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Union density and specialist/professional unions in Sweden

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Foreword

This research report is an enlarged and updated version of a paper presented at the *International Workshop: European Trade Unionism in Transition?* 9-10 September 2008, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).

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Introduction

In Sweden there are very few professional and specialist unions outside the three union confederations. In addition to the blue-collar confederation LO (Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions), founded in 1898, Sweden has two white-collar confederations: TCO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees), founded in 1944, and Saco (Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations), founded in 1947 and labelled "the world's oldest professional peak association" (Heidenheimer 1976: 50).

Sweden contains the most class-segmented union movement in the world through the existence of separate national unions and union confederations for blue-collar workers (LO), university-educated professionals (Saco) and other white-collar workers (TCO). This pattern persists despite increasingly diluted borders between the Saco and TCO unions caused by the heightened educational level of TCO groups like teachers and journalists. The second largest unions in both TCO and Saco are unions of school teachers, the Swedish Teachers' Union (*Lärarförbundet*) and the National Union of Teachers (LR) respectively. By successive reforms of the training of teachers and of the transformation of the Swedish school system the members of TCO and Saco teachers' unions have become more similar to each other. In the future this might bring a merger between the two unions to the fore. The TCO and Saco unions of military officers merged already in 1995. The new union is affiliated to Saco since 1998, but also to the OFR (Public Employees' Negotiation Council). The OFR was founded by TCO unions, however, a growing number of Saco unions have subsequently joined the OFR with respect to their public sector members. As we will see, some TCO and Saco unions cooperate closely. Also the TCO and Saco *confederations* have come closer to each other, in particular since the 1996 cooperation agreement between them. TCO has repeatedly argued for a merger between the two white-collar confederations but has yet to obtain Saco's support for this idea.

While LO is close to the Social Democratic Party, both TCO and Saco have always emphasized their political independence, which does not prevent them from taking stand in political issues of interest for their members. In 2001-2011 the presidents of all three confederations were social democrats, two of them women: Wanja Lundby-Wedin (LO) and Anna Ekström (Saco).[1] LO's social democratic orientation is an important reason for the fact that there has never been a merger between a blue-collar and a white-collar union in Sweden. When the Social Insurance Employees' and Insurance Agents' Union (FF) in 2002 left LO to

[1] Wanja Lundby-Wedin was LO president in 2000-2012, Anna Ekström Saco president in 2001-2011 and Sture Nordh TCO president in 1999-2011. Before their presidencies both Ekström and Nordh had been secretaries of state in social democratic governments.

join TCO and in 2003 merge with the TCO union ST, LO lost its only white-collar union (Kjellberg 2005:244f). As a result the already strongly socially segregated union structure became still more pronounced. The existence of separate unions (many of which professional) and union confederations for white-collar workers has certainly promoted the high union density among this category of workers. In 2006 union density was the same for white-collar and blue-collar workers (77 per cent) – see Table 7 below. The density decline that followed the reform of the Swedish unemployment insurance system hit the LO unions more than the TCO and Saco unions, due to the considerably raised fees for blue-collar union unemployment funds in particular. As a consequence, union density today is higher among white-collar workers (73 per cent in 2012) than among blue-collar workers (67 per cent in 2012). The high union density of university graduates has been promoted by the interweaving of professional and union interests from an early stage among Swedish academically trained persons practising a profession, in Swedish *akademiker* (Björnsson 2007:46).

Considerable shifts between union confederations: rising share of Saco members

The increasing share of white-collar workers within the labour force, combined with their high and – from a longer historical perspective - rising density, is reflected in considerable shifts between the union confederations. LO's membership share declined from 79 per cent in 1950 to 44 per cent in to 2013 (Table 1). Until 1975, TCO's share increased from 17 to 32 per cent, but then remained almost unchanged for many years, to expand to 36 per cent in 2013. Over the last four decades Saco's share has more than quintupled (from 3 per cent in 1970 to 17 per cent in 2013).

Saco's growing share of Swedish union members is part of the explanation for why it has rejected all TCO proposals for a merger between the two confederations. Another obstacle is that seven out of ten TCO members are affiliated to *vertical* unions, while Saco is a confederation of *occupational* unions, at the same time being *professional* unions. Some of the vertical TCO unions are very large and heterogeneous, with a strongly varying educational level amongst their members. That is the case particularly with *Unionen*, Sweden's largest private sector union, founded in 2008 by a merger between two already very heterogeneous vertical TCO unions: Sif (white-collar workers within manufacturing industry and parts of the service sector) and HTF (white-collar workers in commerce, transport and other private services). The average educational level in the new union is lower than it was in Sif. Together with the increased membership heterogeneity it sharpened the contrast with the Saco unions,

as the latter almost exclusively contain university graduates within a specialised profession or a few related professions.

Table 1. Share of members in Swedish union confederations 1950-2013 (%)

Year	LO	TCO	Saco	Others*	All
1950	78	17	1	4	100
1960	74	21	2	3	100
1970	66	28	3	3	100
1980	61	31	5	3	100
1990	58	34	8	0	100
2000	54	32**	11	2**	100
2005	51	33**	13	3**	100
2006	50	33**	14	3**	100
2007	49	33**	14	3**	100
2008	48	34**	15	3**	100
2009	47	34**	16	3**	100
2010	47	34**	16	3**	100
2011	46	34**	16	3**	100
2012	45	35**	16	3**	100
2013	44	36**	17	4**	100

Note. Active wage and salary members (excluding pensioners, students and self-employed) per 31 December.
* Independent unions.
** *Ledarna* (supervisors) outside TCO.

A wide definition of blue-collar workers in Sweden

When comparing the membership shares of LO, TCO and Saco it should be observed that in contrast to all other countries most Swedish retail employees and hotel & restaurant workers are classified as *blue-collar* workers (in Swedish *arbetare*), not as white-collar workers (*tjänstemän*). Also nurse's assistants and assistant nurses are considered as blue-collar workers, not only by the unions themselves and in everyday language, but also in the statistics produced by the Swedish Statistical Office. Nurse's assistants and assistant nurses together make up a substantial share of the members of the LO union Municipal Workers' Union (*Kommunal*), Sweden's largest union. Despite this wide definition of the Swedish working class, LO - as is evident from Table 1 - comprises less than every second union member.

To explain why almost all shop assistants are considered as blue-collar workers it is necessary to go back in history and look at the formation of this group of workers as a social force (Kjellberg 2008, Kjellberg 1999). Also in Denmark and Norway shop assistants are organised in LO unions, but with the name "Commerce and Office" (in Danish *Handel og Kontor*, HK). The Danish and Norwegian HKs are considered as white-collar unions. In Norway the shop assistants in 1908 founded a union of their own, which gave it a white-collar identity. In Denmark shop assistants together with office employees in 1900 formed the union of commercial and office employees. At that time this category of workers contained many persons of middle-class origin. In contrast to the Norwegian and Danish unions, the Swedish Commercial Workers' Union in 1906 was founded by a male typical blue-collar group, the milk drivers. As a result the union got a *blue-collar* identity, reflected in its name, *Handelsarbetareförbundet*, where *arbetare* stands for blue-collar worker. The union was affiliated to LO in 1910, while the Danish and Norwegian unions of commercial employees did not join LO-Denmark and LO-Norway until the early 1930s.

The blue-collar identity of the Swedish Commercial Workers' Union (Handels), however, was disputed in the 1910s when the shop assistants began to join the union and the recruitment area was widened to include office employees within commerce and the manufacturing industry. For many years a cultural tension existed within this union between male transport workers and warehousemen on the one hand, and on the other employees (*anställda*) in shops and offices, of which many were women. From time to time demands were made at congresses of the Commercial Workers' Union for the name to be changed to the Commercial Employees' Union, in Swedish *Handelsanställdas förbund* (Handels). In the 1930s the term *anställda* was inspired from the German *Angestellte* referring to private sector white-collar workers, as in the name of the confederation Daco (*De anställdas centralorganisation*), founded by unions organising this category of workers. When *Handelsarbetareförbundet* in 1956 changed name to *Handelsanställdas förbund* the term *anställda* had long since lost its significance as a label for white-collar workers, becoming instead a common term for all wage and salary earners.

The Commercial Employees' Union never succeed in recruiting any large numbers of office employees. Blue-collar workers in manufacturing industry were conceded union rights early (the 1905 Engineering Agreement and the 1906 December Compromise between LO and the employers' confederation SAF), but it would be a long time before white-collar unions were accepted as bargaining parties. In the late 1910s the Commercial Workers' Union tried using offensive actions to get collective agreements for office employees (most of them young, low-paid clerks) at some large engineering companies in Gothenburg, but failed

completely (Greiff 1995). Many leading union activists were fired and the local union branch suffered a severe defeat. Firms affiliated to SAF associations consequently denied office employees collective agreements.

