

*Språk-stödjande  
insatser: support for  
unemployed refugees  
and immigrants in  
Stockholm*

*Tatiana Saruis, Fabio Colombo,  
Yuri Kazepov & Chiara Civino*

Case Study N°25  
April 2016

## Acknowledgements

The research for this Case Study has benefited from financial support by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2012-2016) under grant agreement n° 290613 (ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation; <http://improve-research.eu>). The authors are solely responsible for any remaining shortcomings and errors.

April 2016

Case study carried out in May 2015

© Tatiana Saruis, Fabio Colombo, Yuri Kazepov, Chiara Civino

## Bibliographic Information

Saruis T., Colombo F., Kazepov Y., Civino C. (2015), *Språk-stödjande insatser: Support for Unemployed Refugees and Immigrants in Stockholm*, ImPRovE Case Study No. 11/25. Antwerp: Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy – University of Antwerp.

Information may be quoted provided the source is stated accurately and clearly.

Reproduction for own/internal use is permitted.

This paper can be downloaded from our website: <http://improve-research.eu>



## Table of contents

1	The initiative and its organisers .....	4
2	Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems .....	5
2.1	Newcomers and unemployed in Sweden .....	5
2.2	History and organisation of services for newcomers .....	6
3	Genesis of the initiative .....	7
4	The activities and organisation .....	10
4.1	The users .....	10
4.2	The team .....	11
4.3	The intervention .....	12
4.4	The employers .....	13
5	The innovative dimension of the initiative .....	14
6	Institutional mapping and governance relations .....	17
7	Governance challenges .....	18
7.1	Mainstreaming social innovation.....	18
7.2	Governing welfare mix: Avoiding fragmentation .....	19
7.3	Governing welfare mix: developing a participatory governance style .....	20
7.4	Equality and diversity.....	21
7.5	Uneven access.....	21
7.6	Avoiding responsibility.....	22
7.7	Managing intra-organisational tensions.....	22
7.8	Enabling legal framework .....	23
	References.....	24
	Appendix.....	25

# 1 The initiative and its organisers

*Språk-stödjande insatser* means “Fair Matching and Language Support”. It is a permanent unit of the public organisation *Swedish for Immigrants (Svenska för invandrare)* in Stockholm.

As established by the national government, *Swedish for Immigrants* (SFI henceforth), organised at the local level by municipalities, provides adult immigrants with basic skills in Swedish language and literacy. One of SFI’s schools, placed in *Västerort* (an urban area located in the immigrant-dense district of Tensta, in the northern part of Stockholm), is involved in the *Språk-stödjande insatser* Unit and acts as a contact for potential pupils.

*Språk-stödjande insatser*’s aim is to support immigrants in social and labour market inclusion, reinforcing their language skills through pathways in an extra-school environment. The method promoted by the project integrates: a) a training period aimed at improving their knowledge of Swedish language, culture, society and labour market; b) personalised matching between users’ specificities and requests of a stable network of aware and available employers; c) training and internships supported by mother tongue coaches (language supporters), who have also the task to prevent and mediate relationships and eventually conflicts with employers.

The other organisations involved in the project were *Jobbtorg* Stockholm and *Vuxenutbildning* or *KOMVUX* (adult education).

*Jobbtorg* Stockholm is a public agency of the Municipality of Stockholm. It was set up in 2008 within a process of re-organisation of labour market activities in the city for the long-term unemployed (especially those of immigrant origin)<sup>1</sup>. It is aimed at promoting empowerment and activation among citizens receiving income support from the social services to reduce the dependence on welfare measures and consequently decrease public expenditure and local taxes. It has the task to organise the implementation of services to match job supply and demand and provide measures to favour the access of Stockholm’s citizens to the labour market. It has five operative units spread across the city, especially in the suburbs, in order to provide interventions closer to citizens and especially to the most disadvantaged groups. It has a section called *Jobbstart*, focused on matching the demand and supply of vocational courses and internships. It coordinates in-house trainings in the Municipality of Stockholm, develops methods for successful matching and skills development and works on quality assessment of services provided at *Jobbtorg*. It serves *Jobbtorg* Stockholm and *Jobbtorg* offices.

*KOMVUX* is a municipal public agency that offers adults courses of basic (primary school) and upper education (secondary school) and university courses. It provides both individual courses and courses arranged by grade. Its purpose is to reinforce and integrate the school curriculum and to improve individuals’ skills.

The state organisation *Swedish Employment Service* and an informal network of employers are also partners of the initiative. The public organisation responsible for job placement sends applicants to *Språk-stödjande insatser* for training and it supports their pathways. The employers mainly provide places for the internships and they are supported during these pathways through meetings and mediation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Previously, all 14 Stockholm districts were responsible for their own labour market services. Services were not standardised and thus could not be compared. The idea behind *Jobbtorg* is to have all municipal labour market services in one location so that regardless of their place of residence, all people who receive income support will have access to the same service. The aim was to create a common programme so as to compare and analyse differences between the districts and the results of different methods of working.

The Swedish Public Employment Service<sup>2</sup> has the general aim to match job demand and supply and contribute to increasing employment levels. It is composed of a Head Office (located in Stockholm) and 320 local employment offices located throughout Sweden. It is the largest placement service in Sweden. It provides economic support and specific programmes for unemployed people. It is a service aimed also at entrepreneurs: it collaborates with the employers and organises nationwide recruitment meetings and national/international job fairs to improve networks among companies.

This innovative experience was selected by the *ImPRovE* research team as an example of innovation within a local public administration, which transforms its organisation, procedures and networks to better cope with changing and growing social problems and to better take in account citizens' specificities. According to the research, social innovation is not a field reserved to civil society (Oosterlynck *et al.*, 2013), but can also concern the public sector's strategies to identify and adapt to social, cultural and economic change. Considering the public tradition of the Swedish welfare system, special attention was given to the role of public institutions in developing social innovative experiences.

## 2 Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems

### 2.1 Newcomers and unemployed in Sweden

From the Second World War onwards, Sweden has always been a country of immigration. From the beginning of the 1950s to the 1970s, labour immigration was prevalent. During the 1950s, immigrants came mostly from northern Europe (especially from Finland) and West Germany and they were skilled people able to meet the requirements of the Swedish labour market. Since the 1960s, migrants with a low professional profile (unskilled or low-skilled people) began to arrive in the country and participated in the development of a growing economy, especially in the industrial sector.

A universal welfare system supported these immigrants just the same as native citizens and promoted their access to the labour market. Starting from the economic crisis of the 1970s, Sweden abandoned a more *laissez-faire* immigration policy in favour of more restrictive conditions. The national economy started to change and the demand for high skilled workers grew, particularly linked to the expansion of the services sector. Meanwhile, the international political situation influenced migration flows: in the 1970s and 1980s, the level of labour immigration decreased and newcomers were mainly refugees and migrants for family reunification. They originated in particular from non-European countries: the Middle East and east Africa (especially Ethiopia and Iran) and Latin America (especially Chile) and, during the 1990s, thousands of refugees came from ex-Yugoslavia. The financial crisis of the early 1990s marked further restrictions on migration policies, specifically on those addressing refugees.

Currently, about 1.5 million living in Sweden are foreign born, considering both regular and undocumented. They constitute 15.9% of the whole population.

The unemployment rate in Sweden has decreased from 10.1% in 1990 to 8.5% in 2012, and is much lower than the European average (12%), but the number of unemployed immigrants is higher.

People with a migrant background have higher unemployment rates: in 2010, approximately 63% of non-EU immigrants were employed compared to 76% of the native-born population, reaching the highest gap among *OECD* Countries. In 2013, this gap rose considerably, to 52% and 81.3% respectively. It is considered as at least partially due to different levels of work experience, formal qualifications and language skills. The importance of both formal and informal (social, relational) professional skills and linguistic competences has increased in the last decade, even in low-skilled sectors (e.g. cleaning or

---

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/>.

elderly care). Although having good educational qualifications may increase the chances to enter the Swedish labour market, data show that even highly educated migrants have difficulties in getting jobs within their professions.

Another important issue related to the condition of the foreign-born people is the risk of long-term unemployment. 48% of the foreign-born unemployed are into long-term unemployment, against 31% among the native-born ones. This is the highest difference amongst European countries (Statistics Sweden, 2013).

