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A guarantee for the future?

There are fewer young people outside education, employment or training in Denmark than in Sweden. Why do the Danes succeed? While all of Europe is learning from the Finnish youth guarantee, the Nordic Labour Journal has spoken to Nordic youths about their experiences, and examined how countries succeed with their measures. Central to them all are vocational educations, apprenticeships and internships.

EDITORIAL

15.10.2014

BY BERIT KVAM

We have known it for a long time, but more than ever we need to include young people — to rescue them from marginalisation also for the sake of the rest of us. OECD figures for Europe show that from this year fewer will enter the labour market than leave it. It is a challenge worth noting, but youth unemployment does not disappear as a result, according to British and German researchers. Political action is needed.

The Italian researcher Maurizio Ferrera is impressed by the help available to Norwegian youths to get activated. In many countries young people are left to fend for themselves. The youth guarantee is designed to prevent this, by securing jobs, internships or education to inactive youths. We take a closer look at the Finnish youth guarantee.

Danish authorities help vulnerable youths in their transition from elementary to further education with production schools, which focus on practical work and production. Sadly, there are not enough places. The government wants to address this with its “vocational education reform”.

Norway's 'Apprentice Promise' is wanted by employers and youths alike. Yet even though everyone thinks it's a good idea, more needs to be done. There are not enough apprenticeships to cover the need.

Sweden has for a long time failed to change the fact it has the highest youth unemployment in the Nordic region. It's now the first job on the new government's list. We went to Northern Sweden to see how “Swedish municipalities get to grips with youth unemployment”.

All the Nordic countries seem to struggle with finding good enough measures to secure young people's futures.

We know what is needed to help young people manage their transfer into working life: enough internships, individual approaches and help which addresses the needs of the individ-

ual youth, and preferably a mentor to see them through difficult transitions. It might sound extravagant: each youth gets the help he or she needs, but it could mean the difference between success and failure when it comes to the guarantee for the future.

Fewer youths equals more jobs?

As the workforce ages and the number of young people of working age falls, their chance of finding a job increases. But it is still too early for politicians to sit back and relax. Powerful measures are needed to fight youth unemployment. One solution is to create more apprenticeships.

THEME

15.10.2014

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said that “youth unemployment is perhaps the most pressing European problem today”. Youth unemployment in her own country stands at 7.9 percent, which is far lower than the EU average — 21.9 percent.

These were the Nordic youth unemployment figures during the second quarter of 2014, according to OECD statistics:

Country	Youth unemployment %
Denmark	12.6
Finland	19.7
Iceland	6.9
Norway	7.4
Sweden	23.5

2014 is a turning point for Europe’s labour market. According to the OECD this is the year the number of working age people (15-64) starts falling in the EU. Over the next 20 years the number of working age people in the 28 member states will fall by 6.5 percent, the equivalent of 21.7 million people.

The speed at which the workforce ages varies. In countries like Germany it is already shrinking. Out of the Nordic countries, Finland has the oldest population.

Migration complicates things

The calculation is complicated by how migration affects the number of people of working age. Between 2000 and 2010 immigration made up 70 percent of the EU’s increase in labour.

Yet even if the immigration rate carries on, the number of working age people will fall. The question is what will happen to youth unemployment when there are fewer young people.

John Mofatt from Durham University in the UK and Duncan Roth from the Philipp University of Marburg, Germany, have looked at how employment is affected by the size of the youth group (or the cohort which is the demographic term for a certain year group).

Since youth unemployment differs within Europe, they have looked at whether there is any correlation with the size of youth cohorts in different countries.

Problems won’t go away by themselves

The researchers conclude that individuals from larger cohorts are more likely to end up unemployed and that the effect is greater if you do regional analysis. But they still warn politicians not to think the youth unemployment problem will solve itself:

“Although shrinking youth cohorts potentially means an improvement to the current youth unemployment situation, you cannot rely on this. Other macroeconomic changes are of greater importance,” write the two researchers.

They found that the risk for young people of becoming unemployed was double if general unemployment in their country rose by one percentage point, compared to if the size of the youth group increased by a certain standardised unit.

Youth unemployment is often explained by the fact that young people’s productivity falls below the lowest agreed wage. This means hiring a young person does not pay, it costs more than the employer gets back.

To change that situation you could change the salary level for young people, but this is often resisted by older employees.

The risk is that salary levels in one trade will fall if special youth salaries are introduced.

Temporary jobs a trap

The main reason young people's productivity is lower is their lack of working life experience. Taking temporary jobs is not a secure way into the labour market:

"Temporary contracts are often thought to be a stepping stone to more stable employment for those with limited skills and experience, but the reality is often that many low-skilled youth get locked into such jobs or leave the labour market altogether, especially women," writes the OECD and ILO in a joint report (Promoting better labour market outcomes for youth).

The most important ways of fighting unemployment, according to the two organisations, are:

- Increase demand and boost job creation
- Maintain active labour market measures
- Strengthen vocational education
- Increase the number of apprenticeships

In Europe these measures have been gathered in a common package, the youth guarantee. It gives all youths under 25 a right to employment, further education, apprenticeships or internships within four months after they finish their education or become unemployed.

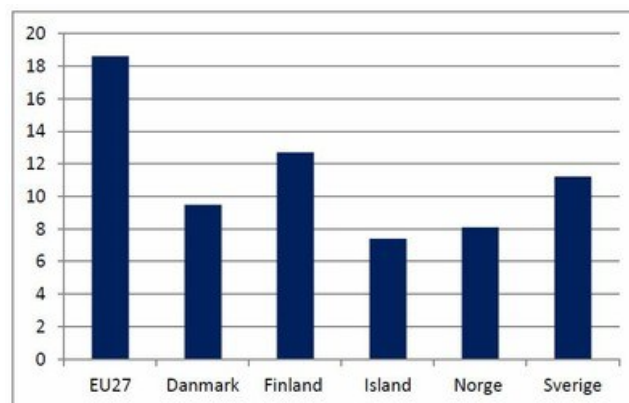
As a result there has been increased focus on vocational schools and training systems, in the EU and in the Nordic countries alike.

Lower pay in exchange for education

One way of helping young people is to give them training in the workplace, in exchange for lower pay. This helps them getting into the labour market.

Although this seems to be a win-win situation for both employers and youths, it occurs relatively rarely in Sweden. Only 3.5 percent of young Swedes, or 7,900 people, are working in so-called training agreements. If you count the smallest companies the number could be somewhat higher; 8,000 to 16,000 according to a report from the National Institute of Economic Research.

