

Chapter Three

►► HOUSEHOLDS, WORK AND FLEXIBILITY Country Contextual Reports

SWEDEN

[Thomas P. Boje, Umeå University, Sweden and Roskilde University Denmark, Mattias Strandh, Umeå University, Sweden and IIASA, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Austria]

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INTRODUCTION

Modern labour market organisations require that the employees are flexible both in adapting to changes in the work content and in the firm organisation and in combining working and family life. Flexibility refers in the HWF project both to a wide range of working patterns including part-time work, variable working hours and contingent employment, to a pattern of life-long learning and to various types of division of labour in the family in reconciling work and home.

The traditional family pattern characterised by breadwinner fathers and homemaker mothers is vanishing and has throughout Europe been replaced by a growing number of dual-earner families and simultaneously a growing diversity of family forms. In all European countries we have seen a progressive increase in women's labour market involvement. In a still more comprehensive way women are shaping their own future by active participation in economic and social processes. They have in large number acquired higher education have chosen paid work instead of unpaid care work and full-time instead of part-time jobs where available. This growing involvement of women in the societal life has generally had as a consequence that families have become smaller with fewer children per family and women tend to postpone the birth of their first child until they have finished their education and have been integrated in the labour market.

The increase in women's labour market participation has obviously taken place in all European countries despite economic recession, falling

general level of employment, high rates of unemployment and lack of childrearing facilities. However the pattern of women's labour market involvement differs strongly depending on the shape of the social and family policies in the individual welfare regimes (Rubery, Smith and Fagan 1996; 1). The gender structure of employment, work and care is determined by a complex interrelationship between the organisation of gender relations in the family, men's and women's labour market positions, and the welfare policies aimed reconciling work and care (see Esping-Andersen 1999: Chapter 5). The gender differences in labour market involvement at the individual level has consequences at the household level in that they shape the ways that couples reconcile their domestic and working lives. The EU commitment towards greater equal opportunities within the European employment system comes through in making equal opportunities a fourth pillar of its employment policy and the commitment has been expressed in the following way: 'the principle of equality between men and women makes it essential to offset the disadvantage faced by women with regard to conditions for access to and participation in the labour market and the disadvantage faced by men with regard to participation in family life, arising from social practices which still presuppose that women are chiefly responsible for unpaid work related to looking after a family and men chiefly responsible for paid work derived from an economic activity' (Council of European Union 2000). Furthermore, at the Euro-

pean Council meeting held in Cardiff in 1998, it was stated that equal opportunities in employment for men and women could only be accomplished by promoting 'family-friendly working practices, including suitable childcare and parental leave schemes' (EU-Commission 1999a: 15).

Sweden is considered as the typical case of the social-democratic welfare state regimes where labour market involvement of both men and women is strongly advocated and where there is a long tradition of support for dual-earner families in the welfare system. Sweden is thus characterised by a welfare system that promotes equality among its citizens and that is strongly committed to an employment guarantee for both men and women. The Swedish welfare system has developed an elaborate system of public services enabling both men and women to participate in the labour market on in principal equal terms – childcare, health care and care for the elderly.

In the Swedish welfare system the state also plays a more important role than in most other welfare systems both in regulation of the living conditions, in reconciling work and care in the families and as an employer of workers especially in the service sector. With respect to work-family arrangements such as public childcare and statutory leave programmes Sweden has a much longer tradition of supporting the dual-earner families than any of the other countries included in the HWF-project. Already in the 1960s Sweden

developed policies supporting working parents. As a consequence the fact that both fathers and mothers might be able to combine work with caring responsibilities is taken for granted in the Swedish society. Lewis (1992) tries to synthesise the national differences in Europe based on different types of breadwinner systems, which consider both the gender contract implicit in unpaid care work and the employment contract regulating gender relations in the labour market. Sweden is in this typology characterised by a weak breadwinner or a dual-earner system, where the impact of motherhood on women's labour market involvement is weak. Motherhood even has a positive impact on women's labour market involvement, in sharp contrast to most other European countries.

The strong emphasis on equal opportunities in the Swedish welfare state does not, however, mean that the outcome concerning opportunities in the labour market as well as sharing of the unpaid care work are equal between men and women. The Swedish labour market is thus highly segregated along gender lines and it is still women who do most of the unpaid work in the household in relation to children and cooking. On the other hand the emphasis on equal opportunities makes the combination of paid and unpaid work less difficult to manage for Swedish women compared with women / mothers in most other European countries (Dulk 2001: 13-4).

1. DEMOGRAPHIC AND EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Labour market development, and obviously also the demographic development, has during the last ten years been strongly influenced by the backdrop of the deep economic crisis that Sweden suffered during the beginning of the 1990s. Through an interlinked combination of different economic factors the country was thrown into its worst economic crisis since the great depression of the 1930s. Sweden was from the beginning relatively unprepared for the international economic downturn of the early 1990s. Factors such as an

overheated economy, together with a high level of government spending, led to economic instability. Matters were however made worse by an underfunded tax reform, and an expensive but an eventually futile defence of the stable exchange rate of the Swedish krona. The resulting situation was huge budget deficits and a national debt that increased rapidly (see appendix figure 1, Yearly growth of national debt). The consequence of these deficits was threefold; large cuts in government spending, large tax increases and interest

rate shocks. Carried out in the middle of a recession this naturally further compounded the economic crisis, and the Swedish economy suffered almost two consecutive years of negative growth (see appendix figure 2, GDP growth in Sweden).

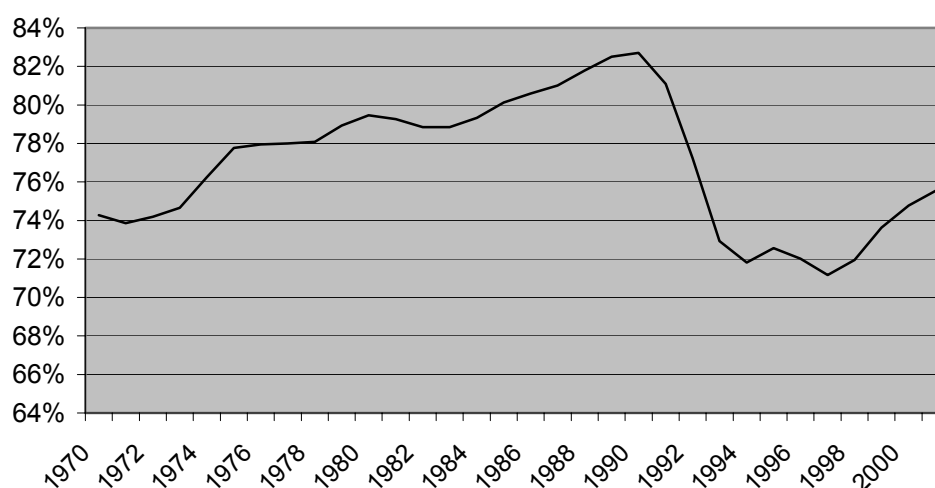
The recovery from the economic shock was a slow process and it only came together with restrictive public budgets and monetary policies during most of the 1990s, which were followed by stable economic growth in the late 1990s.

1.1. Labour market participation and employment

The employment effect of the early 1990s crisis was strong and led to a remarkable fall in the proportion of the Swedish population active in the labour market. In figure 1 the proportion of the popula-

tion 16-64 in employment is presented (for a comparison of employment rates with other countries in the HWF study, see appendix figure 3).