The lack, or weakness of social networks may be another important reason for immigrants' difficulties in the labour market, especially for newcomers. Many of them live in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of inhabitants with a foreign background.

In Stockholm, refugees and immigrants are highly concentrated in the North of the city - in the zone called *Jarvafaltet*, namely the neighbourhoods of *Kista*, *Rinkeby*, *Husby*, *Spanga-Tensta* – and in the South - such as in *Farsta* and *Skarpnack*. These districts are placed outside the city centre and are a result of the so-called *Miljonprogrammet*, implemented between 1965 and 1974. It was an ambitious project developed on the initiative of the Swedish Social Democratic Party with the aim of guaranteeing everyone the right to have accommodation at an affordable price. Quantitatively, it was a successful project as in a decade more than one million houses with lots of public services such as schools, meeting places, churches and libraries were built. However, it also increased special segregation of poor and immigrant people. In these neighborhoods, the cost of living is lower and housing rents are much more affordable. Immigrant communities are often isolated and live in poor socio-economic conditions (with higher youth unemployment rates compared to the national average).

## **2.2 History and organisation of services for newcomers**

Swedish local administrations have worked on inclusion measures for immigrants since 1985 (*Myrberg*, 2014), sharing this responsibility with the central government. In December 2010, the Swedish right-wing government enacted the so-called "Introduction Reform" (*Etableringsreformen*). The new law assigned to the Swedish Public Employment Service all the responsibility for measures to include newcomers in the labour market during their first two years of residence in Sweden. Other central government agencies, such as the Migration Board and the County Administrative Boards were allocated new and more precisely defined tasks. The municipalities had to continue to provide housing and language support during the first period of migrants' stay in Sweden (introduction phase).

In fact, the Employment Service in Solna (a district located just north of the Stockholm City) is the only office in Stockholm that works with newcomers in their first two years of residence in Sweden through the Introduction Programme. They are involved in full-time activities (8 hours per day, 5 days a week) including courses of Swedish language for immigrants, civic orientation and employment preparation at the minimum and they also receive economic support (about 600 euro per person).

The regulation, organisation and financing of services and measures for newcomers have always been managed by both national and local level authorities, sometimes producing confusing, overlapping and conflicting situations, with a fragmented provision of services among different actors. These problems are more evident in Stockholm, where the structure of municipal services is more complex than in the rest of the country. There are substantial differences between the national and municipal active labour market policy (henceforth ALMP) services in Stockholm. *Jobbtorg*, the municipal service for employment, generally provides services for people who are receiving income support by the social services and who are less than 30 years old and/or unemployed for less than 14 months. If the user has not had a stable job for over 14 months, he signs up at the Swedish Employment Service and/or is followed up by the social services and at that point, *Jobbtorg* relinquishes jurisdiction over the case,

unless otherwise recommended by the social services. The two services are differently organised: the national Employment Centres have fewer officers and they have similar skills, they follow a large amount of users at the same time; while *Jobbtorg* has more professionals (per number of users) and with different competences. Thus, it can offer a more personalised support based on specificities through a multi-professional team (the job matcher, the job coach, the study and career counsellor, the ICT instructor).

The competences and tasks between the local employment centre and the national one still overlap. Both organisations provide a large range of activation activities for newcomers and immigrants, they carry out a matching aimed at finding a job and the operators help jobseekers to follow and carry out personal “employment plans”. According to the interviewees, it can happen that a person with various and complex social and economic needs is followed by all these organisations at the same time. It is possible for a user to have more than one “employment plan”, with a lack of coordination in measures and methods from the different organisations causing confusion for users.

Data shows that using SFI’s services has a positive effect on the chance of finding a job for unemployed migrants, but only for those who complete the whole path (Bonfanti and Nordlund, 2012). More than half of the migrant students who started to attend SFI courses dropped out, for many reasons: the quite long procedure for completing the registration for the courses, the rigid and unpersonalised method of learning, the loss of motivation, and so on. Swedish language skills are a basic requirement for migrants to be employable in the Swedish labour market.

### 3 Genesis of the initiative

From 2009 to 2012, *Språk-stödande insatser* was a pilot project (*Språkstöd för nyanlända* – Language support for immigrant newcomers) run by *Jobbtorg* Stockholm. It was co-financed by the European Refugee Fund and focused on refugees and newcomers. It involved the Swedish Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) and its aim was to develop models, methods and strategies to improve immigrants’ inclusion in the Swedish society and labour market, through educational and vocational activities.

The local institutions were facing some difficulties in dealing with this target:

*When the project started, the political will was that newly arrived refugees should enter the labour market on a very short term, basically a month after their arrival. We had a huge problem since the employers did not want to receive people who couldn’t speak Swedish and who did not understand the labour market in Sweden, the culture and so on. (...) It was very hard for matchers at the Jobbtorg to find internship places for the refugee group, thus in the end the operators lost engagement in doing that. We had the political assignment but we could not do anything about it, since there was a structural problem. (Former Executive Director of Kista Jobbtorg)*

The task of manage the education of immigrant’s is assigned to the local agency of *Swedish For Immigrants* that is especially addressed to immigrants with weak linguistic competences.

According to the service’s professionals, their students have some weaknesses making them poorly positioned to find a job; not only low levels of education and only basic reading and writing skills, but also social difficulties in establishing contacts with the local society. In fact, many of them live in neighbourhoods where cannot have any contact with Swedish natives and are often isolated as a result. Often, they have been unemployed for a long time and/or have very little or no work experience. In some cases, even after several years of residence in Sweden, they still lack the possibility to talk in Swedish in their daily lives, outside the linguistic courses. These conditions make it difficult for *SFI* to be effective in reaching good results with the students:

*In Swedish for Immigrants you are in a class with 15 other immigrants of different origins for three hours a day, but all with a very low level of Swedish. How can you learn something in these three hours? Maybe you can learn a bit of grammar, but not the real language that you can learn only by practice, living the everyday life. (Language Supporter)*

The language courses held by SFI are long and intensive. There are courses organised in different levels, according to users' competences, but they frequently prove difficult to complete for people who are not accustomed to classic teaching methodology and study, especially if they are elder.

The project *Språkstöd för nyanlända* started to face these problems in 2009, as a project of *Stockholm City Labour Market Administration*. It was realised within *Jobbtorg* in order to improve the quality of activities provided towards immigrant newcomers to facilitate their pathways of inclusion in the labour market and Swedish society.

The project received *ERF* co-funding of around 9 million Euro – 50% of the total project budget – through a section of *Migrationsverket* (the Swedish Migration Board). The municipality covered the rest of the cost.

The basic idea was to combine language lessons and job experience, offering a special support to *SFI*'s users in doing internships in companies to improve at the same time their linguistic and professional skills.

*The opportunity of an internship in an enterprise is good not only for their professional development, but also for the fact that you can speak with Swedish people, you can practice the language and you can build your social relations, always receiving help from the language supporter and from the employer... (Language Supporter)*

The applicants were accepted from both *Jobbtorg* and the *Swedish Employment Service*, selected with their internal procedures and criteria. They could also be sent from municipalities of the Stockholm County (Solna, Sollentuna), which signed a formal agreement within the project (but in actual fact almost all of them came from the capital). Finally, the *SFI* school in *Västerort* were permitted to send its students to the project to be involved in internships.

As a fundamental part of the project, a *Support Centre* was established along with five language support assistants, directly recruited from people registered at *Jobbtorg*. This role was completely new and thus was created and developed within the project. In that period, Somali and Arabic were the two main languages spoken by job seekers at *Jobbtorg*, therefore, these languages were privileged in the selection of the assistants. From the beginning of the project, it was decided that these professionals had to be *peer operators*, chosen among immigrants with good linguistic competences. This enables them to be closer to the target group, more sympathetic, and also able to show an example of good integration in the Swedish society. The role of supporters had to be versatile and required competences in coaching, follow up and assessment. For these reasons, in 2009-2010, they were involved in a specific training to acquire the competences needed to do the job. Then they developed and improved their skills with practice within the project and they also received individual coaching by professional trainers during the first phase of activities.

