



EVERYONE ON BOARD

Working group on integration
into working life

SHORT VERSION

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This report is written for SAMAK by a working group with representatives from its' member organisations, headed by Kristine N. Kallset of the Norwegian Labour party. SAMAK is the Nordic Labour Movement's Organisation consisting of the social democratic parties and the trade union LO's in the Nordics, who have about 5 million members. The theme of the report is integration of vulnerable groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, into the labour market. The backdrop for initiating the report was the influx of asylum seekers in the autumn of 2015.

The composition of the expert group:

- Kristine Nordenson Kallset (chair), Deputy Secretary General, The Norwegian Labour Party
- Ingela Edlund, Vice-President in the Swedish Conferderation of Trade Unions
- Eve Kyntäjä, Advisor for migration and integration in the Finnish Confederation of Trade Unions
- Erik Nielsen, Consultant in the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions
- Liv Sannes, Deputy Head of the Department for Social Policy in the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions
- Jeppe Sørensen, Political Advisor to the Social Democratic Party in the Danish Parliament
- Irene Wennemo, State Secretary to Minister for Employment and Integration in Sweden

The Secretariat consisted of international advisor Silje Rygland (The Norwegian Labour Party) and Jan-Erik Støstad, Secretary General of SAMAK.

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Our message

A Nordic Model going that extra mile

In the Nordics a larger share of the population have jobs or are in education than most other countries. And those who are not in work or education, will here get public support, while many elsewhere will have to rely on their families.

These two fundamental facts are often overlooked in the debates we have in the Nordic countries about people who are not participating in working life.

The challenge to get even more people employed, however, extremely important for the individual as well as society, and the potential for better policies substantial. We have to learn from each other in the Nordics, but also improve on best practices through experience and research.

The refugee influx in the autumn of 2015 created distress of different kinds, including for the Nordic Model's long term financing and political support. There is reason, then, to recall that the Nordic Model has solved problems and crises through several decades, and that the challenges the current situation poses, are manageable.

But, beware, this presupposes that the challenges are taken seriously, and that necessary action is taken. We must take this occasion to evaluate and improve the integration of vulnerable groups in working life.

The Nordic Model is challenged, but it is also our best tool.

Increased competencies, not lower wages

The Nordic Model builds upon education and competencies for all. That is achieved through specific political measures, but also because the model's design in itself stimulates education and learning at the workplace. This pushes productivity in the firms up, so that they can support higher real wages than in other countries, not least for groups with lower wages.

It is this competencies strategy that has

given the Nordics their unique combination of efficiency and equity.

This strategy is now challenged by some on the right wing of the political spectrum and the business sector, with most distinct debate in Sweden and Finland. They want a policy where wages shall be reduced to get more people working.

It is correct that wages to a large degree and over time have to follow productivity and competencies. This it is also a longstanding tradition in the Nordics. But such an alignment should still happen by competencies increasing, not by lowering wages. A low-wages strategy with main focus on developing "simpler" jobs will therefore undermine the essence – and the success – of the Nordic Model.

By following a low-wages strategy the level of employment might increase in a short time perspective, but this is a short-sighted policy, since the incentives for education and increased competencies diminish. A low-wages strategy is especially short-sighted when simpler jobs may increasingly stand in danger of being rationalized away through new technologies.

Sufficient and efficient employed resources for integration

Successful integration based on a competencies strategy demands resources in the short term, but the alternative may in the longer term be a lot more expensive for the public purse, the taxpayers and society at large. Integration can be made more effective through combinations of education and work, and at the same time through a Nordic "pre": A relatively well functioning working life where well-being and learning is the norm.

Conservative political parties go for tax reductions and a smaller public sector. That translates to less resources for common and public efforts.

Ultimately effective use of available resources is, on this area as others, decisive for results and political support over time.

Shared foundations for integration policies

Referring to the above, and in light of our discussions in the report, we will recommend that the Nordic labour movement's policy for establishment and integration in the labour market is based on the following framework or foundations. The specific policies and measures in the different Nordic countries will, as there are many valid reasons for, still be shaped and implemented nationally.

