



## MEETING REPORT

### Access to Employment Network meeting

#### Stockholm, 6-7 November 2018, hosted by Stockholm City Mission

On 6-7 November, a group of Eurodiaconia member organizations gathered to discuss issues of common interest on employment, with focus on support services for people with low employability, and share experiences and good practice in the field while identifying challenges and potential solutions. The network meeting was hosted by Stockholm City Mission (SCM).

#### Tuesday, 6 November

**Johan Rindevall**, Acting Head of the Department for Social Business at SCM, welcomed participants at Grillska Hall, which is an old Church transformed into the headquarter of SCM since 1911 and is now a hub for social enterprises.



Next, Reverend **Herman Hallonsten** conducted a devotion. Rev. Hallonsten focused his devotion on the theme of hope and how people can find reasons to be hopeful today. He shared his impressions of his participation in the 50th anniversary of the World Council of Churches 1968 meeting in Uppsala. Hope for a better world was felt by society back then but, is this the case today? The Reverend concluded his devotion with a serenity prayer.

After the devotion, **Alexander Elu**, Policy and Membership Officer at Eurodiaconia, took the floor to present the meeting, a first for the new thematic network on Access to Employment. **Alexander Elu** gave an overview





of the profound changes affecting the world of work today, which add to the effects of the last economic and social crisis. He stressed that even if macroeconomic figures are showing signs of recovery in many countries in 2018, it should not be forgotten that behind such trends there are people. Through their work at the service level, Eurodiaconia members are best placed to make such a message be heard and connect the value that every person has with jobs. **Alexander Elu** explained that the meeting aimed at exploring the key role played by services as levers of inclusive labour markets with opportunities for employment for all people, and at giving a space for exchange among Eurodiaconia members on their activity.

## Dr Johan Vamstad - Unemployment-related profiles among people experiencing poverty

The first session provided an overview of the relation of poverty and (un-)employment in Sweden by presenting the findings of the National Association of Swedish City Missions' [Poverty Report](#) and the Social and Human Rights Project.

**Dr Johan Vamstad**, Associate Professor at the Ersta Sköndal University College, explained that Sweden's unemployment rate of 6,5% is below the EU average. However, the figures are much higher for some groups, such as for people under 24 or for people born outside Europe with 15% and 25% unemployment, respectively. The conditions of the Swedish labour market can be considered good, so that the phenomenon of the working poor is not much of an issue. For this reason, issues are concentrated on people without access to labour markets.

The evaluation of the City Missions' work shows that it is typically people at odds with the Swedish welfare system who rely on the services. The research suggests that the profiles of users have changed over time: on average, they have become younger and (mental) health issues have become more complex. There are greater needs for a greater number of people nowadays. All this has led to an increased professionalization and re-organization of the City Missions, in terms of funding and qualification of staff. Thus, the City Missions are no longer complementing the work of public services; a lot of their work is aimed at reaching out to people who are not covered by public services. As such services in Sweden have been traditionally provided on residence-based entitlement, the City Missions fill a gap by providing support to, for example, undocumented migrants and other target groups.



*Dr Johan Vamstad, researcher at Ersta Sköndal University College-Institute for Civil Society Studies*

Looking at figures, in the period from December 2015 to March 2018, more than 238 000 actions carried out by City Missions in major Swedish towns were documented. Most actions concern food distribution, followed by inclusive actions (e.g. care activities), material aid, support with authorities and financial support. 60 percent of the recipients were individuals on long term financial support, the others being EU-citizens and undocumented migrants.



Participants shared their interest to know more about the cooperation of public authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) such as the City Missions. It was explained that the public institutions refer people in need to the City Missions. However, the Missions are also a first point of contact for many people. In practice, CSOs have had to meet an important part of the increased demand for social services.

## **Alexander Elu - The Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market. An EU prescription for an integrated, person-centred approach to work inclusion**

The next presentation was dedicated to EU-policies on long term unemployment (LTU). **Alexander Elu** presented the main EU policy framework in this regard, the 2016 [Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market](#), and offered Eurodiaconia's assessment of it.

