 different nationalities between them. Ninety-four of the staff have a foreign background. Language difficulties, misunderstandings and irritation were recurrent features of the workplace. This had led to inefficiency and very high levels of sick leave and absenteeism. The main goal for the programme which aimed to improve the situation was: 'the right food to the right patient at the right time for the right price'.

The multicultural workplace in the C-kitchen had created some problems which were tackled in a study group on 'cultural meetings' in which cultural differences in family structure, religion, food, etc. were explained and discussed by the participants. In all, the course lasted 12 hours with ten participants. A further two courses with places for 20 participants were organised after the first showed itself to be a success.

According to the final report on the reorganisation (Huddinge sjukhus 1993) the investment in language courses and study groups led to greater levels of understanding between kitchen staff and efficiency improved. Of course, given the preponderance of staff with foreign backgrounds this meant improved relations between immigrant workers first of all rather than improvements in relations or greater understanding between Swedish personnel and immigrant personnel. Sick leave fell by 20 days per year for each employee and reduced staff turnover to 0 per cent.

The work situation in the kitchens is stressful. Each menu applies for a five week period and patients have a choice of dishes. Cards detailing patients' wishes often require the preparation of special dishes. One of the problems which existed in the hospital was that the wrong food was being sent to the wrong patient. When the reasons for this were examined, it was discovered that the mistakes were due to the inability of several kitchen staff to read or write Swedish. The trolleys and food containers were being wrongly addressed as a result of this (Gustafsson 1992).

One result of this discovery was a special ten-week course in Swedish designed for kitchen personnel. The course was provided by the nearby high schools and covered the reading and writing of recipes, the comprehension of work instructions, the reading skills needed to understand work literature and the verbal and written reporting of work tasks. The course participants studied full-time with full pay (Huddinge Sjukhus 1993).

## ***2.9 Cultural Information and Attitude Changes***

Measures have also been taken within SLL to increase knowledge of foreign cultures and change attitudes among personnel in keeping with the immigrant and refugee programme's recommendations. For example, a conference on Islam was organised in September 1996 by the Immigrant Secretariat at which lectures were delivered by researchers and civil servants on different aspects of Islam and Muslim cultures. A summary transcript was published after the conference (SLL 1996b).

A course entitled 'Racism and Xenophobia at Work' (SLL 1995) has been provided for three groups of employees within SLL. The course was designed for work supervisors, personnel with immigrant backgrounds and teachers from the healthcare college. Responsibility for putting the course together fell to the Immigrant Secretariat. The goals of the course were to create a positive work environment and avoid 'cultural collisions'; create a knowledge base among personnel; increase awareness of the agreement which exists around immigrant and refugee questions among the political parties; and stimulate work with local action programmes.

The course addressed prejudices and hostile attitudes due to ignorance and provided the opportunity to discuss xenophobia and racism in a practical way with the aim of changing attitudes in the long-term. A special aim of the course was to tap the emotional bases of xenophobia and racism, rather than simply address these as intellectual problems, that is as straightforward information questions. This was to be achieved through intensive group discussions in which 'unconscious psychological processes can be ventilated together with conscious emotions'.

The course material was chosen to provide breadth of coverage without being too theoretical or specialised. No special competence was necessary to be able to take part. The material was also to be relevant for the workplace as far as this was possible.

The course was built up around lectures and group discussions. The lectures covered the historical background of racism and right-wing extremism in Sweden and abroad, ethnic conflicts, multiculturalism, prejudices, xenophobia and racism, and refugee experiences. Guest lecturers were invited in from universities and branches of the social services.

The course was also built up around discussion groups which contained both native Swedes and personnel with immigrant backgrounds. Course participants felt that this helped stimulate discussion. Some of these discussions became very lively. This was one of the course's goals - to awaken feelings and emotions and not remain at the cognitive level - and was seen as an important method for changing attitudes.

The course participants were able to complete an evaluation of the course once it was over. Their reactions were, for the most part, positive and all felt that the issues which had been taken up were important and that there was still insufficient knowledge of the problems among

personnel and a lack of information about foreign cultures and religions. But there was also a demand among participants for concrete problem-solving measures designed for the workplace and not only more information. It emerged that there was a need for dealing with conflicts and also for discussions within work groups, with supervisors and with management.

### ***2.10 Contracting Out and Immigrant Policy***

When the SLL programme for immigrant and refugee questions was drawn up, the extent of the County Council's activities was clear and unambiguous. The situation today is rather different and the extent of the County Council's activities is not as clearly delimited. Like many other authorities, SLL has opened its doors to private entrepreneurs as part of a more market-oriented organisational policy. A consequence of this is that the status of the programme becomes uncertain. This raises a number of questions which were recognised and taken up in the 1994 follow-up report:

- If a hospital signs an agreement with a cleaning company, is the company bound to follow the immigrant policy programme?
- Ought all or part of the programme be written into the agreement, so that the Council can make demands on a company and ensure that the programme is followed?
- If immigrant questions are not made part of the agreement with external service producers, does this mean that the County Council relinquishes responsibility for that sphere of its activities?
- If immigrant questions are made part of the agreement, what are the practical possibilities available to monitor personnel questions? Or would such monitoring constitute too great an interference in the external service producer's operations?

Given that a growing number of the Council's activities and operations are being put up for private tender, these are increasingly important questions. Here contact persons may be able to play an important role the report notes. For example, a contact person could be present when agreements with external service producers are being reached in order to ensure that any specific immigrant interests are not neglected.

### ***2.11 Contracting Out: Cleaners at Huddinge Hospital***

On April 1 1995, cleaning duties at Huddinge Hospital were taken over by two private companies. One unforeseen result of this was that a large number of cleaners who were employed at the hospital left their jobs rather than continue to work with the new private employers (SLL n.d.). Saying no to the offer of continued employment means long-term unemployment for many. A majority of those who left their jobs had an immigrant background. In order to find out why this was so, a report was prepared by the Immigrant Secretariat based on interviews with 14 people including employer and union representatives and five cleaners who had said no to continued employment.

Of the 5000 people who are employed at Huddinge Hospital one third have an immigrant background. On the 29 April 1993, SLL decided that 20 per cent of its various activities were to be opened up to private competition. In the case of Huddinge Hospital this meant kitchen and cleaning duties in particular. Bids from private companies were made before August 1 1994. On January 1995, all cleaning personnel were called to a meeting and were informed of

the situation. There was an 'open house' between February 2 and 13 where employees could receive more information about the new terms of employment and where any questions could be answered. Those employees who wished to work in the new private companies had to notify the hospital by February 13 at the latest. Cleaning personnel who did not wish to work for the private companies were made redundant on April 1 1995. Although the Council has an employment guarantee, employees who do not accept employment when a private company is brought in to take over certain duties are not covered by the guarantee and risk being made redundant.

Of the 164 cleaners who worked at the hospital, 69 decided to continue working. Ninety-four cleaners, 84 women and 10 men said no to continued employment with the new private companies. Of these 33 were from Chile, 25 from Finland, 10 from Turkey, 12 from other parts of the world and 14 from Sweden.

Based on the interview material a number of factors emerged which help explain why so many personnel chose not to continue to work as cleaners. Although the plan to contract out was not a secret, many employees seem not to have recognised it as a fact until the agreement with the private companies had been reached. Cleaning personnel required more time to think after the decision to use a private company had been made rather than after the new agreement was reached. There was considerable uncertainty about how the new companies would operate and what this would mean for those who agreed to continue working as cleaners. In fact, the new terms of employment were almost the same as when the Hospital had been the main employer, but this does not seem to have been understood by many employees.

Despite the fact that interpreters were present during most stages of consultation between employers and employees, a number of rumours circulated about the amount of severance pay which employees who said no to continued employment could expect to receive and about the risk of losing one's job in the new companies once the initial two-year employment contract expired. Both of these rumours were false, but they may have encouraged employers to prefer to turn down the offer of further training. There was also poor co-operation between the unions and hospital management which created an atmosphere of suspicion and uncertainty and made it difficult for employees to know who to trust. The report suggests that a common set of goals ought to have been agreed upon by the employers and unions which would have provided the opportunity to meet the interests of both employers and employees as far as this was possible.

These misunderstandings were, in part, a result of differences in cultural background and language difficulties, despite the use of interpreters according to the report. It is also clear, the report states, that the cleaners were not an homogenous group and that more attention ought to have been paid to the different backgrounds, experiences and needs of cleaners, in short an 'individual perspective'.

The experience from contracting out illustrates very clearly how important an effective information policy is when cultural differences and language difficulties are present. Even the most well-meaning reforms can create problems if personnel are not sufficiently informed about the rationale behind them. While the experience for the immigrant personnel who lost their jobs was certainly not a positive one, the lessons which can be learned can help to avoid similar situations in the future.

## ***2.12 Stockholm Public Transport, Stockholms lokaltrafik, SL***

Healthcare is the major responsibility of SLL, but public transport is also an important part of SLL's operations. Here, too, some measures have been taken in the past which can be said to have benefited immigrants.

There are almost 10,000 employees in the seven companies which make up Stockholm Public Transport, (SL) of whom 2,810 (28.2 per cent) were not born in Sweden. Over 120 different nationalities are represented. The largest immigrant groups are from Finland (714 persons), Iran (299), Yugoslavia (194), Ethiopia (169), Turkey (135) and Chile (113) (SL PA-Service 1995).

SL has been a major employer of immigrants since the 1960s and has always received large number of job applications from immigrants. Immigrants are therefore a familiar part of the company landscape. For this reason, it has not been felt necessary to design recruitment drives which appeal directly to immigrants. However, most recruitment campaigns, such as newspaper advertisements, do include people who are noticeably 'immigrant' in appearance. Immigrant workers are heavily concentrated in the bus division and underground railway division of SL's operations. Immigrants are considered to be a stable and loyal category of workers. During recent years, they have begun to advance up SL's occupational ladder.

An important reason for this is the use of internal recruitment. Work group leaders have always been recruited internally. External recruitment is only used if no suitable candidate can be found within SL. Internal recruitment is not used in the administrative department, including computing and technical departments.

At management level there have been very few recent vacancies, although these are now beginning to appear. A weak trend of advancement upward within the company can be noted among immigrant employees. SL drivers have received training in management skills.

Information to employees, old and new, is in Swedish. As a public-safety measure, the Railway Safety regulations require language skills equivalent to those of a sixteen-year-old native Swede for all employees.

New employees receive an information packet containing basic information about the company, regulations, trade union affiliation, etc. The cultural needs of immigrant employees have been provided for in some circumstances, for example, special washing facilities for Muslims who need to wash before prayers. These facilities did not raise any comments from other employees.

Complaints revolving around cultural differences are mostly about immigrant employees who have difficulty accepting an SL rule and tensions between female supervisors and certain categories of immigrant men, rather than complaints about discrimination against immigrants. The complaints procedure is the same for all employees. There are no special regulations for dealing with complaints of ethnic discrimination.

There have been no 'positive action' programmes implemented by SL. However, a recent reorganisation has resulted in a weak form of 'positive discrimination'. Large working groups have been broken up into smaller units each with their own work leader. On the underground lines which serve areas with large immigrant populations the composition of work groups and

the backgrounds of work leaders reflect the ethnic composition of the areas. This did not result in any complaints from other employees.