Figure 1. Proportion of the Swedish population 16-64 in employment



Source: OECD statistical compendium 2001/2

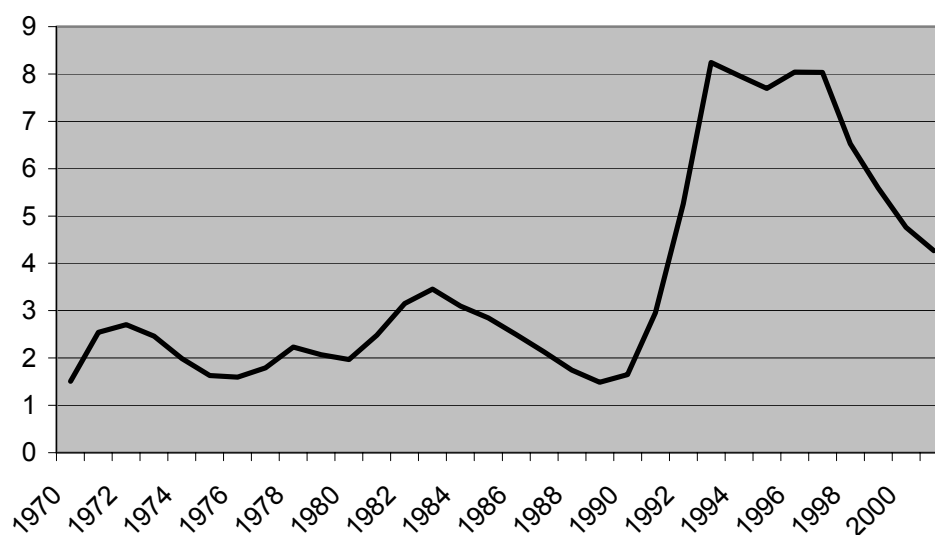
Figure 1 shows clearly how the Swedish employment rate in the beginning of the 1990s dropped from record highs with over 80 percent of the working age population in employment to roughly 72 per cent, with this lower employment rate remaining throughout most of the 1990s. During the late 1990s the economic upswing had a profound positive effect on employment rates, which had risen to roughly 76 per cent by the beginning of 2001. The recent development of both the employment rate and unemployment rate has

been very positive both seen from a Swedish perspective and fare quite well in international comparison. What is worth keeping in mind however is that although the recent development has been quite positive, the current employment level is substantially lower than in the ten years preceding the economic crisis while the rate of unemployment is substantially higher. In 1999 the Swedish government set demanding goals for firstly the development of the unemployment rate and secondly the level of employment. The goal

for increasing employment was stipulated at an overall rate of employment of 80 per cent in 2004 and for the rate of overall open unemployment

the goal was set to 4 per cent in 2002. The last goal has nearly been accomplished as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. The unemployment rate in Sweden



Source: OECD statistical compendium 2001/2

Looking at Swedish unemployment figures over the last ten years, these illustrate well the general economic development described above. Until the 1990s, Sweden could be described as a European unemployment success story. While most European countries during the 1970s and 1980s were hit by repeated unemployment shocks and the persistence of unemployment once it had increased (unemployment hysteresis), Sweden deviated from this normal pattern. Looking at figure 2 (for a comparison of unemployment rates with other countries in the HWF study, see appendix figure 4) it is possible to see that the international downturns in the business cycle meant small to moderate increases in unemployment during the 1970s and 1980s. The increases were however from a low level and compensated by drops in the unemployment level in conjunction with the upturns in the business cycle. Unemployment was

thus on average kept at a very low level, and it appeared as if Sweden managed to avoid the hysteresis problem suffered by many other European countries.

This picture changed radically in conjunction with the early 1990s economic crisis. During the course of little over a year of economic crisis (from the last part of 1991) unemployment jumped from 2 per cent to over 8 per cent, and remained at this high level until the beginning of 1998. The success story of the Swedish economy with low rates of unemployment appeared by the mid 1990s to have ceased and Sweden followed instead the more normal European pattern of persistently high unemployment. The unemployment situation – as that of employment – improved, however, in conjunction with the good economic upswing at the end of the 1990s. From 1998 to the first quarter 2001 (the final time series point in

figure 2 and also the point in time when data was collected for HWF) the unemployment rate dropped to roughly 4 per cent where it has remained the same since.

An apparent effect of the unemployment shock was to universalise the risk of being unemployed. Unemployment, that previously largely was connected with being female, being young,

having low education, having a foreign citizenship, living in rural areas, but now to a greater extent it also struck men, the middle aged, people with middle education, those cohabiting and Swedish citizens (for a detailed breakdown of unemployment rates for different social categories 1975-1995, table 1).

Table 1. The unemployment rate for different categories of the Swedish population during different time-periods 1975 – 1995

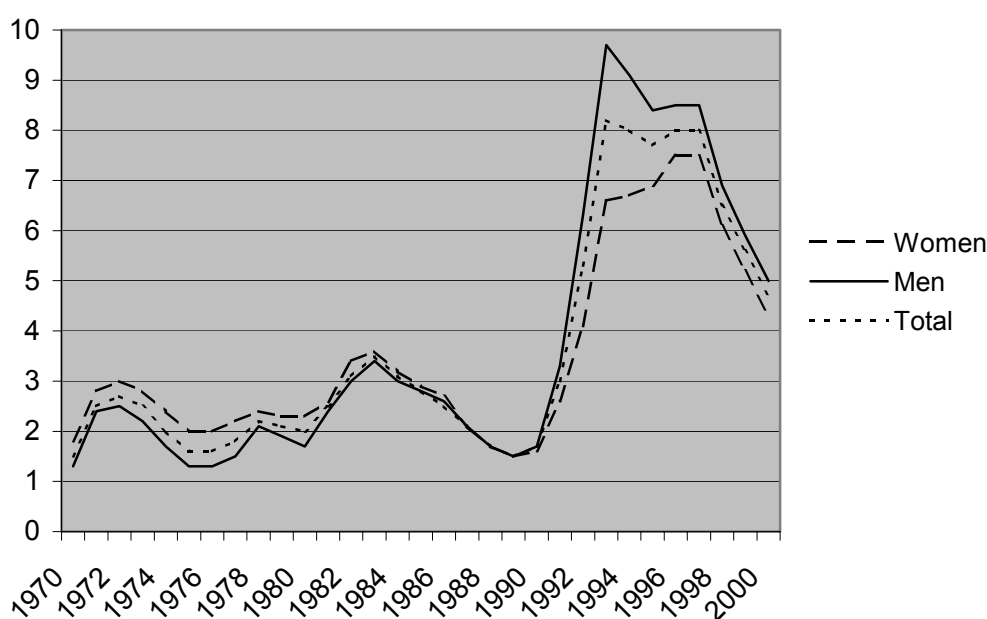
	1975-1980 Business boom	1981-1985 Business recession	1986-1991 Business boom	1992-1995 Business recession
Total unemployment rate:	3.0	4.8	3.7	11.2
Sex				
Men	2.4	4.3	3.3	11.6
Women	3.7	5.4	4.1	10.9
Family situation				
Single	5.6	7.6	6.6	16.8
Single, children	5.2	6.7	5.4	17.9
Cohabiting	2.6	4.4	2.8	8.7
Cohabiting, children	2.2	3.2	2.3	8.9
Age				
-25	7.5	10.4	8.7	22.9
26-35	3.0	4.8	4.0	13.5
36-45	1.7	2.9	2.3	9.1
46-55	1.3	2.5	1.7	6.4
56-	2.2	4.4	2.3	7.2
Education				
Comprehensive school	3.3	5.2	3.9	10.3
Upper secondary school, 2 years	3.2	6.0	4.2	13.9
Upper secondary school, 3 years	2.7	3.6	3.5	13.8
University -2 years	2.8	3.9	3.6	8.2
University 2 years-	1.5	1.6	1.9	6.1
Citizenship				
Non-Swedish	5.1	8.5	9.0	22.1
Swedish	2.9	4.6	3.4	10.7
Region				
North Sweden, rural area	5.4	8.4	5.6	13.6
North Sweden, pop	3.0	5.4	3.9	11.6
South/middle Sweden	3.0	5.5	3.5	12.3
Gothenburg/Malmö	2.9	4.4	4.0	11.7
Stockholm	2.4	2.4	2.7	8.7