"The low number of apprentices in Sweden is one reason why the country's youth unemployment is so high. Because apprentices are considered to be employed, youth unemployment is lower in Denmark, a country with a well-established apprenticeship system," says Åsa Olli Segendorf from the National Institute of Economic Research. If you look at the group of young people who are neither in education, employment of training, there is less difference between the Nordic countries:



Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), ages 20–24, 2012. Eurostat

According to the OECD, NEET statistics represent a better measure for how badly hit young people are than unemployment statistics. The figure for Denmark shows some improvement, according to fresh statistics from the EU Employment Performance Monitor for 2013, when the number fell to six percent.

Despite the fact that vocational schools and training systems are so important for getting young people jobs, this education system has been undervalued in many countries, overshadowed by colleges and universities.

"Vocational education is often seen in these countries as a second-best, low-status option providing classroom-based programmes for academically weak students, unconnected to employer needs and mainly confined to traditional subjects," writes the ILO and the OECD.

So in order to fight youth unemployment there is also a need for a real improvement of the vocational schools' standing in society.



Finland's Mediakylpylä welcomes 34-36 unemployed youths for periods of five months. They get to work with sound and vision among other things. From left: Ida Liina Laine, Anu-Marit Ikola and Nicolas Harju.

Youth guarantee rolls out across the EU

Finland and Austria are in the vanguard when the EU is developing new ways of supporting young people at risk of becoming unemployed. Finland's youth guarantee means everyone will get a job, internship or training within three months, and the country's long-term youth unemployment is the lowest in all of the EU.

THEME

15.10.2014

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN, PHOTO CATA PORTIN

Experts from EU member states met in Helsinki in September to learn more about Finland's youth guarantee.

"Finland is a reference in this field and other governments may find some elements of the Finnish scheme useful in their countries," said László Andor, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion ahead of the meeting.

The Finnish youth guarantee ensures that young people between 16 and 29 can be activated three months after leaving school or losing a job. Now 28 member states have presented their own plans for introducing youth guarantees. More information can be found at the Commission's home page.

Made a mistake

The Nordic Labour Journal visited one of Finland's 250 so-called youth workshops, to see how the transition from school to workplace works. The Mediakylpylä ("Media Spa") workshop lies in a vocational training centre in the north of Helsinki.

"I graduated this spring, but after that I have done nothing at all, which probably was a bit of a mistake," says Nicolas Harju (20), who is getting acquainted with audio technology at the Mediakylpylä workshop.

That morning he broadcast an hour-long live show for the local radio with live rap artists in the studio — rap music with social criticism to be exact. It went well and his friends are congratulating him.

Now he is applying to begin training which starts in January, and has sent his papers to five different vocational universities. Having a plan for the future is one of the criteria for joining the workshop.

Next to him sits Anu-Maarit Ikola (23) who trained as a media assistant. She has finished her studies but cannot find a job. She was disappointed and soon realised there were no jobs in the media for her.

Now she is on a work placement as an assistant leader for the youth workshop, and she is an expert on the youth guarantee.

"The idea is to help young people at risk of marginalisation. To me it is somewhat problematic, since you have to be unemployed and not have an education."

Anu-Marit Ikola is considering switching trades and train to be a youth leader instead.

Games developer

Ida Liina Laine (20) is visually gifted and wants to find a job where she can develop and make computer games. She ended up at Mediakylpylä after doing voluntary work for the Red Cross and working with a temping agency.

"I attended a college for a year and that's where I realised what I wanted to do, to study games development, perhaps train to be a computer engineer at some university."

Mediakylpylä accepts 34-36 unemployed youths for five months at a time. They get to work with sound and video, as video documentary makers, animators or working with printed media like brochures and magazines. Jouko Salonen is responsible for the workshop and has experience from the advertising and printing trade. He says they don't demand too much from the young people, because many of them have psychological problems and regularly attend psychotherapy sessions.

"All I ask is for them to be here, even if they arrive a bit late."

The main point is that those who take part learn what it means to lead a regular life and to work professionally.

Hard for the youngest ones

His hope is that the youths will have moved on before the five months' period has ended. Many start at the vocational training centre in the same building. In his experience, the youngest — aged 16 and up — are struggling more with the discipline than their friends who are a few years older.

"The youngest are just placed somewhere and many leave."

All the three we met say they enjoy attending the workshop.

"At college there was a feeling of, argh, it's Monday morning. But I come here to play the piano and then I carry on at home," says Nicolas.

None of them seem to me to be at risk of marginalisation, but Nicolas explains that many young people worry about the future, about becoming adults. Anu adds that not everyone manages to cope.

"They have no control and have no idea what they want to do with their lives. Here in the capital region there is also an incredible array of choice. As early as in upper secondary education you must take decisions about your future, although you don't really know until you're in your 20s."

The City of Helsinki has an entire system of different youth workshops, ranging from woodwork and metalwork to cafés, sewing and media.

"You gain knowledge here, but no formal education. It does look better on your CV if you have done this, though," says Nicolas.

Important project

The youth guarantee is one of the current government's most important projects and is meant to strengthen employment and education for young people, and to protect them from marginalisation. In parliament the opposition has questioned whether the new system, which came into force at the start of the year, really works. One in every ten people between 16 and 24 are unemployed — which means they are not studying or working. Youth unemployment has risen by 50 percent since the system was introduced, but the rapidly falling economy could take much of the blame for that.

Many marginalised

Those who work with marginalised youths in the field also observe that the most difficult cases are not being looked after and that the rehabilitation promised by the government is still some way off. It is not possible to demand from marginalised youths that they present a finished plan for their lives, experts say.

One of them is Ulla Nord, who heads a project aimed at stopping marginalisation at the Helsinki Deaconess Institute. She

thinks prevention efforts should begin as early as in upper secondary school, since that is when problems often occur — like bullying. More and more youths become early school leavers. Last year in Helsinki the number was 15 percent. Many of those who managed to finish had such poor grades that they will not manage to compete for jobs.

“The youth guarantee does not take into account individual factors, it is the same for all.”

The fact that so many break off their vocational training is a sign that not all is as it should be. Youth workshops demand that the young people function at a certain level so that they can be bothered to stay there five days a week. The most exposed youths need to learn to handle their everyday lives and social situations, and for that Ulla Nord is still waiting for an initiative from the authorities.

Finnish forest industry keen on apprenticeships

An increasing number of young people find work in Finnish industry via apprenticeships. In recent years the forest industry has traded in its own traditional training schemes with other kinds of education — and the programmes are popular.

THEME

15.10.2014

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN

This spring 1,400 youths applied for 39 apprentice places at the paper manufacturer UPM's apprenticeship programme, and this autumn 900 applied for 50 more spaces.

"The initial experiences from this educational programme are very positive, and we will carry on as planned," says head of personnel Kai Latvala, who is responsible for UPM's two year long programme.