The main objective of the Recommendation is to support Member States to improve the transition from LTU to employment. In detail, this should be achieved through a three-stepped approach. Firstly, through an increased registration rate of jobseekers in public employment services. The second step is an individual assessment of needs of registered job-seekers, addressing their employability prospects, their past job search history, a holistic approach to obstacles to employment and information on available support. The third and final step consists of a Job Integration Agreement (JIA) signed between the affected LTU and a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) before 18 months of unemployment at the latest. The JIA should help to target the individual needs and point at concrete goals and obligations of the beneficiary; crucially, the SPOC shall help to facilitate the communication between the different providers of services and interventions.

**Alexander Elu** stressed the integrated approach to services in the Recommendation, with social services working together with employment services towards a person-centered approach. At the same time, from Eurodiaconia's perspective, certain aspects could be further improved. Interventions should be promoted at earlier stages, well before the 12-18 months window in order to be more efficient and prevent higher repairing costs. Also, the Recommendation does not acknowledge -in an explicit manner- the key role played by CSOs in working with LTU profiles. Also, it promotes an outcome-driven approach which can entail potentially negative effects on low-employability profiles (creaming, parking). The Recommendation is also putting most of the weight of actions on the supply side, aiming at rendering beneficiaries "employable" without equally addressing the key role of employers.

Finally, the lack of ad-hoc funding limits the scope for implementation of the Recommendation. It was also discussed that the "root causes" of LTU need to be identified, since for instance low quality employment increases the chances of being recurrently unemployed throughout a career. To balance this trend a more rights-based approach to employment is needed that stressed the returns to society.

## **Anna-Lena Larsson-Lönnqvist – the role of the PES network and Arbetsförmedlingen in partnership with social services**

The next session focused on the work of public employment services (PES) and their partnership with diaconal social services providers. **Anna-Lena Larsson-Lönnqvist** began her presentation by stressing the need to work in partnership with employers and other actors involved in employment services, such as Eurodiaconia members, to address the challenge of unemployment in our societies. The Swedish PES, *Arbetsförmedlingen*, is a government agency under the Ministry of Employment with 14,500 employees and a wide range of professions represented (e.g. employment officers, psychologists and specialists on supported employment).

The Swedish PES aims at improving the functioning of the labour market, giving priority to those who are furthest away from the labour market. Some of the key focus of the Swedish PES are the integration of newly arrived migrants, persons with functional impairment and a reduced working capacity, conducting labour market analysis and, also, enhancing the free movement of workers within the EU (through EURES). Different



challenges were emphasized, the two main ones being the training and development of skills among job seekers to match employers' demands, and the difficult integration of newly arrived migrants.

The Swedish PES works in partnership with many structures and organisations. For example, it has a national written agreement with the Church of Sweden and cooperates widely with social enterprises. At international level, *Arbetsförmedlingen* is an active member of the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES) and the European Network of Public Employment Services.

The PES Network was formally established in 2014 and meets twice a year. It includes national PES from the 28 Member States plus Iceland, Norway and the European Commission. One of the common challenges of all PES is to work more effectively, especially as a result of limited capacity. To this aim, identification of best practices and mutual learning is key. Therefore, the PES network applies benchmarking to identify evidence-based good practices and foster mutual learning. The network also promotes the modernization and strengthening of PES service delivery. Finally, it provides input to EU strategies and corresponding national labour market policies. **Anna-Lena Larsson-Lönnqvist** next touched upon a learning tool developed by the PES Network: *benchlearning*. Each year, a team of evaluators visit the national PES for some days, they carry out interviews with the directors and employment officers, and then produce a report and give recommendations on how to move forward. Thanks to this tool, a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of different European PES is provided.

Finally, **Anna-Lena Larsson-Lönnqvist** stressed the important ongoing work of the PES Network as regards the strategic challenges faced by labour markets today, including new forms of employment and their impact on employability.



After the presentation, **Morgana Cartarasa** from Diaconia Valdese, shared information about the situation in Italy where the private employment services sector is stronger than the public one and wondered which relationship *Arbetsförmedlingen* has with private employment services. **Anna-Lena Larsson-Lönnqvist** explained that at the beginning they considered them as competitors but there is now a growing collaboration even if they can have different approaches.

