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The Research Project Labour Migration, Trade Unions and Employers

Summary of the Results

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
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The research project *Labour Migration, Trade Unions and Employers* (Forte – Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare 2013-2017)

Anders Kjellberg (project coordinator, professor) & Olle Frödin (associate professor)

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1) SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Since December 2008 Sweden has more liberal rules for labor immigration from 'third countries' (countries outside EU/EEA) than any other OECD country. Swedish employers are free to recruit third-country nationals for any occupation and sector. Before December 2008 Sweden applied restrictive rules based on labor market tests, designed to eliminate temporary bottlenecks and shortages of high-skilled labor. The introduction of employer-driven labor immigration was motivated by the need to address labor shortages that could not be filled solely by people living in EU/EEA countries. The reform significantly curtailed trade union influence on labor immigration practices.

The primary objective of the project is to explain why so many third-country nationals were recruited to sectors characterized by high unemployment and a large share of low-skilled jobs. To

test our hypotheses we studied all of the approximately 500 new work permits granted in the restaurant and cleaning sectors in Stockholm in 2012. Using the labor migrant dossiers, business registers and trade union registers of collective agreements we constructed a database to record the migrants, the companies which recruited them, the employment conditions offered and the opinions of trade unions.

The 2008 legislation made it possible to 'change track' from asylum seeker to labor migrant after the application for asylum was rejected. One hypothesis was that the demand for work permits from different kinds of *track changers* accounted for a significant inflow of third-country labor migrants. More than 4 of 10 labor migrants 'switched track' from asylum seekers, students or family connection. The 'pure labor migrants' accordingly represented fewer than 6 of 10 labor migrants. Many track changers from asylum seekers to labor migrants, however, did not fulfil the formal requirements for track change, which we termed *informal* track changers.

Another hypothesis was that the new legislation has put third-country labor migrants in a considerably more vulnerable position than other employees, which might make them attractive for employers who seek to exploit this weak position. During the first two years, the labor migrant is bound to a specific employer and occupation. If the migrant loses the job, expulsion from Sweden will follow unless a new job in the same occupation is found within a few months and a new work permit is granted. After four years the labor migrant normally receives a permanent residence permit. Therefore, asylum seekers changing track to labor migrants may for example, be prepared to accept poor working conditions to get a chance to remain in or return to Sweden. The risk of being exploited could be expected to be greatest in companies without collective agreement as unions there have virtually no ability to control working conditions. Every second labor migrant was recruited to such companies.

A third hypothesis was that employers with non-EU background may have preferred using transnational networks to recruit nondomestic workers. More than one of two labor migrants appears to have a nationality/ethnic link to the employer. This is most common among the pure labor migrants and especially among Chinese cooks. In the smallest firms, three quarters of the labor migrants and their employer were co-nationals. Several indicators suggest that many employers take advantage of the vulnerable position of labor migrants. It is possible that employers seek both to help and at the same time exploit co-nationals, particularly in small firms without collective agreements. From other studies the hypothesis that the recruitment of third-country cooks occurred to satisfy the demand for employees in a shortage occupation could be questioned.

The number of new work permits granted to third-country migrants in the restaurant and cleaning sectors increased until 2011 and began to decline in 2012. Tentative explanations for this trend and for the increase in 2017 are presented.

2) PUBLICATIONS FROM THE PROJECT

- Olle Frödin & Anders Kjellberg (2018) "Labor Migration from Third Countries to Swedish Low-wage Jobs", *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, vol. 8 no 1 (March 2018), pp. 65-85. http://portal.research.lu.se/portal/files/40268826/Labor_Migration_from_Third_Countries_to_Swedish_Low_wage_Jobs_Fr_din_Kjellberg.pdf

- Olle Frödin & Anders Kjellberg (2017) "Arbetskraftsmigration från tredje land i låglöneyrken", *Arbetsmarknad & Arbetsliv* nr 1 2017, pp. 84-102. http://portal.research.lu.se/portal/files/22883855/Fr_din_Kjellberg_Arbetskraftsmigration_i_l_gl_neyrken.pdf

- Olle Frödin & Anders Kjellberg (2015) "Arbetskraftsinvandring från tredje land i restaurang- och städbranscherna", in Catharina Calleman & Petra Herzfeld Olsson (eds.) *Arbetskraft från hela världen. Hur blev det med 2008 års reform?* Stockholm: Delegationen för migrationsforskning (Delmi), Rapport 2015:9, pp. 150-199. http://portal.research.lu.se/portal/files/5646416/8312176.pdf

Delmi

Policy Brief

2015:9

Labour Migrants from the Whole World

How did the 2008 Swedish labour immigration reform fair?