Source: Åberg et al 1997

Such a normalisation is to be expected when the unemployment group is greatly expanded during a recession, and should decrease with decreasing unemployment, as was the case after 1997. However some social groups stand out as clearly more vulnerable and with higher risks of unemployment today than in previous periods of economic recession. One such group is single parents – mostly lone mothers – who have significantly higher rates of unemployment compared with other types of family during the recession of the 1990s than in the early 1980s. A similar change in risk of unemployment we find for individuals with upper secondary education but no vocational training. Previously their rate of unem-

ployment was below all other educational groups except individuals with longer university educations while today their rate of unemployment is among the highest. Also non-Swedish citizens and young people have extremely high rates of unemployment during the economic recession of the 1990s, but these groups have over-average rates of unemployment also in periods of economic prosperity. There seems to be an additional shift between groups in terms of unemployment, which seems to have structural roots and this is the growing risk of unemployment among men compared with women. In figure 3 the unemployment rates for men and women are presented separately.

Figure 3. Unemployment rate in Sweden split by gender



Source: OECD statistical compendium 2001/2

As can be seen in the figure the unemployment rates for women have tended historically to be higher than those for men. In conjunction with the economic crisis this relationship changed, and male unemployment has since then consistently remained somewhat higher than female unem-

ployment. The explanation for the initial change is quite simple as the wave of cutbacks hit first and hardest workplaces in the private sector, rather than the female dominated workplaces in the public sector. That the difference remains is interesting though. Possible explanations for this could

for instance be that the initial increase in the stock of male unemployed has not yet passed out of the unemployment group, and/or that the labour market changes that have taken place during the last ten years have been somewhat more favourable to traditional female employment.

Another possible explanation could have been that women were not as entrenched in the labour market as men and therefore withdrew from the labour market when faced with unemployment and an unfavourable labour market. The lower female unemployment would then be the result of a lower labour market participation rate among

women rather than changes in unemployment risk. Table 2 shows however that this is not the case. The proportion women in the Swedish labour force peaked at 48 per cent by the end of the 1980s, and have remained stable at this level to the present (Boje 2002). Comparing Sweden with the other EU countries included in the HWF project we find that the rates of labour market activity are significantly higher among Swedish women than in the rest of Europe while the male rates are similar or slightly lower than both United Kingdom and the Netherlands – see table 2.

Table 2. Activity rates and Full-time Employment Rate (FTE) percentage of the working age population 15 – 64 years 2000

Country	Activity rates		
	Men	Women	Total
the Netherlands	84	66	75
Sweden	80	75	78
United Kingdom	83	68	75
EU-15	78	60	69
Full-time equivalent employment rate (FTE)			
Country	Men	Women	Total
the Netherlands	75	40	57
Sweden	70	60	65
United Kingdom	74	50	62
EU-15	71	45	58

Source: Employment in Europe 2001

Men are characterised by a continuous pattern of employment in all European labour markets, meaning that they enter the labour market after finishing their education and stay there until they retire only interrupted by periods of unemployment or retraining. We also find this employment pattern for women in Sweden and in the other Scandinavian countries where the overall female rates of employment is close to the male rates while the gender gap is more pronounced in the rest of Europe. Swedish women's rate of employment increases until they reach their late 30s and peaks for women in their early 40s. Then it starts declining until the age of pension. For Swedish

women in their 20s the rate of employment has declined because they increasingly attend higher education and the years in education are extended. The age-differentiated activity rates provide interesting information regarding the Swedish labour market compared with other countries. Employment rates by age in Sweden are somewhat differently structured than in most other countries in Europe. Employment rates are comparatively low in the youngest age group (15-24 year olds), while for the oldest age group (50-64 year olds) they are the highest among the EU countries for both men and women.

Table 3. Employment rates by sex and age in the EU Member States 1999

	15-24		25-49		50-64			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men		
Denmark	62.8	69.5	Denmark	80.5	89.9	Sweden	70.6	74.6
Netherlands	62.5	62.9	Sweden	79.5	83.2	Denmark	59.5	71.1
UK	52.9	57.5	Finland	77.1	84.5	Finland	55.9	56.7
Austria	50.7	59.2	Austria	74.6	90.5	UK	51.7	68.5
Germany	43.9	48.6	Portugal	74.5	90.5	Portugal	47.8	70.6
Ireland	43.0	49.8	UK	73.1	87.6	France	41.5	52.7
Finland	42.8	47.2	Netherlands	72.4	92.3	Germany	38.9	57.5
Portugal	38.5	47.9	Germany	70.8	87.1	EU	37.6	59.9
EU	35.2	42.2	Belgium	70.1	88.0	Netherlands	34.8	65.1
Sweden	35.0	35.8	France	69.1	86.7	Austria	32.9	56.7
Luxemburg	29.5	33.7	EU	65.9	87.0	Ireland	32.8	69.5
Belgium	23.4	27.5	Ireland	62.9	87.5	Greece	28.4	64.9
France	23.3	29.9	Luxemburg	62.6	93.8	Luxemburg	26.6	53.7
Spain	23.1	35.2	Greece	54.8	89.6	Belgium	26.2	51.1
Greece	22.1	31.8	Italy	51.7	85.3	Spain	24.3	63.4
Italy	20.8	30.3	Spain	50.0	84.7	Italy	22.5	54.1

Source: New Cronos Labour Force Survey

That the Swedish labour market seems to be characterised by low employment rates for youths could be explained by high rates of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment has however not been particularly high in Sweden (during the first quarter of 2001 it ran at a little over 10 per cent), and it is instead the large proportion standing outside the labour market. The proportion of 16-24 year olds outside of the labour market has been on the rise for a long time, but rose dramatically in conjunction with the harsh labour market of the 1990s and has not dropped substantially with the improving labour market prospects (for figure on proportion of 16-24 year olds outside the labour market, see appendix figure 5).

Comparing countries with continuous pattern of labour market activity for women we find that Swedish women aged 30 – 44 are employed

on part-time more frequently than Danish or French women in the same age group (Almqvist and Boje 2000). The labour market behaviour for Swedish women in full-time work looks more like a returner pattern, with a decline in full-time employment during the child caring period while most Danish women remain in full-time employment even during periods with comprehensive childcare obligations. The Swedish legislation regulating the relationship between work and care facilitates that women take leave for longer periods while the child is below one year or combines care and work, both part-time. That it is easier for Swedish women to combine work and household / caring responsibilities than for women in most other countries also means that Swedish mothers generally have a higher rate of employment – see table 4.

Table 4. Rates of Employment among men and women aged 20 – 44 without and with children aged 0 – 5 years in the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom in 1998

	No children		Child aged 0 – 5	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Netherlands	88	86	95	60
Sweden	76	77	88	74
United Kingdom	85	87	90	53
EU-11	84	79	91	52

Source: EC Employment Policies in the EU and in the Member States; Joint Report 1999.