### ***2.13 Jobs for Young People in Stockholm County Council'***

In May 1996, SLL applied for funds for a project intended for young immigrant adults. The project gives young adults with an immigrant background the chance to experience working within the different sectors of SLL. The work experience is combined with training which is specially designed for the interests of individual trainees, their background and prospects. The tailor-made nature of the scheme is meant to allow for greater flexibility than has sometimes been the case in more traditional labour market schemes. The vulnerable and weak position of young immigrants in Stockholm's labour market is one of the reasons for initiating the project.

Forty-five per cent of the financing for the project comes from EU Social Fund Goal 3, and the remaining 55 per cent is made up of funds from SLL and the participating municipalities (SLL 1996c). The project is to continue until the end of 1997 when the European funding runs out. At present, the future of the project beyond 1997 is uncertain.

Making the project work required the building up of a network of contacts during a period of several months in close co-operation with the neighbourhood boards (*Stadsdelsnämnden*) which have responsibility for a number of different local services. Initially, SLL co-operated with Stockholm City Council, and two municipalities in the Greater Stockholm region, Botkyrka and Norrtälje. In these three cases high unemployment among immigrant young people and willingness to co-operate in a new initiative were the reasons for taking part. Now the co-operation extends to municipalities located throughout the County. In addition, the state employment services (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) play an active roll in the project. The employment services have detailed knowledge of the labour market and can provide the project staff with information. The municipalities involved also have a well-developed tradition of co-operation with the employment services.

The aim of the project is to awaken the interest of young people in a job within SLL and to encourage them to apply for jobs once a suitable training in the relevant area has been completed. Immigrant organisations have on several occasions mentioned for the Council the need for different types of project for young people with immigrant backgrounds. In part, the project is attempting to create a recruitment base by equipping young people for work rather than creating jobs, something which is difficult during a time of major cut-backs in the public sector.

The project is intended for young people aged between 18 and 20 with poor or inadequate education. One of the reasons for such a narrow age range is that this group lacks education and training and that older trainees might be seen as job competitors by employees at the project workplaces. In addition, older trainees are entitled to higher levels of financial support during the training period adding to the overall cost of the project. One of the requirements for taking part in the project is that the young people in question express an interest in a type of job which exists within the County Councils sphere of operations.

In accordance with Agenda 21, SLL has also decided to take measures to create 'green jobs', that is work of an environmental nature. Examples of this can be found in SLL's real estate company '*Locum*' and Stockholm Public Transport. Another goal of the project is to encourage women to apply for jobs which are of tradition dominated by men.

Young people are recruited to the project through the employment services in the municipalities. Some other forms of recruitment have also been used such as taking young people who are interested direct from high school. Payment for those on the schemes is the same as that for people on regular work-training projects. It was planned that approximately 40 young people would take part in 1996 and this target has already been passed. For 1997, the goal is for 100 young people to be offered a place.

In order to reach as many young people as possible, SLL made use of a wide variety of advertising methods. For example, advertisements were placed in *Metro* a free daily newspaper financed by advertising which is available in the stations of Stockholm's underground railway system. *Metro* is read by many commuters and others who travel on the system. The advert for the project was published over a period of several days and was printed in the major languages spoken by Stockholm's immigrant populations. The adverts printed in Persian, Arabic and Spanish led to a large response, over thirty interested young people phoned.

In addition to the newspaper advertisements, special brochures were placed in employment service offices and County Council premises. The brochures were circulated to information staff within the Council and to the public transport services. Local newspapers also ran advertisements. Minority language radio programmes broadcast an interview describing the project in several languages. And local television broadcast a video about SLL as an employer and about the project.

The training schemes last for between three and six months. Most young people opt for the longer six-month scheme. The schemes combine training, study visits and other activities which promote the development of the necessary skills and competence, including improved language skills in Swedish. In some cases, this has allowed young people with very poor language skills to get practical experience which they might not have otherwise received. They manage better on the job than one might have expected based solely on their language abilities according to one of the SLL staff members involved with the project. A major aim is to encourage young people to consider training in areas where there are good possibilities for future employment.

Special mentors, are appointed within SLL and paid with project funds. Five will be recruited from among employees who are to be made redundant and among other personnel from within SLL who have expressed an interest in working with the project.

The mentors' responsibility is to act as guides to working life for the course participants and to provide the trainee with motivation. Mentors monitor the progress of participants and their places of work. They receive training in SLL's training centres. A plan of action is drawn up for each participant together with the person responsible for the project in the municipalities. Mentors also have close contacts with the local employment services. Although the mentors who were interviewed had no negative experiences with the employment services, others had reported some minor friction when employment service staff acted as though the project mentors were straying on the employment service's territory.

Each mentor is responsible for eight young people. This is far fewer than the number of job seekers an employment officer with the employment services is normally responsible for. This allows mentors to provide the trainees with more individual attention and support. During the course of the project, the young people also receive career advice again in co-operation with the employment services. One mentor summarised her role thus:

Our job is to be an example and to make demands on the trainees. We keep a watch on the employment services, the course and the situation in the workplace. We normally have contact with trainees once a week or more often if any problems arise.

The areas in which training is provided are:

1. *Healthcare*

The care of elderly immigrants is going to place special demands of a cultural and linguistic nature on healthcare staff in the future. It is therefore important to recruit and capture the interest of young people with an immigrant background in advance of the time when recruitment will be necessary. There are currently some homes for old people where new methods of care for the elderly are being developed. Bilingual personnel with immigrant backgrounds are an important resource. Much of the practical experience provided for the trainees consists of following nursing staff during their daily work and performing those tasks which do not require special training or permission. This also provides an opportunity to learn some of the specialised language required within healthcare services. Practical training at the centres is combined with study visits to Stockholm County Council's nursing high school. In addition to geriatric care training places have also been arranged in hospital kitchens, and as caretakers.

2. *Locum AB*

Locum is responsible for the up-keep and management of SLL's properties. Up to 30 places can be made available, for young people within several different parts of the organisation, among them office and reception work especially where foreign language skills are required. In the building sector, where the current average age among employees is high, employment opportunities will be available in the future for technicians within electrical and telephone systems, ventilation systems in schools and further education establishments, plumbing and carpentry. Environmental work such as refuse disposal and treatment, and the sorting of used hospital equipment as a prelude to recycling is also part of the training. Hospitals in the Stockholm region already try to be 'environmental hospitals' (*miljösjukhus*) as far as this is possible. Also covered by the project is the indoor and outdoor up-keep of buildings and their grounds.

3. *Stockholm Public Transport, SL*

There are several types of job of an environmental nature where practical experience can be gained and in the future there will be needed for technicians of different kinds. The track and rail system can also offer practical places as can the telephone system, and central maintenance depot and workshop.



Each trainee is furnished with a plan when they leave the project. This is drawn up in consultation with the mentor and details the possibilities for further training, education and so on. Mentors see the project as providing trainees with:

A chance to get started and get themselves out of dependency on welfare. It gives them more structure in their lives and provides an introduction to working life.

The comments of mentors on the successes and failures of the project so far refer to the difficulty involved in measuring success. Given the difficult labour market situation for immigrants in general and the virtual employment freeze within the public sector at the present time, the project must be understood as an investment in the future, even if some trainees have in fact been employed on a permanent basis within SLL. At the moment mentors are able to keep in touch with trainees even after the latter have finished. But how long this can continue is difficult to say.

To what extent the project can be seen as building on or deriving inspiration from the SLL programme for immigrants was a question put to mentors. The answer, at least for individual mentors themselves, seems to be very little. However, mentors were aware of the existence of the programme and felt it was important that the programme existed in order to provide general guidelines and to emphasise the importance of immigrant issues. They also pointed out, however, that based on their own experiences the different departments and organisations which comprise SLL are very independent and that it is counter-productive to force a plan of action or programme upon them. Their views confirm what we already know from the results of the survey on information within SLL presented above which also indicate the existence of a strong 'local' identification within SLL organisations.

## ***2.14 Evaluation***

The SLL immigrant policy programme was originally designed to be very comprehensive. However, the current programme is shorter and more accessible than the original draft document and there are plans to produce a simple folder to make the programme even more accessible for personnel. This, it is hoped, will make it more attractive to consult and will also enable personnel to adapt it more easily to the specific needs of different sectors of the Council's operations. Bearing in mind the results from the survey of information in SLL which indicate that personnel tend to identify most strongly with sectors of SLL closest to them, a policy which can be adapted to 'local' organisational needs and is shorter and more accessible would appear to be a wise measure. It may help to avoid giving the impression that the programme is being forced on departments from 'above'.

The existence of hospital level initiatives in the Stockholm region points to an important feature of policy reform namely the two-way influence which can exist within large organisations. The content of the SLL central programme and the programme evaluations shows a mutual influence at work between different levels of the total SLL organisation in which policy is formulated and revised in the light of both central and local experience.

Attention to the consequences of contracting out for immigrant personnel is an important aspect of SLL policy and practice, especially as contracting out to private entrepreneurs is a growing trend within many public sector organisations. Although initial experiences have been negative for immigrants, the Immigrant Secretariat has gone some way to identifying why this

was so and providing information which can be used to prevent a repetition of the mistakes in the future.

A great deal of the content of the various programmes for immigrant and refugee questions focuses on cultural resources and making use of the competence of immigrant staff, such as bilingualism. However, this is in the form of recommendations only. Little attention is paid to concrete suggestions in which recruitment policy and practice are spelled out for the personnel involved.

Much of the attention paid in documents and reports is to relations between different national groups in SLL workplaces, rather than to relations between Swedes and immigrant personnel with different cultural backgrounds. The course on racism and xenophobia is a notable exception here. One cannot rule out, however, the possibility of a spin-off effect which contributes to improving relations between all employees once the general level of cultural understanding as a whole increases.

The use of contact persons in different healthcare areas and sectors of the Council is a good idea in theory, but as the Immigrant Secretariat's follow-up report revealed there is considerable variation between contact persons in how they see their role and the knowledge they have of immigrant questions. In fact, some of the people listed as contact persons for immigrant questions turned out to know very little and were only able to refer inquiries further to others.

There have been some difficulties involved in implementing programme proposals. For example, point 10 in the plan of action, 'Bilingual competence' lies outside of the kind of training high schools and colleges of further education provide. SLL cannot provide work training in Swedish *and* another language. This has been pointed out for the Immigrant Secretariat by the dental healthcare services.

Another problem is measuring attitude changes within the organisation. It is also difficult to maintain the programme's momentum at a time of cut-backs, extensive reorganisation and general uncertainty within the organisation. The comments of contact persons from different healthcare areas suggest that this has been the case during recent years. A stagnant public sector labour market provides few opportunities for new recruitment something which does not benefit immigrants.

The Swedish Labour Market Board, AMS, has identified a particular problem facing non-Nordic citizens as the difficulty of qualifying for work-training schemes. In the light of this problem, AMS drew up a special plan of action in 1994 'Immigrants to Work: A Plan of Action for AMV' (*Invandrare till arbetet ett handlingsprogram for AMV*). The plan aims to 'open doors' to the labour market for immigrants both in their contacts with public and private employees and in the area of co-operation between the municipalities, other authorities, organisations and not least the labour market partners.