In the 1920s a struggle took place within LO between the Commercial Workers' Union and the Metalworkers' Union (Metall). Metall succeeded in preventing the Commercial Workers' Union from recruiting clerks within manufacturing. According to the principle of industrial unionism, which is now implemented more effectively than previously, there should be only one LO union at each workplace. Consequently, Metall was the only LO union allowed to organise white-collar workers in the metal industry. In practice Metall left this field open for the white-collar union Sif, founded in 1920. In the 1920s Sif remained a very weak union concentrated in the engineering industry. In the early 1930s its recruitment area was extended to the whole of the manufacturing industry. By organising both technical and administrative white-collar workers in all grades and in all manufacturing industries Sif became quite unique from an international perspective. The union got its breakthrough during the 1930s when it became Sweden's largest white-collar union in the private sector.

Metall was not prepared to strike for the rights of white-collar workers either in the 1920s or in the 1930s (or later on), in particular as these workers themselves were not prepared to resort to such actions and were barely willing to join a socialist blue-collar union. Nor was the time ripe for Sif and its members to reflect upon the strike as a weapon for bringing about better employment conditions. In any case, as the Commercial Workers' Union in LO was prevented from organising white-collar workers within the manufacturing industry, and Metall (like other blue-collar unions in manufacturing) also abstained from doing so, this task was left entirely to Sif.

In 1931 Sif and seven other white-collar unions founded the confederation Daco (the Central Organisation of Employees), whose main objective was to get legislation securing union rights for private sector white-collar workers. Daco was successful and such a law was introduced in 1936. That meant a break with the Swedish model of *self-regulation*, that is industrial relations regulated by the labour market parties themselves (Kjellberg 2009a). Both LO and SAF preferred self-regulation to state regulation - cf the above-mentioned 1905 and 1906 compromises. Due to employer resistance, low union density among white-collar workers and unwillingness to use the strike weapon (not the least because of the attitudes among members) the option of self-regulation was closed for most private sector white-collar unions (Kjellberg 2003). What remained was legislation. In 1936 Daco obtained its strongly desired Law on rights of association and negotiation, which came about under the Social

Democrat government (1932-76). In 1944 Daco and the "old TCO", a confederation of public sector white-collar unions founded in 1937, merged into the modern TCO.

Blue-collar vertical unions and white-collar vertical unions

Both Sif and Metall were vertical unions but at the same time restricted to either white-collar workers (Sif; today *Unionen*) or blue-collar workers (Metall, today *IF Metall*). This contrasts sharply with the German IG Metall, which applies the industrial or vertical unionism strictly and therefore recruits both blue-collar and white-collar workers. As we have seen, LO in the 1920s paved the way for the growth of a separate white-collar unionism within manufacturing industry. While Metall defeated the Commercial Workers' Union in "the struggle for the clerks", Sif had to fight a similar struggle against an occupational, white collar "union", the Association of Clerks (*Kontoristförbundet*). This association only gradually appeared as a union as it took time for its members – and this category of employees in general - to develop what can be called a union consciousness. Due to resistance from Sif, the Association of Clerks was not conceded affiliation to Daco until 1937 and then only by accepting to restrict its recruitment area to commerce and to transform itself into a union proper and in addition a vertical one. In 1938 its name was changed to HTF (Union of Commercial Salaried Employees). The transformation of the occupational Association of Clerks to the vertical union HTF (which later expanded to a large part of the private service sector) was considered a necessity by Sif, which was eager to prevent clerks outside manufacturing from having a wage depressing influence upon Sif members. Secondly, Sif got monopoly on white-collar workers in manufacturing with the exception of supervisors, whose union (SALF) was the largest amongst the unions founding Daco in 1931. Later on graduate engineers would form their own associations, in 1954 merging to the Association of Graduate Engineers (CF).

Associations of younger professionals

Young professionals, above all in the public sector, played a key role in the formation of a union movement among university graduates in the 1930s and 1940s. Many young secondary grammar school teachers, physicians, lawyers and others had insecure and unfavourable employment conditions. A number of associations for young professionals were formed, some of them already in the 1920s or earlier, for example the Association of Younger Secondary Grammar Teachers (1906), the Association of Younger Physicians (1921), the Association of Younger Lawyers (1941) and the Association of Younger Clergymen (1944). Some of these associations were independent, while others became sections of old professional associations when these were transformed into trade unions proper. In 1943 some of these associations of

younger professionals founded the confederation SYACO (*Sveriges Yngre Akademikers Centralorganisation*). SYACO was a predecessor to Saco (*Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation),* founded four years later, to which the established associations of professionals also successively affiliated. The term *akademiker* was used to emphasize the common economic, academic and professional interests of academically trained persons practising a profession like lawyers, priests and graduate engineers. Consequently, this term was included in the names of SYACO and Saco.

The welfare state and the growth of professional unions

The growth of unions among university graduates was highly promoted by the strength of the Swedish labour movement and the establishment of a welfare state with levelling of incomes as a conspicuous ambition, not least through progressive income taxes. The threat of relatively deteriorated conditions for university graduates was an important impetus for the creation of Saco (*Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation*) in 1947. The 'academic' groups risked losing their status and position both through the actions of the social democratic state and the successful blue-collar union movement, which in many respects (although not all) would serve as a model for Swedish white-collar unions (Kjellberg 1983: 128f, 130, 132, 140). On the other hand, the academically trained groups also profited heavily from the growth of welfare services, not least the considerable expansion of public childcare, which was a prerequisite for the growing share of women among professionals (Björnsson 2007:258f).

The appearance of the welfare state also played a more direct role in the growth of professional unions. As the large majority of professional workers were employed by local and central government, the expansion of the public sector made up a substantial source of membership recruitment. Of employed Saco members in 1950 no less than 71 per cent were found in the public sector (self-employed excluded). Two years later this share had increased to 78 per cent when the National Union of Teachers joined Saco (see Table 11). In 1960 the public sector share had grown somewhat further (81 per cent) to culminate in 1966 (84 per cent). In *absolute* numbers the growth of public sector members was much larger due to the considerable overall increase of Saco members. The total number of employed Saco members increased from 15,500 in 1950 to 67,500 in 1966 (self-employed excluded).

Saco: from centralised militancy to decentralised cooperation in the state sector

For the development of collective bargaining among Saco members those employed within central government became a key group. From January 1966 state employees were conceded full bargaining and strike rights. The strong centralisation of the state as a bargaining partner was reflected in far-reaching centralisation on the part of Saco. Although the affiliated unions negotiated on wages and other employment conditions, the ultimate decisions on labour conflicts lay in the hands of the Saco confederation (Björnsson 2007:148). Two prominent examples are found in the 1966 teachers' strike and the 1971 strike in central government. In the latter case the Social Democrat government used legislation to bring the extensive strike and lockout to an end. This was a conspicuous break with the strong Swedish tradition of self-regulation in the industrial relations arena, that is the high degree of autonomy of the bargaining partners and the relative absence of state regulation (the extensive labour legislation introduced in the 1970s is an exception; Kjellberg 2009a).

In practice collective bargaining in the public sector was introduced long before 1966. Already in the 1950s Saco was involved in central negotiations with both central and local government (Björnsson 2007:363f). Later bargaining was transferred to bargaining cartels (Saco-S in the state sector, Saco-K in the municipal sector).

Through its militant actions in the 1950s and 1960s Saco stood apart from the spirit of Saltsjöbaden, that is the spirit of cooperation in the wake of the 1938 Saltsjöbaden Agreement between the blue-collar union confederation LO and the private sector employers' confederation SAF. On the contrary, numerous labour conflicts or threats thereof occurred in the public sector negotiations involving Saco and its affiliates (Lund 1985:81f). Before strike rights were conceded in 1966, two other types of industrial actions were frequently used: large-scale notices to quit and blockades of new appointments.

About 1990 Saco and the Saco public sector unions abandoned the strategy of centralisation for a far-reaching strategy of decentralisation. Centralised bargaining backed up by militant strikes did not prevent wage increases from lagging behind those of other groups. In the period 1966-78 the LO and TCO unions (the latter in the bargaining cartel TCO-S) in the state sector, backed up by the state itself, applied a policy of levelling out wages – so-called solidaristic wage policy (Elvander 2004:6). The members of the Saco-S unions were hit by the strongly coordinated bargaining in the state sector. Decentralisation and individualisation of wage formation – and in addition intensified lobbying and more intense efforts to influence public opinion – were thought to improve the position of professional employees. In 1989 Saco-S, the bargaining cartel of Saco unions in the state sector, decided to

change strategy to decentralised and individualised wage-setting to get an equivalent to private sector wage drift (Björnsson 2007:331ff). The introduction of individualized and more differentiated wages in the public sector was strongly supported by many Saco members in this sector (Granqvist & Regnér 2008:502). Another motive was to facilitate the introduction of "education premiums" (wages aimed to encourage higher education). The idea is that skilled, educated workers would get a relatively larger share of wage increases if wage-setting is decentralised.