The tasks of language supporters were to hold a preparatory training course in native tongue for all the participants, to prepare them for the language practice, guiding and coaching their internships and mediating their relationship with the employers. The course they provided lasted two weeks and contained general information on local culture and customs and on workplace relationships and basic rules. Throughout the period of training in companies, they provided coaching and mentoring, customised to the participants' needs and specific work contexts. Initially their role was restricted to linguistic support only, but gradually it was modified, as the situation changed and new requests and demands emerged. They also became mediators in case of difficulties or conflicts in the work contexts, offering support to both employers and trainees.

A form of direct cooperation with SFI took shape through the experimentation of a specific language support for participants within the project: *MyVocab 1.0*, a learning tool for computer and Smartphones. *MyVocab* was presented to four SFI schools (Hermods, Utbildningsborgen, Competens and Lernia) and the tool was used with the help of teachers and language supporters to assist and motivate the students in the use of new technologies for language training. Its purpose was to speed up their language knowledge through technological devices, while being enjoyable and easy to use anywhere<sup>3</sup>. It was experimented with by the 266 applicants involved in the project and by another 355 students of the four SFI schools involved in the project. However, in 2011, *MyVocab* was abandoned because the users, who were not always familiar with technological devices, considered it as difficult to use.

The main problem of the project during the experimentation concerned the job matching process to organise the internships. At local *Jobbtorg* offices, the matchers met structural difficulties in finding public or private employers available to welcome refugees and immigrants with weak linguistic and professional skills in the legally established time of one month. That led them not to engage towards this target group, as the aim was considered impossible to reach. This problem put at risk the continuity of the project, as it hampered quick access of the newly arrived refugees and of the most disadvantaged immigrants to the labour market. In 2010, a steering group was set up to discuss and put into action new solutions, involving the relevant figures of the local office of *Jobbtorg Kista*, the national Employment Service and the *Jobbtorg* section specialised on trainings and internships called *Jobbstart*. The language supporters' team was called to take part to the meetings. They decided that the project should have its own job matchers working separately but in close cooperation with the language supporters, in order to find the most appropriate training places for the new arrivals.

In early 2010, two job matchers were hired. Efforts to find jobs for this target group posed a major challenge for them. The new matching method implemented in the project included different phases involving the applicants, the employers and the workplaces. It was called "fair matching model", because it aimed at developing and enhancing all the internal and external conditions for the success of the training period, the satisfaction of both trainees and employers based on the responsiveness of the matcher and the real empowerment of the aspirant. More frequent and numerous contacts with employers and a large motivational work towards them has been made. During these talks, the job matcher informs the employer about the project, its goals and objectives and gives a brief description of the potential trainee. They emphasised the social responsibility and the positive effects it can bring to the workplace and its employees. This solution has given surprisingly good results in short time. Matchers succeeded in placing an average of 20 participants in internships each month and achieved internships in companies where ordinary matchers had never succeeded with newcomers, such as furnishing stores and pharmacies.

A significant element favouring the availability of employers to hire apprentices or trainees are the public incentives. In order to counteract unemployment, the State offers contributions to the employer, up to the 80% of the due salary.

Among its objectives, the project aimed to improve employer awareness of immigrant workers' difficulties and problems in the workplace. In late 2009, training courses were offered to employers to allow them to acquire better competences as "supervisors" for the trainees. After the first year of activities, the project planned a strategy to enlarge the group of available employers for trainings. One-day meetings called "tutor networks" were organised three times a year, including lectures held by

---

<sup>3</sup> *MyVocab 1.0* proposed different contents to stimulate immigrants' learning processes, not only on language: it proposed workplace scenarios to make them understand tacit cultural and social codes, a dictionary and a translator into users' tongues, listening and interactive exercises and so on. Open College Network (OCN) guaranteed the quality of the methodology and the achievement of the learning goals by the users generated an automatic recommendation by this organisation. In 2010, the product had an evolution in a 2.0 version.

experts and groups to share experiences and discuss questions and topics, also involving “old” and “new” available employers to favourite a *peer-to-peer* exchange.

The project’s activities have been complemented with a double, internal and external, monitoring process and quality assessment. This gave the possibility of demonstrating its good results, identify its weaknesses and improve its implementation with a learning-by-doing strategy.

One of the keys of the initiative is the constant focus towards a continuous improvement involving the staff to reach new skills, to acquire more self-confidence about their work and develop general trust towards change:

*Every year we have conferences in which we discuss ideas to change and improve. We are progressing together with Jobbtorg and AF. We change views, in order to understand what type of needs we should meet better, according to the different new groups that we receive.*  
(Language Supporter)

In 2012, *Språkstöd för nyanlända* won the *City of Stockholm Innovation Prize* for being the most innovative project developed in the City and for its high quality standard.

In the same year, it was definitively implemented by the municipality with the name of *Språk-stödjande insatser* as a specific Unit under *Swedish For Immigrants* because of the main language education content.

With the change of the legislative framework (described in chapter 2) shifting the responsibility of introduction measures for immigrant newcomers to the national level (Swedish Public Employment Service), the target group of *SFI* and *Språk-stödjande insatser Unit* has been enlarged and it now addresses all immigrants with low language skills, with a special focus on long-term unemployed.

## **4 The activities and organisation**

### **4.1 The users**

As reported by the internal monitoring reports, *Språk-stödjande insatser* users mainly came from Stockholm City. There have been very few applicants coming from other municipalities of Stockholm County. Even if some individuals asked to access the service on their own, applicants can be only referred by the Employment Service and *Jobbtorg* by caseworkers and job coaches following their training paths.

The applicants number about 200 per year. In 2012, 63% were women and 37% were men; 75% of them were under 30 years old; about 85% were Somali and 15% Arabic speakers. The opening up to new target groups after the first phase of experimentation, in 2012, the implementation of the 2010 Reform and the international crisis influencing migrations modified the composition of the services’ users:

*The majority of users that are currently attending the Unit are from Syria. Maybe 10-15% of those who we accept and take in are jobseekers that speak other languages than Arabic, Somali, and Tigrinya. So we give them the follow up at the placement both in Swedish and in English. In general terms, users of all range of age are accepted, from 18 to 65 years old. A minimum SFI level (the level of Swedish language skills) to enter the Unit is formally a B level, not so high, but still we are very flexible about it, as well as with the most of things.* (Language supporter)

Generally, users have low education and work experiences; only some of them have a high school or university degree. At the end of the project, 57% of them had finished secondary school, 26% were

attending high school and 6% were in higher education. The majority had been living in Sweden for less than two years. Only in some cases have they been residents in Sweden for longer than 8 or 9 years and although they don't have the same linguistic difficulties, they face serious problems in accessing the labour market.

All *Språk-stödjande insatser's* users get an internship. However, if the training period does not lead to a stable employment, they have to return back to *Jobbtorg* or the Employment Service. The amount of users that succeed in getting a job after this experience is about 20-25%, which is considered as a good result taking into account the critical situation and the needs of the target group. Indeed, the Unit does not have any follow up to see how much of their users find a job. According to the coordinator, it is very difficult to verify it:

*Our mission is to let users enter the labour market, by creating good internship places. It can happen that our applicants find a job even after months or years, and how could we know how much it is due to the Unit or not... We tried to do a follow up: we called a hundred people that finished the training after a year, just to see in which level their language was compared to the period before the training, and what happened later, and we knew that 20-25% of them was working, which was amazing for that group... but that information that we got is not complete and verifiable. Sometimes people go back to AF or Jobbtorg, and then they got a job a couple of months later and we don't know about that... so it's really hard for us to go out with numbers ...and it will be really hard for us to follow people all the time... (Coordinator of the project)*

## **4.2 The team**

In 2013, the *Språk-stödjande insatser's* staff is composed of ten professionals: a responsible coordinator, six language supporters (the Support Centre), two job matchers and an administrative officer.

The coordinator of the Unit is also the former project manager of *Språkstöd för nyanlända*. She has general directional and planning tasks and is the main referent for the relationships with higher institutional and political levels. She is the coordinator and supervisor of the staff through monthly team meetings, daily monitoring and quality control on the service. Every two weeks language supporters are asked for "portfolio calls": they are individual conversations with the supervisor where each of them reports the progress made by participants they are responsible for. These conversations proved to increase the effectiveness of the *Support Centre's* activities. The individual cases are also discussed during staff meetings with the aim of achieving a common approach towards the participants.