One of the requirements listed in the programme is the need for more active contacts with companies in order to find out about vacancies, gain knowledge of the company and inform them of the agency's activities (AMS 1991). As many of these special schemes are only found in certain areas, AMS stresses that co-operation over administrative borders is vital. AMS also suggests that a 'Partnership' is needed between the employment services, companies and other actors in order to agree on future labour market needs. The major structural changes within business and the public sector during the 1990s make it difficult to predict which jobs and

types of skill will be in demand in the future. Identifying new areas of growth will enable employment services to adapt training programmes for immigrants to these new demands.

The SLL project for young immigrants appears, for the most part, to be a concrete example of a more flexible attitude to recruitment and a good example of co-operation between different organisations. It attempts to predict future employment needs within SLL, and it links together several organisations as well as administrative levels. It also targets young people who might normally have difficulty finding a place on a training scheme.

There is, perhaps, also an important element of realism in a project such as this. During a period when there has been a virtual recruitment stop in SLL (and to the public sector in general) little can be done to increase the number of immigrants who are employed within the organisation. Attempting to ensure that young immigrants are better placed to take advantage of future employment opportunities, which is the primary aim of the project, may be a positive practical measure worth emulating.

## CHAPTER 3

### **CASE STUDY 2: THE CONFEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES, TJÄNSTEMÄNNENS CENTRALORGANISATION, TCO**

#### ***3.1 The Confederation of Professional Employees, Tjänstemännens centralorganisation, TCO***

The labour market organisations in Sweden occupy a strong position in society. This is true of their size and of the influence they exercise. Expressions such as 'organisational Sweden' and 'the power of interest organisations' usually refer to the labour market organisations. In 1992, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) had around 2.23 million members, and The Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) 1.3 million in both the public and private sectors. The population of Sweden is 8.7 million. By international standards, then, the trade unions in Sweden are extremely well organised and represent between 80 and 90 per cent of all employees. The Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF), represented 45 000 business firms in 1992.

The representation accorded the labour market's major organised interests in committee work and lay governing bodies has traditionally been a particularly important feature of the Swedish policy-making model, which is also characterised by openness, rationality and consensus-seeking. The position of the central labour market actors also provides them with considerable influence over public opinion.

Since 1979, the Swedish Trade Unions Confederation (LO), which acts as the umbrella organisation for national unions for blue-collar workers, has had an immigrant policy programme. In 1991, LO suggested that a law against ethnic discrimination in the labour market was needed. Over half of immigrants who were born abroad and are in employment are members of blue-collar unions and therefore affiliated to LO. LO's position on ethnic discrimination can be said to reflect this. Other unions have their own information campaigns for immigrants, and most at some point emphasise that ethnic discrimination must not occur in the workplace, but, on the whole, the attention paid to ethnic discrimination was limited up until the mid-1990s.

In 1995, TCO, SAF and LO issued a joint recommendation: 'Preventing Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities in the Workplace'. The recommendation is founded on a joint programme for action adopted by the Union of Industrial Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (LO and TCO belong to the latter). The six-page document is intended to be distributed throughout the private sector. An equivalent but somewhat shorter document exists for the public sector.

In the document intended for industry and business the main content consists of a description of the multicultural company. The document notes that the world in which today's companies operate is a multicultural environment where employees, customers and suppliers have shifting national and ethnic backgrounds. The text strongly emphasises how market forces demand that companies adapt to growing internationalisation.

'Success in the market depends to an increasing degree on the ability to exploit the inherent potential found in a diversity of experiences and knowledge. Companies which succeed in doing this will be more competitive and better equipped to deal with changes in a constructive way.'

The reader is then informed that companies today do not exploit the obvious advantages which follow from a multicultural workforce. According to studies, immigrants and their children have low-skilled jobs or are unemployed to a greater extent than the rest of the population. Along with the poor language skills discrimination is also mentioned as an explanation for the weak position of immigrants in the labour market.

The document declares that because racial discrimination is in conflict with good business methods and principles of solidarity it is in the interests of employers, employees and their organisations to prevent ethnic discrimination in working life. The document also asserts that the labour market partners are aware of their social responsibility and the relationship between fair recruitment practices and effective business management. The most central ideas are summarised as:

1. Take full advantage of the abilities and talents available. 'A company which is comprised of different groups with many different talents, experiences and skills, finds it easier to recognise new ideas and possibilities. Such an organisation has a greater chance of developing its role in society and exploiting its business and social potential to the full'.
2. Ensure that objective selection criteria form the basis for decisions and actions and not discrimination, prejudices or unjust assumptions. If the selection criteria do not reflect the skills a job demands, this will lead to inefficiency and injustice.
3. Make the company more attractive. Abilities are a fundamental competitive asset, companies need to foster a reputation which makes people want to work for them.
4. Get to know customers and understand their needs. Company management needs reliable and objective information about potential customers and a multicultural workforce can act as a source for this kind of information. Moreover, it can help the company create successful strategies for marketing in a situation where ethnic minority and international markets are expanding.
5. Operate with success internationally. Companies with a multicultural workforce find themselves in a favourable starting position from which to reach markets in other countries where their employees have contacts.
6. Contributing to a stable society. Equal opportunities and equal treatment contribute to creating a stable society with good growth potential.

The documents states that The Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO), the Swedish Employers' Federation (SAF) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) stress the importance of creating a democratic, pluralistic society in Sweden characterised by solidarity and respect for the dignity of all people. Racism and xenophobia constitute a threat not only to society but also to a smoothly functioning economy. Even if the law provides legal protection against racial discrimination, continual efforts are still needed to tackle direct and indirect discrimination.

The recommendation also explains what is meant by the terms direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination is defined as deliberate discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds. Indirect discrimination is a practice which, although it is applied to everyone, systematically disadvantages certain individuals from ethnic, national or other groups compared with individuals who do not belong to these groups.

In a similar manner, TCO and LO, together with public sector employers, have produced a recommendation for the public sector. It differs in content from the recommendation intended for the private sector. Companies are not the central concern. Instead, the programme concentrates on how good public service can be produced.

The recommendation argues that exploiting the competence which exists in public sector organisations improves productivity and quality. Through the application of a deliberate integration policy in recruitment, selection, developing competence and skills, work allocation and promotion, public sector organisations can better represent and provide service to society. Many of the programme points and suggestions are discussed in terms of how the preconditions for integration can be created

It is of no small importance, according to the document, that public authorities and organisations which work for the integration of immigrants are also good examples for the rest of society. Public authorities and organisations have the responsibility for integration policy. It is they who must ensure that everyone is treated equally within the refugee services, schools, the labour market, healthcare, etc. and that immigrants are given the same opportunities as Swedes. It is therefore particularly important that they work against unintended and hidden discrimination in workplaces, the public sector and the authorities. Failure to do so can create a society which is a fertile ground for xenophobia, racism and eventual serious conflicts.

### ***3.2 New Initiatives in 1997***

Co-operation between TCO, SAF and LO resulted in substantial 40-page joint policy document in 1997. The document has its origins in a joint declaration which TCO, SAF and LO signed in 1995 in which they distanced themselves from racism and xenophobia. In the declaration the member organisations of TCO, LO and SAF are encouraged to work together for the good of all in the workplace.

The three organisations are of the opinion that a joint policy declaration is not in itself sufficient to achieve actual results in working life. It must be supported by concrete measures to create equal conditions in companies and local places of work. According to the preface to *'Immigrants in Swedish Working Life'* the three organisations hope that the text can act as a source of inspiration for business management and union branches which want to work in the spirit expressed in TCO's, LO's, and SAF's joint statement.

The main headings in the document are 'The key to Sweden', 'Who is an immigrant?', 'Immigrant = unemployed?', 'Immigrants in working life - this is the situation', 'Ideas for change' and a concluding section entitled 'How do we proceed? A discussion of immigrants in working life', as well as a summary of ideas and suggestions. The document is intended for distribution to places of work and to act as the basis for discussion.

The document begins by asking why it is so important for the labour market partners actively to make it easier for immigrants to find work. Unemployment has risen considerably in Sweden

during the 1990s, especially amongst the most recently arrived immigrants. Indeed, since the 1980s a growing group of immigrants have been excluded from the labour market.

High unemployment affects society's development and social divisions arise when welfare is undermined. High levels of unemployment especially among immigrants create a breeding ground for xenophobia and racism the document argues. The integration of immigrants into working life is the key to further integration into society providing that the labour market is not ethnically segregated.

The policy document links together the exclusion of immigrants from the labour market with undesirable consequences for the general development of society and for immigrants themselves.

In the document the organisations wish to present examples of immigrants who have been successful in the Swedish labour market. The growth in the number of immigrant businesses is noted with enthusiasm. Presenting immigrants who are employed, it is argued, helps to undermine the stereotypical depiction of immigrants as always excluded from work. The examples presented are taken from the private sector as there has been a virtual employment freeze within the public sector during the 1990s.

### **Who is the document intended for ?**

TCO, SAF and LO argue that an important reason for analysing the position of immigrants in Swedish working life is that it can be useful for those immigrants who are outside the labour market. This is an explicit aim of the document and it is for this reason that it does not focus on unemployed immigrants. Such a focus creates negative expectations and is devastating both for the morale of immigrants who are seeking work and for those who are already in the labour market. Instead, the aim is to give a more nuanced picture of immigrants in working life and to provide the reader with examples of successful immigrant work careers in order to inspire other immigrants, and potential employers.

The document also shows clear signs of wanting to alter employer attitudes to employing immigrants. Concrete examples of immigrants working in different companies can increase the employers' openness to the possibility of recruiting personnel with another cultural background. There is also a critical scrutiny of what the concepts of 'Swedes' and 'immigrants' actually mean. Many people who were contacted during the initial stages of preparing the document expressed surprise that they had been chosen because they were immigrants. Examining the recruitment and integration of immigrants at a workplace can mean that a division arises between immigrants and others which does not normally receive any attention in daily working practice. 'Sometimes too much attention to the position of immigrants at a place of work can have negative consequences' the document states.

### **Immigrants in the Labour Market**

The sections 'Who are immigrants?' and 'Immigrant = Unemployed?' provide background information about immigration to Sweden, its composition and character. The position of immigrants in the labour market is also presented with the help of statistics and research findings. The document notes the higher average levels of education among refugee immigrants than among Swedes and the rising levels of unemployment and early retirement among labour migrants. The fact that unemployment is more than three times higher among non-European

immigrants than among native Swedes is also noted. High unemployment is said to create a category of people dependent on welfare payments who constitute a heavy financial burden on society, especially in larger towns and cities. Immigrants increasingly belong to the growing number of poor.

The document goes on to give a subtle picture of the diversity that exists among immigrants in terms of their educational backgrounds and labour market careers. Examples of Swedish computer companies which have employed highly educated immigrants are provided. A departmental manager from one of the larger companies, Ericsson, describes foreign computer education as usually being of a high standard and states that it does not really matter very much where one was educated. Computer training *in* Sweden probably shows as much variability as the differences in computer training and education *between* countries he states.

The document goes on to note that among political refugees there are professors, doctors and former top civil servants living in Sweden who are forced to live on welfare against their will or who have been given work for which they are over-qualified. The reader is informed that the National Agency for Higher Education has made significant efforts to facilitate effective comparison of foreign and Swedish qualifications and that a data base of approximately 6000 qualifications is now available for the state employment agencies to consult. It is also available on the Internet. Because many employers are ignorant of the content of foreign education, they are reluctant to employ people who do not have a Swedish qualification. According to one civil servant from the National Agency for Higher Education this is not a question of discrimination, but, rather, genuine uncertainty on the employers' side.