A certain centralisation, however, was kept. While the white-collar bargaining cartels in the municipal sector were dissolved and the private sector white-collar cartel PTK ceased to negotiate on wages, Saco-S not only survived but was also strengthened by the transfer of the right to decide on strikes from Saco to Saco-S (Björnsson 2007:356).

The first step towards decentralised bargaining in the state sector was taken in 1985-86 by a social democrat government, the second one in 1993-94 by a centre-right government (Elvander 2004:7ff, 18). In the 1990s, what Elvander calls a process of "centralised decentralisation" occurred. Wage-setting gradually became more decentralised and individualised but combined with central (branch) agreements on criteria for wage-setting, negotiation procedures etc, although not always on the size of wage increases ("zero agreements"). Furthermore, the state authorities introduced centrally fixed frames for local wage increases motivated by the deteriorating state finances. The result is that Sweden now has probably the most decentralised state sector wage formation in the world. Parallel to this development the spirit of confrontation and militancy gave way to more cooperative industrial relations in this sector, reflected in an agreement of cooperation reminiscent of the 1997 Industry Agreement in the manufacturing sector and also of the 1938 Saltsjöbaden Agreement.

Professional and multi-professional Saco unions

Although all Saco unions are professional unions, far from all are specialised on a single profession or based on a single university degree. Unions like SRAT (Saco's General Group), *Jusek* (Swedish Federation of Lawyers, Social Scientists and Economists) and *Akademikerförbundet SSR* (Swedish Union of Social Workers, Personnel and Public Administration) each contain several professions. *Jusek* and the Saco union *Civilekonomerna* compete on recruiting economists.

Other Saco unions have become more heterogeneous by mergers. In 1972 DIK (Swedish Association of Graduates in Documentation, Information and Culture) was founded by five Saco unions amalgamating into a multi-professional union within the cultural sphere

(libraries, museums and archives). Another example is the merger between the Saco and TCO unions of military officers. LR (the National Union of Teachers) acquired six unions in 1949-51, which became sections within LR. In 1974/75 Saco itself merged with a small confederation (SR) of higher civil servants, teachers (LR) and military officers. The merged confederation, Saco-SR, in 1989 resumed the name Saco (Kjellberg 2000: 611ff, Kjellberg 2005).

Non-academic groups have also been conceded entry into Saco. In 1970 the union of pilots (*Lotsförbundet*) joined Saco's General Group. Another example is the Swedish Ship Officers' Association (*Fartygsbefälsförbundet*), which joined Saco in 1997 but left in 2011 to become an association within the supervisors' union *Ledarna*. From the late 1960s Saco found it necessary to recruit both 'academics' (*akademiker;* academically trained persons) and 'non-academics' among white-collar workers with similar occupations working side by side (Björnsson 2007:221ff). Long before that, in 1952, the Association of Swedish Public Librarians (*Svenska Folkbibliotekarieföreningen*), many of whose members did not have a university degree, had left the TCO union SKTF to become a Saco affiliate. Some non-academic groups of public administrators have also joined Saco.

Vertical and professional TCO unions

Seven out of ten TCO members belonged in 2012 to vertical unions like *Unionen* (white-collar workers in manufacturing industry and private services), Vision/SKTF (local government officers), ST (civil servants) and seven other vertical unions (Table 2). *Unionen* was founded in 1 January 2008 by a merger of the two vertical TCO unions Sif (manufacturing industry and to a lesser degree private services) and HTF (private services). With the exception of *Unionen*, the TCO vertical unions were exactly the same in 2012 as in 1990, although some of them had changed their names (Table 3). When the TCO union SKTF in 2011 changed name to *Vision* and by that abolished '*kommunal*' (municipal) and '*tjänsteman*' in the name, one aim was stressing that also the private sector was included in the recruitment area, another to appear more attractive to academically trained persons and improve the prospects successfully competing with the Saco unions when recruiting members.

Table 2. TCO unions and members 31 December 2012

A. Vertical unions:
Unionen (white-collar workers in manufacturing industry and private services): 450,137
Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (Vision, formerly SKTF): 122,077
Union of Civil servants (ST): 64,244
Union of Finance Sector Employees (Finansförbundet): 28,923
Union of Insurance Employees (FTF): 12,774
Swedish Union of Theatrical Employees (Teaterförbundet): 6,276
Union of Chemist's Employees (Farmaci): 4,174
Union of Civilian Employees in the Defence Forces (Försvarsförbundet): 3,035
Swedish Union of Customs' and Coastguard Officers (TULL-KUST): 2,042
Association of Forestal and Agricultural Employees (SLF): 830

SUM 10 vertical TCO unions: 694,512 members (70% of TCO members)

B. Professional/occupational unions:
Swedish Teachers' Union (Lärarförbundet): 177,278 (including Swedish Union of People's High School Teachers, SFHL)
Swedish Association of Health Officers (dominated by nurses; Vårdförbundet): 89,801
Union of Swedish Policemen (Polisförbundet): 19,382
Swedish Union of Journalists (Journalistförbundet): 13,512
Swedish Federation of Professional Musicians (Symf): 1,406

SUM 5 professional/occupational TCO unions: 301,379 (30% of TCO members)

C. TCO in all:
15 unions with 995,891 active members

The membership share of the vertical unions was also about the same in 2012 as in 1990. Excluding the occupational union SALF (expelled from TCO in 1997) from the calculations, a slight decline of the vertical membership share occurred: from 73 per cent in 1990 to 69 per cent in 2007 and 70 per cent in 2012 (Table 3-5).

The two largest public sector TCO unions, Vision/SKTF (Swedish Union of Local Government Officers) and ST (Union of Civil servants), both had considerably fewer members in 2012 than in 1990: -48,400 (-28%) and -49,000 (-43%) respectively, in the latter case influenced by privatization of public sector jobs. Also the unions of financial and insurance employees have lost several members since 1990: -19,100 (-40%) and -3,900 (-23%). (Tables 2-3).

Among the occupational/professional TCO unions a dramatic changed occurred in 1997 when the Association of Supervisors (SALF; later renamed *Ledarna*) was expelled from TCO due to its reorientation to a competitive stance towards other TCO unions. The new aim of the union was – and is - to recruit all kinds of middle-managers in all sectors. When excluding this occupational union from the 1990 TCO statistics, the membership share of professional TCO unions grew from 27 per cent in 1990 (31 December) to 30 per cent in 2012.

Table 3. TCO unions and members 31 December 1990

A. Vertical unions:
Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry (Sif): 276,843
Union of Commercial Salaried Employees (HTF): 122,511
Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (SKTF): 170,505
Union of Civil servants (ST): 113,219
Swedish Bank Employees' Union (SBmf): 48,037
Union of Insurance Employees (FTF): 16,662
Swedish Union of Theatrical Employees (Teaterförbundet): 5,303
Union of Chemist's Employees (ATF): 5,924
Union of Civilian Employees in the Defence Forces (FCTF): 11,450
Swedish Union of Customs' Officers (STF): 4,306
Association of Forestal and Agricultural Employees (SLF): 1,728

SUM 11 vertical TCO unions: 776,488 members (68% of TCO members; 73% if SALF excluded)

B. Professional/occupational unions:
Swedish Union of Specialist Teachers (SFL): 95,239
Swedish Union of Teachers (SL): 64,032
Swedish Union of People's High School Teachers (SFHL): 1,669
Swedish Federation of Salaried Employees in Health Services (dominated by nurses; SHSTF): 87,023
Swedish Association of Supervisors (SALF): 77,035
Union of Swedish Policemen (Polisförbundet): 18,089
Swedish Union of Journalists (Journalistförbundet): 13,297
Officers' National Association (military officers; ORF): 9,668
Swedish Federation of Professional Musicians (Symf): 1,678

SUM 9 professional/occupational TCO unions: 367,730 (32% of TCO members)
Excluding SALF: 290,695 (27% of TCO members if SALF excluded)

C. TCO in all:
20 unions with 1,144,218 active members; excluding SALF: 1,067,183

The professional Swedish Teachers' Union (*Lärarförbundet*) in practice could be classified as a *vertical* union as it covers all kinds teachers and consequently almost all kinds of white-collar workers in schools. The union was founded in 1991 by a merger of two large TCO teachers' unions: the Swedish Union of Specialist Teachers (SFL) and the Swedish Union of Teachers (SL). Considering the whole period 1945-1991 no fewer than sixteen teachers' unions successively merged into the Swedish Teachers' Union (Kjellberg 2005). This union in 2012 was larger (177,300 members) than the merged teachers' unions (SFL and SL) together in 1990 (159,300).