Then, **Dorota Calus** from Skåne Stadsmission in Malmo, explained that in her work they are in constant relation with *Arbetsförmedlingen*. She experiences a significant gap between principles and strategies on paper and reality. For instance, **Dorota Calus** flagged the issue of skill mismatches, which are a major issue for people coming from outside Sweden; in many cases, these people are skilled but cannot speak Swedish. Therefore, the first step should be to provide language learning, but resources provided to this aim by employment services are insufficient. **Dorota Calus** also raised the issue of discrimination in the Swedish



society as it is much more difficult to find a job with a foreign name. In her reply, **Anna-Lena Larsson-Löngvist** explained that in *Arbetsförmedlingen's* new strategy, job seekers shall be able to do both, to look for a job as well as to learn Swedish.

**Julio David** García Justamante from the Asociación Evangélica Nueva Vida in Spain asked whether any progress has been made towards a common strategy by all national PES. It was explained that employment policies are in Member States' hands; in such a competence framework, the EU can give recommendations on how to proceed but implementation is at national level. However, benchlearning is a process that every PES must do.

Next, Alexander Elu introduced the group exercise, in which participants further discussed questions linked to the relationship between diaconal social services and employment services.



*Group work exercise*

### **Outcomes of the discussion**

Participants agreed on the importance to foster dialogue with public employment services. A good practice from Czech Republic was identified during the discussion; the Agency for Supported Employment and Social Rehabilitation from the Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (DECCB) works with people with mental disabilities and acts as a bridge between their beneficiaries and employment services. They provide training to employment services. Finally, a common challenge identified by participants was the lack of resources to further develop their services.

### **Study Visit – Warehouse and second-hand shop Sättra**

After lunch, participants headed to visit a social enterprise run by Stockholm City Mission: the second-hand shop Sättra and the main warehouse and redistribution centre for 17 other second hand shops. Before a guided tour in the warehouse, **Johan Rindevall** gave a presentation on the work done by Stockholm City Mission through its social enterprises, one of the key activity areas of the SCM. Social businesses at SCM provide work training for people who are unemployed, enabling them to bridge the gap with the labour market. Social enterprises target individuals outside the labour market, often long-term unemployed due to mental and/or physical health issues and/or structural discrimination in the labour market.

**Johan Rindevall** explained that social enterprises run by Stockholm City Mission offer different forms of employment, work training and vocational training and cover a large geographical area in and around Stockholm. SCM has a wide range of social enterprises: 17 second hand shops in Stockholm, a warehouse and redistribution centre in Sättra, two social supermarkets, a shop selling remade products, a temporary job



service targeting people with substance abuse issues, a lunch restaurant café, a bakery and catering service and a conference facility.

Then, **Johan Rindevall** explained the work integration model used in all their social enterprises, based upon the assumption that everyone has individual capabilities and personal circumstances that should be considered. Each worker has a supervisor and a mentor in order to strengthen professional skills as well as personal growth and development. The supervisor teaches professional skills and the mentor takes care of the individual. **Johan Rindevall** concluded with some challenges faced by social enterprises such as the fact that the requirements of PES are often too general and do not reflect the needs of each individual.



*Supervisor and employee in Satra second hand shop and organisation of work schedule at Satra warehouse*

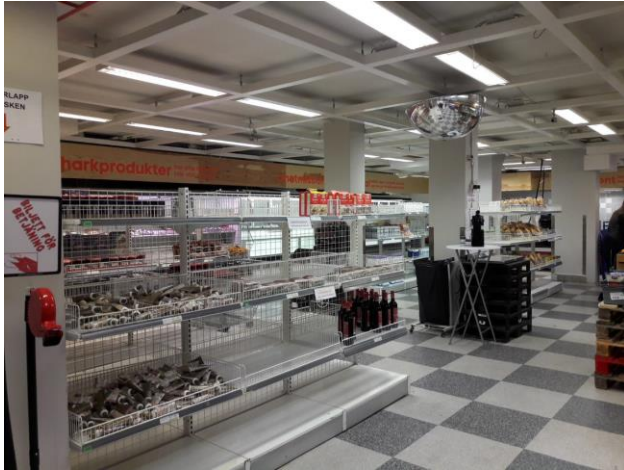
After **Johan Rindevall's** presentation, participants had a guided tour by one of the managers of the second-hand shops. Sättra is the main warehouse and redistribution centre for the 17 other second hand stores of Stockholm City Mission. During the tour, participants discovered the warehouse organisation consisting of different places to sort out the second-hand products arriving in Sättra. Employees work at different spot which changes throughout the day, in that way they can learn different skills. This social enterprise provides work training for 40 people.