The language supporters hold the preparatory classes, act as coaches during the trainees and as intercultural-linguistic mediators at the workplace, work as promoters of the initiative in services for immigrants and other organisations.

As explained above, the language supporter's role is given to people who were previous beneficiaries of *Jobbtorg*. The idea is that they represent a good model for the participants as they come from similar situations, have learnt Swedish quickly and are integrated into the society and labour market:

*We have already gone through the challenge of integration in Sweden, so we can tell others in the same situation which way is better to follow, according to our personal experiences. We can help the applicants not to do the same mistakes that we did, or to solve them. (Language supporter)*

They are selected and recruited to spend an initial period of training within the Unit, thanks to a decision coming from the city hall stating that 3% of all the staff in each public company should be internship places. During the training period they get the opportunity to develop their specific role and competences as language supporters, and if their progress is deemed satisfactory, they are officially

hired as permanent staff members. The language supporters' mother tongues are Somali, Arabic and Tigrinya. The native language aspect makes the users feel welcomed and makes it easier for them to ask questions and to understand the information until their Swedish is good enough. During the trainings, language supporters take care of the linguistic and intercultural mediation between employers and trainees, which facilitates overcoming misunderstandings and preventing conflicts, through the explanation of tasks and roles in workplaces and the understanding of linguistic or technical specific expressions.

The job matchers get an average of around 20 participants every month. They work specifically for the Unit in close cooperation with the language supporters. Their tasks are: matching work demand and supply to organise adequate internships, work on participant motivation, raise employer awareness and create stable partnerships with them to increase the availability of workplaces for users by organising networking meetings and employers panels. This function is important in the Unit's specific method of intervention and was the reason why the project's name is referred to as a "fair matching" model.

### **4.3 The intervention**

*Språk-stödjande insatser's* intervention comprises several phases.

First of all, the staff holds a first information meeting for new applicants, explaining the pathway activities and steps.

After that, a preparatory training course is mainly held by the language supporters. It lasts 5 weeks and aims to prepare the users for the internship. The classes convey knowledge of Swedish language, culture and society, rules to follow and roles to be held at the workplace, worker's rights, information on physical and psychological personal care, orientation on the labour market and strategies for job searching, and basic computer skills. The classes on Swedish culture and society are run by the *Centrum för samhällsorientering* (Centre for social studies), a private organisation working on social research and adult education.

During the first week of the course, the job matchers present an offer of potential occupations to the participants, then each of them select three job sectors. During the second week, matchers conduct individual interviews about their preferences, goals and wishes, background and life situation, previous work or training experiences, any educational background, language skills, zone of residence. The purpose of these meetings is to assess their Swedish language proficiency and the possibility for them to conduct a job interview. All this provide a basis for an in-depth mapping to be used to match individuals with potential internships.

Job matchers then contact the employers on the basis of participants' wishes and on a set of criteria. First, the enterprise is checked for compliance with tax, contract and safety rules. Second, the internship should be located in the city centre or inner suburbs. Third, both employers and employees should talk Swedish at the workplace and the work environment should involve more than one person. Moreover, the applicant should have as a maximum 30 minutes travelling distance from the workplace, taking in account the individuals' social circumstances, for example, being a single parent.

There is a list of employers who have already collaborated with the Unit, however job matchers constantly try to enlarge their list of contacts to provide more possible choices for the applicants. Job matchers inform the employers about the Unit's activities, its mission and aims, and present the potential candidate to the internship specifying their profile in order to facilitate the matching. In all the conversations, job matchers give emphasis to the positive effects that hosting a trainee could bring to the workplace and its employees in term of social responsibility and cohesion. The acceptance of interns by employers is stimulated by the fact that, according to a national law, the public sector could cover up to the 80% of the wage of a trainee. The employers gain a big advantage from this regulation,

as they get labour force without any contractual long-term bonds and with limited costs in terms of wage and contributions.

Once both parties have given their approval, the employer, the user, the language supporter and the job matcher attend a first meeting to organise the internships and sign a contract. Employers and participants have the opportunity to present themselves to each other and ask questions. The internship lasts between 3 to 5 months. Language supporters attend the first day at work in order to provide mother tongue assistance on the explanation of the tasks and in the introduction of colleagues. They are also committed to monitor the training period; they call the participant at least once a week and visit the work place once a month. During the visits, they fill in a survey about the progress in language and professional items, as an evaluation to provide a basis for further planning. Language supporters are also available at the employers' request and in any cases of problems or special needs.

The feedback data about the attitudes and progress of the trainees during the Unit's activities is sent to the correspondent coach or administrator at *Jobbtorg* or the Employment Service via monthly reports by the language supporters. If necessary, regular contact is held between the partners.

#### **4.4 The employers**

As previously explained, the employers are usually contacted by the job matcher in order to set up an internship or to strengthen a collaboration. According to some interviews, the event of the conversation between job matcher and employer is a crucial moment for the latter to choose to receive a newly arrived user.

The Unit is provided with a database of internships, which contains the internship site address, name, contact person, but also the name of the participant who has been there. The database also contains information about the type of company, but also about the neighbourhood. This also facilitates the process of acquiring other employers in the same neighbourhood or within the same productive sector, as well as the daily work of matchers.

Nowadays, quite a wide range of companies belonging to public (40%), private and NGO sectors (60%) constitute the hosting organisations. Some of the major enterprises that collaborate with the Unit are: medium and large supermarket chains and discount stores (Hemkop, Coop Forum, Maxi Stormarknad/ICA, Överskottsbolaget), second-hand shops and cultural centers belonging to third sector organisations (Myrorna, Foraldrakooperativet Bikupan, Kulturhuset Stockholm), schools (Futuraskolan, Forskola solangen, Ross Tensta Gymnasium, Elinsborgs Skolan), other service sector stores (pharmacies or "apotek", Hatt'stugan, Butikerna, Deichmann), hotels, restaurants (Scandic, Restaurang Seglet) and public organisations (Stockholm Stad, Stockholms Stadtsbibliotek, retirement homes).

Some employers have been partners of the Unit since it was a project. For example, *SWYS* and *Stockholm Inn Hotels* are public companies which offer apartments and various kinds of social help to marginalised people. Other long and fruitful collaborations have been established with schools, food stores or NGOs. Another example is *Myrorna*, a long established and large Swedish NGO, with a national reach, which manages second hand shops throughout the City of Stockholm.

All these companies and organisations welcome trainees from the Unit and employ them in different tasks, according to the working and educational background and to the personal attitudes of the applicant: cooks, assistant cooks or dishwashers in the kitchen, cleaners, sales clerks, care workers, and so on.

In order to offer other opportunities of training, the Unit strictly cooperates with *Ungdomshallstallingar* (Youth employment project), a *Jobbtorg* Unit offering internships in the public enterprise sector to young unemployed people (under 31 years old). The public companies and organisations have the responsibility to host trainees within their working activities, due to a decision

coming from the city hall stating that 3% of all the staff number in each public company should be internship places. The Unit has naturally made this decision a part of its mission, by recruiting language supporters directly from the users at *Jobborg*.

Employers are invited to become mentors and supervisors of the applicants by attending an introductory training. The first supervisor training was set up in late 2009 (delivered by a private training company), with the aim to give support to the employers and to offer the new arrivals a qualitative guidance. Since then, the project (and, thereafter, the Unit) has offered supervisor training virtually every month. Trainings focus heavily on communication and misunderstandings that can arise due to cultural differences and also how to prevent or solve different cases and difficulties.

The so-called “network meetings” are organised by the job matchers. They are attended by employers, but also the staff from *Språk-stödjande insatser*, *Jobbtorg* and the Employment Service is invited to take part. Four network meetings have been convened every year since 2010, involving presentations, lectures, discussions and forums. Basically, the employers’ needs and issues are listened to and discussed, with a view to improve the sustainability and the outcomes of the project and to develop enterprises and companies into multicultural and open workplaces. During the first year (2009-2010), 179 supervisors attended the mentor training and 55 mentors took part in the network meetings. Sharing these communicative experiences has been perceived by employers as rewarding and it has also helped to raise awareness among the employers about the difficulties that the target group usually meets in their work integration path. Most of them continued the collaboration in the following years.