Table 4. TCO unions and members 31 December 2007 / 1 January 2008

A. Vertical unions:
Unionen (white-collar workers in manufacturing industry and private services; founded in 2008): 412.354
Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (SKTF): 127.448
Union of Civil servants (ST): 70.238
Union of Finance Sector Employees (Finansförbundet): 30.136
Union of Insurance Employees (FTF): 11.926
Swedish Union of Theatrical Employees (Teaterförbundet): 7.006
Union of Chemist's Employees (Farmaci): 5.074
Union of Civilian Employees in the Defence Forces (Försvarsförbundet): 3.511
Swedish Union of Customs' and Coastguard Officers (TULL-KUST): 2.454
Association of Forestal and Agricultural Employees (SLF): 882

SUM vertical 10 TCO unions: 671.029 members (69% of TCO members)

B. Professional/occupational unions:
Swedish Teachers' Union (Lärarförbundet): 177.020
Swedish Union of People's High School Teachers (SFHL): 1.892
Swedish Association of Health Officers (dominated by nurses; Vårdförbundet): 91.695
Union of Swedish Policemen (Polisförbundet): 17.442
Swedish Union of Journalists (Journalistförbundet): 14.280
Swedish Federation of Professional Musicians (Symf): 1.601

SUM 6 professional/occupational TCO unions: 303.930 (31% of TCO members)

C. TCO in all: 16 unions with 974.959 active members

Large variations in the number of members, however, have occurred *in between* the years 1990 and 2012 among the vertical TCO unions. The private sector union *Unionen* in 2012 was larger (450,100 members) than Sif and HTF together in 1990 (399,300) but smaller than in 2002 when Sif + HTF peaked at 465,300 members (table 5). From 1940 to 1980 Sif and HTF together increased by 345,300 members or more than 1,200 per cent.

Table 5. Active members in the private sector TCO unions Sif, HTF and Unionen 31 December 1937-2012

Year	Sif	HTF	Sum	Unionen	Change
1937	11,000	9,100	20,100		
1940	18,900	8,300	27,200		+ 7,100 (+ 35%)
1950	59,700	12,600	72,300		+ 45,100 (+ 166%)
1960	107,100	24,700	131,800		+ 59,500 (+ 82%)
1970	203,000	51,000	254,000		+ 122,200 (+ 93%)
1980	276,700	95,800	372,500		+ 118,500 (+ 47%)
1990	276,800	122,500	399,300		+ 26,800 (+ 7%)
2000	298,600	151,800	450,400		+ 51,100 (+ 13%)
2001	305,300	155,400	460,700		+ 10,300
2002	**308,000**	157,300	**465,300**		+ 4,600
2003	304,900	**158,000**	462,900		-2,400
2004	301,100	157,700	458,800		-4,100
2005	294,500	157,000	451,500		-7,300
2006	288,000	155,000	443,000		-8,500
2007	273,500	138,900	412,400		-30,600 (-7%)
2008	-	-	-	403,600	-8,800 (-2%)
2009	-	-	-	410,200	+ 6,600
2010	-	-	-	413,100	+ 2,900
2011	-	-	-	422,100	+ 9,000 (+ 2%)
2012	-	-	-	450,100	+ 28,000 (+ 7%)

After the peak year 2002 the number of HTF/Sif (Unionen) members stagnated. It fell by almost 40,000 persons during the two years of general membership decline in Sweden – 2007 and 2008 – caused by the considerably raised fees to union unemployment funds. In these two years *Unionen* (in 2007 Sif + HTF) lost almost every tenth member (9 per cent). Reduced fund fees and the attractive 'income insurance' run by the union itself and providing supplementary unemployment benefits to union members contributed to reversing the downwards trend to growth. In 2012 a remarkable expansion took place (+28.000 persons in one year). In the two years 2011 and 2012 Unionen increased by about as much as the union and its predecessors lost in 2007 and 2008.

Expanding Saco unions – stagnating TCO unions

As is evident from Table 6, the large professional Saco unions expanded considerably during the period 1990-2012 but a small decline occurred in 2007 due to the considerably raised fee of the unemployment fund AEA covering all Saco unions and a TCO union dominated by nurses. The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers increased by as much as 118 per cent from 1990 to 2012 (to get comparability over the years the Swedish Society of College Engineers, affiliated from 2007, is included in the 1990 figure).

The Saco unions of lawyers and economists (Jusek) and economists (*Civilekonomerna*) – competing with each other - more than doubled their membership in the same period, Jusek even tripled it (Table 6). The Saco union organizing social workers and personnel and public administrators *Akademikerförbundet SSR* also increased considerably: +107% from 1990 to 2012. The membership growth of the TCO professional unions was much more moderate than that of the Saco unions. That is the case also when comparing the percentage growth of TCO and Saco teachers' unions: +18.000 (+10%) and +16.000 (+38%).

The large vertical TCO unions have great difficulties competing with the professional Saco unions recruiting expanding professional groups like graduate engineers, social workers, economists etc. It is particularly evident when considering the membership development in the period 1990-2012. While *Unionen* (TCO) despite its impressive growth in 2012 increased by merely 13 per cent (compared with the sum of Sif and HTF in 1990), its most severe competitor, the Association of Graduate Engineers, expanded by 118 per cent. Similarly, during the same period the vertical TCO union Vision/SKTF (local government officers) *decreased* by 28 per cent at the same time as its Saco rival, *Akademikerförbundet SSR, grew* by 107 per cent. The same pattern appears when restricting the comparison to the years 2000-2012: *Unionen*: -1%, the Association of Graduate Engineers: +50%, Vision/SKTF -31%, *Akademikerförbundet SSR +53%,* etc (Table 6).

Only two occupational unions are affiliated to LO: the Swedish Electricians' Union and the Swedish Painters' Union. All the other LO unions are industrial (vertical) unions organizing all kinds of blue-collar workers within their recruitment area.[2] A few of them also contain some white-collar workers, for example the Commercial Employees' Union. As appears from Table 6 both the two occupational LO unions and the large vertical LO unions have lost many members since 1990.

[2] In June 2009 the Graphical Workers' Union and the Union of Forest and Wood Workers merged into the union GS. By that the number of LO unions was reduced to 13.

Table 6. Number of members in selected professional/specialist and vertical unions in 1990-2012 (Saco, TCO and LO)

	Dec. 1990	Dec. 2000	Dec. 2005	Dec. 2007	Change 1990-2007	Change 2000-2007
A. Saco: all 22 Saco unions** are white-collar and professional unions, but some recruit within a relatively wide area						
Graduate Engineers (CF) Swedish Society of College Engineers. (Merger in 2007)	42,700 7,200 SUM: 49,900	63,600 8,800 SUM: 72,400	82,100 7,600 SUM: 89,700	93,500	+43,600 (+87%)	+21,100 (+29%)
Teachers (LR)	42,500	52,100	58,000	56,900	+14,400 (+34%)	+4,800 (+9%)
Lawyers & economists (Jusek)	23,000	38,900	51,600	52,000	+29,000 (+126%)	+13,100 (+34%)
Social workers etc (Akademikerförbundet SSR)	22,200	30,100	35,300	36,400	+14,400 (+65%)	+6,300 (+21%)
Economists (Civilekonomerna)	8,800	15,900	22,145	22,800	+14,000 (+159%)	+6,900 (+43%)
Physisians (Läkarförbundet)	23,400	25,800	27,500	27,600	+4,200 (+18%)	+1,800 (7%)
B. TCO (all 16 TCO unions are white-collar unions): (1) 6 professional/specialist unions:						
Teachers (Lärarförbundet)	159,300*** (SL + SFL)	176,100	179,800	177,000	+17,700 (+11%)	+900 (+1%)
Nurses (Vårdförbundet)	87,000	97,700	95,600	91,700	+4,700 (+5%)	-6,000 (-6%)
(2) 10 vertical unions:						
Sif (manufacturing) and HTF (commercial employees) merged 1 January 2008 into *Unionen*	Sif: 276,800 HTF: 122,500 SUM: 399,300	Sif: 298,600 HTF: 151,800 Sum: 450,400	Sif: 294,500 HTF: 157,000 Sum: 451,500	Unionen: 412,400	+13,100 (+3%)	-38,000 (-8%)
Local government officers (SKTF)	170,500	176,100	135,900	127,400	-43,100 (-25%)	-17,700 (-12%)
C. LO (all 15 LO unions are blue-collar unions)						
(1) 2 occupational unions						
Electricians (Elektrikerförbundet)	29,100	22,900	22,200	22,000	-7,100 (-24%)	-900 (-4%)
Painters (Målareförbundet)	18,500	14,800	13,000	12,600	-5,900 (-32%)	-2,200 (-15%)
(2) 13 vertical unions						
Metall and the Union of Industrial Workers (*Industrifacket*; IF) merged in 2006 into *IF Metall*	Metall: 357,100 IF:****: 98,500 SUM: 455,600	Metall: 314,300 IF: 80,300 Sum: 394,600	Metall: 276,100 IF: 66,000 Sum: 342,100	IF Metall: 316,000	-139,600 (-31%)	-78,600 (-20%)
Municipal workers (Kommunal)	636,700	595,200	568,300	529,100	-107,600 (-17%)	-66,100 (-11%)