A massive process

Right now he and his colleagues are reading through applications and they invite the most promising candidates to an interview — several hundreds of them. It is a massive, time consuming process.

"Our model is different from others, it is a concept which we have designed from the bottom up, and this is not something we are just doing on the side for one year only."

He says the forest trade's public image might not be the best, but in the industrial communities the factories are considered to be good employers and the trade is thought to have good future prospects. This is also reflected in the number of applicants.

The competitor Stora Enso has also seen great interest in apprenticeships. Yet the company has no systematic recruitment programme — it takes people in as they are needed.

The forest industry is struggling with a lopsided age structure, and as a result of severe cuts in recent years the factories now face a lack people from the younger generation. Young people are tempted by the opportunities offered by apprenticeships with salaried training, and it is considered a good way of securing a job. Latvala says the aim is to hire everyone who is good enough.

Looking beyond the UPM experience, work-related vocational training has been shown to lead to lower youth unemployment. Yet apprenticeships are relatively uncommon in Finland, and involve just a few hundred youths a year — partic-

ularly those who already have some experience from working. It is a form of training which demands a lot from employers, and it needs motivated and independent youths. Not even state wage subsidies have helped improve the situation, but now something might finally be happening in Finland.

Denmark strengthens vocational education

Few young Danes are outside of the labour market. Improved vocational education should get even more of them into training and jobs.

THEME

15.10.2014

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER

Denmark is doing better than most other European countries when it comes to preventing young people remaining outside of the labour market. Only six percent of young Danes between 15 and 24 are neither in work, training or internships, which means Denmark ranks a proud third in the EU.

Only Luxembourg and the Netherlands have a lower number of young people who are not in education or working, and the EU average is far higher; 13 percent of EU youths are not working or in education. In countries like Italy, Bulgaria and Greece matters are even worse, where more than one in five young people has no job and does not study.

The figures come from Samspil.info, an employment newsletter from the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment, which is part of the Ministry of Employment. Per Kongshøj Madsen is one of Denmark's leading labour market researchers. He believes the reason so few young Danes are without jobs, education or internships is Denmark's low unemployment rate in a European context. But he also thinks the bar for entering the labour market is lower for young people in Denmark compared to many other EU countries.

Kongshøj Madsen, who is a Professor at the Department of Political Science and Government at the Aalborg University, points to the fact that Denmark has an active policy of following vulnerable young people on their journey from secondary school to further education at for instance schools of production, where training is based on practical work and production. There is also a strong tradition in Denmark for linking young people in training to the labour market:

"Many studies are designed to be practical and involve periods of internships, and young people often work while they study. This gives them an early introduction to working life," he tells Samspil.info.

Reform for better vocational education

Yet Danish vocational education and accompanying internships have been heavily criticised for many years, partly be-

cause some students do not get the chance to get an internship, which is normally a central element in the training. One in ten have to make do with a so-called school internship, which does not give them the same work experience. Some students can't get any work experience at all.

The government now wants to change this. A broad majority in parliament passed a comprehensive vocational education reform in February 2014. The reform comes into effect after the summer holiday in 2015 and will introduce a range of improvements to vocational educations. Entrance exams will be introduced along with more teaching hours, improved further training for teachers and more will be done to offer students internships.

The Ministry of Education has hired teaching consultants as part of the vocational training reform, who will advise vocational schools that struggle with teaching quality. They will also advise Danish vocational schools on skills development and spread general knowledge.

A drive for more internships

80,000 Danish youths are in vocational training in the school year of 2014-2015. 90 percent of them have a trainee agreement with an employer. The rest — one in ten students — must make do with school internships for now. This is becoming more common, because it is hard to find internships in real workplaces. There has even been a lack of school internships.

The government expects the reform to strengthen businesses' desire to set up internships, because the education is getting better and as a result the students are better qualified, ready and motivated and more attractive for businesses which are considering taking on a student. Vocational schools should also get better at helping students find internships, the country's municipalities have agreed to establish more internships and more school internships will also be created.

Future need for skilled workers

The Minister for Education, Christine Antorini (Social Democrats), says the vocational education reform is aimed at making Danish youths the best both behind a desk and at on the shop floor:

“Some people think we Danes are so clever that we can do without using our hands, and only use our head. This is not right. Denmark is both a knowledge and production country. That’s why Denmark’s vocational educations are now given a huge lift which will give us even better skilled workers for the future.”

She says it is crucial to get more young people to apply for and finish one of the 107 vocational training programmes available and that they acquire the skills which are needed in the labour market.

“Older and sick people will get help from the most skilled social and health care assistants. Our industries’ high-tech machines will be operated by the best process operators. Buildings, bridges and roads will be built by the most skilled bricklayers and builders,” the Minister said, commenting on the coming reform.



Henrik Tanum in the reception of Virke

Norwegian employers' organisation Virke: more apprentices please

It is hard to find a better role model for apprentices than Henrik Tanum. He is full of enthusiasm and drive. Right now he is also the face of the Norwegian employers' organisation Virke, as he is learning the job as their receptionist.

THEME

15.10.2014

TEXT AND PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

“Working at Virke is both fun and challenging. You can learn a trade in school, but you don’t get to practice what you learn. After a year here I still feel I’m learning new things every day and it’s good for my personal development too,” he says.



Henrik Tanum.

He has already been interviewed several times by different media because Virke is one of the organisations which have wholeheartedly embraced a campaign initiated last December by trade unions, employers and the government, called 'Lærlingløftet' (a wordplay meaning both the Apprentice Promise and the Apprentice Lift). The aim is to increase the number of apprenticeships by 20 percent by the end of 2015, compared to 2011 figures.

The government and the social partners signed a social contract promising to work together to increase the status of vocational training and to motivate more people to finish such training once they have started.

Despite Henrik Tanum's enthusiasm, all the Nordic countries face problems with their vocational training. A recent Nordic study summed up the situation like this:

"You do not attract resourceful and ambitious students by marketing training to academically weak groups of people, and you do not improve the status of the training either."

Tired of school

Put bluntly, vocational colleges struggle with an image of being somewhere you send youths who are tired of school, not a means to train for an attractive job. As a result, many businesses have set up their own in-house training schemes. There are Hennes & Mauritz schools, Clas Ohlson schools and ICA schools (for food retail).

"We're not even close to reaching our goal of 20 percent more apprenticeships," admits Marianne Westbye, coordinator for the Social Contract at the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

"But we're hoping for a ketchup effect, that we will see many more suddenly emerging towards the end of the period. Changing attitudes takes time," she says.

Østfold county used to be one of the country's worst regions in terms of the number of apprenticeships. But a new drive has seen some 100 new apprenticeships spring up there.