The possibility to re-iterate an internship place depends on a good and constructive dialogue between employer and trainee and whether a relationship of trust between the employer and the Unit’s professionals has been previously created. For this reason, it is fundamental to take care of all the phases concerning the “fair matching model”, focusing also on the supervisor’s preparation, the development of a supportive and friendly workplace and on supporting the employer’s needs during the training period. The articulation of the placement process increases the confidence of the employer towards the quality assurance of the Unit’s method, in which every step before, during and after the internship is standardised and secured by project staff and applied with a professional attitude.

It is also very important to provide an accurate final evaluation of the training period. With such feedback, the employer feels appreciated and he/she is often stimulated to receive a participant, and the establishment of relationships among employers through tutors meetings and employers’ panels is aimed to spread motivation and good experiences and impressions towards hosting trainees coming from the Unit.

Experience made by the Unit’s staff shows that it is important for matchers to maintain the “network” of employers in the form of good placements for this target group. It pays in the long run regarding continued collaboration with companies and organisations that ensure good workplaces for the participants.

## **5 The innovative dimension of the initiative**

As suggested by the literature about social innovation, *Språk-stödjande insatser’s* experience has been analysed through three basic components (Gerometta, Häußermann and Longo 2005; Moulaert *et al.* 2005a, b): a) the satisfaction of basic social needs (content dimension); b) the transformation of social relations (process dimension); c) and the empowerment and socio-political mobilisation (linking the process and content dimension). These indicators have been applied to *Språk-stödjande insatser’s* innovative experience:

### **a) Content dimension**

The project is innovative in the content dimension as aimed to develop a new method and strategy to deal with immigrants with difficulties in Swedish language, education and inclusion in the labour market and local society. The target's needs are not new, what is new, however, is the way to deal with them, taking into account multiple problems connected to social and work inclusion and integrating multiple aims.

The first aim of the Unit is to meet immigrants' needs for additional support in learning Swedish language and understanding Swedish culture, society and labour market to improve their process of labour market inclusion. It does so through a method that mixes traditional classes and work experience. The involvement of former users as language supporters within the service facilitates individual empowerment, proposing a model of social and labour market inclusion to newcomers and other unemployed immigrants. The standard teaching method of SFI classes proved to be ineffective for the most vulnerable target groups, like newcomers, weakly literate people and/or people who left school many years before and was unaccustomed to study. This strategy enhances and complements the paths within SFI combining school and apprenticeship methods and allowing learning Swedish by practice.

It is innovative to provide support to applicants in their mother tongue languages during the course and in the workplace where the internship is pursued. This support allows them to feel comfortable and increases motivation, confidence in understanding the information provided and instructions to do the job. The mediation helps to understand the social dynamics and to prevent misunderstandings and resolve conflicts.

*There is a huge difference between Swedish culture and the cultures of origins of our applicants. Those people are from far away, they don't even belong to a European culture. You know, it would be much easier for trainees coming from Germany, Norway or Denmark, because they are close to the Swedish culture, but if you are from Middle East or Africa you have a different mentality, habits and culture, even about the company culture. In some countries, workers are naturally afraid of the boss and they don't even speak to him or look at him, it's impossible to discuss with the boss, while sometimes it is required for workers to do some private services for the employer! In Sweden this action is illegal and a lot of attitudes on the workplace are totally different or opposed. So it can be hard for an extra-European immigrant to understand all those difference and to integrate. (Language Supporter)*

The second aim is to promote social inclusion creating contacts outside their own social and relational sphere. This creates opportunities for activation and job inclusion and for the expansion of social and professional network and contacts. It also breaks residential and ethnic isolation and leads to a gradual and autonomous integration of the user in society.

*Each applicant that we meet firstly asks: - can I get a job here? - It doesn't matter if he or she has been here for a month or for ten years. Those people have families and children to care for. At the same time, we face the belief of many native Swedes who think that these people don't like to work, while what we see is totally different. Everybody wants to work and to have an opportunity to solve his or her problems. But our target is too far from finding a work and it's very difficult for them to reach the aim. (Matcher of the Unit)*

According to the former Executive Director of *Jobbtorg Kista*, applicants are pressured from one service to another and the intervention is generally highly standardised, without giving them so much freedom of choice on their paths. This can make them lose self-confidence and motivation. Compared to traditional services, the two job matchers of *Språk-stödjande insatser* have a unique and innovative role and skills that are specifically oriented to create a new kinds of relationships between the user, the service and employers: their approach is highly personalised, also due to the more limited number of recipients compared to the traditional services, and leads to find better solutions for trainees and employers.

Beside the applicants' needs, also the employers' needs are taken into consideration. They receive information and formative opportunities on the possibility of activating internships in their companies through the actions provided for them. They have frequent contacts with the service and they receive constant support during the internship.

### **b) Process dimension**

The innovation in the process dimension concerns the capacity of the public services involved in the experimentation to modify their organisation and relationships to realise the new aims and apply the new method of intervention.

The introduction of new professionals to realise a peer-to-peer strategy in the pathways of social and work inclusion, the reflection about the relationships among the municipal and state services for employment, the involvement of employment in initiatives of sensitisation of other employers are part of the process of innovation.

In this process it was crucial to integrate the implementation of the new method with a strategy of evaluation. In the opinion of respondents, the continuous participatory internal and external monitoring, both involving the different stakeholders, has: a) gradually improved the effectiveness of the project, b) reinforced the governance system and relationships among the professionals and the organisations, c) given the possibility to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new method and increase the interest on it in other welfare services.

### **c) Empowerment dimension**

*Språk-stödjande insatser* is not a bottom-up initiative, although for some aspects the voice of the target group has been taken into consideration. In particular the language supporters actively participated in the project design, influencing some decisions: for example the profile of the job matcher was designed starting from their suggestions. The language supporters cannot be taken as representative of the target group, but nonetheless, they have been in the same situation as the beneficiaries and can therefore express some bottom-up issues.

The Unit aims at the users' empowerment as individuals, stimulating self-confidence through an adequate knowledge of Swedish culture, society and labour market and a direct experience in a workplace. The feeling of alienation of newcomers and the fall of motivation of long-term unemployed immigrants are taken into account creating a more comfortable learning context and the use of native language, through personalised intervention, mediation and coaching during internships to obtain good result in that experience. The final aim is to promote an autonomous pathway of full inclusion in Swedish society and labour market.

*Something that I have noticed both in our applicants and in the groups from Vasterort has been the big change in their attitude from the beginning until the last day of placement. They were shy and lacked self-confidence, and then they have been acquiring some feedback about their skills and their capacities, that reminds them the goals of their experience of migration. They have grown very much and become much more open, so we can see the value in terms of individual empowerment. (Language Supporter)*

The *Språk-stödjande insatser* experience is considered by local experts and professionals working in the same policy area as an example of innovation and quality. They also suggest that it can act as a stimulus to introduce innovative methods in more traditional services like *Jobbtorg*, the Employment Service, and others. The success of an innovative initiative which arose within *Jobbtorg* is expected to increase public functionaries' and civil servants' responsiveness about the issues of immigrants and about the possibility of enacting innovative solutions. It is considered as an empowerment of public professionals.

An important aspect is the users' active participation in the evaluation process: they have been directly invited to express their perceptions towards the project's parts, and to discuss together about their effectiveness, to provide suggestions for improvements.

Finally, the Unit has started innovative initiatives aimed at raising employer and public opinion awareness about the problems of social exclusion of immigrants through the actions addressing employers and workplaces, through meetings and networks of discussion (tutor networks and employers panels). In the words of the professionals working at the *Unit*, these activities can be considered as tending to a process of collective empowerment: the direct involvement of the employers of the city as well as the other employees at the internship places leads not only to an empowerment and sensitising of stakeholders, but also of family members, relatives, colleagues, friends belonging to both formal and informal various social and professional networks of the people directly involved.

## 6 Institutional mapping and governance relations

Since 2012 *Språk-stödjande insatser* is a Unit of Swedish for immigrants, a municipal educational institution under *Arbetsmarknadsförvaltningen* (the Stockholm City Labour Market Administration). This service has the aim of providing adult immigrants with basic knowledge of the Swedish language.