/Continued/

Table 6 continued.	Dec. 2007	Dec. 2012	Change 1990-2012	Change 2000-2012	Change 2007-2012
A. Saco: all 22 Saco unions** are white-collar and professional unions, but some recruit within a relatively wide area					
Graduate Engineers (CF) Swedish Society of College Engineers (merger in 2007)	93,500	108,700	+58,800 (+118%)	+36,300 (+50%)	+15,200 (+16%)
Teachers (LR)	56,900	58,500	+16,000 (+38%)	+6,400 (+12%)	+1,600 (+2,8%)
Lawyers & economists (Jusek)	52,000	58,000	+35,000 (+152%)	+19,100 (+49%)	+6,000 (+12%)
Social workers etc (Akademikerförbundet SSR)	36,400	46,000	+23,800 (+107%)	+15,900 (+53%)	+9,600 (+26%)
Economists (Civilekonomerna)	22,800	26,100	+17,300 (+197%)	+10,200 (+64%)	+3,300 (+14%)
Physisians (Läkarförbundet)	27,600	31,200	+7,800 (+33%)	+5,400 (21%)	+3,600 (+13%)
B. TCO (all 15 TCO unions are white-collar unions): (1) 5 professional/specialist unions:					
Teachers (Lärarförbundet) Including SFHL (Union of Folk High Shool Teachers)	177,000 178,900	177,300 177,300	+18,000 (+11%)	-1,200 (-1%)	-1,600 (-1%)
Nurses (Vårdförbundet)	91,700	89,800	+2,800 (+3%)	-7,900 (-8%)	-1,900 (-2%)
(2) 10 vertical unions:					
Sif (manufacturing) and HTF (commercial employees) merged 1 January 2008 into *Unionen*	Unionen: 412,400	Unionen: 450,100	+50,800 (+13%)	-3,000 (-1%)	+37,700 (+9%)
Local government officers (Vision/SKTF)	127,400	122,100	-48,400 (-28%)	-54,000 (-31%)	-5,300 (-4%)
C. LO (all 15 LO unions are blue-collar unions) (14 LO unions in 2012)					
(1) 2 occupational unions					
Electricians (Elektrikerförbundet)	22,000	20,400	-8,700 (-30%)	-2,500 (-11%)	-1,600 (-7%)
Painters (Målareförbundet)	12,600	12,400	-6,100 (-33%)	-2,400 (-16%)	-200 (-2%)
(2) 13 vertical unions (12 in 2012)					
Metall and the Union of Industrial Workers (*Industrifacket*; IF) merged in 2006 into *IF Metall*	IF Metall: 316.000	IF Metall: 266.300	-189.300 (-42%)	-128.300 (-33%)	-49.700 (-16%)
Municipal workers (Kommunal)	529,100	502,500	-134,200 (-21%)	-92,700 (-16%)	-26,600 (-5%)

* 1 January 2008 = 31 December 2007; ** Reserve Officers Association excluded as it has no employed members; *** Two TCO unions of teachers (SL and SFL), which merged in 1991; **** Two LO unions which merged into the Union of Industrial Workers (IF) in 1993

Remark. Active wage and salary members (including unemployed, excluding pensioners, students and self-employed)

As regards the few independent unions (in all six, most of them very small) the union of supervisors declined a lot in the 1990s while being a TCO union. The new competitive strategy and the extension of the recruitment area to all kinds of managers have reversed the negative development: -21% from 1990 to 2000, +48% from 2000 to 2012 (Table 7). The

unions specialised in engine-drivers and dockworkers workers are both breakaways from LO unions.

Table 7. Number of members in selected independent unions in 1990-2012

	Dec. 1990	Dec. 2000	Dec. 2005	Dec. 2007	Dec. 2012	Change 1990-2007	Change 2000-2007	Change 2007-2012	Change 1990-2012	Change 2000-2012
In all 6 independent unions (almost all specialised)										
Supervisors (SALF/Ledarna*)	77,000*	60,600	70,000	70,200	89,700	-6,800 (-9%)	+9,600 (+16%)	+19,500 (+28%)	+12,700 (+16%)	+29,100 (+48%)
Airplane pilots (Svensk Pilotförening)	1,800	1,700	1,300	1,200	1,100	-600 (-33%)	-500 (-29%)	-100 (-8%)	-700 (-39%)	-600 (-35%)
Engine-drivers (Svensk Lokförarförening)	-	450	300	250	200	-	-200 (-44%)	-50 (-20%)	-	-250 (-56%)
Stevedore workers (Hamnarbetarförbundet)	1,700	1,600	1,500	1,700	1,400	0 (0%)	+100 (+6%)	-300 (-18%)	-300 (-18%)	-200 (-13%)

* Affiliated to TCO in 1990 (expelled from TCO in 1997)
Remark. Active wage and salary members (including unemployed, excluding pensioners, students and self-employed)

Increasing share of union members in professional unions

Historically Sweden experienced a long period of transition from occupational and craft unions to vertical/industrial unions. Among LO unions this development has continued up to now and is still going on. Small occupational unions have merged into vertical unions or joined vertical unions. With respect to the total number of unionised wage and salary earners in Sweden there has been a shift weakening the position of vertical unions. Some of them have reacted by merging into larger units such as the blue-collar IF Metall (2006) and the white-collar *Unionen* (2007) – see Kjellberg 2008.

The growing share of white-collar workers and the heightened educational level among this category of workers have increased the share of union members affiliated to professional unions: among white-collar workers from 38 per cent of union members in 1990 to 49 per cent in 2007 and 2012 (Table 8). The share of occupational unions (excluding professional unions) among white-collar workers was about the same in 1990, 2007 and 2012 (5-6 per cent) and also among blue-collar workers (2-3 per cent). Professional and occupational unions put together increased their share of Swedish union members from 20 per cent in 1990 to 29 per cent in 2007 and 31 per cent in 2012. Among white-collar workers this share increased from 44 per cent in 1990 to 54 per cent in 2007 and 55 per cent in 2012. This development reflects both the rising share of professional/occupational members in TCO (from 27 per cent in 1990 to 30 per cent in 2012) and the expansion of Saco unions and the independent union *Ledarna*.

Table 8. Membership share of professional and occupational unions in 1990-2012 (per December 31)

	Professional Unions	Occupational Unions	Professional + occupational unions	All Unions
1990				
Blue-collar Workers	-	54,000 (3%)	54,000 (3%)	1,935,000 (100%)
White-collar Workers	553,000 (38%)	86,000 (6%)	638,000 (44%)	1,453,000 (100%)
All workers	553,000 (16%)	139,000 (4%)	692,000 (20%)	3,388,000 (100%)
2007				
Blue-collar Workers	-	35,000 (2%)	35,000 (2%)	1,449,000 (100%)
White-collar Workers	725,000 (49%)	76,000 (5%)	801,000 (54%)	1,472,000 (100%)
All workers	725,000 (25%)	111,000 (4%)	836,000 (29%)	2,921,000 (100%)
2012				
Blue-collar Workers		33,062 (3%)	33,062 (3%)	1,291,249 (100%)
White-collar Workers	768,534 (49%)	93,586 (6%)	862,120 (55%)	1,556,632 (100%)
All workers	768,534 (27%)	126,648 (4%)	895,182 (31%)	2,847,881 (100%)

Remark. All non-vertical TCO unions (except SALF in 1990) are classified as professional unions. The same applies to all Saco unions and the independent Swedish Association of Airplane Pilots.

A majority of Swedish union members are women

Women make up a slight majority of Swedish unions members. At the end of 2012, 53 per cent of active wage and salary members were women (unemployed workers included). The female share of the LO was 48 per cent, TCO 61 per cent and Saco 54 per cent. That means that a clear majority (56 per cent) of white-collar members are women. Union density among employed women in 2012 was 73 per cent compared to 68 per cent among men (yearly averages), but there are considerable variations between different groups of women. This pattern is reinforced by the relative concentration of women in the labour market sectors where union density is either very high (the public sector) or by Swedish standards low (private services). Among white-collar workers the female union density in 2012 was as high as 76 per cent compared to 69 per cent among men.