Having responsibility for small children in Sweden does not mean that they were forced to give up employment and consequently for the mothers and non-mothers the rates of employment are nearly the same while there are significant differences in most other countries. In both the Netherlands and United Kingdom the female rates of employment decline with 26 and 34 percentage points respectively when they become mothers while the fall is only 3 percentage points in Sweden. Other studies show that becoming a mother even increases the rates of employment in the Scandinavian countries while it in most other European countries – especially in the Southern

Europe – means that women are forced to leave active labour market participation because of difficulties in reconciling work and caring for small children and as a consequence of the prevailing division of labour in families (Rubery et al. 1999)

As noticed previously in the paper (figure 1. 2 and 4) the Swedish labour market has experienced considerable changes during the late 1990s. The rates of unemployment have fallen sharply and employment-rates have increased but none of these rates have reached the same levels as prior to the economic recession of the early 1990s. Consequently there still exists in the Swedish labour market a huge labour force reserve.

Table 5. The Swedish labour force reserve 1990 and 2000

Year	Registered unemployed		Part-time Employment		Discouraged workers		Total Reserve
	Persons	Hours	Persons	Hours	Persons	Hours	Hours
1990	75	2.8	192	2.0	37	0.8	5.6
2000	203	7.8	264	3.3	130	3.7	14.8

Notes: 1. Persons in thousands and hours in millions
2. Discouraged workers are defined as persons who are without work, prepared to take up gainful employment but not actively searching for job
3. Part-time employment is defined as persons who are involuntary in a part-time job

Source: European Employment Observatory; Review Spring 2001

According to table 5 the Swedish labour force reserve is about 9 million hours greater in 2000 than in 1990. It is primarily the number of registered unemployed persons and discouraged workers who have increased. Consequently there seems to be no reason to suggest that there is a shortage of

labour in Sweden as has been argued by the employers organisation. However in some higher-educated occupation in the IT sector there may be a shortage of labour but generally the Swedish labour force tends to be over-educated – for more details, see next section.

1.2. Education and employment in Sweden

The educational level has increased substantially both for men and women during the last 15 years. The proportion with only primary education dropped over this time period from being almost

half the population to less than thirty percent (a decline for men from 45 per cent to 29 per cent and for women from 48 per cent to 27 per cent) see table 6.

Table 6. The Proportion of Men and Women in Sweden with different levels of education in per cent

	Men				Women			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary, short	Tertiary, long	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary, short	Tertiary, long
1985	45	40	7	8	48	38	8	7
1990	38	44	9	9	39	43	10	8
1995	34	45	11	9	33	45	13	9
2000	29	47	12	12	27	46	14	14

Source: Statistics Sweden, Sveriges statistiska databaser.

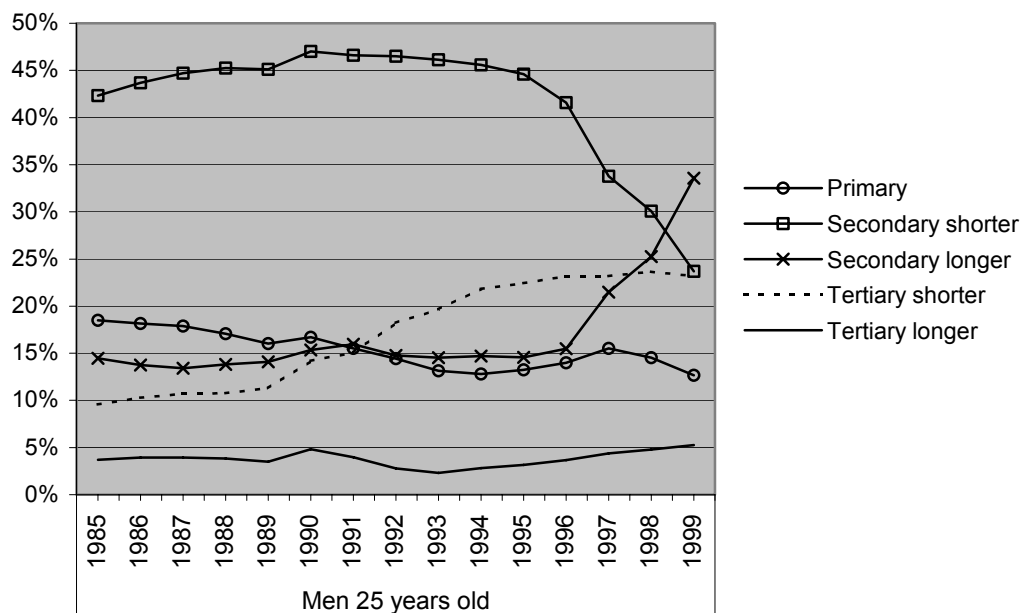
At the same time the proportion with some tertiary education rose substantially (for men from 15 per cent to 24 per cent and for women from 15 per cent to 28 per cent). Furthermore it is worth noting that the increasing level of education in the whole population also includes a remarkable gender dimension. Firstly the general trend in education has been very similar for men and women with a strong increase in both secondary and tertiary education. Secondly, during the 1990s the female educational level, which have traditionally has been lower than for men in Sweden, has passed the male educational level in the total population.

Data on the educational level of the entire population, of course muddles the actual volume and level reached through the increase in education. To get a more accurate picture of the development in the educational structure it is necessary to look at those who just have left the educational system. Figures 4 and 5 present the educational level of Swedish men and women aged 25, respectively, by this age the main body of young people should ideally have left the educational system.¹

The figures confirm the picture of an increased educational level among youths that could be expected from table 6. Among the newly

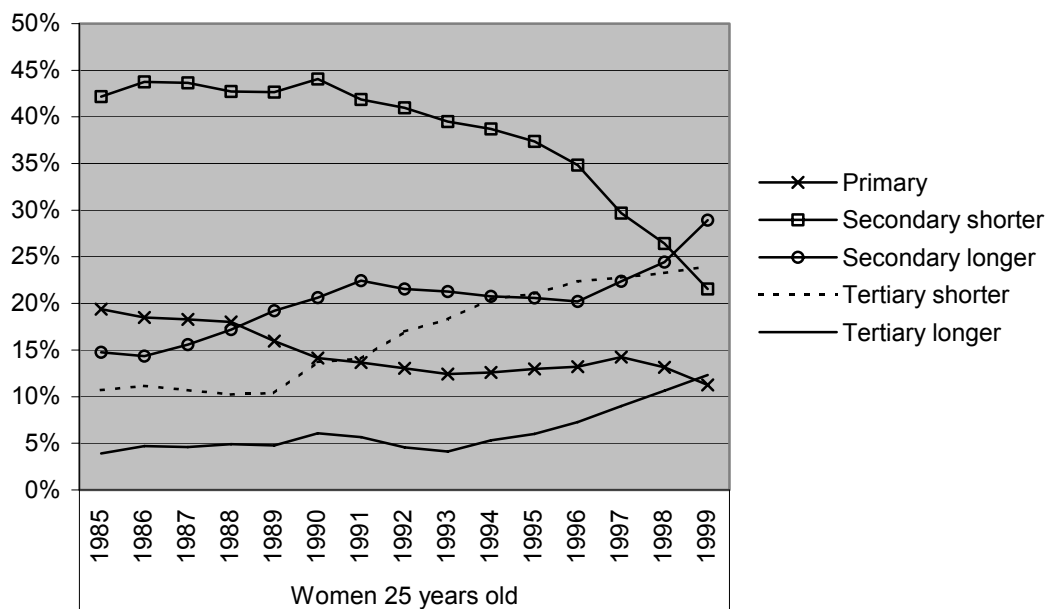
educated the proportion with only primary education has dropped for women to 11.2 per cent, and for men to 12.7 per cent, by 1999. Dividing the secondary level of education into the shorter secondary education and the longer university preparatory secondary education, we notice that also the proportion with shorter secondary education drop radically over the course of the 1990s. The proportion of 25 year olds with only short secondary education dropped for women from 44 per cent 1990 to 21 per cent 1999, and for men from 47 per cent 1990 to 24 per cent 1999. Instead there has been an increase in the proportions with university preparatory secondary education. This change from shorter to longer secondary education is closely connected with a substantial increase in the proportion attending tertiary education, for women from 19 per cent 1990 to 36 per cent in 1999 and for men from 19 per cent in 1990 to 29 per cent in 1999. The increase in tertiary education is stronger for women and this is especially marked when looking at the longer tertiary education. In 1990 the proportion of men and women in longer tertiary education courses were nearly the same while in 1999 the proportion of women aged 25 with longer tertiary education was more than double the proportion of men.

