


Social Standards in the EU

A strategic dialogue meeting with People experiencing
Poverty 19-20 November 2015

Swedish Delegation



Svenska kyrkan 
LUNDS STIFT





Monica

Member of the Swedish
delegation

I am 55 years old and live in a flat in the south of Sweden. Before that I worked at my husbands company during several years. When we separated I didn't have a work no more. I have been unemployed for more than 6 year and it is no fun at all. After that Stefan (the boss) at AlltMöjligt Verkstaden asked me if I want a work... YES I said! But during the time I work there I got cancer and stayed home for over one year. Now I am well and back again doing work training. For the future I only want a work and most of all in the new big beautiful Second Hand Shop that AlltMöjligt Verkstaden runs. So Stefan, when do I get a new work ?



Jonathan

Member of the Swedish
delegation

My name is Jonathan Andersson. I am 35 years old and I live in the south of Sweden. I am the father of two wonderful boys, Alvin and Benjamin. I have been experiencing poverty and exclusion most of my life. For many years I was addicted to heroin and other drugs and lived a criminal lifestyle. I lived as a homeless both in Sweden and Denmark and through that I experienced the stigmata this kind of lifestyle brings you. Today I am clean and sober and I want to do my best to change the attitude in society towards people living in exclusion.



AlltMöjligt Verkstaden

The “Everything is possible/all sorts of things¹-Workshop”

A social Enterprise for work training and rehabilitation

- What do we do to combat poverty and exclusion?

At AlltMöjligt Verkstaden:

- You become part of a community.
- You learn new things.
- Your self-esteem increases.
- You become encouraged to do something to improve your situation.
- The main thing is that you do something, you don't have to stress.
- They ask you what you want to do.
- It is not a public institution working according to political interests. It is a Christian organization guided by values like solidarity and the equality of all human beings. You can participate in activities where you organize and where you together with user organizations try to fight the causes poverty and exclusion.

(See the document from political hearing June 2014).

¹ Both translations are possible

Our pillars of social rights

Equal right to health care

A change of attitude in the way people that work in the health care system meet people that live in poverty and exclusion. The goal shall always be that they meet people in a respectful and equal way. The health care system shall always be self critical and always work to be better in the way that they treat people.

People with mental disabilities have the same right to a good health care as people with physical diseases.

The treatment for alcohol and drug addiction shall always be a part of the health care system. Today in Sweden the municipalities are responsible. The consequence is that many addicts don't get the help they need.

Right to housing

The big problem in Sweden today is that we are building too few cheap apartments. The focus shall always be on housing that is affordable for all people. The rent in Sweden should be regulated by the government and not by the free market. Today in Sweden the free market regulates rents and that contributes to high rents.

Right to minimum income

The minimum income shall always follow the inflation. This is not the case in Sweden today. The cost for living in Sweden today is bigger than the minimum income. This contributes to that people get in deep depths to the government and private companies.

Right to be part of a meaningful context and being part of a community.

The goal of the occupation shall always feel meaningful for the individual. And the goal shall always be to strengthen self-esteem and to help the individual to independence.

To be part of a context/community of people with the same problem so they can support each other and through that strengthen the self-confidence and minimize the feeling of exclusion.

Right to job, education and occupation

Shorter education should be offered to elderly people. It shall be easier for elderly people to get an education. Education shall always be free for everyone. We think this is the key point in order to solve the unemployment issues in Sweden. Life experience and work experience should count. It should be possible to formalize this in some sort of rating.

The workshop



Right to minimum income - Right to housing

An example from October 2015

A family from Rumania: A father, a mother and two small children. The parents of the father.

The father and the mother are in Sweden begging in the streets. They lived in Spain, and worked there. They had to go back to Romania to take care of the sick father of the mother. After that they had no work in Spain, so they went to Sweden. The children and the grand parents live in Romania. The grand parents are sick. The grandfather receives a pension of about 150 euro each month.

They rent a house in Romania. The rent is 400 euro a month. As they worked in Spain they spent a lot of money renovating the house. In Sweden the couple lives in a car. They have to gain 700 Euro a month in order to maintain the whole family.

Now the owner of the house in Romania died, and the children want to sell the house. The grandfather has the first right to buy the house. If someone else buys it, they have to leave the house with no other place to stay. The house has a value of 17000 Euro. The owners agree to sell it to the family who lives there now for 15000 Euro if they can pay 10000 Euro in cash within some weeks. No bank will give them a loan.

Now the couple in Sweden within two months has to find 10000 Euro. The rest they can pay later. If they own the house, they need only about 100 Euro a month to maintain it. Now they pay 400 Euro in rent. So they will save 300 Euro each month if they can buy the house.

If they do not solve this problem the grandparents and the children will have no place to live.

How shall they find 10000 Euro?

EAPN – SWEDEN

Hearing with politicians June 2014

Everyone has a voice – use it!



Before the last elections the regional EAPN organization in southern Sweden arranged a hearing with politicians. People living in exclusion and poverty wrote over 100 proposals to the national parliament. Refugees, prison inmates, long term unemployed persons etc. shared their experience of specific problems, analyzed the causes and consequences of these problems, and finally, suggested how politicians could work for an improvement. In the network participated over 15 user organizations and the Lutheran diocese of Lund through a European Social Fond project.

As a consequence of this hearing the regional EAPN together with a social fond project run by the diocese of Lund now develops a “Swedish semester” model that should be coordinated with the “European semester” of the European Union.

The goal is creating structures that facilitate the regular ONGOING DIRECT dialogue between people living in poverty and exclusion and politicians on local, regional and national level.

