

THE FUTURE OF TRADE UNIONS AND THE NORDIC MODEL

organizing and recruitment

- ◆ **Crisis awareness.** The trade union density has declined in the Nordic countries (with Iceland as an exception). The decline has been particularly vast within LO affiliates (known as SAK in Finland). In the rest of Europe, the decline has been even greater. The trade union density is under threat. Trade unions that currently are growing or maintaining members must be aware of the emerging global trend. There is a need to pay attention to and address the severity of a declining trade union density.
- ◆ **Higher levels of trade union density – one component within a comprehensive trade union strategy.** Efforts to increase the trade union density must be one component within a comprehensive trade union strategy. Other components, such as signing collective bargaining agreements, strengthening trade union trainings, and advancing positions for workers should also be included in the strategy.
- ◆ **Use trade union values, membership benefits and professional identification to recruit trade union members.** The ability of trade unions to recruit members is contingent on three components: a support of trade union values, a membership that is economically beneficial to the employee, and the trade union's ability to strengthen its members' professional identity. Depending on the profession and the trade union, the strength of each component varies.
- ◆ **More resources and greater status for work on labor organizing.**
 - ◇ Trade unions should focus further on labor organizing – it is crucial that leaders within the trade unions motivate why this is necessary.

About the report



Compared to the rest of the world, the Nordic countries have higher levels of trade union density. In Europe, Belgium and the

Nordic countries are the only nations with more than 50 percent of employees organized in trade unions. However, in the Nordic countries, the trade union density is declining. This report discusses how to maintain and increase the trade union density. It also provides suggestions on how to preserve and further strengthen trade unions and thereby support the Nordic Model.

Author: Mats Wingborg



Download the report here:
tankesmedjantiden.se

- ◇ Organizers need support and guidance through coaching and trainings.
 - ◇ Involve negotiating ombudsmen in new efforts and coordinate with local shop stewards.
 - ◇ The management team within trade unions must articulate that working to increase membership numbers is of high priority.
- ◆ **Professionalization of recruitment campaigns.**
 - ◇ Campaigns and methods should be evaluated and fine-tuned to become more successful.
 - ◇ There is a need for meetings between shop stewards and potential members. The most effective recruitment method is face-to-face.
- ◆ **Successful trade unions with high levels of trade union density have a responsibility to support trade unions facing challenges.** There is a need for a better exchange of best practices between the Nordic countries on recruitment and organizing methods.
- ◆ **Keeping members is equally important as recruiting new ones.** Long-term strategies, clear multi-level goals, reviewing and simplifying administrative tasks and routines, help efforts to keep members.
- ◆ **Trade union efforts to reduce precarious work.** The trade union density is lower amongst employees with precarious work, such as contract workers. It is in the interest of trade unions to limit the growing number of precarious work.
- ◆ **Lower and more equal fees for unemployment benefits.** The link between unemployment benefits and trade union membership has become weaker in Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. This has contributed to a lower trade union density. It is imperative that governments advocate for subsidies that equalize fees for unemployment benefits as well as subsidies that helps even out fees between professions (so that the fee does not increase for workers in professions facing high levels of unemployment).
- ◆ **Tax deductions for the trade union membership fee.** In order to better the conditions for trade union organizing, one concrete action would be to amend the law and introduce more comprehensive tax cuts for the trade union membership fee.
- ◆ **Increase exchanges of organizing and recruitment experiences between Nordic trade unions.** There is a need to increase the exchange of ideas regarding methods for organizing and recruitment strategies within various trade unions. There is also a need to exchange ideas regarding organizing and recruitment within the Nordic countries.