- 1. Social democratic values.** Integration policies must take as their starting points the labour movement's values of freedom, equity and solidarity, and more specifically build upon democracy, rule of law, universal human rights, equality, gender equality and "do your duty, demand your right".
- 2. Norm support for the Nordic Model.** Norms that weaken the Nordic Model should be opposed politically. It is important to balance well the possibilities to live different lives and to safeguard against that increasing inequalities of several kinds become drivers for lower employment rates and lasting, large differences in living conditions.
- 3. Competencies strategy, not low-wage strategy.** The simple solution to reduce wages to get more people working, and design more jobs with low skill demands, will hamper the driving forces for the Nordic Models unique combination of equality and high productivity.
- 4. Full employment.** An economic policy targeted on work for all is decisive for success for integration as well. Without enough jobs, vulnerable groups will lose out.
- 5. Permanent, full-time jobs.** Permanent full-time jobs must dominate also for vulnerable groups, if not they get stuck in "revolving door jobs". Specific action plans
- 6. Enough resources for integration, efficiently utilized.** The efforts to integrate more people in the labour market must get sufficient resources. That includes vocational measures and adult education. The alternative is more costly. At the same time the situation with more newly arrived refugees is an opportunity to focus on efficiency in the public efforts.
- 7. Everybody has responsibility.** Everybody should contribute to integrate vulnerable groups into working life, you and me in our daily life, organisations, public agencies, the political parties and government locally and nationally. Integration is by nature characterized by mutuality, and it is wrong to think that "they" should integrate themselves, or that "they" should take care of my integration.
- 8. Close tripartite cooperation.** Only through close cooperation between employers' organisations, employee's organisations and government will we be able to develop a good and earthy policy and at the same time secure broad support and legitimacy.
- 9. Tailor-made efforts.** People in vulnerable groups have very different wishes, needs and backgrounds.
- 10. Clarifying competencies from Day 1.** Clarifying of competencies and job wishes is key to further efforts for education and job. Capacity and quality for this must be high enough. For newly arrived this also signals what is expected in the Nordics.
- 11. Work and education without delay.** For many, efforts to work or start education should not be delayed due to language

against social dumping and labour market crime should materialize in all Nordic countries, and this is also to achieve that prudent businesses does not lose contracts to irresponsible ones.

training. There are positive spill-over effects if language training and needed health improving measures go hand in hand with work. It will, however, still be many who need comprehensive education/qualification before starting to work. The aim must be long term participation in the labour market.

- 12. Activity and language decisive.** Passivity destroys future possibilities. Most will need a usable knowledge of Nordic language to function in work and society. For newly arrived refugees activity and language must be prioritized in the refugee receptions. More knowledge and spreading of best practices are necessary to improve language training.
- 13. Labour market and education policies in tandem.** Labour market and education policies must be better coordinated. Basic skills and other competencies must be raised for many in vulnerable groups, of these many newly arrived. A long term goal is that everybody shall have education at least on a secondary level. Vocational education must be strengthened in reputation and quality from elementary school all up to the top of the educational hierarchy. Capacity for "real" competencies evaluations and profession testing must be enhanced.
- 14. Broad effort for safe local areas.** Housing policies should be evaluated and strengthened in light of more newly arrived refugees. Broad efforts must ensure zero tolerance towards housing areas with large social and economic problems, which also may lead to "parallel societies". This is important in itself, but also contributes to participation in working life.
- 15. Settlement for work.** Possibilities for suitable jobs or education must play a role when deciding where refugees should be settled.
- 16. Kindergarten a necessity.** Kindergarten is important to succeed in school and working life later in life, but also often a prerequisite for vulnerable adults with children, including immigrated women, to get a job.
- 17. Beware of immigration measures hampering integration.** The desired stance of immigration policies must be attained with the least possible adverse effect on integration in society and working life.
- 18. Increase efforts on gender equality and anti-discrimination.** The labour movement's fight for gender equality must be strengthened when some of the newly arrived come from cultures with a traditional pattern of gender roles.
- 19. Knowledge and constructive debate.** Knowledge based measures in line with our values. A public debate which as much as possible is open, respectful and constructive. These will constitute the best recipe for support and legitimacy for a social democratic integration policy.
- 20. Active measures to sustain and strengthen organised working life.** Organised working life is the most fundamental pillar of the Nordic Model. To meet the increased challenges of integrating people into the labour market, organised working life with tripartite cooperation is our most important tool, on society and industry as well as business level.
- 21. A Nordic Model going that extra mile.** The opportunity must be grasped to take a substantial leap to integrate vulnerable groups, including newly arrived asylum seekers, into the labour market.

Even though these points are not complete, they offer a foundation and a direction for social democratic policies for integration in the Nordic labour markets in the coming years.



Specific measures for inspiration

The specific integration policies in the Nordic countries have been different, and this will and should be the case also in the future, even when they have a common foundation.

The report presents an overview of existing and planned measures in the Nordics for integration in the labour market. The following are a few measures which may be especially interesting to follow and learn from in other Nordic countries:

- **Industry packages – The Vejle Model (Denmark).** Building of competencies with the local labour market needs as a starting point.
- **Basic Integrating Education (Integrasjonsgrunnutdanning IGU - Denmark).** Trials for 2 year basic education for specific profession or industry, developed by the Danish employers' and employees' (LO) organization.
- **Cooperation and competency in public service (Finland).** Increased focus on administrative and professional

competencies when receiving more newly arrived asylum seekers.

- **The Groruddal Strategy (Norway).** Large-scale, comprehensive and geographically delimited strategy over 10 years for a vulnerable area with social challenges and a considerable immigrant population.
- **Fast track in Introductory Program (Norway).** For immigrants with refugee background who may manage without long education schemes, government and the social partners have agreed on fast track measures which can stimulate inclusion in working life.
- **Fast track (Snabbløp – Sweden).** Identification of newly arrived with competencies who without delay can get clarified and connected to the relevant profession.

Spreading of best practices, nationally as well as between the Nordic countries, will be decisive in the years to come for successful integration into working life of people in vulnerable groups.





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