Table 9. The 30 largest unions in Sweden 31 December 2012

(1)	(2) National union	(3) Members	(4) Female share	(5) UM	(6) PTK	(7) OFR	(8) Saco-S	(9)
1	Municipal workers	502,500	80					LO
2	Unionen	450,100	44	X	X			TCO
3	IF Metall	266,300	20	X				LO
4	Teachers' Union	177,300	83		X	X		TCO
5	Commercial employees	125,000	65					LO
6	Vision (SKTF)	122,100	72			X		TCO
7	Graduate engineers	108,700	24	X	X		X	Saco
8	Nurses	89,800	91		X	X		TCO
9	Ledarna (supervisors)	89,700	25		X	X		Independ.
10	Service and communication employees (Seko)	81,300	27					LO
11	Building workers	77,200	1					LO
12	Civil servants (ST)	64,200	64			X		TCO
13	National Union of Teachers (LR)	58,500	69		X	X	X	Saco
14	Jusek (lawyers, economists etc)	58,000	57		X		X	Saco
15	Transport workers	56,800	16					LO
16	Akademikerförbundet SSR	46,000	82		X	X	X	Saco
17	Wood, forest and graphical workers (GS-Facket)	45,600	18	X				LO
18	Swedish Medical Association (doctors)	31,200	49			X	X	Saco
19	Finance employees	28,900	62					TCO
20	Hotel and restaurant workers	28,700	64					LO
21	Maintenance workers	28,500	50					LO
22	Food workers	26,800	37	X				LO
23	Scientists (Naturvetarna)	26,600	60		X		X	Saco
24	Economists (Civilekonomerna)	26,100	55		X		X	Saco
25	Electricians	20,400	1					LO
26	Policemen	19,400	29			X		TCO
27	DIK	17,800	78		X		X	Saco
28	University teachers	17,700	49		X		X	Saco
29	Paper workers	16,900	16					LO
30	Journalists	13,500	52		X			TCO

(1) Rank, (2) National union, (3) Number of active members (unemployed included, pensioners excluded, TCO and Saco students excluded, self-employed Saco members excluded, the Saco union of military reserve officers excluded), (4) Female share of active members, (5) Affiliated to Unions in Manufacturing, (6) Affiliated to PTK, (7) Affiliated to OFR, (8) Affiliated to Saco-S, (9) Affiliated to confederation.

Five of Sweden's ten largest unions are dominated by women (no 1, 4-6 and 8 in Table 9). As a result of the far-reaching sex segregation in the Swedish labour market there are massive female majorities in these five unions. Women at the end of 2012 made up 80 per cent of the members in Sweden's largest union, the Municipal Workers' Union (LO). The corresponding share in the Teachers' Union (TCO) was 83 per cent and in the TCO union organizing nurses 91 per cent. On the other hand, the share of women in IF Metall (LO) was only 20 per cent

and in the Association of Graduate Engineers (Saco), the seventh largest union in Sweden, 24 per cent.

Many Saco unions have undergone a feminization process. In 2012 the share of women in Sweden's fourteenth largest union, Jusek (laywers and economists), was 57 per cent, in *Akademikerförbundet SSR* (social workers, personnel administrators etc) 82 per cent, in *Civilekonomerna* (economists) 55 per cent and in *Läkarförbundet* (doctors) 49 per cent. The female share in the National Union of Teachers (LR) was 56 per cent in 1985 and 69 per cent in 2012. Most of its members are employed in the public sector although the growth of private schools has increased the share of those in private employment to 13 per cent (2012).

The growing share of private sector Saco members

Since 1966 the share of Saco members in *private* employment has increased – from 16 per cent in 1966 to 35 per cent in 2000 and 44 per cent in 2012 – due to the rapid expansion of graduate engineers and other professionals in private companies. The transformation of state agencies into companies and the privatization of the Church of Sweden (1999) also contributed to the increasing share of members in private employment. In 2000, however, two out of three employed Saco members worked in the public sector and still in 2012 a clear majority of the members (self-employed excluded).

Some of the large professional unions, which today have their basis mainly in the private sector, did at their start recruit a substantial share of their members in local and central government. That was for example the case with the Association of Graduates in Economics (*Civilekonomerna*). When this union joined Saco in 1955 it only contained public sector employees. In 1957 every second employed member of the Association of Graduate Engineers (CF) worked in the public sector and as late as 1970 still as much as 45 per cent (self-employed excluded), but times would soon change due to the rapidly growing demand of graduate engineers in companies like Ericsson, ABB, Volvo and Saab. In 2005 as much as 83 per cent of the CF members were found in the private sector. Fifteen years earlier CF surpassed the National Union of Teachers as largest Saco union (active members; self-employed excluded). As a consequence of the merger between CF and another Saco union, the Swedish Society of College Engineers, the membership share in private employment dropped somewhat - to 77 per cent in 2007 (in the new Association of Graduate Engineers) to expand to 84 per cent in 2012.

Increasing share of private sector members in TCO and Saco but still a public sector majority in Saco

Among organised university graduates there is still a dominance of public sector employees, although the private employment share has expanded considerably in the last three decades. While almost eight out of ten Saco members (employees) were to be found in the public sector as late as 1980, the corresponding share in 2012 was less than six out of ten (Table 10).

Table 10. Share (%) of TCO and Saco members (employees) in private and public sectors 1950-2012

	TCO			Saco		
	Private sector	Public sector	All members (employees only)	Private sector	Public sector	All members (employees only)
1950	48	52	100	29	71	100
1952	52	48	100	22	78*	100
1960	55	45	100	19	81	100
1966	59	41	100	16	84	100
1970	58	42	100	20	80	100
1980	48**	52**	100	23	77	100
1990	50	50	100	27	73	100
2000	52	48**	100	35	65	100
2010	56	44	100	43	57	100
2011	57	43	100	44	56	100
2012	57	43	100	44	56	100

* LR (National Union of Teachers) joined Saco in 1952.

** The union of supervisors SALF (Ledarna) left TCO in 1979 but returned in 1985 and was expelled in 1997.

When Saco was founded in 1947 a large majority of members was employed in the public sector. This share increased in 1952 to 78 per cent after the affiliation of the National Union of Teachers (*Lärarnas Riksförbund*, LR; secondary school teachers), which then became the largest Saco union followed by the Swedish Medical Association (*Läkarförbundet*; doctors). The expanding Swedish public sector raised the Saco public employment share to 84 per cent in the peak year 1966.

While the public sector share in 1966-2012 declined from 84 to 56 per cent, the corresponding process in TCO is less conspicuous: from 52 per cent in 1950 to 43 per cent in 2012 despite the 1997 expulsion of the private sector dominated *Ledarna*, the former supervisors' union SALF.

Among female Saco members (employees) two out of four (65 per cent) were employed in the public sector, but less than every second male member (46 per cent in 2012). In 1990 the share of public sector employees was higher among both women (81 per cent) and men (68 per cent). Since then the female share of Saco members has increased from 42 per cent (1990) to 54 per cent (2012).

As is evident from Table 11 the share of female members has increased considerably in both the private and the public sector. In 1985 women made up a minority among public sector Saco members. Between 1985 and 2008 their share increased from 43 to 62 per cent. The growing female presence in the *private* sector during this period – from 27 to 43 per cent of Saco members – means that their 2012 share in that sector was exactly the same as their 1985 share in the *public* sector (43 per cent). If this development continues in the future, the time will come when women also make up a majority among Saco members in private employment.

Table 11. Share of men and women (%) by sector among Saco members (employees only) 1985-2012

	1985	1990	2000	2010	2012
Private sector					
Men	73	69	65	58	57
Women	27	31	35	42	43
All	100	100	100	100	100
Public sector					
Men	57	54	48	39	38
Women	43	46	52	61	62
All	100	100	100	100	100
Both sectors					
Men	61	58	54	47	46
Women	39	42	46	53	54
All	100	100	100	100	100

Declining union density since 1993

Since 1993 union density in Sweden has declined from 85 per cent to 70 per cent (Table 12). The decline comprises both blue-collar and white-collar workers, both men and women and all sectors (Kjellberg 2011a, Kjellberg 2013). It is particularly marked among young workers. A contributory factor is that every second worker aged 16-24 today has a temporary job compared to every third worker 20 years ago. Changed attitudes are also part of the picture.

Table 12. Union density by age and category in Sweden 1990-2012 (%)

Age	1990	1993	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	1990-2012	1993-2012	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2012	2006-2012
16-24	62	69	52	46	40	36	35	34	34	36	-26	-33	-6	-4	0	-10
25-29	78	81	74	68	64	61	59	60	58	57	-21	-24	-4	-3	-4	-11
16-29 in all	69	76	64	58	53	49	48	48	47	47	-22	-29	-5	-4	-2	-11
30-44	85	86	82	77	74	72	72	73	72	71	-14	-15	-3	-2	-1	-6
45-64	88	89	88	85	82	81	80	80	80	80	-8	-9	-3	-1	-1	-5
16-64 in all	81	85	81	77	73	71	71	71	70	70	-11	-15	-4	-2	-1	-7
Blue-collar workers	82	86	83	77	74	71	70	69	67	67	-15	-19	-3	-3	-4	-10
White-collar workers	81	83	79	77	73	72	72	73	73	73	-8	-10	-4	-1	+1	-4

Remark. Annual averages labour force surveys excluding full-time students working part-time.

Looking at the average density a substantial part of the decline from 1993 to 2006 – about 0 to 1 percentage points per year – was caused by the shrinking employment share in manufacturing industry and the public sector. In the span of one single year, 2007, union density declined by four percentage points (from 77 to 73 per cent), which is quite unique in modern Swedish history (we have to go back to the union defeat in the 1909 general strike to find a larger decline) and remarkable also by international standards. The total number of union members in Sweden decreased from 3,102,000 at the end of 2006 to 2,921,000 one year later (students, pensioners and self-employed Saco-members excluded).