Here the document, through presenting accounts of good experiences from those employers who have employed highly-educated immigrants and the information employers can find out about foreign qualifications, aims to remove the attitudes and behaviours which result in this kind of unintended discrimination.

For immigrants with low levels of education, the situation in the labour market is even worse because of the cut-backs within industry, healthcare and social services. The document presents a number of successful solutions which have helped immigrants in the retail sector. It also discusses how the stereotypical image of immigrant women as tied to the home and socially isolated makes it difficult for them to enter working life.

### **Immigrants as a Resource**

The document poses the question of what happens to the competence of immigrants, their language skills and cultural capital. Do personnel staff recognise the potential the special abilities of immigrants represent? The answer given is 'No'. However, simply by raising the question, so the authors hope, more employers will pay attention to the matter.

The document does, however, provide some examples of how the language skills of immigrants have been utilised. Some companies have made up lists of personnel with language skills who can act as interpreters and guides when the company has visitors from abroad. One supermarket owner explains how a store located in an area with a large immigrant population benefits from the language skills of the employees who can provide better service. There is also the example of a food wholesaler which supplies restaurants and cafés and caters to a majority of customers with immigrant backgrounds. Employing immigrants in the company is not only a matter of making use of their language skills, it is also, and more importantly, a matter of



establishing a trusting relationship with the company's customers. In short, immigrants can provide a company with a resource which increases its competitive edge.

### **Multiculturalism in the Workplace ?**

Having immigrant personnel can be good for business. But how a culturally mixed workplace affect the company's productivity and efficiency is the next issue the document takes up. One employer declares in the document that he is not convinced that a multicultural place of work functions better than a monocultural, but he is also of the opinion that there is no evidence that a multicultural place of work entails any special problems either. Others who are quoted argue that multiculturalism is good for productivity. The presence of different kinds of knowledge and experience increases the analytical and problem-solving skills of the group. Everyone seems to be of the opinion, for example, that a two-sex workplace functions better than a unisex one.

The policy document is designed so that it weaves together information with a critical examination of common assumptions about what immigrants in working life mean for a workplace, for the majority of workers and for the company and its productivity. This may function to make employers and employees aware of their own taken-for-granted assumptions. Although the document is explicit about its aim to address immigrants, the information presented here is intended particularly for recruitment and personnel staff.

### **Discrimination ?**

Discrimination is discussed in two places in the document. It first appears after the presentation of basic information about immigration, immigrants and their situation in the Swedish labour market. Having awoken the reader's interest the question reappears later on in the document where the problem of ethnic special treatment in working life is examined in depth. The document does not preach at the reader or identify scapegoats nor does it deliver ready-made answers which can be mechanically accepted. Instead, the analysis often takes the form of dialogue and conversation between representatives for employees, often with an immigrant background, and employer representatives. Different perspectives, opinions and questions surrounding discrimination are made to confront one another and the reader is obliged to adopt a stance in relation to them and his/her own position. The basic assumption made by the document seems to be that people will ensure that they do not discriminate deliberately or unintentionally once they understand better how and why they think and act as they do.

The section 'Discrimination or new structures' poses the question of why unemployment is so high among immigrants. The discussion begins by asking whether the growing divide between Swedes and immigrants in the labour market is the result of new demands for special skills, especially in Swedish, or whether it is a matter of ethnic discrimination.

Changes in industry, healthcare and social services which traditionally employed large numbers of immigrants have led to fewer jobs in these sectors at the same time as the service sector has developed. Specific types of skills such as in the Swedish language and 'the silent language' (i.e. social codes and mores), teamwork and individual initiative have come to characterise both industry and the service sector.

The authors ask whether the theory that immigrants lack the necessary social competence is free from problems and conclude that it is not. They ask:

Is it really true that there are common social codes in Sweden which are in general diametrically opposed to those of immigrant groups: Why are only immigrants disadvantaged by the new demands which are made in working life? Poor knowledge of Swedish can be an obstacle, of course, but why should an immigrant have less social competence? At worst these theories are simply myths used to conceal less pleasant facts: That Sweden is characterised by a discriminatory mentality and that this is why immigrants are not employed. Immigrants are deselected more often than others when employers call people for interviews and when hiring. This risks leading to a situation in which unemployed immigrants lose faith and become passive.

A similar situation arises when employers and personnel staff are unsure how to judge the competence of people from other cultures. Their uncertainty leads them to prefer the known over the unknown, which logically results in a discriminatory pattern of recruitment. The authors argue that:

The theory does not rest on the fact that cultural differences in themselves are the problem, it does not even presuppose that there actually exist cultural differences. The problem is, rather, that recruitment staff are ignorant of immigrant cultural patterns.

This clearly asserts that discrimination exists and that attitudes and actions, which, on many occasions, are not seen as discriminatory in fact are so. It is also apparent that the target group for this discussion is not immigrants but work supervisors, personnel staff and employers. Anyone can quite easily and innocently apply ideas of social competence without realising that this leads to unintended discrimination. The policy document raises the question of discriminatory attitudes and actions in concrete contexts and shows how these attitudes and forms of behaviour which are due to a lack of critical reflection by those responsible can result in discrimination. The aim is twofold: to provide recruitment staff with better insights into how they themselves reason and the consequences of this, and to point out that far from all discrimination is deliberate and that it can be a consequence of general patterns of behaviour. Ultimately, the aim is to change the behaviour of personnel staff through increased insight, self-knowledge and changed attitudes.

The section concludes with a list of different reasons for the weak position of immigrants in the labour market. The time taken to be granted asylum can make it difficult for refugee immigrants to enter the labour market. There is little mobility between those who are in and those who stand outside the labour market. Informal contacts through family members and networks have become increasingly important when searching for work. Searching for the reasons for unemployment among immigrants themselves often focuses on lack of skills in Swedish. But, the document notes, there are vulgar and xenophobic variations on this theme, for example the claim that 'immigrants do not want to work.'

The document raises the question of discrimination without pointing out or accusing anyone. Later on, in a section which accounts for a quarter of the entire document, there is an in-depth discussion of the initial questions raised about discrimination.

The discussion begins with the conclusion that discrimination is in all likelihood one of the reasons for the high unemployment rates among non-European immigrants. This is one of the reasons why many immigrants adopt Swedish names to improve their chances in the labour market. The authors also note that immigrants are rejected by employers, not only on the grounds of lack of skills in Swedish, but also in many cases because immigrant applicants are over-qualified.

The authors then attempt to determine what is meant by the complex concept of discrimination. The distinction between direct and indirect discrimination is made and several examples of common forms of indirect discrimination are given. For example, demands for a certain type of clothing which exclude certain groups of immigrant applicants. Demands for virtually flawless Swedish for jobs which do not actually require such high levels of linguistic ability. The authors argue that:

Distinguishing between different forms of discrimination determines how one is to attack prejudices and ignorance. In order to meet direct discrimination which rests on racist assumptions, legislation and campaigns against xenophobia and racism are needed. In order to meet more indirect discrimination, effective laws are needed, but also other types of measures: practical training, instruction in Swedish, greater knowledge of immigrant competence and cultural background, etc. There is nothing to prevent different strategies being used in parallel. But, if the work is to be successful, it is important to analyse where the emphasis is to lie.

Here the document addresses the reader directly with a clear message. 'We' wish to promote equal treatment in working life and in order to do this it is vital that we have a clear picture of the nature of the problem so that we can choose the most suitable strategy and achieve our goals. The stress is on strategic actions, efficiency and success. The problem of ethnic discrimination is translated into a language and terms of reference which are characteristic of the business world's own self-image and how it is seen by others.

A representative for the state labour market board is of the opinion that both direct and indirect discrimination occur but the emphasis is on the latter. Here the document returns to a theme touched upon earlier, namely how genuine uncertainty among many employers has discriminatory consequences. The board official argues that Swedish employers prefer Swedish applicants over immigrant applicants and that this seems often to be the result of a lack of knowledge and fear of the unfamiliar. This is closely associated with the phenomena of statistical discrimination and the authors refer to a study which shows that personnel staff were involved in statistical discrimination by ascribing individual foreign applicants characteristics which were associated with an entire group. It was assumed in advance that the person did not have a command of Swedish or was dressed in a particular way.

The document suggests, as a concrete measure against this sort of discrimination, that controls be carried out to see if people with foreign names are called to interviews as often as others.

Regardless of which form of discrimination is involved it results in the exclusion of immigrants from the labour market, something which has very serious consequences for immigrants and for society. In addition, discrimination is irrational for companies as it means that they do not exploit the educational resources which immigrants possess. 'Presumably companies with a more open recruitment outlook manage better'.

The reasons for combating discrimination are many according to the authors, all parties have something to gain. Companies in particular can benefit if they utilise personnel resources to the full in accordance with market principles. Later the issue of discrimination as a problem for unions is taken up. This is done with the help of a comparison between the Swedish and the British legislation.

In an earlier section, 'Stockholms Energi', a large company with two thousand employees of which ten per cent are immigrants, provides a case where immigrant employees started a 'World Association'. The reason lay in the feeling among several immigrants that they were exposed to discrimination and were being denied the possibility of advancement within the company. Neither management nor the union branch had been willing to admit that immigrant employees were discriminated against.

Discrimination is thus not only a matter of recruitment, the document notes, it is also something which affects employees, for example, their pay levels and promotion prospects. A thorough but comprehensive examination of the 1994 law against ethnic discrimination in working life is presented and compared with the more detailed British legislation, which, unlike the Swedish, also addresses trade unions. According to the British legislation it is illegal for the unions to discriminate against members in access to education and training. A critical discussion of the current Swedish legislation ensues in which it is concluded that it does not really tackle the discrimination which several independent sources have confirmed affects both first and second generation immigrants. Under the title 'Advice to those who have been discriminated' a summary is provided of what one should do if one feels that one had been subjected to discrimination.

### **What is to Be Done ?**

The policy document concludes with the section 'Ideas for Change' and 'How to Proceed? A conversation'.

'What can employers, personnel managers, union branches and local authorities do to make it easier for immigrants who are seeking work?' is the question which the first section attempts to answer. Practical experience, an open policy of recruitment, instruction in Swedish and training in social competence are some of the suggestions which are discussed, the use of support networks among immigrant employees is another practical possibility.

Recruitment interviews are often too short to give a fair picture of someone with a different background, for example an immigrant. It is better to employ someone for a probationary period, something which many employers and immigrants have already discovered claim the authors. This is also a way to solve the problem of employers' uncertainty about the competence of applicants with an immigrant background. Research into recruitment has shown that personnel staff in companies with many immigrant employees have a more positive and nuanced picture of immigrants than personnel staff in companies with few or no immigrants. The importance of Swedish language skills in recruitment and promotion receives a good deal of attention. Once again the question of demands for new forms of competence is taken up. That communication skills can have a decisive impact on the chances of being employed is an established fact, but this need not reflect actual changes in working life it can be an assumption on the part of employers or simply discrimination argues the document.

The document's conclusion consists of a round-table discussion between representatives from TCO, SAF and LO together with researchers and immigrant representatives. The document notes how the discussion reveals different opinions and approaches, but also a certain amount of agreement on how to proceed together.