Figure 4. Education levels among Swedish 25 year old men. 1985 – 1999



Source: Statistics Sweden, Sveriges statistiska databaser

Figure 5. Education levels among Swedish 25 year old men. 1985 – 1999



Source: Statistics Sweden, Sveriges statistiska databaser

Table 7. Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Levels in 2000

Men						
Level of education	Employment Rates			Unemployment Rates		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Netherlands	90.1	86.3	74.6	1.4	1.6	3.4
Sweden	82.8	79.5	58.7	3.8	5.9	8.5
UK	89.7	81.6	57.0	2.7	6.1	13.7
EU-15	86.3	76.8	63.4	3.9	6.8	10.4

Women						
Level of education	Employment Rates			Unemployment Rates		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Netherlands	81.4	72.1	47.0	2.1	2.6	5.7
Sweden	82.7	75.3	52.0	2.3	5.5	8.4
UK	84.9	72.5	47.7	2.2	5.3	7.7
EU-15	77.9	62.6	37.9	6.0	9.4	14.6

Source: EC Employment in Europe 2001

The strong increase in Swedish youths attending longer tertiary education is the main explanation for the low and declining rates of employment among young Swedes aged 15 – 24. Generally the increase in level of education among the Swedes is however the most important variable explaining a high level of labour market involvement.

According to table 7 there is a strong connection between education and employment. The rates of employment are increasing strongly with the level of education and for the rates of unemployment it is the other way around in all three countries. Considering the high proportion of Swedish women who have completed tertiary education it also means a higher overall labour market involvement of women in Sweden than in most other EU-countries including the Netherlands and United Kingdom.

The increasing education level in the Swedish population has initiated a debate about the development of the labour market structure – patterns of demand and supply of labour – over time. What is perhaps of most interest from the perspective of the increased educational level of the labour force, is of course the demand for education in the labour market. Here the sociologist

Rune Åberg has made some interesting analysis of the changes in educational demand from 1975 to 1998. He finds that there is a strong linear trend towards increasing demand for people who have completed higher education over this time period. Using a definition of low qualification job as jobs requiring less than two years education after primary education he finds that the proportion of such jobs on the labour market has dropped from roughly 40 per cent of employment in 1975 to 30 per cent in 1998. On the other hand, the demand for jobs with higher educational levels, defined by completed longer secondary education or tertiary education, has increased as a proportion of the labour force from 20 per cent in 1975 to 30 per cent in 1998. Jobs with educational qualifications in between these two groups of jobs, and jobs where the demand for qualifications are difficult to classify (e. g. self-employed) remain stable at 25 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, over the analysed time period. An interesting point made by Åberg is that even though there is a strong trend towards increasing demands for higher educational level in the firms, the trend towards higher educational attainment in the population actually seems to be even stronger. This opens the

possibility for growing over-qualification in the population. Looking at the educational level of people in jobs with a low educational level he also finds that the proportion of people with longer

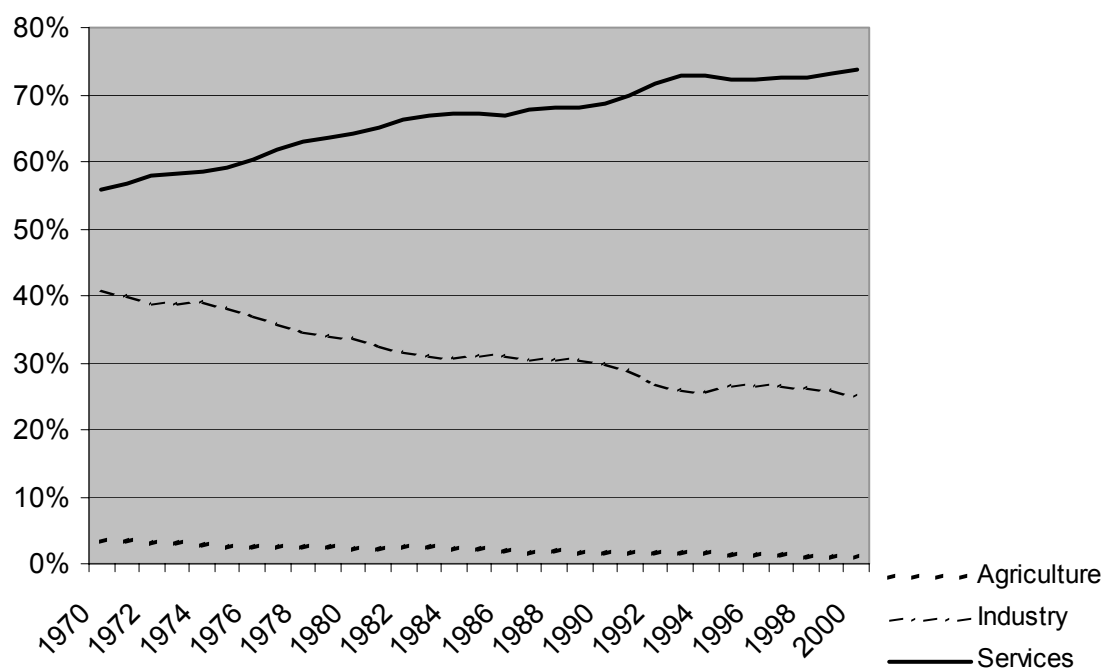
secondary education or more in low qualified jobs rise from less than 10 per cent in 1975 to almost 30 per cent in 1998 (Åberg 1999).

1.3. Changes in the industrial composition of the Swedish labour force

In all industrialised countries, economic activities have shifted from production of goods to the delivery of services. A decline in agricultural production and employment has been followed by a fall in manufacturing jobs. The present labour market is a service labour market, more than two-thirds of the labour force is employed in private or public service industries. The more advanced

and post-industrial an economy becomes, the more its production and employment is concentrated in services, and the less its production and employment is concentrated in agriculture and manufacturing (see Boje 2002). As in most other European countries, the development towards an increasing importance for services in the labour market can also be registered in Sweden.