The employers' organisation Virke, with 18,000 members from many different areas of Norwegian business, does see an increase in interest from them, however.

"73 percent of our businesses are looking for some kind of skills which you don't learn in school, like entrepreneurship, initiative and energy. These things you learn on the job," says Anne K. Eggen Lervik, who is responsible for vocational training at Virke.

A proper career path

"We need to work with our reputation to make it attractive to choose vocational training and to make it a career path. The

ones who choose this now are very happy with their choice and get to do many interesting things."

To make vocational training more attractive, Virke wants to see changes in three areas. As a result, the organisation has launched three pilot projects.

- More fluidity between studies and work. The Norwegian model is two years in the classroom followed by two years' apprenticeship.

- In-house company training should be incorporated into the vocational training.

- Teachers in vocational colleges should spend more time within businesses.

"It takes too long to get students into apprenticeships. That is the motivation," says Anne K. Eggen Lervik. Henrik Tanum agrees. He says he matures faster as an apprentice compared to sitting in a classroom where you only interact with people your own age. Moving from his home city of Larvik to Oslo at only 17 probably also helped.

More opportunities for further education

"Virke wants better acknowledgement for vocational training programmes. More career paths must be created so that vocational schooling gives students the chance to study at university. We call it the Y Path (from 'Yrke', Norwegian for 'occupation'). It would for instance allow an electrician to carry on studying to become an electro engineer," says Anne K. Eggen Lervik.

"Y Paths were also created in sales, office work and tourism 6-7 years ago, allowing people to get a bachelor degree in service management for instance, but not enough people know about this opportunity."

Henrik Tanum can choose to go straight into work when he finishes his two years' apprenticeship. His monthly pay has risen from 11,000 kroner (€1,338) in the first year to 17,000 kroner (€2,067) in the second.

"In addition to my apprenticeship I work in telesales for the Aftenposten newspaper where my responsibility includes being a group leader. I also run a company, Russepakken, together with three other youths," he says.

Norwegian college graduates are called 'russ' and walk around in red or blue overalls. Many get together to buy an old bus and turn it into a rolling disco. Henrik's company develops logos and songs for those who want to make their celebrations extra special.

"You can be a russ at vocational college too, but I have not been that. My motivation to keep studying has not decreased, however. I will probably take a further course, but first I want to get my professional certificate," says Henrik.



Navigatorcentrum, NC, a municipal labour market centre for young people in Östersund

Swedish municipalities target youth unemployment

Over the past seven years, Sweden's Public Employment Service has taken on more and more responsibility for labour market measures aimed at young people. But it has been a challenging task, and municipalities have become increasingly central to getting people into work or training. If they don't, the cost of marginalisation lands on the municipalities' desk.

THEME

15.10.2014

TEXT AND PHOTO: GUNHILD WALLIN

"What are your plans and what do you want to do?" That was the question which faced 20 year old Andreas Englund early this year when social services put him in touch with Navigatorcentrum, NC, a municipal labour market centre for young people in Östersund.

"I wanted something which would give me relevant experience for what I will be doing in the long term," says Andreas Englund.

He has respect for jobs within elderly care or elsewhere in the care sector, but he had different visions for his own future. He managed to shape and realise those visions with the help of NC and coach Erik Hellgren. Internships or youth jobs can have different purposes, explains Erik Hellgren. Sometimes it can be a way to get young people into temporary positions, or as in the case of Andreas Englund it can be to figure out what you want to do in the future, to learn more and get experience from the occupation you consider doing long term. All young people who come to Navigatorcentrum must write

a motivation letter, whether they come via social services, job centres, as early school leavers or out of their own free will. The coach follows this up and together they find a suitable internship, education or a so-called youth job, which allows young people to work while spending some of the time studying.

A salary strengthens responsibility

Andreas Englund dreamt of becoming a philosophy lecturer, but he was also interested in politics — what is really going on behind the walls of the municipality building? Now he knows. For six months he has had a youth job with Östersund Municipality. He has been working full time, but if he had wanted to he would have had the right to spend 25 percent of his time studying. He has received a salary, which for a youth employee is 75 percent of the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union's minimum wage. He made 12,500 kronor (€1,368) a month.

“Having a salary is very important. It makes it a kind of employment with more responsibility. I was very much included at work and became one of the staff. That is worth a lot. If you are on a work compensation scheme you risk working just as much but you don't feel appreciated. It also makes a great difference having a salary you can live off,” says Andreas Englund.

We are sitting in one of the homely rooms at Navigatorcentrum in central Öresund. It is easily accessible for anyone who wants to pop in for a coffee or a chat. A map of the world with some red dots hangs on the wall to show there are opportunities for those who want to try out voluntary work abroad.

Not an authority

When Navigatorcentrum opened in 2008, accessibility and openness were key words. This is not an authority, but a place where young people can come and get support and help to find out what they want to do, and to figure out what kind of help they need. They can knock on the door or they can be recommended to visit by the social services, the Social Security Agency or the Public Employment Service.

The young person's desires and needs represent the starting point, and authorities, municipalities and businesses coordinate their resources to help find the young person a job, an internship or education as quickly as possible. The whole thing started as a project financed by the social funds in 2008, but since 2012 it has been a permanent measure financed by the municipality, which provides seven million kronor (€766,200) a year for so-called youth jobs.



“It is important that we are not an authority, for instance the fact that what a young person decides about education or work is not linked to the social services' allowance. At the same time we must point out the fact that there are authorities and that they are our 'friends' who can also help along the way,” says Håkan Printz, who runs Navigatorcentrum and who has been working with unemployed youths for several decades.

NC also cooperates strategically with other players working for the same target group — social services, the Social Security Agency and the Public Employment Service. Representatives from NC and the authorities now meet every six weeks in a joint steering committee.

“It has taken time to create this cooperation. Everybody looks after their own budget and it can be difficult to make changes. But we have got to know each other and have got a better understanding of each other's worlds. Social services and the labour market measures are linked,” says Håkan Printz.

Break out of the box

He also wants to see new thinking on a national level which can break down the boxed in structures which exist today.

“Get social services, the Public Employment Service and the Social Security Agency under one roof, similar to for instance NAV in Norway. That way marginalised people end up in one place and it is easier to quickly implement effective measures. We also need to get better at getting a return on our investments in measures,” says Håkan Printz.

The fact that the municipality is working with unemployed youths is nothing new. Municipalities are responsible of identifying youths under 20 who are not studying or working. Until December 2007, when the youth guarantee was introduced, there were also municipal youth guarantees which meant the municipalities were also running labour market measures for under 26s, work which was financed by the state.

When the centre-right coalition government moved the responsibility away from municipalities to the Public Employment Service, this funding was withdrawn.