The discussion functions as an example of how the issue can be addressed in individual workplaces. Even though not everyone agrees on all matters, the way has been opened for a dialogue to proceed in which the problems facing immigrants in working life can be highlighted from different angles. This also provides the opportunity for employers, unions and immigrants to examine their own basic positions and to re-evaluate them in the light of alternative viewpoints and ideas. In short, a concrete example is presented of how a workplace can address the problem.

The policy document summarises its ideas and suggestions in a ten-point programme:

1. *Provide unemployed immigrants with work experience* through practical training and probationary periods of work.
2. *Provide suitable education and help to make it easier to get work.* Immigrants need tuition in Swedish and about Sweden, better communication skills, effective evaluation of foreign qualifications, and the translation of qualifications and testimonials are also needed.
3. *Mobility in the labour market.* Increased mobility in the labour market means that more people get the opportunity to try new jobs and receive further training, while others get temporary jobs and work experience. Periods of leave for further education will be necessary if this is to work.
4. *Open recruitment.* Recruitment routines are of central importance for making the labour market more accessible for immigrants. It is of considerable importance that applicants not be deselected just because of ethnic belonging. Other ideas include positive special treatment when recruiting. Recruitment through the employment services is important for many immigrants who lack the contact networks of native Swedes. It is vital to call immigrant job applicants to interviews and to note the number of immigrants who apply for vacancies and how many of them are actually called to interviews and how many are employed. An equal opportunity policy for employing immigrants.
5. *Taking advantage of the competence of immigrants.* Many immigrants who have come to Sweden during the last ten years are highly educated, but this competence and knowledge has not been made use of in working life. Several things can be done: use the competence of educated immigrants, make use of the language skills of immigrants, try to increase productivity by creating culturally mixed groups.
6. *Support for newly hired employees:* Newly employed immigrants need special support, for example, in the form of an introduction for immigrants to the workplace.
7. *An end to discrimination:*, many immigrants testify that they do not get work or are not given the opportunity to develop at work because of discrimination. Many things can be done to put an end to discrimination. Campaigns against discrimination and information about immigration, report employers and other who discriminate to the Discrimination Ombudsman and the courts, document the situation of immigrants in working life (salaries, activities in the unions, representation in union branch organisations), develop social contact networks for immigrants in working life, introduce measures against

indirect discrimination, and provide advice to employees who are affected by discrimination.

8. *Support for immigrant businesses:* a growing group of immigrants are self-employed with their own businesses. They have special needs: support for immigrant businesses in their contacts with the Swedish authorities, and education in Swedish for immigrant businessmen is needed.
9. *Union involvement in immigrant questions:* union branches must do more to support immigrants in working life, through examining the representation of immigrants on union boards, and theme meetings in union branches on immigrant questions.
10. *Show positive examples:* many immigrants have been successful in working life. They are positive role models and are needed to inspire unemployed immigrants. They can also help to change the image of immigrants found in the general population as always being unemployed. The equation 'immigrants = unemployment' can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Show positive examples of immigrants who have succeed in working life and shatter the myth that a majority of immigrants are unemployed - the majority work, expose the myth that a majority of immigrant women are unemployed - the majority work.

### **3.3 TCO's Internal Work for Immigrant Members**

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employers, TCO, which represents among others nurses, teachers and administrative personnel in the private sector as well as public sector administrators, has actively worked with immigrant issues since the mid-1990s. The organisation has been greatly inspired by the social dialogue of recent years between the European labour market partners. In parallel with the international co-operation a dialogue has been in progress with employers in Sweden. According to Yngve Hjalmarson, who works with the TCO International Secretariat, the organisation has a group of immigrant members who have been discriminated against in working life. It is most common for members to be exposed to discrimination at the recruitment stage, i.e. before they are employed and become members of the organisation. Those immigrants who do not find jobs represent an untapped resource of potential union members. It is therefore important for TCO to work actively against negative differential treatment on ethnic grounds and take steps to promote equal treatment.

According to Yngve Hjalmarson, co-operation with SAF has proceeded very well. There is considerable agreement that it is important to work against ethnic discrimination. While SAF pursues the issue of multiculturalism's advantages for efficiency, especially for export companies, TCO has monitored the interests of its members.

During the last year, TCO has had a special working group for immigrant and refugee questions comprised of representatives from TCO's federations. Its main task is to examine policy issues in this area. In its policy text proposal 'Immigrants in TCO', from the spring of 1997, the work group summarises its suggestions for a union immigrant policy and notes in the preface that the trade union movement has an obligation to involve itself in the welfare of the new Swedes who have immigrated to Sweden during recent decades. The trade union movement, concludes the document, can act as an important bridge between Swedish society and immigrants.

The document also takes up the question of the right to work, integration into society, racism and xenophobia, an active trade union movement and, finally, presents statistics on the number

of immigrants within TCO. The union integration policy is directed at public and private sector employers and also inward at its own member organisations in order to make them examine their own practices.

### **TCO and Immigrants as Union Members**

TCO's proposed policy document states that, although there are no statistics showing the proportion of immigrants among elected union representatives, it is apparent that they are strongly under-represented. The movement must be better at getting immigrants involved in union affairs. In the introductory section of the text considerable space is devoted to discussing why it is important for the trade union movement to become involved in the fight against discrimination, xenophobia and racism. The question is raised again at the end of the policy-document where concrete suggestions for how TCO can proceed centrally and locally are presented.

One of TCO's largest member organisations submitted a motion concerning 'discrimination of immigrants in the labour market' to the 1997 TCO congress. The motion also notes that members with an immigrant background are rare among those holding an official position. The motion demands that 'TCO, together with the member organisations work to ensure that more immigrants become active in the union.' In the internal policy document the question is discussed further and it is concluded that trade union success in getting more immigrants involved requires an active union immigrant policy and a deliberate effort to reach immigrant members.

TCO has commissioned a survey from the National Bureau of Statistics (SCB) of the proportion of immigrants within the TCO federation. Around 74,000 members, i.e. 6.5 per cent of the total membership, were born abroad, 40,000 of whom are from other Nordic countries, 22,500 from non-Nordic European countries and 11,500 from non-European countries. There exists therefore, as the policy document notes, a significant group of foreign-born members within TCO. Non-European immigrant groups, especially from the Middle East and Africa, are over-represented among those who are outside the labour market and do not therefore belong to TCO. An important reason mentioned in the report for their under-representation is discrimination. The report points out that surveys and eyewitness accounts clearly indicate that discrimination against non-European immigrants is greater than against Nordic and West European immigrants.

The policy-document recommendations encourage the member organisations and union branches to:

- Try to get immigrants elected in union branches, and work with their immigrant members and the companies and organisations in which they work.
- Ensure that electoral committees draw up lists of candidates which reflect the ethnic composition of the membership.
- Voice opposition to racist and xenophobic comments.
- Figure in local efforts to shape public opinion.

- Create more temporary trainee places to give the unemployed an insight into union work.
- Organise branch meetings with cultural difference as the theme. Discrimination is often the result of a lack of understanding of other people's situation. Encourage a greater knowledge of the situation in other countries.

The document argues that integration into working life is not solely an issue for immigrant, it is everyone's concern. The high rates of unemployment among refugee immigrants, according to the document, represent a considerable failure and a potential seed bed for xenophobia and racism.

'One of the reasons for why unemployment is so high among immigrants is the occurrence of ethnic discrimination. There are many accounts from witnesses of how employers deselect people with foreign-sounding names when choosing job applicants for interviews. Union organisations can make an important contribution here. Only by monitoring recruitment can discrimination be prevented.'

According to the work group, ethnic discrimination can have its roots in prejudice and uncertainty, in the worst cases in xenophobia and racist beliefs. Racism is a threat to society itself, but it is also in the interests of the trade union and therefore a union task actively to pursue anti-racist measures. A workforce divided up into separate categories, undermines the union's ability to pursue a unified policy line.

TCO therefore focuses most in its policy document on the discrimination which takes place at the recruitment stage, rather than the discrimination which employees can be exposed to in the workplace. That ethnic discrimination occurs is accepted as a fact by the organisation. But racism and xenophobia ought to be prevented for purely 'selfish' reasons: internal conflicts undermine the strength of the organisation itself. 'The trade union movement needs to take a look at its own affairs'. Immigrants are and will continue to be large group in the labour market and a trade union that is unable to organise and attract immigrants will inevitably be weakened.

Another important reasons for combating discrimination according to TCO is that discrimination is not only unjust it is also a waste of competence and skills which well-educated immigrants often possess. Not making use of this competence undermines the competitiveness of Swedish companies. Swedish companies which are active internationally also have the opportunity to benefit from the language skills of immigrants.

The composition of official organisations in Sweden ought to reflect that of the general population and it is therefore desirable that immigrants be represented in the authorities, in industry, the media and in decision-making bodies within the unions and political system. Innovation and greater openness in working life are necessary to achieve this.

### **TCO and Immigrants in Working Life**

The existence of ethnic discrimination is an established fact according to the TCO document. What are TCO and its member organisations able to do centrally and locally to make it easier for immigrants to enter working life? According to 'Policy and Proposals' :

- Give immigrants a chance at the recruitment stage. Do not allow foreign names to deter employers.



- Demand introductions to the workplace. Introductory measures are important for all new employees and especially for those from another country.
- Work for equal rights in career development and promotion.
- Make use of knowledge from other countries. Companies and public sector organisations are poor utilisers of immigrant competence.
- Work to prevent wage discrimination. That immigrants, in general, have a lower average income than others who perform the same job is not acceptable.
- Support instruction in the Swedish language. A requirement for being able to succeed in working life is good knowledge of Swedish.
- Help those who have not been in Sweden for any length of time in their contacts with Swedish society, provide information on where they can find help and the rules and regulations that apply.
- Inform personnel departments of the situation of immigrants in working life, but also about the competence of immigrants. Provide those who work with immigrants knowledge of integration questions.

The policy document is intended for use by TCO's member organisations and by local union branches. The section 'The Right to Work' provides background information about immigrants and the position of immigrants in the Swedish labour market. Particular attention is paid to the high levels of unemployment among immigrants and that ethnic discrimination can be an important reason for this.

It is pointed out that TCO is opposed to the use of quotas as a general method for increasing the number of immigrant employees. The argument against quotas is that they would require employers and trade unions to compile lists of those employees who are immigrants. Such a system of ethnic sorting could, it is argued, form the basis for xenophobia and racism, TCO is therefore opposed to monitoring and quotas.

There should not be special labour market measures which are only meant for immigrants. However, certain types of measures, such as temporary training schemes, could be appropriate in areas where there are many unemployed immigrants. Financial support can be made available for municipalities where there is a high proportion of unemployed immigrants.

TCO speaks of goals such as 'Give unemployed immigrants experience of working life! Give Swedish companies experience of immigrants!', 'An open recruitment policy', 'Make use of Competence', 'Show positive examples', 'Support immigrant businesses', and 'Listen to immigrant organisations'. Recruitment through personal connections is condemned as it excludes new arrivals who have a smaller network of social contacts. At least some recruitment of new employees ought therefore to be through the employment services.

Other goals include 'Prevent ethnic discrimination' and 'Tougher laws against ethnic discrimination in Working Life'. The first includes active measures by employers and trade unions to prevent discrimination during recruitment and at work. Numerous measures can be taken to stop ethnic discrimination:

- Campaigns against discrimination and information on immigration
- Report employers and others who discriminate to the Discrimination Ombudsman and the courts
- Investigate the position and conditions of immigrants in working life, their wages, advancement possibilities, union activity and representation
- Measures against indirect and structural discrimination
- Advice for employees who have been affected by discrimination
- Educate union representatives about ethnic discrimination
- Fight common prejudices and beliefs that immigrants 'lack social competence'.