Figure 6. Proportion of the Swedish labour force employed in Agriculture, Industry and Services 1970 – 2000



Source: OECD statistical compendium 2001/2

Figure 6 shows the proportion employed in agriculture, industry and services from 1970. In 1970 the Swedish economy was divided with slightly more than half working in the service industries, while the proportion working in manufacturing

industries was 41 per cent and the proportion working within agriculture was a tiny 3 per cent. By the beginning of 2001 the labour force of service industries in the Swedish labour market had increased to almost 74 per cent of the labour mar-

ket while roughly 25 per cent worked in industry and only 1 per cent was in agriculture. We find a similar pattern in all EU-countries. Differences in the industrial composition of the labour force we primarily find in the service industries – in the division between the different types of services – distributive, personal, producer and social services and in the division between private and public service employment. Looking at service employment divided by sub-sectors we find that Sweden has a high concentration of service employees in social services while Swedes are under-represented in personal services compared with other industrial countries – see table 8.

This over-representation of social services is strongly related to the size of the public sector, which is significantly larger in Sweden than in the other EU-countries outside Scandinavia. This has not always been the case. In the 1960s and in the early 1970s the Swedish social services employed less than for the Netherlands and United Kingdom but in the late 1970s and in most of the 1980s the Swedish public sector expanded rapidly and so did the employment in the social services. During the 1990s the social services / public sector have stagnated and instead the growth in service employment has taken place in private services and especially producer services such as consulting, accounting, maintenance etc. Today the public sector includes about 30 per cent of total employment. This is a slight decline from the heyday of the welfare state in the mid-1980s when the Swedish public sector employed 33 per cent of the total labour force (OECD 1999).

The proportion employed in personal services is low in most European countries but especially in Sweden where a large number of personal services has been taken over by the public sector and therefore are included in social services – caring for children and elderly people. Furthermore the high minimum wages and the equalized income structure in Sweden have also prevented growth of a private industry offering personal services to the population. Instead a comprehensive culture of do-it-yourself activities has

emerged (see Boje 2002). When taken into account this trend towards increasing importance of services on the Swedish labour market, together with the labour force trend for women increasing their educational level more than men, we might actually find a possible explanation to the small but markedly gendered shift in unemployment discussed above. The declining industry and agriculture industries typically has been dominated by male employees while higher education and employment in the service industries which are dominated by women are connected with lower risks of unemployment.

Table 8. Service employment share by sub-sectors in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom 1960, 1973, 1984 and 1997

	All services			
	1960	1973	1984	1997
the Netherlands	47.8	57.7	67.3	73.1
Sweden	47.6	57.7	66.4	70.9
United Kingdom	48.8	55.3	64.9	70.9
	Distributive services			
	1960	1973	1984	1997
the Netherlands	20.0	21.0	22.0	23.0
Sweden	19.0	20.0	19.0	19.0
United Kingdom	21.0	20.0	21.0	22.0
	Personal services			
	1960	1973	1984	1997
the Netherlands	8.5	7.6	7.8	6.8
Sweden	8.4	6.6	5.9	5.7
United Kingdom	8.0	7.9	9.7	9.2
	Producer services			
	1960	1973	1984	1997
the Netherlands	4.2	6.8	9.9	14.0
Sweden	3.5	5.1	6.4	12.0
United Kingdom	4.4	6.5	9.2	14.0
	Social services			
	1960	1973	1984	1997
the Netherlands	15.0	23.0	28.0	30.0
Sweden	16.0	16.0	35.0	34.0
United Kingdom	16.0	21.0	25.0	25.0

Source: Elfring (1988) for 1960, 1973 and 1984, and European labour force survey 1997 for 1997 based on Anxo and Storrie 2001

The large proportion of Swedish women entering the labour market during the 1970s and the 1980s took up gainful employment in the public service sector and consequently the labour market remained highly segregated despite strong efforts to create equal opportunities for women and men in labour market conditions. This situation characterise all the Scandinavian countries where we find high employment rates for women combined with relatively highly segregated occupational structure while in the Netherlands and United Kingdom we find both lower level of female employment and a less segregated occupational and sectoral structure. During the late 1990s only minor changes have taken place in the gender segregation of the Swedish labour market. The horizontal segregation (by occupation) has dropped slowly while the vertical segregation (by sector) has remained stable and is still markedly above the EU-

average. The decline in horizontal segregation can mainly be explained by the large number of women who have got a higher education and thereby have entered most occupational groups while women's employment is still highly concentrated to the public sector and social services.

Table 9. Index of gender segregation in occupations and sectors in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom 2000.

	Occupations (ISCO-88)		Sectors (Nace Rev 1)	
	1997	2000	1997	2000
Netherlands	25.6	24.7	19.1	18.8
Sweden	29.4	29.0	21.8	21.8
United Kingdom	27.2	26.7	19.0	18.8
EU-15	25.1	25.2	17.8	17.8

Source: EC (2001) Impact evaluation on the EES

1.4. Atypical work on the Swedish labour market

The transformation of the industrial structure as well as the work organisation has changed the employment conditions for large groups of the labour force. This development has caused a strong pressure for more flexible use of labour and a more flexible organisation of firms. The traditional forms of work based on full-time employment and long tenure has being slowly eroded and instead different types of non-standard or atypical employment contracts have been introduced. The definition of atypical employment contracts is closely related to flexible employment and the principle forms of flexible work usually include temporary work, contract work, part-time employment, certain categories of self-employed persons, sub-contracted work and work at home. In table 10 we have shown the proportion of the labour force employed in the three most frequently mentioned types of atypical work.

One form of atypical work includes those who work on the labour market but are not employed, such as the self-employed and the unpaid family workers in the non-agricultural labour

force. Self-employment as a whole has dropped substantially, from almost 18 per cent in the beginning of the 1960s to about 10 per cent by the end of the 1990s. Self-employment traditionally has been connected with the agricultural sector, a sector that almost completely lost its importance on the Swedish labour market. It was in the traditional types of self-employment that the drop took place in the early stages of the post-industrial development. During the 1990s it has been possible to register what can be described as a slight increase in the proportion of self-employed. This recent growth in self-employment has primarily taken place in the service industries and especially in the producer services where a large number of IT-firms and firms providing services for business have been established. In Sweden there has thus a continuous rise in non-agricultural self-employment from 5 per cent in the early 1970s to a stabilisation around 10 per cent in the mid 1990s. Unpaid family workers which are another category of workers connected to the pre-industrial economy made up only 2.4 per cent of the Swedish

working age population in 1963, a proportion that dropped radically during the following decades and this group of workers have since the early 1980s made up a stable but miniscule 0.2 per cent of the working age population in Sweden.

Table 10. Proportion of self-employed, part-time and temporary employment in percentages of the total labour force 1999.

	Self-employed – non- agriculture	Part-time employment	Temporary employment
the Netherlands	11	39	13
Sweden	11	24	13
United Kingdom	12	25	7
EU-15	15	17	13

Source: Employment in Europe, 2000

Another important form of atypical employment is employment on temporary contracts. This group has been relatively stable in Sweden covering about 12 – 14 per cent of the labour force. Temporary employment is in Sweden slightly more common among women than men, and

there seems to be a rise in Swedish temporary employment during the 1990s (OECD 1996 and Boje & Grönlund 2002).

According to table 11 temporary employment is primarily widespread among young workers who have just started their labour market careers. Furthermore, Sweden has a somewhat higher prevalence of temporary employment than the market-regulated liberal economies as Ireland and United Kingdom but also compared to Denmark. Sweden is characterised by comprehensive regulation of employment relations which typically encourage employers to hire contingent workers on fixed contract to avoid long notice in case of labour force redundancy while this is not the case in countries with non-regulated employment relations like in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

A third form of atypical employment represents those working on reduced working hours. The working time pattern has been, and still is, highly gendered in the Swedish labour market. Only a small proportion of men work anything other than full time whereas the proportion women working part time is large.