## Wednesday, 7 November

### Study visit – Matmissionen, social supermarket

For the first session of the second day, participants had the chance to visit one of the two social supermarkets run by Stockholm City Mission: [Matmissionen](#). Participants were welcomed by Matmissionen's manager, Tove Larsson. and were provided with a guided tour with explanations. Founded in 2015, Matmissionen was the first social supermarket in Nordic countries to open. It follows three goals: an environmental goal, a social goal and a work inclusion goal.

The social supermarket sells surplus food collected in other supermarkets and therefore contributes to waste reduction. Supermarkets make food donations thanks to media attention and scouting carried out by Matmissionen. Furthermore, it allows people with low income to buy healthy, cheap and nutritious food. As a matter of fact, people with an income below 950 euros can apply for membership and then have access to the membership price which is on average one third of the normal price. Matmissionen counts with 3,000 members now, half of them shopping regularly. Users are mainly families with children, usually not originally from Sweden. Members can buy food at membership price for 25 euros each week. Matmissionen, like all other Stockholm City Mission social enterprises, employs people far from the labour market.



Matmissionen



Working hours and organisation of tasks at Matmissionen

## Morgana Cartarasa, Diacona Valdese – Casa del Lavoro and its services to employers to facilitate an increased demand for ‘low employability’ profiles

After the study visit, participants headed to Grillska Hall for the project sharing session. **Morgana Cartarasa** works as a manager of the job placement centre [Casa del Lavoro](#), which was created in 2016 and is a private work-service licensed by the Piemonte region.

Casa del Lavoro runs three projects commissioned by the PES: one project for people with disabilities, one for people in disadvantaged situations and one for people over the age of 30 who have been unemployed for at least 6 months. Next to those public projects, Casa del Lavoro runs two projects in partnership with private foundations, *Articolo +1* for young NEETs and *Iniziativa Lavoro*.

Morgana Cartarasa first touched upon the services provided in the public projects. Users are offered professional orientation, workshops and training courses (e.g. digital skills, relational skills) and tutoring during the internship. As regards companies, Casa del Lavoro initiates the free activation of the internship. Also, it provides different information on benefits and advantages available to employers of target groups; e.g. bonus exist for NEETs; young people, people over 50 years of age, women or people with disabilities, among others. The three projects began in 2017 but results are already very promising, with most users being engaged in internships and many of these transitioning into employment within the same employer.

Next, **Morgana Cartarasa** focused on the two private-sponsored projects. *Iniziativa Lavoro* is a project for vulnerable young people and adults -4 people participated in the project in 2017 and 6 people in 2018-. Casa del Lavoro provides them with professional orientation, skills development (digital lab, soft-skills lab) and tutoring during the internship. Companies participating in the project are provided with free activation of the internship, a refund of 900 euros as well as of the internship administrative costs, and they are given information about all existing bonuses.

On the other hand, *Articolo +1* project dedicated to vulnerable young NEETs. Between March 2017 and September 2018, 40 participants received professional orientation, participated in theatre workshops to improve their social skills and received tutoring during their internship. In total, 19 youngsters had an internship, with 15 of them being hired after their internship; 9 out of the 40 users were hired without internship. In this project, Casa del Lavoro offers a refund of 900 EUR on the salary paid to the user if the employer commits to hiring for at least 4 months.