SFI has one or more schools in each district of the City. Different short-term courses managed by these schools provide different professional specialisations for occupations such as childcare, retail workers or truck drivers. The first version of *Språk-stödjande insatser* involved 335 students from four SFI schools (*Hermods, Utbildningsborgen, Competens and Lernia SFI* schools) in the use of a technological tool, *MyVocab* (see point 3). The Unit currently collaborates with the school of *Västerort*, which sends students holding professional health course for internships.

In its start-up phase, *Språk-stödjande insatser* was co-financed by the European Refugee Fund and the Municipality of Stockholm. The Swedish Public Employment Service provided applicants and the employers of Stockholm (both public, private and NGOs) offered internships. Nowadays it is fully financed by the Municipality of Stockholm.

The main partners of the SFI Unit are *Jobbtorg* and the Swedish Public Employment Service. The job coaches and job matchers from *Jobbtorg* and the caseworkers from the Employment Service send applicants to *Språk-stödjande insatser* and follow their training path together with the Unit's professionals. They establish formal agreements on individual cases. The language supporters send monthly reports to both organisations, containing feedback data and information about each user's progress during the internships. If necessary, the operators keep in regular contact. The Unit's and *Jobbtorg's* staff also attend monthly meetings and conferences to discuss and exchange information about employers and job training experiences. As the *Språk-stödjande insatser's* professionals explain, maintaining constant contact with the Employment Service is more difficult, given the overload of work facing the staff of the national organisation.

Very few of the applicants have been sent from Municipalities of the Stockholm County (namely, with the local employment services of Solna, Sollentuna), which signed formal agreements of cooperation with the Unit, but the most of them came from the capital.

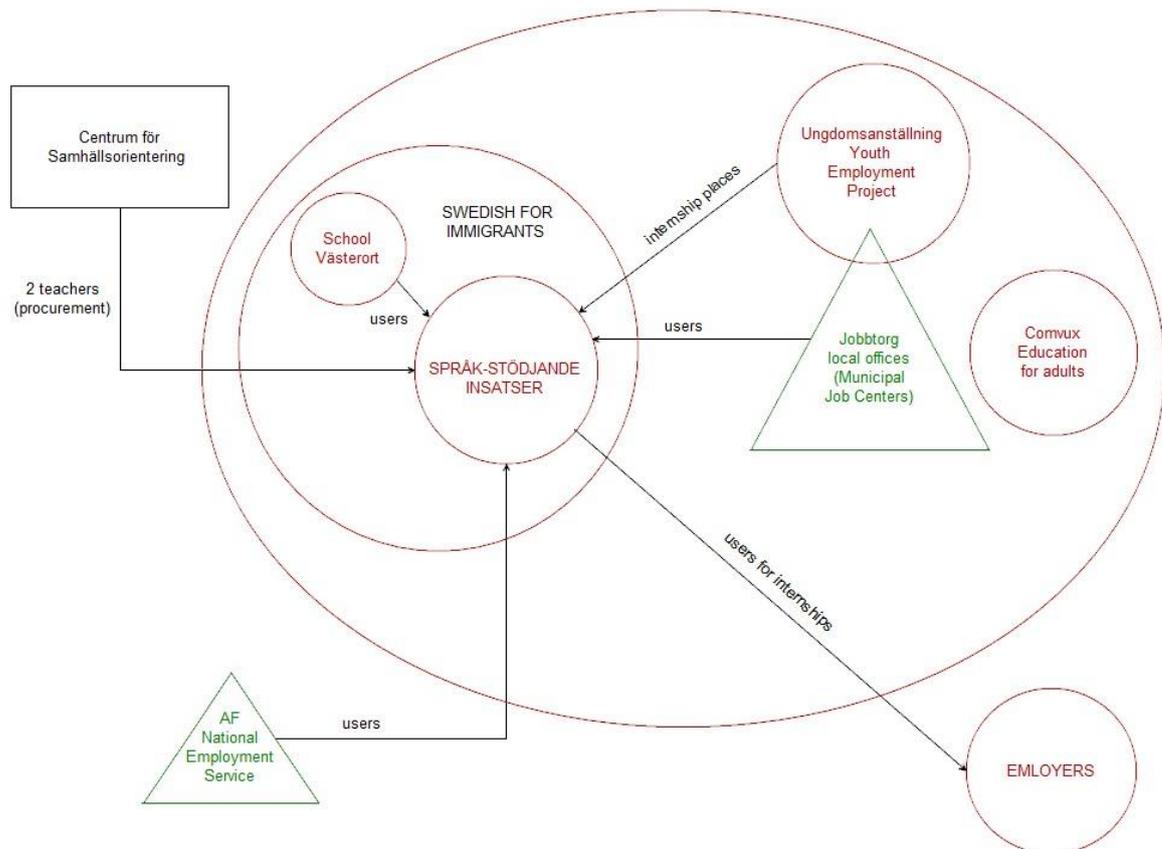
The *Centrum för samhällsorientering* provides two teachers for classes on Swedish culture and society during the preparatory courses.

The network of employers involved in the Unit's activities until now provides places for the trainees, and the bank of internship, a database with all the useful information about each internship place, has been built over this time in order to facilitate the job matchers with carrying on the established relationships and creating new ones with the employers of the city. The relationship between the

employers and the Unit is not formally regulated. When an internship is defined, the collaboration is formalised by a contract between the employer and the trainee defining the job conditions (days and hours, activities, etc.). Some documents, signed by the employer and the language supporters, have to be filled in and sent to *Jobbtorg* and the Employment Service.

The Unit strictly collaborates with *Ungdomshallstallingar* (Youth employment project), a *Jobbtorg* Unit offering internships in the public enterprises sector to youth unemployed people.

**Fig. 1 – *Språk-stödjande insatser* in the local governance system: actors and relationships**



Source: Authors' elaboration from desk analysis, interviews and focus group

## 7 Governance challenges

The following paragraphs analyse the governance challenges to social innovation in the analysed experience. They are described as they emerged from the documents and the field research, using the *ImPROvE* definition.

### 7.1 Mainstreaming social innovation

*Språk-stödjande insatser* is a case of upscaling innovation. It was introduced through a European project reserved to refugees and immigrant newcomers, assisted by a process of monitoring and evaluation and finally implemented as a stable service within an established organisation provided by

the municipality to newcomers and unemployed immigrants (refugees are included in the target group).

This pathway was not simple and the staff followed a complex process of transformation, readapting their tasks to new formal procedures and requests:

*Usually when you work in a project you can live in your bubble. You've already got your money, you got your actions and your staff works, you're not affected by annual budget, by political priorities or by anybody else, you can see that your project progresses with high development rates. The transformation from a medium-size project into a Unit has led all these problems, it has led frustration in the staff, and your work is affected by a lot of factors. I would say the project has become a Unit now really, cause it takes time for the transformation to complete, for the staff to understand how we should work, and that we should not develop it any more but we should now improve quality, sustainability and efficiency. (Head of Unit)*

The project has been able to follow this process because it has planned from the beginning the evaluation during the last year of the project and the necessary budget to do it for the purpose of implementation, taking into account the results of the evaluation for readjustments.

According to respondents, these are some of the conditions that, whether not considered, cause the failure of the projects' mainstreaming. The analysis is indeed essential for the implementation to be successful, but its importance is too often overlooked and projects crash, or become "sick": a project stops, a new request for funding for another project arrives, abandoning the first one.

The innovative method promoted by *Språk-stödjande insatser* has been also implemented in other Jobbtorg projects or Units. In *FAMU*, a project co-financed by the European Social Fund with a focus on increasing opportunities for long-term unemployed, the implementation of the Unit's preparatory course improved the results: 100% of *FAMU* applicants followed the project's path, while they were only about 15% before.

For this reason, great importance has been given to the evaluation phase in the last year of *Språkstöd för nyanlända*, made by a reliable external organisation (*Ramboll*). As explained above (see p. 3), an attentive external evaluation of the project was included within the project's budget for the implementation, which resulted in a final document.