The size of the decline cannot be explained by anything other than the profound changes in the unemployment insurance introduced by the centre-right government in 2007. Unemployment funds were ordered to finance a larger part of benefits, and they therefore had to raise their fees considerably. In 2006 fund members paid 90-100 SEK per month (more than 9 SEK was then valued at one euro). From January 2007 most fees rose to about 340-370 SEK a month. Due to the abolition of tax reduction, the net increase was even higher. Many members experienced a six fold net increase, often from about 60 SEK (100 SEK with 40 per cent tax reduction) to about 360 SEK (with no tax reduction). The precise rise of the fee was dependent upon the rate of unemployment among the members of the fund. The underlying rationale was to push unions to modest wage claims in industries with high unemployment (Kjellberg 2009b).

The considerably increased fund fees caused massive membership losses in both unions and funds. The union-led funds in 2007 lost almost twice as many members (10 per cent) as the unions (6 per cent). Blue-collar funds and unions in private services were particularly hard hit. In general their members pay the highest fund fees while the wages are among the lowest

in the labour market. This is true particularly among hotel and restaurant workers. In 2007 their union lost every fifth member. Conversely, the members of the professional Saco unions, many of which are at the top of the wage scale, have to pay considerably less. While the number of LO members declined by as much as 8 per cent in 2007, the corresponding Saco figure was just 1 per cent (Table 13). TCO lost 5 per cent of its members during this year.

Table 13. Losses of union members in the years 2007-2012

Union Confederation	Changed number of union members in the year 2007	Changed number of union members in the year 2008	Changed number of union members in 2007 + 2008	Changed umber of union members in the year 2009
LO	-122,000 -8%	-57,000 -4%	-179,500 -11%	-38,000 -3%
TCO	-51,000 -5%	-17,000 -2%	-68,000 -7%	+3,500 0%
Saco	-4,500 -1%	+7,000 +2%	+2,500 +1%	+18,000 +4%
Independent unions	-3,500 -4%	+3,000 +4%	-500 -1%	+4,000 +5%
All unions	-181,000 -6%	-64,000 -2%	-245,000 -8%	-12,000 0%

Union Confederation	Changed number of union members in the year 2010	Changed number of union members in the year 2011	Changed number of union members in the year 2012	Changed umber of union members in 2007-2012*
LO	-28,000 -2%	-20,600 -2%	-6,200 -0,5%	-272,800 -17%
TCO	+1,000 0%	+6,200 +1%	+27,000 +3%	-30,000 -3%
Saco	+8,500 +2%	+6,400 +1%	+5,500 +1%	+41,400 +10%
Independent unions	+3,000 +3%	+3,300 +4%	+2,600 +3%	+12,800 +15%
All unions	-16,000 -1%	-4,700 0%	+29,000 +1%	-248,700 -8%

** In 2007 +2008 +2009+2010+2011+2012*

Remark. Active wage and salary members (including unemployed, excluding pensioners, students and self-employed)

Union density declined by another two percentage points from 2007 to 2008. In the period 2006-2008 the rate of unionization thus fell by as much as six points, from 77 per cent to 71 per cent. In the two years 2007 and 2008 together Swedish unions lost 8 per cent of their members or about every thirteenth member. LO declined by 11 per cent and TCO by 7 per cent, while Saco increased by 1 per cent. The primary circumstance explaining both the heavy losses of union members and the contrasting development between different groups of workers is found in the profound changes of the Ghent system made by the centre-right government (Kjellberg 2009b). The massive membership losses in 2007 were caused by the strongly raised fees of union unemployment funds, although a successive differentiation of fees took place. In July 2008 the differentiation was reinforced considerably as the government now linked fund fees more closely to unemployment among the members of each fund. The strongly socially segregated Swedish union structure, together with higher

unemployment among blue-collar workers compared to white-collar workers, meant that the increased differentiation of fund fees resulted in a growing social polarization in this respect. In general blue-collar workers in the private service sector have to pay the highest fees at the same time as their wages are among the lowest in Sweden. Conversely, the members of the white-collar Saco fund AEA, many of which are at the upper section of the wage scale, pay considerably less due to low unemployment among its members.

The social polarization of fees to union unemployment funds – and by that also the sum of union fees and fund fees – became much more pronounced than previously. The successively changing composition of labour, combined with a high union density among white-collar workers, for a long period had resulted in a decline of LO's share of union members. Now the large membership losses hitting LO unions due to high fund fees accelerated this development. The share of Saco members increased from 14 per cent at the end of 2006 to 15 per cent two years later, while LO's share declined from 50 per cent in 2006 to 48 per cent in 2008 and 47 per cent in 2012 (Table 1). The white-collar union density in 2008 superseded that of blue-collar workers due to the stronger decline of blue-collar density compared to that of white-collar workers.

Considering the whole period from 2006 to 2012, the decline in union density of blue-collar workers was 10 percentage points compared to 4 points among white-collar workers (Table 12). In the private sector, and particularly in private services, the disparity was substantially larger. Blue-collar density in the private service sector fell by 11 percentage points from 2006 to 2012 compared to 2 points among white-collar workers (Kjellberg 2013). In the second half of this period the growing divergence was manifested in a continued *fall* of blue-collar density in contrast to the *increasing* density among private sector white-collar groups from 2008 to 2009 and from 2011 to 2012. As a result, from being equal in 2006 (77 per cent), the average white-collar density in 2012 surpassed that of blue-collar workers by 6 percentage points (73 and 67 per cent respectively).

Competition but also cooperation between TCO and Saco unions

The Public Employees' Negotiation Council, OFR, was founded in 1991 by a merger of two bargaining cartels made up of TCO unions within the public sector (the municipal KTK and the civil servants' TCO-S). Successively five Saco unions have joined OFR. Also the independent *Ledarna* is affiliated to OFR with its public sector members. Despite membership competition there is a close cooperation on collective bargaining within OFR between individual TCO and Saco unions organizing *local* government employees. In particular the following cases can be observed:

- The Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (Vision/SKTF, a vertical TCO union) and the Association of Health Officers (professional, most members are nurses; TCO) and the Swedish Medical Association (professional, physicians; Saco).

- The Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (Vision/SKTF, a vertical TCO union) and *Akademikerförbundet SSR* (professional, organizes university graduates in social work, personnel management etc; Saco). *Akademikerförbundet SSR* was founded in 1958 by graduates from schools of social studies (*socionomer*) dissatisfied with the development of wages and other employment conditions (Wingfors 2004:101ff, 201f). They had hitherto been split up into four vertical TCO unions (SKTF, ST, Sif and HTF).

- The Swedish Teachers' Union (professional, TCO) and the National Union of Teachers in Sweden (professional, Saco).

Within *central* government there is no close cooperation between individual TCO and Saco unions. All Saco unions are affiliated to the bargaining cartel Saco-S (Saco-State sector) as regards members employed by the state. The Saco wage agreements within this sector – together with those of the independent union *Ledarna* – are the most far-reaching with respect to individualized wage formation on the whole Swedish labour market. The Saco-S central agreements, besides regulating pensions and other general conditions, do not specify any wage increases but only principles for local wage formation. Consequently, they are called "zero agreements". The TCO and LO unions within central government have had a much more negative attitude towards such agreements (Elvander 2004: 20). In the municipal sector the TCO union Vision (formerly SKTF), however, is testing zero agreements at central level with great hopes of local wage increases surpassing the so-called industry norm. The central zero agreements will consequently be used as a means of raising the wages of the members relative to other groups. In April 2013 the union Vision together with the Saco union *Akademikerförbundet SSR* concluded a four year long agreement including wage increases without numbers in the last two years. In 2012 the TCO and Saco teachers' unions concluded a similar four year agreement with the municipal employers' organisation SKL.

In the private sector the cross-confederal bargaining cartel PTK (Federation of Salaried Employees in Industry and Services) was founded in 1973 (now known as the Council for Negotiation and Cooperation). It contains both TCO and Saco unions and the independent *Ledarna* (the former union of supervisors, SALF). Up to 1969 Sif counteracted its Saco rival,

the Association of Graduate Engineers (CF), in order to preserve its monopoly position in collective bargaining with respect to white-collar workers (except supervisors) in manufacturing industry. After the conclusion of an agreement of co-operation between Sif, CF and SALF in 1969 the SAF associations accepted CF as a collective bargaining partner. The three white-collar unions in manufacturing founded a common body to co-ordinate their actions. The next step was extending the co-ordination to all private sector white-collar unions by the founding of PTK.

Up to 1990 PTK participated in centralized collective bargaining on wages and employment conditions representing all TCO and Saco private sector unions. Today PTK negotiates on issues like pensions with SN (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise). In 2008 PTK together with LO started deliberations with SN on a new basic agreement to replace the 1938 Saltsjöbaden Agreement (between LO and SAF), but SN broke the negotiations off in March 2009.