Under the heading 'A tougher law against ethnic discrimination' the current law against discrimination is described as toothless and in need of reform if it is to be a useful tool against discrimination. The British Race Relations Act is mentioned as an example of a better law.

Two pages in the 20-page document are devoted to questions of integration. Ethnic segregation in society in housing and the labour market is aggravated by high unemployment among immigrants. Integration is the responsibility of the state, municipalities and associations and organisations in civil society. Integration presupposes that Swedish society is open for immigrants, their ideas, cultures and religions. The document makes a distinction between cultural assimilation and integration which allows immigrants to continue to practise their own religion and retain their mother tongue. Integration also means that 'everyone in Sweden must have a place in the Swedish political system, organised social movements, working life and the mass media'.

This is important to avoid the creation of an underclass. Knowledge of the Swedish language is an important prerequisite.

The concrete proposals are:

- More effective education in Swedish language
- The right to instruction in one's mother tongue. Cut-backs within mother tongue language teaching ought to stop.
- Immigrants are needed in a wider range of professions such as teaching, the police, healthcare, the legal profession, etc.

## **Racism and Xenophobia**

Racism and xenophobia also receive a section of their own in the policy document. Here it is claimed that around ten per cent of the population are very xenophobic. Other reports indicate that ethnic discrimination in Swedish working life is extensive and that this also applies to the housing market and places of entertainment and that violence against immigrants and against refugee facilities is a consequence of xenophobia and racist propaganda.

Important means to combat xenophobia are information for the general public about immigrants and the Swedish immigrant policy. Dialogue and personal contacts between people with different backgrounds is also important. The trade unions can act as a forum for such meetings.

The document states that racism is an extreme position which rests on the belief that different 'races' or ethnic groups are of different moral worth. Another source for the prejudices is ignorance and fear. It is the responsibility of the trade union movement to combat explicit racism and less serious prejudices. The trade union movement must actively try to prevent racist organisations spreading their message. This is forbidden by Swedish law.

Prejudices against immigrants exist in Swedish places of work and among union members. The views of union members are a reflection of the general population. For this reason, the trade union movement has a special responsibility to combat prejudices. Unions ought in fact to be exemplary in this respect. Measures are suggested which include:

- No to discrimination in working life
- Anti-racism. Through information and campaigns the union should combat xenophobia and racism
- Boycott racist goods. For example CDs which contain incitement to racist violence
- Solidarity. Express solidarity with those who have been subjected to racism and ethnic discrimination, and with those who have been exposed to threats because of their anti-racist work

### ***3.4 Immigrant Union Activists: Mobilising for the Future***

In March 1997, TCO will take part in a union conference 'Meeting for the Future'. Behind the conference is a group of thirty active LO blue-collar members with immigrant backgrounds from organisations with large immigrant memberships. They took part in an LO initiative on how to influence opinion. Although LO has organised introductory courses for immigrants before, this particular course was regarded by the participants as further training for tomorrow's union leaders.

The conference aims to build an association for immigrant union activists, from union branches from around the country. TCO's co-operation is important according to Yngve Hjalmarson from TCO's international secretariat. He stresses the value of different union organisations working together both centrally and in the workplace to strengthen the position of immigrants in union work, to combat xenophobia and to promote equal treatment in working life.

### **3.5 TCO and Discrimination Policies in the Workplace**

As we have been able to see, TCO, together with the labour market partners SAF and LO, have developed fairly detailed action programmes. A proposal for a policy document on how discrimination within the TCO organisation itself is to be dealt with appeared in the Spring of 1997. These documents are of recent vintage. Questions of ethnic discrimination in working life and equal treatment have now found a place on the agenda at central level. The current European agreement between the social partners can be discerned in the problems taken up, eventual goals, the concrete proposals and ideas contained in them. What effect have these programmes and recommendations had at company level in actual workplaces? To answer this question, we briefly look at two large workplaces with strong international operations to examine what, if any, impact TCO's anti-discrimination ideas have had. But also to see what kind of situation eventual TCO policies will have to confront and perhaps change.

#### **3.5.1 IKEA**

By the mid-1960s, IKEA was firmly established as a leading furniture warehouse with outlets in Älmhult, in Småland in Sweden, in Oslo and in Stockholm. The story of the early development and expansion of the firm is well-known and is something of a modern business fairy tale. IKEA was founded 1943 as a mail-order company which soon began selling low-priced furniture. IKEA combined mail-ordering with warehouses situated in rural surroundings. Customers bought cheap furniture which they took home and assembled themselves. The clear, low-price profile was successful, and in the beginning of 1960s IKEA was one of the largest furniture retailers in Scandinavia. Due to steady expansion, IKEA began opening warehouses outside Scandinavia first in Switzerland and Germany, then in Austria and Holland. During the 1980s, the international expansion continued in America and Asia. By 1994, the IKEA group had more than 120 stores in 26 countries and employed more than 26 000 employees, thus making it the largest furniture retail chain in the world (Kjaer 1996).

In 1997, IKEA had 13 furniture stores in Sweden with 2,000 employees, of whom around two hundred were in administration. The country's largest store, Kungens kurva in Stockholm, employs almost 500 people, of whom around sixty work in administration. According to the local union representative for administrative staff there are no statistics for employee ethnic background. She estimates, however, that some administrative staff have an immigrant background, and that there are ten or more with an immigrant background working elsewhere in the company. The ethnic background of employees is not monitored by IKEA. However, the company does have its own explicit and distinctive personnel policy.

In 1976, the profile and marketing strategy of IKEA was articulated explicitly by the founder Ingvar Kamprad in a pamphlet called *To create a better everyday life for the majority of people*. The pamphlet described the philosophy of IKEA and is used in marketing campaigns. Since the mid-1980s, a large-scale training programme called the 'Ikea way' has trained employees to become IKEA ambassadors. The programme includes lectures on IKEA history, product range and human resource philosophy (Kjaer 1996).

IKEA has its own unique corporate culture which has emerged along with the company's business idea. According to the 'Our vision' brochure this culture has its roots in 'the stony fields of the province of Småland in southern Sweden. It's all about people, about our relationships with each other and the world around us, about thrift and hard work, humility and willpower. Our culture allows of no barriers between different categories of personnel. We know that all tasks are important, that we need each other. IKEA has a large number of employees and they are spread all over the world.' Cost effectiveness is stressed to achieve good results with small means.

IKEA also has the ambition to serve as many people as possible. 'We are working to broaden our product lines in order to satisfy a wider range of tastes and to meet local needs.'

The company's policy rests on a 'triangular base': 'Dreams, Business ideas and Personnel ideas'. The basic personnel policy is described in a folder 'Our Personnel Idea' and covers recruitment, development, training and management.

IKEA recruits people who, from their own experience as IKEA customers, know and understand our ideas in theory and in practice. IKEA seeks to employ people who: Work to the best of their ability, show initiative, accept responsibility for the consequences of what they do, trust their own judgement and dare to question accepted practice when they have a better idea of their own. The company also appreciates employees who do not put their own prestige first, who are open and honest, co-operate with others and are cost-conscious and understand that everything has a price tag.

In return, the company offers a job in a growing company where there are opportunities to develop and choose between different types of career. Employees have the opportunity to work in an environment where people and 'community' are central values and where an outstanding contribution is recognised, good results are appreciated and greater personal responsibility is the result. Experience in IKEA is an advantage when vacancies are to be filled and promotion are pending.

The TCO representative at Kungens kurva store is also a member of the company's central co-ordinating group, and confirms that internal recruitment is an important part of personnel policy. Many employees begin on the 'shop floor' and then advance upward to administrative positions. Only in a few cases are personnel recruited from outside to fill administrative vacancies.

In accordance with this policy, the company expects employees to take responsibility for their training and career development and learn as many aspects of the job as possible. New employees are given responsibilities and problems to solve at an early stage. Yearly development discussions with management and bosses take up the individual employees' abilities, performance, work situation and long-term ambitions. The company makes it possible to choose both a specialist and management career. The way to this is through work tasks where the employees act as trainers and guides for each other. A central slogan is that 'IKEA is developed by employees who also develop'.

According to the union representative, ethnic discrimination has not been a topic for discussion. Neither management nor employees seem to have come into contact with the problem. Given the amount of interaction between employees and the good relations between personnel and management conflicts are rare. Employee identification with the company is high at all levels. So much so that the union might be a little too inactive.

### 3.5.2 Telia

Telia is the leading supplier of telephone-based communication systems in the Nordic and Baltic regions. In its own words the concern is 'a competitive international information company with a streamlined customer-oriented organisation'. With its just over 33,000 employees it serves both private individuals and companies. Telia has offices in twenty countries and language and cultural skills are considered to be an important asset for the company.

During Autumn 1995 and Spring 1996 a course was offered by Telia for white-collar immigrants. The course combined both theory and practice and was a co-operative scheme between the company and the Stockholm county labour market board.

Twenty-five immigrants from the first and second generation with both Swedish and foreign university qualifications took part. It was considered important for the course participants to realise that their training corresponded to the competence requirements at Telia. Among those who took part were unemployed system analysts, computer engineers and economists.

The programme included 27 weeks of training divided into 13 weeks of theory, and an introduction to Swedish working life and a Telia production unit followed by 14 weeks of practical training. The programme began with 25 participants. One person left when offered a job at another company. Of the 24 who completed the training, 20 were employed by Telia when filling ordinary vacancies.

The company commented on the project in its evaluation:

The fact that it is unique for a large employer like Telia to have taken the initiative and acted in this way has meant that the programme has been followed with a great deal of interest by the mass media, other companies and by union organisations.

Because production within the company relies on teamwork, team training is part of Telia's personnel policy for all employees. According to the union representative for the company's administrative staff, this has indirect consequences for immigrants. The training to provide increased social competence based on the company's demands for good co-operative skills and the ability to adapt to teamwork is not, however, specially designed for employees with an immigrant background, but for all employees.

The company does not have any statistics on the national and ethnic background of employees. However, there is a programme proposal for promoting ethnic pluralism which it is suggested ought to become part of a general equal opportunity policy which also includes sexual equality. However, trade unions have questioned the wisdom of combining these two issues into one. The promotion of ethnic multiplicity is to be a goal for the 1997-1999 period.

The immigrant question which is of most interest for the company and unions in Spring 1997 is Europe Against Racism Year explained the union representative. The European Tele Committee has approved a resolution against racism. It asks for employers and unions to specify what measures have been taken. The Committee's resolution states that racism and xenophobia is an important and growing problem in Europe and one that must be tackled by applying the plan of action during 1997.

According to the plan of action:

- Telephone companies ought to issue special telephone cards which take up the problem , and union organisations can issue special stickers and badges.
- Employers and trade union organisations ought to publish articles in newspapers which are distributed among personnel and union activists.
- Employer and trade union organisations ought also to discuss which other measures can be taken in order to prevent racism and xenophobia at all organisational levels.

Post-Telegraph and Telecommunications International have asked Telia to report back with the measures which have been taken. It has also asked Telia to send examples of the telephone cards and other campaign materials which have been distributed.