The language supporter is a professional conceived within *Språkstöd för nyanlända*, but actually it has been spread and implemented in other learning contexts involving immigrants with insufficient knowledge of Swedish, in which this figure works as assistant role, teacher assistant, ICT teacher or a matcher. In the Unit the language supporter maintains its specific tasks and skills, which have developed within the project, widening beyond a simple translating and becoming an original and distinct figure. He works in strict coordination with the other professionals of the Unit (matchers, ICT teacher).

According to the interviewees, while considering the good results, the programme's existence depends on the municipality's political agenda. If priorities and funding focus on different problems or targets, the service's continuity or quality standards could be affected. The goal for the Unit is to acquire more stability and higher quality standards and to continue demonstrating its good results to gain political attention and continuity.

## **7.2 Governing welfare mix: Avoiding fragmentation**

In the first two or three years, the project had to overcome mistrust and difficulties in dialogue by the *Jobbtorg's* and *Employment Service's* ordinary staff, due to the new approach that was far from traditional methods.

Winning the *City of Stockholm innovation price* in 2012 has given great visibility to the project, among the media and the public opinion. It was presented to the city council and the issue has been considered as a political priority. This helped to spread information on the new method and to increase the possibility of its diffusion.

Reciprocal trust in professionals of the different organisations involved was essential to build shared pathways for people and professionals among different organisations. In fact, as already explained, the *Unit* is well integrated in the local services system and policies aimed to improve immigrants' access to the labour market and Swedish society.

A difficulty is still in the weak coordination between *Jobbtorg* (municipal service for employment) and the *Public Employment Service* (national service). In some cases, users had two different plans, one for each organisation. The challenge is actually to enhance the cooperation and exchange of information on the cases and services' activities at operative and higher levels. Annual meetings are held between the Heads of the services, in order to solve the problems of coordination and connection among services working on the same issues and often on the same cases.

A good network has been established with the companies involved in the project. The following step in this field, in the intention of some respondents, will be a better formalisation of the agreements between the employers and the *Unit* to encourage and the strength these relations and improve the possibility to involve new companies, also through a peer-to-peer approach among employers.

The idea of a combination of internal monitoring and external evaluation, both involving the different stakeholders of the project, demonstrated to be effective in supporting the process of innovation. It helped to highlight weaknesses and strengths, to develop reflections about them and elaborate solutions. It enabled the possibility not only to improve the experimental method through a continuous learning-by-doing strategy, but also to reflect on fragmentation and the need to reinforce the governance system as a strategy to make the project work taking in account multidimensional needs dimension.

### **7.3 Governing welfare mix: developing a participatory governance style**

The direct involvement of the target group in the organisation and provision of the service is carried out through the recruitment of bilingual language supporters from people registered at job services. It underlines the idea that these people, from passive recipients of welfare services, can become role models and active providers for the participants in the project, since they had similar pathways with positive outcomes. These professionals were also involved in the design of the project and in the steering group of monitoring and evaluation.

Great relevance has also been given to the employers, as direct stakeholders and potential collaborators of the *Unit*. They have been involved in trainings aimed at raising awareness about their role as supervisors for cases with a different cultural background and weak Swedish language skills.

The activation of panels with employers was an effort to involve the supervisors, the staff in the project and the partners' staff in the participatory process monitoring the project. During these meetings, the groups discussed emerging issues concerning the internships, needs and problems, and developed common solutions. They were perceived as a success by the participants, not only because it provided a chance for skill development, but also it served as a *forum* for the exchange of good experiences and in supporting tutors' work and motivation and, finally, as an opportunity for employers to influence and improve the activities through proposals and suggestions.

## 7.4 Equality and diversity

There are not any formal limits to the access to the service whose targets are newcomers or long-term unemployed immigrants. It guarantees a special support for these citizens to erase their linguistic disadvantage and overcome the obstacles due to their limited knowledge of Swedish culture, society and labour market.

The languages spoken by language supporters within *Språk-stödjande insatser* are Somali, Arabic and Tigrinya, the three main languages spoken by *Jobbtorg* users. Courses in English or Swedish are held for immigrants speaking other languages.

As explained above, the staff approach in *Språk-stödjande insatser* is very individual. The “fair matching” model helps to improve immigrants’ access to the labour market meeting their specificities. The staff takes into consideration their characteristics, but also their preferences, goals and wishes, life situation, previous work or training experiences, language skills, even the area of residence. All these aspects are considered all important to find the most suitable internship for each person.

The staff is aware of the high flexibility needed to meet all applicants’ possible specificities changing over time:

*We can see how the needs are changing over time! Recently we are receiving more and more very skilled immigrants, for example electronic engineers or computer experts. It's a challenge itself: I cannot behave the same way with an electronic engineer and with a person with little education. Their needs are really really different. Thus, I need to do researches in new sections and new fields. Even my colleagues, the job matchers, normally look at the public companies for those with less education (nurseries, schools, etc.), but it's a challenge also looking for companies we have never had contacted until now. It's important for us to lead all the persons on the right way, based on their needs. Such challenges make the Unit progress. (Language Supporter)*

## 7.5 Uneven access

The users are sent to *Språk-stödjande insatser* by the Employment Service and *Jobbtorg*’s caseworkers, who play an important role in users’ pathways and take in account various factors and conditions. There is room for discretion in their decisions.

The already highlighted fragmentation and weak dialogue between these organisations can be an obstacle to the access of potential users to the new opportunity. Furthermore, there are many programmes offering internships, offered by the same services which leads to the caseworkers more easily sending their cases directly to those courses.

The transfer of the project from *Jobbtorg* to SFI has created positive and negative effects on user access. Besides *Jobbtorg* and the Employment Service, even SFI schools began to send students from their professional courses and in the last year about 450 participants had internships through *Språk-stödjande insatser*.

The access also depends on if and how employers, services’ staff and users know the possibility offered by *Språk-stödjande insatser*. The employers of the City centre are the best informed about it. With the exception of an Employment Service office located in *Kista*, which has a solid partnership with the Unit, the other offices do not send many users. This could be due to a lack of information, a wide range of actions available or few potential applicants among their users. The Unit staff is engaged in spreading information about the services offered through meetings with users (held in their mother tongue), operators, managers and responsible at *Jobbtorg*.

Other barriers may consist of bureaucratic closures of the services system, which create categorisations and rigidities hindering some pathways and excluding some people from some measures and also from access to *Språk-stödjande insatser*.

*One guy that was in social insurance benefits did not have any kind of plan at the Employment Service, he was just going there and looking for a job. He was a barista and he really wanted to start working. As I can remember, I spoke with him every two days for maybe two months, but we could not do anything for him. We are under SFI, and social insurance agency does not accept more than ten SFI hours per week in an individual action plan. This is only one case, we have many of these cases. You know, the system itself closes the door. (Matcher)*

Rigid target categorisations, strict criteria of access or standardised interventions and opportunities can affect the adaptation of the services to specificities and needs and prevent the possibility to take into account their desires and preferences. All the interviewees underline the need of more flexibility of services and attention on individuals.

## **7.6 Avoiding responsibility**

*Språk-stödjande insatser* is a service provided by a local public institution, the Municipality of Stockholm, which takes in charge a weaker group of immigrants: newcomers and long-term unemployed with difficulties in accessing the labour market with the support of services already available for all the citizens.

Over the past eight years, the national political agenda has prioritised actions in the field of the labour market, also reinforcing *SFI* and *Komvux* (Education for Adults), to strengthen them and focus on internships as a measure to support activation policies.

The public investments on improving unemployed people's professionalisation has been important in the last decade in Sweden. *Jobbtorg* and the *Employment Service* increasingly buy a wide offer of training courses provided by private companies for their users. For some interviewees, these courses reach good results when they become a first step to acquire proper education, even they do not provide users stable jobs or reinforce their competitiveness. They only allow access to seasonal jobs or on-call contracts, with little chance of permanent or more qualified jobs. Most of the so-called "hard users" remain unemployed despite these initiatives and go back to the services to be involved in new activation programmes, trapped in a vicious cycle of dependence on the services.

The general vision of the activation policies emerged by the interviews is of a system that has reached important results, but it is struggling to adapt to changes in the labour market and unemployed people's needs. The personalisation of interventions, which takes into account specific combinations of needs of individuals, should be integrated with the universalistic logic of the Swedish welfare system.