Table 11. Temporary employees by sex and age in the EU Member States 1999

age: 15 to 24	Women	Men	age: 25 to 49	Women	Men
Spain	70	70	Spain	31	28
Finland	56	48	Finland	18	11
France	51	57	Portugal	17	14
Germany	49	55	Sweden	16	10
Sweden	47	35	Greece	13	10
Belgium	43	33	France	12	10
Portugal	42	37	EU	11	9
EU	37	39	Belgium	11	6
Netherlands	33	34	Netherlands	11	5
Italy	29	25	Italy	11	7
Greece	28	30	Denmark	9	5
Austria	27	35	Germany	9	8
Denmark	26	33	UK	7	5
UK	12	12	Austria	4	3
Ireland	0	0	Luxembourg	4	0
Luxembourg	0	25	Ireland	0	0

Source: New Cronos Labour Force Survey

Less than 10 per cent of the male labour force works part-time while it is about 40 per cent of the employed Swedish women. This is more than the average for the EU-countries but less than in the Netherlands and United Kingdom both countries with some of the highest rates of part-time for women in Europe (OECD 2001). More detailed data on part time shows that the proportion of women in part time work is decreasing over time though, from almost 50 per cent in 1987 to 41 per cent the first quarter of 2001. The pattern of

women's part-time employment differs strongly between the three EU-countries. Swedish women in part-time tend to work still longer hours and today nearly one-third of these women work more than 30 hours per week and consequently close to the official standard for full-time employment (40 hours per week). Therefore defining part-time employment as 30 hours per week or less reduces the number of Swedish women in part-time work from 40 per cent to about 25 per cent.

Table 12. Employment rates for women and men of working age in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom, by full-time and part-time status, 1996

In total labour force	Men			Women		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
the Netherlands	63	12	76	17	37	55
Sweden	65	6	71	40	28	68
United Kingdom	70	5	75	35	28	62
EU-15	66	4	70	34	16	50

Source: OECD 2001

Both the Netherlands and United Kingdom have a much higher proportion of female part-time workers working less than 30 hours and a large proportion working even less than 20 hours. On the other hand nearly one-third of the Swedish women in part-time work consider their present type of employment as involuntary. They are

looking for full-time employment even though a large proportion is working more than 30 hours already. Looking at rates of employment by age groups divided into full-time and part-time we also find marked differences between the European countries.

Table 13. Pattern of part-time employment among women in the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom in 1997 – part-time defined as less than 30 hours

	Total share of women in part-time employment	Share of female part-time employment <20 hours	Share of female part-timers in involuntary part-time employment
the Netherlands	54.8	31.4	4.6
Sweden	24.9	7.6	31.3
United Kingdom	40.9	23.9	9.5

Source: OECD (1999) Employment Outlook

According to table 14 part-time work is at the same level in all age groups among Swedish women, with a slight over-representation among middle-age women, while part-time employment

in most other European countries is primarily concentrated among middle-aged women with caring obligations. Even though Swedish women with children below 8 years of age have the right

to choose part-time employment, they are mainly aiming for full-time jobs -- and their part-time employment rate is declining. In the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, the large majority of mothers with small children also take up part-time jobs. However, they take up part-time jobs with short hours and do it voluntarily. They do not have the same possibilities for combining work and paid parental leave as their Swedish sisters, and they are forced to take up part-time jobs or short working hours or to leave the labour

market completely because of insufficient provision of child care for small children. For Swedish parents, conditions for taking up part-time employment while the children are small are radically different from conditions in other countries. According to Swedish labour market regulation, parents with children from 0 to 8 years of age have the right to take up part-time jobs. Furthermore, it is possible for Swedish parents to be on leave part-time and combine leave with part-time work.

Table 14. Difference between rates of overall employment and full-time equivalent employment for women in the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom in 1996 by age groups.

	the Netherlands	Sweden	United Kingdom	EU-15
15 – 19	23.3	11.1	17.4	4.7
20 – 24	19.6	11.2	8.4	5.5
25 – 29	15.6	9.1	10.3	6.7
30 – 39	24.3	12.6	18.2	10.3
40 – 49	24.4	12.2	18.7	10.1
50 – 54	19.9	10.2	18.5	9.2
55 – 59	13.4	13.8	15.9	7.5
60 – 64	5.2	12.8	10.4	3.5
Total	20.2	12.1	16.1	8.0

Note: The calculations are based on national definition of part-time and the figures come from national labour force surveys. High figures mean a large proportion of women on part-time in the age group

Source: EU 1999b: 19

In addition to these three forms of atypical employment a variety of other types of flexible work arrangements exist in the company organisations. In a recent study of 'Work-Family arrangements in organisations' Laura den Dulk compares flexible work arrangement in Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom.

Swedish employers provide flexible work arrangements more often than employers in Netherlands and the UK. This is especially the case when looking at variable working hours – flexi-time or a compressed working week – but also the possibilities for telework and work at home are signifi-

cantly more widespread in Sweden than in the other countries. This means that Swedish employees have greater possibilities for reconciling work and family responsibilities. They have more alternatives in organising their working week and in choosing between working at home or in the company organisation. All together it may be a reasonable conclusion that the Swedish labour market is more flexible and adaptable to the needs for families than most other labour markets despite the tight regulation of the employment relations – see next section.

Table 15. Flexible work arrangements in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom, 1999, percentage of employers

Type of work arrangement	Netherlands	Sweden	United Kingdom
Most or all employers provide:	N = 113	N = 100	N = 67
Part-time work	96	93	100
Flex-time	70	92	64
Compressed working week	30	47	40
Tele-work	20	39	25
Work a day from home	10	16	12

Source: Dulk 2000: 135

1.5. Birth rates and the household composition in Sweden

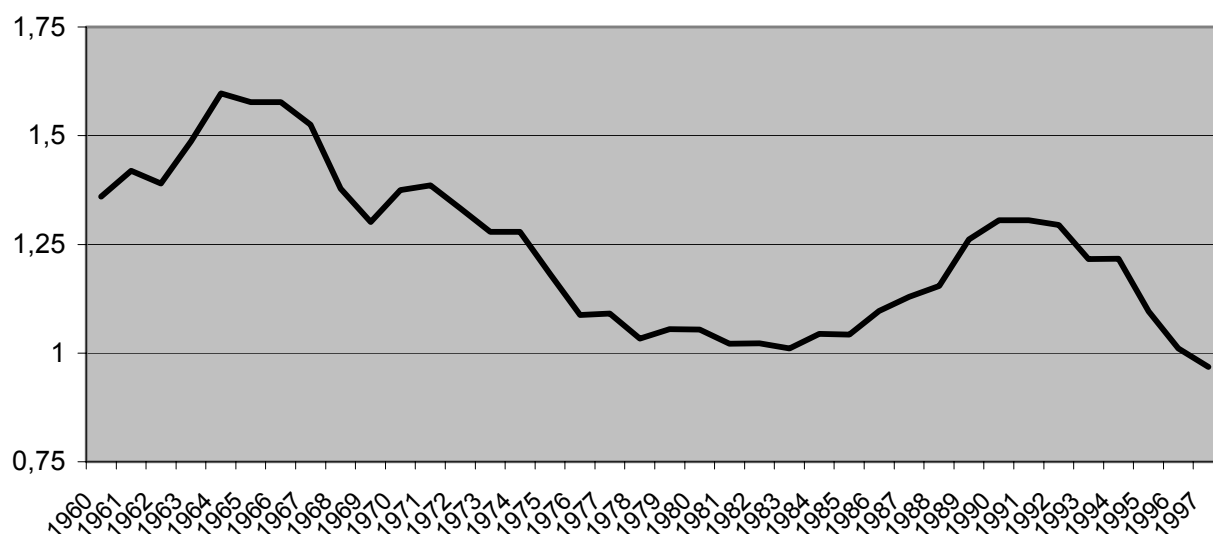
The increase in women's employment has been the most dominant and persistent trend in the Swedish labour market as well as in the rest of Europe. The most significant consequence of this development is a decline in the traditional household form based on a single male breadwinner and a rise in the dual breadwinner household. This move from single to dual participation is an implicit objective of the European employment strategy attempting to solve the future needs for labour when the large cohorts from the 1940s and 1950s retire from the labour force. In this section we shall give a short overview of the development in fertility and household composition given the changed pattern in women's work and care obligations.