At Telia measures had scarcely progressed beyond the discussion stage in March 1997. During the Spring of 1997 an intensive and expensive advertisement campaign 'Someone is longing for you...' where the text on the colourful advertisement posters are in immigrant languages is under way. The campaign seeks to attract a specific customer category, presumably with relatives abroad who miss them. If one calls them during certain times of the day, it is cheaper.

### ***3.6 Local Union Anti-Discrimination Policies***

IKEA and Telia are both large international companies with their own distinctive personnel policies. However, the question of ethnic discrimination in working life has not received very much attention in personnel policy documents and practical work with personnel questions. Neither have these two companies, according to union representatives for administrative and management personnel, have any experience of problems with ethnic inequality.

Monitoring the ethnic background of employers is interpreted as being in conflict with the principle of equal treatment for all which is such a central pillar of IKEA's personnel policy. The dominant perspective on what ethnic equality is and which forms the basis for equal opportunity policies is precisely that of *identical* treatment regardless of ethnic background.

Telia's 1995 project for unemployed immigrant professionals does, however, express a different view, namely that there may exist barriers in working life especially in the recruitment of new personnel. The aim of the project was to remove such barriers through special action for immigrants with a university education. As a one-off project, it may also have been used by the company to improve the proportion of immigrant employees within Telia.

Otherwise, the active recruitment of administrative and management staff with immigrant backgrounds or the use of quotas and positive discrimination as short-term measures to achieve a more representative workforce have been alien ideas out of step with the companies' general principle of equal treatment as the best guarantee of equality.

In IKEA's distinctive and carefully thought out personnel policy, internal recruitment plays a determining role for the employees' possibility to advance and be promoted. Likewise, the recruitment criteria that an individual fit into the company's organisational culture can in the long-term mean a certain amount of indirect discrimination. When the chance that an employee will fit in are maximised at the recruitment stage, then the chances of an applicant with the correct formal qualifications, but with a different cultural background, are minimised. Given that the way to the top within IKEA proceeds mainly via the 'shop floor', this avenue is not normally open for anyone applying from outside.

Certain forms of anti-discrimination policy can thus be understood as being in conflict with free competition and market principles and the business philosophies of individual companies. A problem can be that the occurrence of ethnic discrimination need not be the result of deliberate actions, but the consequence of a lack of awareness of the mechanisms which lie behind ethnic discrimination in working life.

An alternative, but equally competitive strategy, could instead start with the fact that IKEA, as a company, caters for ethnically diverse customers at least in Sweden. Winning the confidence of immigrant customers by having a staff which reflects the ethnic composition of the population as a whole is not an idea which seems to occupy a natural place within the company policy at present.

Within Telia discussions of ethnic pluralism began in 1997 and the company has decided to change policy direction and include ethnic pluralism as part of personnel policy together with equal opportunity for women and men. In the long-term this may promote equal opportunity by encouraging intercultural awareness among employees. For newly employed immigrants, the chances of integrating oneself are probably easier in a work environment where ethnic pluralism is an accepted everyday reality. Measures of this type are in line with the company's general policy of promoting teamwork. The internal training in teamwork aims to improve communication between employees and is justified by the need for greater co-operation within today's work organisations.

Increased cultural awareness among personnel as the result of a policy declaration in favour of cultural pluralism may lead to changed attitudes toward employees with an immigrant background and influence gatekeepers at the recruitment stage. A policy document is usually also preceded by and subsequently gives rise to discussions and questions, in this case about ethnic equality and discrimination, which can affect attitudes even if there may not be total agreement as to which goals are to be achieved and the most effective means of realising them.

Telia's work with immigrant questions was also strongly influenced during 1997 by the recommendations which were the result of the agreement between the social partners within EU. The reasons for putting effort into anti-racist measures is therefore a reaction to pressures from outside in the form of international agreements rather than internal factors.

It is too early to say exactly what kind of organisational support exists for Telia's ethnic pluralism policy for the period 1997-1999 as it is still in the initial stages. It is clear the policies of the central organisations have not had time to reach local union work. The impact of the goals of greater equality in personnel policy and in the work of union representatives have yet to be realised. This is scarcely surprising. According to the representative from central TCO there has barely been time to establish the policy at union branch level.



### **3.7 Evaluation**

In Sweden the labour market partners are important political actors because of their high levels of organisation and lack of internal schisms along religious or other lines. They are also important actors in questions concerning ethnic discrimination in working life. TCO, with its 1.3 million members employed in both the public and private sectors, has, in co-operation with SAF and LO, produced several policy documents since the mid-1990s. As late as Spring 1997, the organisation produced a proposal for a policy document intended for union activists and white-collar workers. This case study has been primarily interested in these policy initiatives.

For TCO, ethnic equality in working life has been a live issue since 1995. In that year the organisation, together with LO and SAF, produced a joint policy declaration against ethnic discrimination in the private sector and also contributed to an equivalent policy document for the public sector. In 1997, a new edition of a more comprehensive policy document 'Immigrants in Swedish Working Life' was issued in co-operation with SAF and LO.

All of these documents (especially the last of them) illuminate the problem of indirect/institutional discrimination particularly in the context of recruitment. The question of ethnic inequality in working life is placed on the agenda by being approached from different perspectives. By giving examples of indirect discrimination and its concrete consequences an attempt is made to increase personnel staff and union awareness of the problem. The content of the concepts themselves are also clarified.

The 1997 joint policy declaration address recruitment staff and employers in particular in the discussions of how promoting ethnic equality benefits the company. The authors of the policy document are aware that companies today operate in international environments where they meet customers with different national and ethnic origins and where multicultural personnel contribute to creating good customer contacts which is to the advantage of the company. It is also in the company's interests to exploit the reserves of talent that are present regardless of ethnic or national origins.

The policy document clearly rejects negative ethnic special treatment in recruitment, advancement and promotion, though often without providing a more concrete example of which measures can be employed to do so. The discussions and descriptions of specific situations do, however, perform the function of enabling the reader to identify easily with, for example, recruitment personnel and their way of thinking in the context of employing someone, which might make it possible for the reader to reflect on their own situation. Less common are recommendations for measures which allow active tolerance of cultural and religious differences.

TCO's programme proposal from Spring 1997 gives the impression of being a union anti-discrimination policy and can be said to represent a more radical position than the joint programme for the labour market partners. It is not only the question of negative special treatment which is taken up, but also xenophobia, racism and right-wing extremism in society and the workplace. The document also contains concrete proposals for how racism is to be tackled.

The document differs from the joint policies in that it begins from the supposition that ethnic discrimination in working life is a definite fact. As in the other policy documents, space is devoted to a discussion of proposals for how immigrants can be integrated into society and working life better than at present. More effective teaching of Swedish and the right for children to learn their mother tongue are regarded as important measures.

The special measures intended for TCO's own internal organisation include a number of recommendations and concrete proposals: how to recruit immigrants to union branches and boards and how members are to be encouraged to object to racist or xenophobic remarks. Union activists are also reminded that they set an example through their own actions. TCO's policy, then, does not give the impression of treating ethnic discrimination as something which exists 'out there' in society in the form of a general social problem but which does not concern the internal workings of the organisation.

Information training which encourages intercultural awareness and promotes greater understanding is part of all the programme documents. However, some of the TCO document proposals aim to change behaviour regardless of members' attitudes, seen for example, in the challenge to elect immigrants to union offices.

All of the policy programmes can be said to place stress on changing the attitudes of the reader and assume that changed attitudes will in time lead to changed behaviour. Much of the policy content can be said to have been, at least in part, the result of co-operation and contacts with the European social partners. The process of producing the policies and programmes has thus progressed in parallel with European developments. The existence of Sweden's 1994 law against ethnic discrimination in working life has also been significant in placing these issues onto the political agenda and legitimising open discussion of ethnic discrimination. However, as we have seen, the implementation of these policies and programmes is still very much in its infancy.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS

There are obvious similarities and differences between the two case studies we have chosen to present in this report. In the case of Stockholm County Council, a public sector employer and workplace with a large proportion of immigrants working in blue-collar jobs, a programme has existed for several years and there has been time to assess its successes and failures. In the case of TCO, a trade union for white-collar workers in both the public and private sectors, the policy documents produced together with SAF, LO and its own proposed document are of such recent vintage that there has not been sufficient time for them to have had an impact on union and organisational praxis. In addition, the private sector initiative, unlike those taken by Stockholm County Council, should also be seen against the background of other European initiatives taken during recent years.

#### Monitoring

A prerequisite for being able to find out the exact situation of immigrants within an organisation and measure the effects of policies is reliable information. This often means monitoring a workforce's ethnic composition. SLL has extensive statistics on the national background of its employees making it easy to gain an overview of the placement of immigrants (or at least foreign citizens) within the organisation. But the existence of reliable statistics in itself does not, of course, guarantee that they will be consulted or have an appreciable effect on policy formulation. Statistics covering a period of several years indicate little change in the kind of work carried out by immigrant employees within the SLL organisation.

TCO has expressed opposition to the idea of ethnic monitoring in individual workplaces in its policy programme proposal and this is also true of the policy documents produced together with the labour market partners SAF and LO, although in the joint document some monitoring of which applicants are called to interviews is suggested. However, TCO has said that the ethnic composition of its own organisation ought to be monitored to some extent so that the backgrounds of elected union representatives reflect the ethnic composition of membership. In this respect, TCO is somewhat more radical in the demands it places on itself than on the organisations in which its members work. In the case of the two companies we have briefly looked at - Telia and IKEA - neither have adopted a policy of differential treatment for immigrants and the need for ethnic monitoring is therefore absent.

Stockholm's County Council has a long history of programmes and initiatives and it is common knowledge among the general public that large numbers of immigrants are employed by the council. As a public sector organisation, SLL is obliged to follow the principle of 'openness' (*offentlighetsprincipen*) which guarantees that the organisation can be subjected to public scrutiny. TCO's opposition to the monitoring of private companies can be understood as expressing the more general private sector dislike of external interference in private organisations. Monitoring is also seen as being in conflict with the principle of equal treatment for all as we have seen. And it is also possible, we would suggest, that there are worries that monitoring might reveal a situation of discrimination or at least severe under-representation of immigrants.

## **Equality Targets for Recruitment**

The use of quotas for ethnic minorities and a reliance on forms of positive discrimination are measures foreign to traditional Swedish labour market policy, which, on the whole, has favoured a colour-blind policy. Up until the beginning of the 1990s there was full employment in Sweden and this was still an official political goal. A very active labour market policy effectively created job opportunities to such an extent that this mitigated the negative effects of ethnic discrimination in the sense of the exclusion of immigrants from the labour market. However, other forms of discrimination still existed in the labour market such as in promotion and access to jobs which match a person's qualifications.

In the cases we have examined, positive discrimination does not occur. It is seen as creating a category of citizens or denizens who are separate from the rest of society and who, perhaps, will be seen as in need of special help because of their own shortcomings and lack of ability. Positive discrimination in the labour market can therefore be seen as in direct conflict with Sweden's immigrant policy and its aim to avoid the creation of immigrant ethnic minorities in society with their own rights and special needs to be met through special measures (see point 2.3).