“You deprived municipalities of one of two important tools which were meant to work with young people,” says Tor Hatlevoll. He works with youth employment at the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SKL.

Put their own money in

Many municipalities then chose to use their own money to fund labour market measures. Partly because job centres do not have tools and responsibility for under 18s and partly because the so-called 90 day rule meant youths would get active help from the Public Employment Service only after 90 days of unemployment.

In 2013 some 4,500 people worked with labour market issues, and that year labour market measures run by municipalities had around 110,000 participants, according to the survey ‘Municipalities’ labour market statistics’. The numbers are estimates and according to the report the municipalities’ labour market measures differ a great deal.

“Many municipalities get young people active as soon as they leave school or become unemployed, and there are many good activities in the municipalities, sometimes also in cooperation with the Public Employment Service. Municipalities realise they need to offer measures immediately, or else the problems come back to haunt them,” says Tor Hatlevoll.

Disagreement

The municipalities and the state have not been able to agree on how labour market issues should be dealt with and by whom. Municipalities have for many years called for a new kind of organisation which would join together all authorities working with unemployed people, creating a way in for job seekers. This is the situation in Norway with NAV, in Denmark municipalities have sole responsibility for the unemployed and in the UK it is completely the state’s responsibility. In Sweden the government has wanted to put an increasing amount of responsibility onto the Public Employment Service.

“Municipalities run labour market measures because the Public Employment Service doesn’t take full responsibility, especially for groups with special requirements. Because municipalities are responsible for their citizens they have all the motives in the world to find alternative support and of course it is in everyone’s interest - both the individual person and society. That’s why labour market measures quickly give return on the investment,” says Tor Hatlevoll.

Guardedly positive to promises of work

So what do they think, people working with labour market issues in the municipalities and the young people who will be affected by the election promises which now must be put into practice, albeit in a slightly compromised fashion?

At NC in Östersund they are guardedly positive about the Social Democrats’ promises of 50,000 new jobs and work, internships or education for all unemployed youths within 90 days.

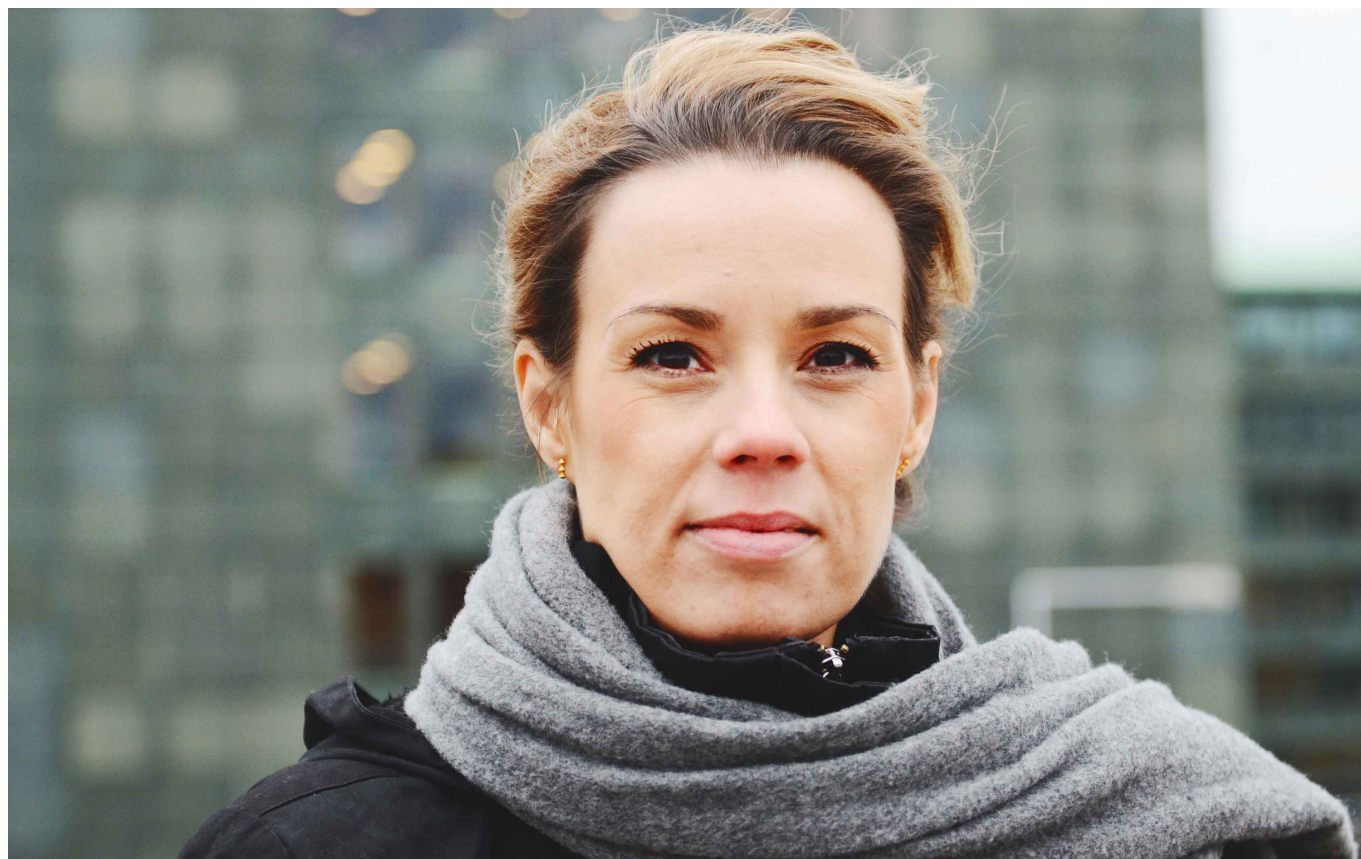
“I might be a bit cynical, but the risk is that the difference won’t be that great. If the 90 day rule is passed perhaps the measures will come into force as soon as 90 days have passed, rather than later, which is what happens now. Statistics become very important when we have measures like this, but what we want is an answer to the question — how do we help people get going as quickly as possible,” says Håkan Printz, head of Navigatorcentrum in Östersund.

Andreas Englund, who just over six months ago was so sick of never getting any help at the job centre that he personally visited almost every business in his home town of Brunflo and gave them his CV and a handshake — with no result — wants to see the promises become reality. He would also like the municipalities to get state funding to start and expand activities aimed at finding employment for young people.

“The 90 day guarantee sounds good, but make sure it turns into action. If you want to do it, you must make it a reality. If not people will be forced into jobs they don’t believe in,” says Andreas Englund.

Encouraged and inspired by his youth job at the municipality, a job he liked so much he volunteered to work on days in between public holidays, he is now planning to study political science.