*Språk-stödjande insatser* is an experience going in that direction. It has become part of the local services system and it has influenced the method of intervention of other organisations working on the access of immigrants in the labour market.

## **7.7 Managing intra-organisational tensions**

The relationships between the Unit and its partners are considered as effective by the interviewees. Some difficulties are highlighted in the relationship with the staff of the *Swedish Employment Service*, mainly due to structural factors of the organisation, in particular the staff shortage and level of competence.

In the first period of the project, both *Jobbtorg* and the *Employment Service* expressed distrust of the potential of the initiative, probably due to the innovative content in the method of intervention, different from the traditional methods used in their services. This has been described as a reaction to the possibility of destabilisation due to change. However, over time, *Språk-stödjande insatser* has demonstrated positively in the field to work to guarantee good quality and good results (the evaluation process was important in this sense) and this has allowed the building of trust and confidence among the partners involved.

## **7.8 Enabling legal framework**

The possibility to establish internships is fostered by a favourable legal framework, which provides employers with public incentives for the hiring of trainees. These incentives can cover up to the 80% of the costs of the trainee. From the other side, in the opinion of some interviewees, these public contributions are so favourable for companies that they are not interested to hire anyone, but only to activate internships to cut the cost of their labour force. Some professionals suggest that obtaining regular work through training has become difficult and that only a change in labour market policies could stop this spiral.

On the side of the employers, some norms regulating the internships are considered as too rigid, thus hindering the realisation of internships:

*If people are employed by us as ordinary employment, it's ok, but a person who comes from Jobbtorg or other organisations has a lot of rules around him: he cannot work alone, he cannot do this, he cannot do that. That's a huge problem for us (employers), because it takes a lot of time and efforts to take care of this person. I experienced that once: a girl was a fantastic worker with this kind of people (elderly with dementia) and the Workers' Union found out that she had been working "alone" for a while. She was ok about it, even she did not want to go behind a supervisor all the time. But they have their rules, so we had to pay a fine, and my boss was quite angry, and the girl was really disappointed, because they had ruined her chances of working that summer. So crazy! So I think it's good to have rules, but I think we have to be little more flexible and see the individual. (Employer in the sector of care for elderly)*

## References

- Alietti A., Agustoni A. (2013), Integrazione, casa e immigrazione. Esperienze e prospettive in Europa, Italia e Lombardia. *Quaderni ISMU*, pp. 88-90
- Bevelander P., Lundh C. (2007), Employment Integration of Refugees: The Influence of Local Factors on Refugee Job Opportunities in Sweden, Discussion Paper No. 2551, IZA, available on line: <http://ftp.iza.org/dp2551.pdf>
- Bonfanti S., Nordlund M. (2012), Does “Swedish For Immigrants” (SFI) matter? A longitudinal assessment of the impact of SFI on migrants’ position in the Swedish labour market., pp. 24-26, available on line: [http://www.disei.unifi.it/upload/sub/pubblicazioni/repec/pdf/wp24\\_2012.pdf](http://www.disei.unifi.it/upload/sub/pubblicazioni/repec/pdf/wp24_2012.pdf)
- Eurostat News Release (2014), Migrant integration in the labour market in 2013. Unemployment rate for non-EU citizens notably higher than for nationals in the EU28, available on line: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/5175382/3-30072014-AP-EN.PDF/3d501ab4-8735-4f70-a460-543b308ccdbe?version=1.0>
- Kazepov Y., Saruis T., Wukovitsch F., Cools P., Novy A. (2013), How to study social innovation in poverty analysis. Methods and methodologies, ImPRovE Work package 14, Deliverable 14.1, on-line: <http://improve-research.eu/?wpdmact=process&did=NDYuaG90bGluaw==>
- Myrberg G. (2014), Organizing Refugee Reception: The Case of the Swedish Introduction Reform, Dept. of Government and Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University, Sweden, pp. 1-2, available on line: <http://www.ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/82ea46f5-1443-44de-beee-a8be145d48a0.pdf>
- Oosterlynck S., Kazepov Y., Novy A., Cools P., Barberis E., Wukovitsch F., Saruis T., Leubolt B. (2013a), The butterfly and the elephant: local social innovation, the welfare state and new poverty dynamics, ImPRovE Working Paper 13/03, on-line: [http://www.academia.edu/4144697/The\\_butterfly\\_and\\_the\\_elephant\\_local\\_social\\_innovati\\_on\\_the\\_welfare\\_state\\_and\\_new\\_poverty\\_dynamics\\_by\\_Oosterlynck\\_S.\\_Kazepov\\_Y.\\_Novy\\_A.\\_Cools\\_P.\\_Barberis\\_E.\\_Wukovitsch\\_F.\\_Saruis\\_T.\\_and\\_Leubolt\\_B](http://www.academia.edu/4144697/The_butterfly_and_the_elephant_local_social_innovati_on_the_welfare_state_and_new_poverty_dynamics_by_Oosterlynck_S._Kazepov_Y._Novy_A._Cools_P._Barberis_E._Wukovitsch_F._Saruis_T._and_Leubolt_B)
- Språkstöd för nyanlända (2011), Slutrapport, Stockholm.

## Appendix

The field research aims, through a complex transdisciplinary and integrated methodology, to analyse the conditions influencing the rise of innovative experiences on poverty problems and their potential of mainstreaming in different welfare models. Following the established protocols for the fieldwork, the actions conducted for the case study by the University of *Urbino* team, between March and May 2014, are:

- Analysis of documents, data and publications, reports of the project furnished by the Unit e concerning the innovative experience. The analysis has aimed to individuate useful information about its organisation and development. Institutional documents, national data and researches were consulted to describe the policies on refugees, new comers and unemployed immigrants' conditions and define the framework where the project is realised.

- 5 qualitative interviews involving: a) the former project manager and Head of Unit; b) the former head of *Jobbtorg* in *Kista* who was involved in the project and in the steering group in 2010; c) a language supporter; d) a matcher; e) the responsible of the Introduction Programme since 2010 at the local *AF* office in *Solna*. The interviews aimed at describing in depth the project, its genesis and potential, its organisation and network, its relationships with the Swedish welfare system and the national policies concerning newcomers, unemployed immigrants and refugees.

- A focus group involving six people: the already interviewed matcher, language supporter and head of the Unit, an employer belonging to the project's network (the manager of a home for elder people with dementia, located in the City centre), the Principal of the SFI school in *Västerort* and professional of *AF* (who was job coach at *Jobbtorg* three years before). The focus group aimed at going deeper in the analysis of the project, in order to better describe its innovative characteristics and potential in relation to the context where it is realised.

## **ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe. Social Policy and Innovation**

Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE) is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The ImPRovE project aims to improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term. In the short term, this is done by carrying out research that is directly relevant for policymakers. At the same time however, ImPRovE invests in improving the long-term capacity for evidence-based policy making by upgrading the available research infrastructure, by combining both applied and fundamental research, and by optimising the information flow of research results to relevant policy makers and the civil society at large.

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?

How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?

The project runs from March 2012 till February 2016 and receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. The output of ImPRovE will include over 55 research papers, about 16 policy briefs and at least 3 scientific books. The ImPRovE Consortium will organise two international conferences (Spring 2014 and Winter 2015). In addition, ImPRovE will develop a new database of local projects of social innovation in Europe, cross-national comparable reference budgets for 6 countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) and will strongly expand the available policy scenarios in the European microsimulation model EUROMOD.

More detailed information is available on the website <http://improve-research.eu>.

Bea Cantillon (Coordinator)

E-mail: [bea.cantillon@uantwerpen.be](mailto:bea.cantillon@uantwerpen.be)

Phone: +32 3 265 53 98

Address: University of Antwerp – Sint-Jacobstraat 2 (M.177) – 2000 Antwerp - Belgium

Tim Goedemé (Manager)

E-mail: [tim.goedeme@uantwerpen.be](mailto:tim.goedeme@uantwerpen.be)

Phone: +32 3 265 55 55

Mobile: +32 494 82 36 27

Address: University of Antwerp – Sint-Jacobstraat 2 (M.185) – 2000 Antwerp - Belgium