After the presentation, **Julio David García Justamante** asked about the selection of participants. **Morgana Cartarasa** explained that she is the one meeting all potential participants and selecting candidates for recruitment. In addition, she stressed that she works extensively with social services. Participants were also keen to know if *Casa del Lavoro* had any leverage on making employers adapt jobs to the capacities of each user. **Morgana Cartarasa** replied that through tutoring provided by Casa del Lavoro to companies, they gradually learn to adapt the tasks.

## **Lenka Sovová and Kateřina Kalivodová – Agency for Supported Employment and Social Rehabilitation and its promotion of work inclusion among persons with disabilities, Diaconia of Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (DECCB)**

In the next presentation, **Kateřina Kalivodová**, social worker of the social rehabilitation service, together with **Lenka Sovová**, head of the social rehabilitation service, presented the work done by the Agency for Supported Employment and Social Rehabilitation.



*Kateřina Kalivodová and Lenka Sovová, Diaconia ECCB*

DECCB in Litomerice provides a wide range of social services aimed at helping people with disabilities to integrate into society, the labour market and everyday life. DECCB also operates 7 different work inclusion social enterprises, e.g. a tearoom, a restaurant, a sewing workshop, a ceramic workshop, a workshop for the completion of industrial products, an outdoor cleaning service and a plastic sorting workshop for one company. In addition to this, since 2005 the Agency offers a social rehabilitation service aimed at supporting people with disabilities with their job search, as well as keeping their current jobs. According to **Kateřina Kalivodová**, public support in this area is not sufficient.

The social rehabilitation service targets people with mental, physical and combined disabilities and psychic illness between the ages of 18 and 64. It is provided for free for a maximum of two years. Users of the social rehabilitation service are provided with skills training for living an independent life such as food preparation and housework. They also learn how to manage their budget, do shopping and travel on their own, and can have support on administrative tasks such as getting the disability pension or other social benefits. In addition to that, the social rehabilitation service prepares its users to work. The preparation goes from assistance with choosing a job, to training to specific type of work (eg, how to work in a kitchen) and how to communicate with employers, including organizing job practice in companies and specific skills development. They also teach users how to write their CV and organise training interviews.





Importantly, support services are continued at the workplace after placements are achieved. In this regard, social workers help users to go about their new workplace, commute by themselves and offer some guidance at the beginning of the workday. To this aim, cooperation with employers is key. The Agency helps with the formalities related to the entry into employment (creation of the contract, adjustment of working hours), provides training on how to communicate and how to solve problems with a person with disabilities and helps to integrate the user into the team. During the first 6 months of the placement, DECCB staff visit users at the workplace and, after that, the Agency remains available for contact and counselling.

Participants found the presentation very inspiring and asked about the experience of working with employers, who usually have a different approach to the integration process. **Kateřina Kalivodov** explained that cooperation is very good at present, as unemployment is very low in the Czech Republic and vacancies abound. For this reason, users of the service are in high demand. Then, **Julio David Garca Justamante** asked how people know about the programme. In this regard, **Kateřina Kalivodov** pointed that the relatively small size of the city of Litomerice, 20 000 inhabitants, is helpful to this aim. Usually, many users are coming from other Diaconia projects, but some come by their own or from Institutions.

## **Gabriela Agatiello – A spotlight on migrants: strategies and available tools to enable the integration of migrants into employment and society**

In her presentation, **Gabriela Agatiello**, Policy and Membership Development Officer at Eurodiaconia, provided insights into the organization’s work on migration and discussed opportunities and challenges regarding the labour market integration of non-EU-migrants with the participants.

Eurodiaconia and its members on local levels are engaged in short term humanitarian assistance for migrants as well as in long term integration activities for migrants. Migrants have different legal statuses, they are documented or undocumented migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. On the European level, Eurodiaconia advocates on the topics of integration and social inclusion together with other civil society organizations. Furthermore, Eurodiaconia serves as a platform to inform its members on European policy developments and funding opportunities. It also aims to exchange best practice examples through study visits, network meetings and publications.

**Gabriela Agatiello** explained that non-EU-migrants face lower employment rates than EU citizens throughout member states, with refugees and asylum seekers as particularly vulnerable groups. Support measures We should focus on their employment opportunities to help restoring their human dignity and self-esteem. On the other hand, refugees and migrants participating in the labour force will yield positive economic and social returns, especially considering Europe’s projected decline on the working age population by 7.5 million by 2020.