“You were really a great resource for them and very much appreciated,” says coach Erik Hellgren before he and Anders and Andreas Englund retire to have a chat.



Kvinfo Director: The Nordics can't afford not to be gender equal

Modern gender equality must liberate both sexes, and the Nordic region must be at the forefront of this. It is too expensive not to, says Nina Groes, Director at the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity, Kvinfo.

PORTRAIT

15.10.2014

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: KVINFO

The gender equality debate in Denmark and the Nordic region has gained a new high profile player in Nina Groes, who started her job as Director of Kvinfo six months ago. She has just launched a new bold strategy for the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity.

“My ambition is to get gender equality onto all the major social agendas, be it the labour market, education or growth. Denmark and the Nordic region represent a small area globally, and we simply cannot afford for individual men and

women not to be able to realise their full potential because of a lack of equality,” she says.

Liberate both sexes

Nina Groes is young, a mother of two and married to a government minister. She has a business background, working with knowledge dissemination as an entrepreneur. She brings a new approach to the work with gender equality.

“Equality should not be a niche debate, it should be omnipresent and focus on giving every person the chance to ap-

ply themselves no matter their gender. Modern gender equality is about liberating both sexes. It is not a zero-sum game where one sex wins at the expense of the other. More gender equality is a win for both sexes and for all of society.

She sees plenty of areas where the lack of equality is an obstacle both for the chance for individuals to shine and for social development. Danish women are paid up to five percent less than their male colleagues for the same work with the same education and experience.

“That in itself is an unfair difference, but it also leads to inequality in a range of other areas, for instance the fact that women more often choose to work part-time, and the salary gap continues all the way into old age when women pensioners are left with considerably lower pensions than men.”

Entrepreneur with a gender agenda

Nina Groes also thinks it is unfair that Danish men get far less parental leave compared to men in the other Nordic countries, and this has deep and unfortunate social consequences.

“This is not only a problem for the individual father, who won't get to spend time with his small child. It also has an effect on the couple's relationship and the woman's career opportunities.”

During her own time as an entrepreneur, she saw that only three in ten entrepreneurs were women. She missed female role models, and felt the debate among entrepreneurs was very masculine.

“You almost talk about the entrepreneur as a predator, and we need to change that image. Entrepreneurship helps create opportunities for the Nordic region, and it is important to get gender onto that agenda too.”

Better dialogue with young people

She considers it an important task for Kvinfor to challenge gender stereotypes with the aim to allow everyone to be who they are. And that work begins with young people. With Nina Groes at the helm, Kvinfor has presented a new strategy which aims to make the equality debate relevant to young people. Kvinfor has opened a new school service.

“We want to improve our dialogue with young people. Our analysis shows that many youths consider gender equality to be something their grandmothers fought for, and something which they enjoy today. At the same time many young girls are struggling to live up to perfect ideals, and old fashioned stereotypes about male and female trades are very much alive. To take an example; 25 percent of young people think men are better managers than women.”

Widening the gender equality debate to include the entire country is a new focus area for Kvinfor. The debate can easily become too elitist, Nina Groes points out.

“Kvinfor will go out and talk to people even more. Gender equality is viewed very differently in the city and in the countryside. It depends on geography, age, social economy and ethnicity, and if you are a white, highly educated middle class woman like me, spending most of your time in the big city, there's a great risk that you end up talking about gender equality based on your own little world.”



Social scientists must guide us out of the crisis

"There is a fire of resentment burning across Europe, and there's an urgent need to calm tensions. Social scientists need to get involved. Dogmatic economists have been allowed to dominate the debate for too long," says Maurizio Ferrera, Professor at the University of Milan.

ANALYSIS

15.10.2014

TEXT: BERIT KVAM, PHOTO: FONDAZIONE GIANNINO BASSETT

The Italian researcher Maurizio Ferrera is keen to break the negative spirals created by the crisis, and thinks social scientists are now the right people to point to the different alternatives for action in political decision-making processes, both nationally and on an EU level. The economists' medicine has not worked.

'Beyond the Crisis in Europe. New opportunities for reconciling sustainability, equality and economic robustness'. That was the title of an Oslo conference on the welfare state organised by The Network for European Social Policy Analysis (ES-

PAnet). The NOVA social research institute at the Oslo and Akershus University College curated the conference.

Maurizio Ferrara was a keynote speaker at the conference, which gathered 270 participants from 27 countries. He was very worried about the consequences if Europe fails to address the inequalities brought on by austerity policies, and he challenged his colleagues.

"The national welfare state and the European Union are two precious legacies of the twentieth century. But this mutual relationship is fraught with unresolved tensions which have

multiplied during the crisis. It has led to a conflict between the nation state and the EU. Is reconciliation possible, and how would that work?" asked Maurizio Ferrera.

Behind all this is austerity-driven economic policies which have resulted in slow growth and high unemployment. This has created an imbalance which leads to greater inequality and more tension, especially within the Euro-zone.

Participative processes

Maurizio Ferrera used the word reconciliation as a starting point. The original Latin meaning of the verb 'conciliare' can be to rejoin entities which are moving away from each other, while the noun 'concilium' can mean council/counselling. Europe's challenge is to bring back together again — to reconcile — economic and social Europe through discursive and participative processes.

"In order to create a process like that it is important to ask basic questions like: what is the European Union, and what should the EU be?"

Today we have four clear conflict lines defining the union, he says: How much solidarity should EU's policies show? How do you balance market regulation and social safety on an EU level? Where do you draw the line between national social sovereignty versus EU interventions? A third battle line runs internally in the EU between member states with high wage levels and high welfare, and member states with low wage levels and low welfare. There are also conflicts between north and south, between rich member states and poorer ones which receive financial assistance.

Organised irresponsibility

Ferrera uses Max Weber, Jürgen Habermas and Stein Rokkan to illustrate his points, and he borrows Kant's arguments and his hospitality principle to arrive at norms which can be applied on an individual level to solve conflicts over immigration.

One important argument for Ferrera is Weber's view that intellectuals should provide clarity to politics. They must offer to politicians a choice of instruments to reach their objectives and they should involve themselves in debates on values and attitudes — for instance which attitudes form the basis for different alternative actions which can help politicians reach their objectives, and what the consequences of those choices might be.

"But in the end it is the politicians who must make the decisions," he underlines.

Maurizio Ferrera is critical to the one-sided discourse in the EU.

"If we look at the EU's intellectual sphere which focuses on knowledge, values and attitudes, we see that this sphere has

been monopolised by dogmatic economists who have a very particular view of how the economy should be administered."