Collective bargaining cooperation between Saco, TCO and LO unions in manufacturing industry

Another cross-confederal bargaining constellation in the private sector is *Unions in Manufacturing* (*Facken inom industrin*), which consists of the vertical white-collar TCO union *Unionen*, the professional Saco union Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers and four vertical (industrial) LO blue-collar unions in manufacturing industry. These six unions coordinate their bargaining by procedures set by the Industry Agreement, which was concluded in 1997 between the unions in manufacturing and the corresponding employers associations affiliated to the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (SN).

The unions making up the constellation *Unions in Manufacturing* (founded in 1996) coordinate their negotiations. They do not negotiate together, but conclude separate agreements, for example the engineering agreement between IF Metall and the Engineering Employers' Association. *Unionen* and the Association of Graduate Engineers, however, conclude a common collective agreement with the Engineering Employers' Association.

In both 1993 and 1995 the employers headed by the Association of Engineering Employers demanded completely decentralised bargaining to restore Swedish competitiveness and to obtain a more individualised and flexible wage-setting. National agreements should contain nothing but a peace clause. To counter such demands the LO union *Metall*, together with the white-collar TCO union Sif and the Saco union Association of Graduate Engineers (CF), formed a common organisation, *the Bargaining Council* in the autumn of 1992, which still makes up the core of Unions in Manufacturing today.

As a result the system of national collective agreements was maintained, although a gradual decentralisation of the contents of the agreements took place (Ahlberg & Bruun 2005, Kjellberg 2007). In 1993, however, the employers scored an important success with the (still valid) agreements with the former TCO union of supervisors (*Ledarna*) concentrating all wage formation to the workplace level. Among LO unions, fears grew that other white-collar unions would take the same path.

To forestall both completely decentralised wage formation and increased state regulation – and to prevent wage inflation – the presidents of Sif, CF and six LO unions in the manufacturing industry wrote an article, 'Moderate wage increases – our responsibility' (June 1996), inviting the employers in manufacturing to deliberate on industrial development, training and wage formation. As a result, the organisation *Unions in Manufacturing* was formed. The following year these unions and twelve employers' associations in manufacturing concluded the Agreement on Industrial Development and Wage Formation, usually known as the *Industry Agreement* (revised in 2011). It has clear parallels to the 1938 basic agreement LO – SAF with respect to origin (threat of state regulation), contents (negotiation procedure, conflict resolution) and the spirit of cooperation (Elvander 2002). The 1997 Industry Agreement started a re-centralisation of the Swedish bargaining system.

The Industry Agreement was followed by similar, although not always as far-reaching, agreements in other areas, except in the private service sector. In 2006 Sif, HTF and the employers' association *Almega* (affiliated to the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, SN) started negotiations on this issue, but not until 2009 was an agreement concluded between *Unionen* (TCO), three Saco unions and the employers' association Almega. In the meantime other initiatives were taken to strengthen unity within the private service sector and to decrease the dominant position of the manufacturing industry in the collective bargaining system. On the initiative of the employers within commerce and hotel & restaurants five employers' associations and seven LO and TCO unions, among them *Unionen*, have created a network within the private service sector including construction (Kjellberg 2008). It was formalized in 2007 under the label "Service sector in Cooperation" (*Tjänstesektorn i samverkan*). It should be observed that no Saco union belongs to the network, probably because all Saco unions as professional unions recruit members in all sectors. On the other hand, the Saco union Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers is a member of Unions in Manufacturing and even its core, the Bargaining Council.

The 1996 cooperation agreement between TCO and Saco

In September 1996 TCO and Saco signed a cooperation agreement between the two white-collar confederations (revised in 2000). Some important consequences of the agreement are:

- Saco in 1996 became a member of ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation)[3]
- Saco in 1997 joined the LO-TCO common office in Brussels (founded in 1989)
- The presidencies of TCO and Saco meet regularly
- At least one annual common meeting of the Saco and TCO boards takes place.

TCO and Saco have similar views on tax issues, unemployment insurance and European issues, for example the Laval case. On the other hand, the cooperation does not include education policy.

The highly compressed Swedish wage structure

In contrast to TCO, Saco wants a more restricted access to higher education. This policy recalls a characteristic aspect of professional groups, namely to restrict entry to a profession in order to protect its status and prevent downwards wage pressure. The rapid expansion of higher education in Sweden is an important factor in explaining why the wages of Swedish professionals are low by European standards (Granqvist & Regnér 2007: 44ff). Due to this and decades of 'solidaristic wage policy' Sweden has one of the most compressed wage structures in the world despite the class-segmented union structure. In the 1990s the number of people with higher education expanded dramatically, but as the demand on professionals grew faster, wage compression declined somewhat. LO still gives priority to its low-wage groups while Saco considers increased wage differentiation as desirable.

Two sources of cohesion among union members

The relatively low wages of Swedish professionals have probably been a powerful impetus for the high union density among these groups. Another is the existence of separate unions for all kinds of professionals, most of them affiliated to Saco and some to TCO. In accordance with what could be labelled 'the principle of similarity' a common identity and community are promoted if the members of a union have a similar *profession/occupation* and/or a similar

[3] The decision to concede Saco membership was taken at the 10-11 October 1996 meeting of the ETUC Executive Committee. According to the ETUC statutes the decision had to be ratified at the 1999 congress. Saco was for the first time invited to participate at the 12-13 December 1996 meeting of the Executive Committee. The membership fee was paid from 1 July 1996 (information 27 July 2009 from Gunilla Lyngfelt, archivist of Saco).

education (Kjellberg 2001: 330f, cf Lysgaard 1985). The Saco unions are sometimes called ‘examination unions’ (*examensförbund*). This contrasts sharply with the large vertical TCO unions which by their heterogeneity are lacking this source of cohesion among their members and potential members. On the other hand, they are restricted to *white-collar* workers which decreases the risk that this category of workers feels ‘homeless’ in the world of unions. The vertical unions are primarily based upon solidarity stemming from the community among workers at the same *workplace* – ‘the principle of nearness’ and the same employer. Large professional unions like the Association of Graduate Engineers combine these two sources of cohesion by the existence of union ‘clubs’ made up of graduate engineers in large workplaces, in short: similarity *and* nearness.

The workplace clubs of vertical white-collar unions and some professional unions illustrate how white-collar unions have copied important aspects of the Swedish blue-collar union movement, in this case the combined centralisation and decentralisation of Swedish unions (Kjellberg 2009a). Both centralisation (central agreements, later restricted to industry agreements) and decentralisation (union workplace organisations with negotiating tasks) have been conducive to the high union density in Sweden.

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List of Abbreviations

Akademikerförbundet SSR: Swedish Union of Social Workers, Personnel and Public Administration

CF: Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (*Civilingenjörsförbundet*)

Civilekonomerna: Association of Graduates in Economics

Daco: Central Organisation of Employees (*De anställdas centralorganisation*)

Handels: Commercial Workers' Union (*Handelsarbetareförbundet*)

Handels: Commercial Employees' Union (*Handelsanställdas förbund*)

HTF: Union of Commercial Salaried Employees (*Handelstjänstemannaförbundet*)

IF Metall: *Industrifacket Metall*

IG Metall: *Industriegewerkschaft Metall*

Jusek: Swedish Federation of Lawyers, Social Scientists and Economists

Kommunal: Swedish Municipal Workers' Union (*Svenska Kommunalarbetareförbundet*)

Ledarna: see SALF

LO: Swedish Federation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisationen i Sverige*)

LR: National Union of Teachers (*Lärarnas Riksförbund*)

Läkarförbundet: Swedish Medical Association

Metall: Swedish Metalworkers' Union (*Svenska Metallindustriarbetareförbundet*)

OFR: Public Employees' Negotiation Council (*Offentliganställdas förhandlingsråd*)

PTK: Federation of Salaried Employees in Industry and Services; today: Council for Negotiation and Cooperation (*Privattjänstemannakartellen*)

Saco: Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (*Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation*)

SAF: Swedish Employers' Confederation (*Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen*)

SALF/Ledarna: Association of Supervisors and Foremen (*Sveriges Arbetsledareförbund*); later Association of Managerial and Professional Staff (*Ledarna*)

SEK: Swedish crowns

Sif: Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry (*Svenska Industritjänstemannaförbundet*)

SKTF: Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (*Svenska Kommunaltjänstemannaförbundet*)

SN: Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (*Svenskt Näringsliv*)

SR: National Federation of Government Employees (*Statstjänstemännens Riksförbund*)

ST: Union of Civil Servants (*Statstjänstemannaförbundet*)

SYACO: Swedish Confederation of Younger Professional Associations (*Sveriges Yngre Akademikers Centralorganisation*)

Sveriges ingenjörer: Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers

Unionen: Unionen (called Unionen also in English)

TCO: Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (*Tjänstemännens centralorganisation*)

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