Neither SLL nor TCO have real ethnic equality targets as such. SLL already has a workforce which in some respects reflects the ethnic composition of the general population in the Stockholm region, even if the distribution of immigrants within the Council's occupational structure shows a clear concentration within the less skilled sectors. As noted, TCO does argue that its own governing bodies ought to reflect the composition of the general population, and the composition of the union's membership. But this is not a target in the sense of achieving a certain percentage of union representatives with an immigrant background by a certain date. It is, rather, in the form of a general principle. Furthermore, again as noted, this recommendation only applies to TCO's own organisation not to individual workplaces as such a recommendation would effectively require the use of ethnic monitoring. Equal opportunities are understood as the result of *identical* treatment, positive discrimination is not an option within this framework. It is, however, worth noting that sexual equality in Sweden has resulted in some positive discrimination measures for women.

## **Positive Measures for Equal Opportunity**

We have been able to note the existence of several initiatives which were or are intended to improve the chances of immigrants in the labour market. SLL already has a workforce which reflects the general population's ethnic make-up in this respect there are no obvious barriers. If one can speak of barriers, it is perhaps within the organisation itself. This can be seen in the concentration of immigrant employees to certain kinds of job. Improving the language skills of immigrants and the translation of professional qualifications from abroad into Swedish equivalents are measures which have been taken to improve the position of immigrant employees. SLL has created the 'Jobs for Young Immigrants' project, although this may only turn out to be a one-off measure if continued funding cannot be guaranteed.

Telia has applied the 'level playing field' principle in its course for a group of white-collar immigrants which led to employment with the company. Telia's project for recruitment of immigrants was, however, also a one-off initiative rather than a permanent feature of the company's recruitment policy.

In the case of TCO, combating discrimination and unfair treatment, as it is described in the joint documents, is primarily understood to be a question of changing the attitudes of recruitment personnel. We have already noted that the policy documents, which have still to be officially approved and adopted, have not been in existence long enough for any concrete results to have emerged.

An alternative approach is to subscribe to the equation 'equal opportunity = identical treatment' this can be said to inform the policy of IKEA. Even SLL, TCO and Telia, while they may have some projects or recommendations which involve or imply differential treatment, nonetheless place greatest emphasis on identical treatment for everyone. Having said this, identifying the special problems faced by immigrants and producing a plan of action or policy document specifically addressing questions of discrimination, etc. is itself a kind of measure which indicates that differential treatment is needed and moreover is actually present - the programmes itself is an example of this. What we have therefore is something of a 'performative contradiction', i.e. the denial of the need for special measures in a document which is itself a special measure.

### **Practical Measures to Prevent Discrimination**

The TCO document together with the labour market partners marks an important attempt to prevent indirect or unintended discrimination and to make employers more aware of the criteria which can have discriminatory effects such as an exaggerated emphasis on what is presumed to be necessary social competence but may not be recognised as such by recruitment staff. Similarly, SLL is quite explicit in its programme that not being aware of the skills of immigrant employees when filling vacancies, or the potentially discriminatory effects of standard procedures is not an excuse.

Most of the measures we have examined are based on the idea that a change in behaviour is the result of a change in attitudes. Greater knowledge of immigrants, immigrant cultures and one's own assumptions paves the way for a more just workplace and labour market. Extreme xenophobia and racism are not part of this picture of the problem. If racism and xenophobia are present, policies designed to change attitudes by providing more information are unlikely to be effective. Instead, direct changes to behaviour are more likely to be needed which effectively exclude or prevent discriminatory actions regardless of how a person thinks.

There are examples of various initiatives which have been taken such as seminars and educational material about immigration and its causes and even the policy documents themselves. The major assumption behind most of these is that acquiring greater knowledge of other cultures makes people more tolerant and reduces the likelihood and incidence of discrimination. This is true in all of the cases examined. It can be seen as a typically Swedish example of social engineering.

However, active training, in the sense of role-playing is absent. The TCO, SAF, LO 'round table' discussion is meant to be a feasible example of what can be done in the workplace. Indeed, the way the discussion is written effectively pulls the reader into the debate. The debate shows how it is acceptable for different actors to have different opinions and to ventilate them openly. A certain amount of cultural awareness training has figured within SLL initiatives though some informants are of the opinion that it has decreased in frequency during recent years. The course in racism and xenophobia, like the joint document round table

discussion, also brought disputes out into the open in order to be discussed and to develop praxis for future initiatives.

TCO has issued the challenge to members to elect immigrants to union post and to see what happens, rather than attempt to change attitudes first. One can interpret this as an attempt to change attitudes not in the direction of greater understanding and acceptance of putative cultural differences, but towards a greater willingness to take a chance in a situation where knowledge and certainty are lacking.

Racism awareness training, which is intended to make for example, the individual aware of his or her racist prejudices, is not present within most of the material or the other initiatives we have examined even if it is touched upon in some SLL material and the problem is raised by TCO in its own policy document.

Within the Swedish context accusations of racism are highly problematic. A series of surveys carried out during the 1970s and 1980s stressed the essentially tolerant character of the Swedish population (e.g. Westin 1987), rather than the presence of xenophobia or discriminatory attitudes. It was not until the very beginning of the 1990s that findings suggested that native Swedes were less inclined to support the government's generous refugee policy, and that those people who were already intolerant of immigrants had become more so (Lange and Westin 1993). The 1990s has also witnessed the greater visibility in Sweden of neo-nazis and racist groups in Sweden than previously. One consequence of this has been that accusations of racism have recently been levelled rather indiscriminately and sometimes with a good deal of hyperbole at all those who have criticised the immigration policy. This has robbed the word of much of its accuracy critical force and also led to heated denial by those so labelled. It has also made it easier to dismiss such accusations as extreme and unreasonable. This situation also helps us to understand the prominence accorded the attitude changes and information campaigns based on the assumption that most people are rational and fair-minded rather than 'anti-racist' strategies which view racism and discrimination as more 'emotional' and less receptive to rational debate.

## **Organisational Structures**

Within SLL there is an established organisational structure in place including the Reference Group, Secretariat and contact persons. This provides at least the formal organisational requirements for policy initiation, evaluation and feedback. There are also specific organisational demands at the central level for follow-up studies every third year.

TCO, in its own policy document, argues that ethnic equality ought to become a feature of daily praxis, i.e. that standard organisational routines and practice ought to be developed which effectively exclude discriminatory actions, especially of an indirect character, and that this be the ambition for the period 1997-99. Whether TCO's own proposed policy document 'Immigrants in TCO', which was completed in Spring 1997 and has yet to be finally approved, will be able to achieve this remains to be seen. Furthermore, the opposition of TCO to ethnic monitoring might make the effective measurement of results attained within organisations difficult in the future.

The main actors who are responsible for policies and programmes are recruitment staff, union representatives, supervisors and foreman, It is legitimate to ask if all of these actors understand the nature of the problem of ethnic discrimination? What are the practical opportunities to do

anything, are there conflicts and tensions between the central ideal found in the policy documents and programmes and the local realities of recruitment, and, for instance, the election of union officials where a certain amount of competition between candidates is likely to exist? The fact that the policies have been decided on and drawn up at the highest level does provide them with them a certain status and weight, but this in itself is not a guarantee of success. The answers to these questions must remain open in the case of TCO until its policy has been given a chance to influence practice.

### **Why Prevent Discrimination ?**

The impact of the 1994 legislation, when interpreted in a positive light, may signal a moral reason for preventing ethnic discrimination and unfair treatment. The inadequacies of the current legislation thus need to be made up for with organisational initiatives. This is clearly not so in the case of SLL where programmes have existed since the 1970s which were not created because of legal pressures, but because of more moral social justice considerations. Making use of the talents that exist in the interests of efficiency and good business practice is a recurring argument in the joint TCO, SAF and LO document. Connected to this is the further recognition that customers and clients may demand or prefer a more ethnically representative workforce.

That preventing ethnic discrimination is good for social peace and stability is an argument that has been put forward on several occasions. There is also the argument put forward by TCO in its own policy document that a united workforce free from ethnic cleavages strengthens the hand of the unions if they know that they enjoy the support of all members. However, it has to be asked if this is the reason for introducing a policy or if it is being used as a justification for the policy after the fact and, moreover, one likely to win the support of union members?

Negative reasons for policies can be characterised as reactive measures rather than active ones. The passing in Sweden of the 1994 law against ethnic discrimination may have provided pressures, both moral and legal, on the labour market partners to address the issue of ethnic discrimination in more detail than previously. This may also be true of the 1995 Florence Declaration by the social partners. International pressures or the wish to avoid international criticisms may have played a contributory part in stimulating the labour market organisations to propose concrete measures against ethnic discrimination in working life. TCO mentions international co-operation, meetings, etc. as existing parallel to their own initiatives. The authority of the 1994 law and importance of following international developments can be invoked to improve the status of policies. This was also the case for Telia where demands from Post- Telegraph and Telecommunication International to report on the anti-racism measures it had taken, were an important stimulus to considering the problem, even if concrete measures have yet to emerge. Clearly, then, measures at the European level such as declarations and agreements can play an important part in the development of national level policies and measures.

### **Policy Discussion**

We have already noted that the TCO, SAF and LO documents have not had sufficient time to change attitudes and routines in the workplace, this is even more true of TCO's own document, and it is therefore difficult to say anything concrete about policy outcomes. The rather general tone of the recommendations, rather than the specification of very exact and concrete goals, will also make it difficult to measure results.

Since the late 1960s, the Swedish government has been content to leave the regulation of negative treatment on ethnic grounds to the labour market partners in Sweden, though with little success. There has been a strong reluctance to acknowledge the existence of ethnic discrimination in the labour market by the labour market organisations. This only partially ceased in 1994 when the law against ethnic discrimination in the labour market was introduced, but even this recent piece of legislation has already been subjected to serious criticism for its lack of effect. Expecting union representatives and members to progress from a position in which ethnic discrimination was not an acknowledged fact to a position in which everyone is to be aware of their own discriminatory attitudes and/or routines within only three years is therefore to expect a great deal.

The likelihood of the joint TCO, SAF and LO policies succeeding depends, in part, on the scale of the attitude changes required at all organisational levels and the organisational support that exists. The change required is presumably great given the historical attitude toward the existence and extent of ethnic discrimination present among the labour market partners.

On the other hand, as noted above, the documents do enjoy support at the highest level within the organisations though their existence is still not widely known judging by the few workplaces we have examined. It is obviously important that the documents find their way down to the lower trade union levels and individual workplaces. However, it is not clear to what extent the policy documents have been produced in response to internal pressures or in response to international commitments such as in response to the agreement between the social partners at the European level. This obviously has implications for the willingness to see them work in practice.

Policy programmes can be seen in different ways: The commonest assumption is that made by the *instrumentalist* approach, namely that a policy is to be implemented in detail and through concrete measures in order to change behaviour and attitudes. However, policy programmes can also have a *symbolic* function in a positive sense. Their detailed implementation is less important than the changes in the actors' common frames of reference and understanding which knowledge of the policy's existence can achieve. It is probably in this way that the policy documents and programmes we have examined can play an important part assuming that they reach and are read in places of work. As the cases have shown, much of the work in Sweden to prevent ethnic discrimination takes the form of changing attitudes and frames of reference rather than changing behaviour directly.

The basic philosophy informing these policies and programmes is one of social harmony. They aim to create consensus and shared values and to adopt a rational approach to tackling problems of ethnic discrimination. This is not perhaps surprising as such an approach to social problems is a typical feature of Swedish politics and policy-making generally.



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