He draws on his own experience to give an example. Commissioners presented a white paper on a new social investment scheme, and it travelled through the bureaucracy in accordance to the usual rules. When it returned after the technocrats had looked at it, the white paper was suddenly wrapped in a new economic terminology and the most important terms had become efficiency, targeting and selectivity. The overall tone of the discourse had changed through what he calls the EU technocracy's organised irresponsibility.

"It's irresponsible because of how these views are being used automatically. They stick to the principles even when they are inefficient."

The labour market is special

"Mainstream economists think of employment and jobs and unemployment in terms of having an efficient and sufficiently flexible labour market, apart from some safety net, and that this will allow the labour market itself to produce jobs."

Maurizio Ferrera says there are two variations of this view. One is that the labour market invigorates itself, so the less state intervention the more efficient it will be. The other view is the German *Ordoliberalism*, which has been of great importance for the shaping of the EU and its institutions. This approach says the market is not a natural thing, but it must be created through strong state interference.

"But regardless of which of the two models are applied, the economists don't see that the labour market functions differently than the product market, where you can shop around. The labour market is embedded in a social structure and has to be managed properly. This means you need to have industrial policies, employment services and unemployment benefits together as a whole.

"These must operate together, if they don't you will not achieve an equal and fair system, neither will you get an efficient system. That's why I challenge this system."

Economists forget about the social structure, he claims, and provides an example from a conversation he had with Norwegian students who had interviewed social workers and social services clients.

"The cooperation struck me as being highly developed. The social worker also acts as a facilitator, and some also take the client's preferences into consideration. This does not exist at all in Italy, especially not in southern Italy.

"The employment service is there, but it is like a notice board. You get a stamp and then you collect your benefit. Here [in Norway] you have a system which links your social standing to the service you get. Nearly all unemployed people are of-

ferred this service, I was told, while in certain European countries fewer than ten percent are, while the others are left to deal with informal channels.

“We need to find new ways of thinking which are based on fairness and responsibility,” says Maurizio Ferrera.

How do you do that?

“I challenge the prevailing paradigm because it has to a large extent proven to be inefficient. The idea that countries can get out of economic and financial stress simply by restructuring their public debt through keeping their public finances in order has proven to be false. So why don’t they learn? If they have done it wrong, they need to learn from it. Now we see some signs of learning. The European Central Bank is moving towards quantitative easing, nearly six years after the crisis hit. Why hasn’t this been done earlier? Furthermore, the paradigm is in itself incomplete,” he claims.

“As one of my colleagues put it: if Europe wants to stay competitive and create lots of jobs, Europe must gain new comparative advantage over other regions of the world where they produce the same goods and services as Europe, only cheaper. We don’t want to compete on price with these regions. We want a Europe which is capable of selling products and services which can be sold to the world, but only invented and produced and supported by the economic social structures here.

“So we need an environment with many universities and innovative environments where highly skilled people not only are highly educated but have interdisciplinary skills. The kind of education we give our children is absolutely crucial. To get there, you cannot keep cutting. We need economic and social investments, like in education and child care from an early age, and we need to invest in women.”

Only 49 percent of Italy’s women are in work, even though women in Italy are better educated than men and want to work.

“Imagine the potential when you allow women to participate in the labour market,” says Maurizio Ferrera, and argues for economic safety for households and liberation for women.

“A liberal society should allow people to pursue their dreams and you cannot expect a woman with a university degree who has become a mother not to work because her husband does not want to help with the housework.”

EU must get back to politics

Development has been controlled by self-propelled dynamics because of a technocrat elite of neo-liberal economists, says Ferrera.

“They have held top positions in national administrations, in national banks and in finance ministries, in supranational institutions like the European Central Bank, and the Commis-

sion’s Director-General is also an economist. They all come from the same economic background.”

Maurizio Ferrera believes we are now at a cross roads, as several national politicians have started to realise that the supranational technocrats have too much influence on political decisions.

“This is at the core of the debate on flexibility. When we talk about flexibility it means to regain the room for maneuver in order to respond to voters who are furious because of austerity measures and cuts and the fact that there are no jobs. They want to respond to the voters, but they also simply want to govern their countries along other principles than efficiency alone. For instance by aiming for more equality and social justice.”

He uses the example of when the troika presented Greece with the conditions for receiving financial support from the EU.

“The word poverty wasn’t even mentioned. But the first paragraph in the Lisbon Treaty dealt with poverty, so they might as well have told the Greek government: you have to cut the highest pensions, you need to get people to pay tax, you need to liberalise some economic sectors which are monopolised by professions, but you must make sure that people don’t fall into serious poverty. They could have done this, because it is their duty according to the Lisbon Treaty. But they didn’t, and I’m surprised no-one in the Greek government said anything.”

Why didn’t they?

“Poor people aren’t core voters, nor are they core groups for trade unions. I believe ideas which support the most fragile groups in society don’t get anywhere in politics if there isn’t a strong civil society, a third sector, or strong intellectual movements which manage to put this on the agenda.

This is the reason for his project:

“Part of my project for the coming five years is to bring together philosophers, sociologist, political scientists and historians so that they can think about this. And when the project has finished they shouldn’t just write books and articles, but speak out; speak the truth to the powers that be.”

Perhaps that could lead to a fairer society, hopes the Professor from the University of Milan, Maurizio Ferrera.

Finnish cases in EU Court of Justice could have Nordic consequences

Is the Finnish system of universally applicable collective agreements incompatible with the free movement of services? That is what an advocate-general at the Court of Justice of the European Union suggests in a fresh opinion. The case is only one out of three current ones which could have a major impact on the Nordic countries' labour markets.

NEWS

14.10.2014

TEXT: KERSTIN AHLBERG, EDITOR EU & ARBETSRÄTT

Two of the cases have been sent to the Court of Justice of the European Union from Finnish courts. One centers on which of the collective agreement's benefits could be included in the minimum rates of pay which a member state asks foreign companies to pay when they post workers there. In essence this covers the same ground as the Norwegian "shipbuilding case" on which Norway's Supreme Court passed judgement last year. The Efta Court complained that the Supreme Court's judgement was wrong.

In Sweden there is also debate over what the concept "minimum rates of pay" in the EU's posting of workers directive entails. This is evidently an important question for the Nordic countries, because the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish governments have all told the EU Court of Justice how they believe it should be answered.

The case in question deals with 186 electricians from Poland who worked at the construction site of the Olkiluoto nuclear power plant. The Finnish Electrical Workers' Union claims the workers have not been paid in accordance with the Finnish universally applicable collective agreement. Their employer counters that the trade union is demanding too much on behalf of the posted electricians. As a result, the Satakunta district court has asked the EU Court a range of questions about what can be included in the minimum rates of pay.