In this booklet we present some of the suggestions from the hearing in June 2014.



Suggestions from the hearing

1. Refugees

Proposal

Create a law that makes it possible to apply for residence permit in Sweden without first returning to your home country if you are married to a Swedish citizen.

Refugees that did not receive a residence permit but cannot be sent back to their home countries should be granted receive permanent residence permit.

The financial support for people seeking asylum should be adapted to the level of those who receive social support. This support should be linked to the level of inflation.

Background

Problem

I am married to a Swedish woman. We married in Sweden. I have to return to my home country in order to apply for a residence permit in Sweden. My home country does not receive me. In the meanwhile I am not permitted to work or go to school. My income is only 1.800 SEK a month (about 180 euros). The daily income of refugees has not been raised the last 20 years...

The amount of refugees that can't be sent back home after being refused political asylum increases.

Causes

The legislation does not sufficiently consider the human rights and that human beings should not be discriminated. Basic values are at stake.

Consequences

Many live excluded because they can't work and can't go to school. Many have lived like this for several years. These persons easily are exploited or look for work on the black market. The police use their resources on matters where they are bound to fail.

2. Jobs

Proposal

All citizens should have access to an unconditional minimum income.

Background

Problem

The lack of a basic security exposes the individual to arbitrary public authority administrators and unserious employers.

Causes

Lack of social- and employment policies focused on the individual conditions and needs. Short term political perspectives create a system that favors the interests of public authorities and the employment industry at the expense of public service.

Consequences

Public authorities work primarily to achieve their own goals instead of deliver the support and the help people have the right to. The responsibility for structural problems like unemployment is given to individuals. Vulnerable people are forced to deliver accomplishments that often are obstacles for social integration and the possibility to enter the labor market.

Remarks

The productivity of the workers increases more and more. We have to draw political conclusions of this fact. An employment focused policy combined with the fact that there is not enough work opportunities for everyone threatens to end up in a policy marked by control and disciplinary measures...

Massive subventions to employers that create jobs for which there is no need and no market, distorts competition on the labor market. Individuals turn into merchandise, and the labor market is less and less dominated by employers and employees.

In spite of this political parties continue in an artificial way to keep people occupied though labor market measures. At the same time there is much necessary work that is not being done. It is work that corresponds to important needs that no employer wants to finance. People in need for help are robbed of time and energy.

The access to social support through our common security systems are increasingly conditions. These conditions are often seen as humiliating disciplinary measures. The control mechanisms and the bureaucracy that is created in order to support these processes are in addition very ineffective and expensive.

It is not acceptable that individuals are made responsible for unemployment. This is a structural problem linked to a positive economic development.

The interest in an unconditional basic income is increasing. The European parliament encouraged in a resolution in 2010 the member states to try out unconditional basic income as a mean to combat poverty and social exclusion. The motivation was that this measure would be a none stigmatizing way of combating poverty. It would also diminish hidden poverty...

3. User influence

- Proposal

Create a law that makes it compulsory to have user influence on local, regional and national level.

- Background

Problem

Politicians listen very little when you talk about user influence. Users are not considered when decisions concerning user influence are treated. Decisions are made without consulting users.

Causes

The knowledge that users have is not considered.

Consequences

Wrong decisions are made. Users are suffering the consequences of these wrong decisions.

4. Law and right

- Proposal 1

Judges and court members should get a compulsory education concerning violence against women. This education should include teachers with proper experience in this matter.

- Background

Problem

In our society – especially in vulnerable groups – the women are more exposed than men.

Causes

Partly it depends on how you have seen how conflicts have been handled during your childhood. If violence has been used, you can think that this is a normal behavior.

The economic situation and formation has a influence. If there are psychological or other disabilities also matters.

The view of mankind and what you think a woman should do.

Our roles are stuck in the system and have to be changed.

The right to your body. To respect a “no” in intimate situations.

That abortion is ok.

That no girls have to marry before they are 18 years old without their own consent.

- Proposal 2

Improve the preparation within the prison before releasing the prisoners. Coordinate the help given after releasing prisoners.

Coordinating the initiative of the employment agency, the social service etc.

- Background

Problem

No prison follows the legislation concerning help that should be given to the prisoners at the moment of their release.

Causes

We don't know why. Only a few prison guards are interested in preparing the release. Everything exists. Schools, jobs, work practice etc. no one takes the time to help.

Consequences

If you don't get any help after being released from prison you continue doing what you are good at and always have done.

5. Cooperation

Proposal

We want to introduce a coordinator on municipal and regional level. The purpose should be to coordinate the work of public authorities. This would contribute to reach the goal that all citizens should get the help they have a right to receive.

Build structures and routines that guarantee the participation and influence of the individual in the planning and realization of their lives.

- Background

Problem

Individuals that have contact with several authorities like psychiatry and social welfare administrated by the municipalities do not have access to help that has the quality and continuity they need. They fall between the cracks. A coordinated plan (SIP) is an effective help for this group of individuals. Why is this not practiced more often? Often, the individual person does not have sufficient participation and influence in the planning and decision making.

Causes

Unwillingness to cooperate. Lack of time and responsibility. Different ways of working. You don't see the need for this. It demands collaboration, and this seems to be difficult.

Consequences

You don't get the help and the support you have a right to receive. The lack of coordination leads to increased public expenses. People lose the chance to rehabilitation. You lose the possibility to grow as a human being when you don't participate and when you don't have any influence on the decisions being made that affects your situation.

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