*Gabriela Agatiello, Eurodiaconia*

The challenges for labour market integration are manifold and require joint efforts by all stakeholders. Tailor made approaches, recognizing the different needs of different target groups, are crucial. Access to basic services, from housing to health services, is also a precondition for successful labour market integration. To overcome language barriers, language skill acquisition should start as early as possible and should also be work-related. Many migrants face barriers in validating their skills and qualifications, which could be overcome by a review of recognition procedures. Early access to training helps to gain more experiences and increases further employment possibilities. Migrants often lack information on the functioning of labour markets and services in new countries. Multilingual internet platforms and social media apps proved to be a success in that regard.

In a broader political sense, sustainable labour market integration would require faster processing of asylum procedures accompanied by legislative measures that ensure access to the labour market. As local and regional authorities are closer to the day to day experiences of target groups and practitioners their knowledge must contribute to policy making. Best practice examples have demonstrated the potential of joint efforts from social partners. To really fulfill the potential of migration for society, **Gabriela Agatiello** emphasized the need of sustainable labour market integration. Migrants may work in low skilled sectors to gain experience, but they should be offered career paths to avoid getting stuck in low skilled jobs.

The concluding discussion between participants centered around the challenges faced by non-EU-migrants in the different member states, namely the poor efforts of authorities when it comes to validating skills and qualifications and the slow procedures. Long waiting periods for status determination and financial support create vicious circles. As to challenges in the participants' work with migrants the language difficulties and conflicting interests of public employment services were mentioned as key issues. The presentations of best practice examples from Sweden and Spain showed that, in spite of the unexpected character of the inflow of new people in both countries, a lot has been achieved.

## **Policy Workshop. Building Eurodiaconia messages for more inclusive labour markets.**

In the last session of the meeting participants had the chance to feed into Eurodiaconia's future policy paper on Access to Employment. **Célimène Bernard** and **Lukas Humer** both Policy Assistants at Eurodiaconia, introduced the workshop and walked participants through different questions.

The policy paper aims at stressing the role of quality social services as the device linking employment and social inclusion and will be a compass of Eurodiaconia advocacy work vis a vis EU Institutions. Based on the discussion of the network meeting and their experiences, participants came up with relevant inputs. They were divided in two groups reflecting on different questions. The first group focused on the reasons to look at access to employment as a policy priority today in Europe, and on working in partnership with employment services and with employers. The second group discussed two different issues: the promotion of quality services for work and social inclusion of people, and the creation of stable employability paths.



## Outcomes of the discussion

Participants noted that some groups are more difficult to reach than others. The example of non-EU-migrant women was given. Concerning the promotion of quality services, increasing the investment in education and staff training appeared as a key element for participants, as well as the need to improve the ratio professional/user. Funding was also stressed as a crucial point. Another point of concern raised by participants was the increasing gap between urban and rural areas and the availability of social services in rural areas.

Participants agreed on the pressing need to bring employment services closer to reality as many of their models do not trickle down and as often employment services' focus is numbers instead of quality. In order to create stable employment paths, the promotion of accompaniment services into the workplace was identified as a key element. More emphasis should also be put on stressing the return of social investment on society of investing in jobseeker's accompaniment as it is costlier to keep people away from employment. In the discussion, social services were often identified as bridges between the individuals and the labour market.

To conclude the meeting, **Alexander Elu** warmly thanked participants for their active participation. This network on Access to Employment is the latest milestone of the Eurodiaconia work in the area of work and social inclusion. The work done by Eurodiaconia members is essential. The services they provide make people with less chances in labour markets employable, bring different profiles of people to workplaces and create more diverse and inclusive workforces. However, providing those services is not enough as it is of little use to get people ready for jobs if employers and society are not on board and do not render employment more inclusive and offer opportunities for all.

On those words, **Alexander Elu** invited participants to save the date for the next meeting of the network on Access to Employment, which will take place on 11-12 June 2019 in Madrid.