Opinion in September

In September the Court's Advocate General presented his opinion. He points out that member states decide the content of the minimum rates of pay and argues that all kinds of allowances could form part of this. As a result it is not desirable to establish a set legal definition which covers all countries. The Advocate General argued that the question of which elements of a collective agreement form part of the minimum

rates of pay should instead be decided on a case-by-case basis, in cases involving the posting of workers directive.

But the Advocate General also addresses an issue none of the parties to the case nor the district court have considered. He suggests that the Finnish system with universally applicable collective agreements as such may be incompatible with the freedom of movement of services, because domestic employers, in the words of the Advocate General, can "circumvent" the universally applicable collective agreement by entering their own collective agreement directly with the trade union.

Of course, the final word has not been said with this. The EU court does not have to support any of the Advocate General's arguments when it finally passes its judgement. No matter what decision it reaches, however, we can expect a clarification of what Nordic countries can demand from foreign employers. This could also perhaps provide an indication as to who has got the best arguments in the row between the Norwegian Supreme Court and the Efta Court.

Restrictions on temporary agency work

In the other Finnish case the EU Court must decide whether restrictions on the use of temporary agency work found in Finnish collective agreements are justified. They imply that temporary agency work may be used only during periods of temporary increase in work or for limited tasks which cannot be carried out by the company's own workforce. This, it is not allowed to use agency workers for ordinary activities over longer periods of time.

The employer's organisation Öljytuote (the Oil Product Association), which is a party to one of these collective agreements, claims these limitations are in breach of the EU directive on temporary agency work. Öljytuote argues Finnish lawmakers on the whole failed to properly remove restrictions and prohibitions when the directive was implemented.

There is common Nordic interest in this case too. Norway's Working Environment Act says temporary agency work may be used only in the same few situations when it is also allowed to use fixed-term employment. Sweden has implemented the temporary agency work directive in much the same way as Finland, and there are also some limitations in collective agreements, although these do not go as far as the Finnish ones.

If the EU court supports the employers' side, both Norwegian and Swedish legislation will probably need changing. As a result, both countries' governments have intervened in this case to defend their national rules.

Swedish industrial action questioned again

The third current case is similar to the much-debated Laval case from a few years back, when the EU court decided Swedish trade unions' decision to take industrial action was illegal because it restricted the free movement of services. But this time the situation is different; now two Swedish trade unions' industrial action against a Panama registered vessel is under attack.

The Norwegian shipping company Fonnship A/S has taken legal action against the Swedish Transport Workers Union and the Swedish Union for Service and Communications Employees (Seko) because they blocked the company's vessel Sava Star when it called at Swedish ports. The vessel sailed under a Panama flag with a Russian crew, and the aim of the blockades was to make the Norwegian owners sign one of the International Transport Workers' Federation's collective agreements on wages and working conditions for the crew on board. Other trade unions in other countries, including Norway and Iceland, had also tried to reach the same kind of agreement during the vessel's journey through Europe. The Swedish blockade was successful and the company signed the collective agreement to avoid getting stuck in the harbours. Afterwards the company took its case to the Swedish Labour Court (AD) arguing the industrial action had been illegal. On their part, the Transport Workers Union and Seko demanded damages because the company had failed to honour the collective agreement.

According to the Labour Court, the legality of the industrial action depends on whether the Sava Star transports were covered by the rules of the free movement of services according to the EEA agreement, as the vessel was registered in a non-EU/EEA country. AD failed to reach a conclusion and passed the question on to the EU Court.

The EU Court's answer came this summer and implies the vessel's transports were covered by the free movement of services — under certain conditions. It will now be up to AD to decide whether these conditions have been met. If the answer is yes, AD will also have to take into account what the EU Court said in its Laval judgement. In future it could become considerably more difficult for Nordic unions to contribute to international trade union cooperation aimed at improving

wages and working conditions on board vessels under a flag of convenience.

Picture of Sweden's new government. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven number three front right

Sweden's new government. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven number three front right

Stefan Löfven (S): Sweden will be a global role model

Prime Minister Löfven called his new government feminist as he presented it in parliament on Friday. It has 23 government ministers — 12 women and 11 men plus the Prime Minister — and is a coalition comprising the Social Democrats and the Green Party. Work was top of Löfven's speech.

NEWS

03.10.2014

TEXT: BERIT KVAM PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND, THE SWEDISH PARLIAMENT



Prime Minister Stefan Löfven number three front right.

“Work means community and belonging, and power to shape your life and your future,” Stefan Löfven began, and promised that Sweden would have the lowest unemployment rate in the EU's by 2020.

“It is crucial for women and men to find work if we want to keep Sweden together.”

Young people were also high on his agenda, and will be looked after through a youth guarantee. Unemployed youths will be offered a job, work experience, internships or training within 90 days.

He continued by highlighting his government would put far more emphasis on education and workplace development, and said there would be a new boost of skills during the next parliament. There will also be a ground-up reform of Sweden's Public Employment Service, and the social partners

will start talks on skills development and opportunities for people to change their careers. A functioning system for rehabilitation after illness will also be set up.

The controversial labour market initiative FAS 3, introduced by the Reinfeldt government, will be abolished:

“Instead people will be offered jobs which will gain society, with real solutions and good conditions, and with good training opportunities.”

People with physical handicaps and reduced work ability will have access to so-called flexjobs, which offer special employment conditions combined with a state wage subsidy.

Löfven particularly mentioned the importance of equal opportunities for people with physical handicaps, allowing them to participate and to be available on the labour market. He promised to review discrimination legislation.

“We will remove obstacles for people's participation in society. This is a question of equality and fairness,” said Löfven.

He was also keen to create a better functioning labour market, and said Swedish salaries and conditions will apply to everyone who works in Sweden.

“The misuse of temporary contracts will stop and we will improve the unemployment insurance scheme.”

A feminist government

Sweden's new government is a feminist government, Prime Minister Löfven told parliament, underlining how gender equality policy will play a greater role.

"We will fight gender roles and structures which hold people back. Women and men will be given equal power to shape our society and their own lives."

He promised to narrow the salary gap between women and men.

"That's why we will map salary trends every year. The employment rate should be equal for women and men. Full-time work will be the norm in the labour market. Part-time work will be a possibility."

Quotas

There will be no legislation to introduce boardroom gender quotas now, but the Prime Minister said this:

"If the number of women in listed companies has not reached at least 40 percent by 2016, we will propose quota legislation."

Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and his government has great ambitions for Sweden:

There will be more investment in house construction, railway infrastructure, other public transport solutions and for fighting climate change. Sweden's competitiveness should increase, and not least:

"Sweden will be a global role model for development, equality and in leading the fight against climate change. It will be a country known for human equality, self confidence, solidarity and a belief in our ability to change the future."

Read more about Sweden's new government [here](#)