New legislation regarding labour immigration from countries outside of the EU was introduced in Sweden in 2008. The purpose was to facilitate the recruitment of labour for shortage occupations and provide employers with better opportunities to hire people with the appropriate skills. One important new feature was that the Swedish Employment Agency was no longer to assess the need for labour within different industries. The legislation instead highlighted the needs of individual employers for the granting of residence and work permits. The reform received both praise and criticism. A new Delmi anthology has been produced to evaluate the effects of the reform. Was this legislation appropriately formulated? What conditions have been provided for the immigrant workers and what unexpected and unwanted effects have occurred?

3) PRESENTATIONS OF THE PROJECT AT CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

- *Forskning på gång*, Department of Sociology, Lund University 24 March 2015:

  Olle Frödin and Anders Kjellberg presents resultats from the research project *Arbetskraftsmigration, fack och arbetsgivare*.

- Forte Talks 8 March 2016 (Olle Frödin):

  ARBETSKRAFTSINVANDRING TILL SVERIGE SEDAN 2008

  Speakers:
  Petra Herzfeld Olsson, docent i civilrätt och universitetslektor i internationell arbetsrätt, Uppsala universitet
  Olle Frödin, universitetslektor i sociologi, Lunds universitet
  Anders Neergaard, biträdande professor i sociologi med inriktning mot migration och etniska relationer, REMESO, ISV, Linköpings universitet

  Moderator:
  Joakim Palme, professor i statskunskap vid Uppsala universitet, ordförande för Delegationen för migrationsstudier

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  Arranged by Delegationen för migrationsstudier (Delmi). Website: www.delmi.se

  Website of the conference:
  http://talks.forte.se/2016/program/seminarier/arbetskraftsinvandring-till-sverige-sedan-2008/

- Olle Frödin and Anders Kjellberg presented their research at *Forskarträff om migration och arbete* 18 May 2016 in Stockholm arranged by Svenska ESF-rådet, Forte, Vetenskapsrådet and Delmi (Delegationen för migrationsforskning)

  Forskarträff om migration och arbete - konsten att riva gränser

  18 May 2016, 13-16. Konferens Spårvagnshallarna, Birger Jarlsgatan 57A.

- Olle Frödin and Anders Kjellberg presented their research about *Arbetskraftsmigration från tredje land i låglöneyrken* at the conference *Människor i rörelse. Migration och arbete* 10-11 November 2016 in Norrköping. Arranged by Arbetets museum and Rådet för yrkeshistorisk forskning, supported by Forte and in co-operation with Institutionen för samhälls- och välfärdsstudier at Linköping University and FALF – Forum för arbetslivsforskning.

  Link to the conference report:
  http://www.arbetetsmuseum.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Konferensrapport-2016.pdf

4) MEDIA ABOUT THE PROJECT

Arbetet 15 December 2015: Forskarna om reformen av arbetskraftinvandring (by Birgitta Ländin)

Fastighetsfolket 15 December 2015: Arbetskraftsinvandrare i utsatt position (by Sofia Lindroth)

Arbetet no 1 2016, p. 11, 15 January: Många vill jobba för att få stanna (by Birgitta Ländin)

Hotellrevyn 19 January 2016: Migranter vill jobba trots dåliga villkor (by Kerstin Gustafsson Figueroa)

Hotellrevyn 28 June 2017: Forskaren: ”Arbetaren är nästan livegen” (by Lisa Castilla):
http://www.hotellrevyn.se/forskaren-arbetaren-ar-nastan-livegen/

Those who arrive alone to a foreign country may easily get into dependence to the employer.

5) CONTACT INFORMATION

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