Declining birth rates that are persistently below replacement fertility is a general trend in all European countries, mainly caused by women's increasing difficulties in reconciling work and care. Despite the convergence towards low fertility levels the EU-countries differ in the timing and intensity of the development. Sweden – and the other Nordic countries experienced a slight increase in fertility rates by the end of the 1980s and despite a renewed decline in the recent years the current Swedish fertility level is among the highest in Europe.

According to figure 7, the births / deaths ratios in Sweden have fluctuated significant over the last four decades with the highest replacement rates in the mid-1960s and in the early 1990s but only in the late 1990s the replacement fertility was below 1. The fluctuations in the birth / death ratios are almost solely related to changes in the birth ratio, as the death rates are fairly stable. The connection between falling fertility and women's increasing labour market involvement is however not straightforward. It is worth noticing is that the ratio actually increased substantially from near the break-even point in the mid 1980s. This positive trend was broken by the economic crisis in the early 1990s. From this point in time the births to deaths ratio drops dramatically to levels that are lower than the break-even point. The drop in the birth / death ratio under break-even in 1997 actually took place for the first time since 1809, the year of the last war on Swedish soil.

A special issue related to the fall in both fertility and mortality during the post-war period is ageing of the population. A still larger proportion of the population is aged 65 or more and consequently the economic burden of pensioners is growing. According to table 16 the old age dependency is high in Sweden compared with other EU-countries and slowly growing during the first decade of the 21st century.

Figure 7. Births to deaths ratio in Sweden (OECD statistical compendium 2001/2)



Source: HWF Country Context. Sweden

The old age dependency is high in Sweden mainly because Sweden has highest level of life expectancy among EU countries while both Netherlands and United Kingdom have life expectancy below the EU-average. The life expectancy of Swedes has increased over time for both men and women and in 2000 the life expectancy at birth of Swedish men and women was about 77 and 82 years, respectively. On the other hand the burden of the old age population in Sweden has not increased to the same level as in Continental Europe. In Sweden the old age benefits represent a lower share of the total social benefits than in nearly all Continental European countries and is 6 percentage points below the EU-average of 44.8 per cent in 1997 (EC 2000).

The growing involvement of women in economic and social life means that they have become independent, and for the large group of educated women also able to maintain a livelihood of their own without relying on a male breadwinner. This has clearly influenced the pattern of marriage and divorce. The number of marriages has declined in Sweden and the number of divorces has increased during the period 1940 to

2000. There have consequently also been changes in the household structure among Swedish households. First of all the proportion of single households has increased from 30 per cent of all households in 1975 to 40 per cent of all households in 1990.

Table 16. The population aged 65 as a per cent of the working age population (15-64) in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom

	Old age dependency (pop. aged 65 / 15-64)	
	1998	2010 (estimate)
Netherlands	20	23
Sweden	27	28
United Kingdom	24	25
EU-15	24	27

Source: EC (2000) The social situation in the European Union 2000

According to table 17, the proportion of single parents as well as those cohabiting without children has remained relatively stable whilst the proportion of couples cohabiting with children has decreased from 30 per cent in 1975 to 22 per

cent in 1990. The proportion of other types of households remains stable at a low proportion of households over the time period (6 per cent in 1975 and 5 per cent in 1990). Over time the composition of Swedish households has thus changed towards more single adult households while the cohabiting households living with children are in decline. These trends lead to households being fairly small in Sweden. Census data from 1990 shows, that the number of large household is few. This is even the case if we draw the boundary for a large household at more than 4 individuals,

typically implying a cohabiting couple with more than 2 children (then there are roughly 200.000 such households of over 3.5 million households in Sweden), although they make up a somewhat larger proportion of individuals. Furthermore there are a notably large number of single households in Sweden, although they do not represent such a large proportion of the population. Instead most individuals live in households with two to four members, households made up of cohabiters without children and cohabiters with one or two children.

Table 17. Proportion of households according to household type in Sweden

	Census 75	Census 80	Census 85	Census 90
Single men	13%	14%	16%	18%
Single women	17%	19%	20%	22%
Single parents, men	0%	1%	1%	1%
Single parents, women	3%	3%	3%	3%
Cohabiting, no child	31%	31%	31%	30%
Cohabiting with child	30%	27%	24%	22%
Other households, with children	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other households, no child	5%	4%	4%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Statistics Sweden

1.6. Migration

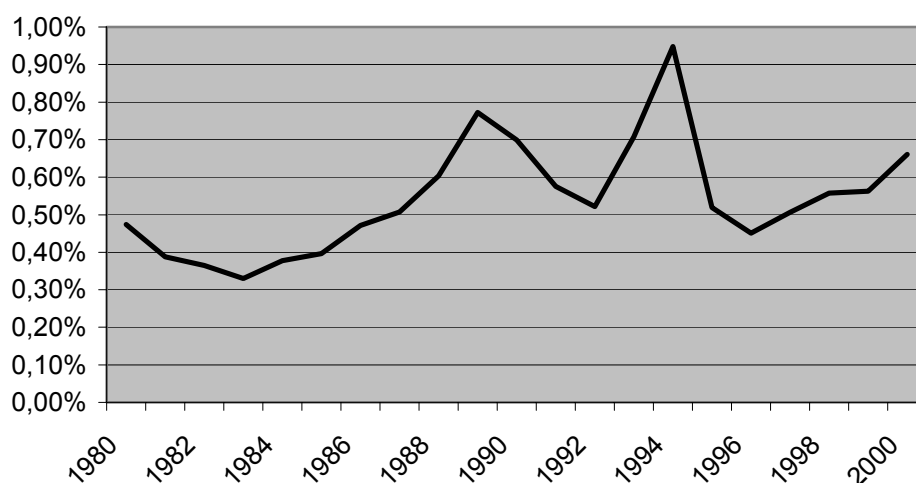
The Swedish population is still slowly growing, despite a fertility rate below replacement, because of a net migration. As can be seen from figure 8 Sweden has during the last decades been characterised by a significant influx of immigrants, although the influx has varied somewhat depending on world events. During the 1990s the yearly immigration to Sweden adds up to roughly 0.5 per cent of the population with a significant higher level in the early 1990s because of a large entry of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. After a drop in the number of immigrants in the mid-1990s its number has increased in the most recent years primarily because of heavy restrictions imposed on asylum seekers in the neighbouring countries.

Sweden shifted from being essentially an emigrant country to becoming an immigrant country during the Second World War. This means that the composition of the Swedish population has increasingly become heterogeneous. Previously the ethnic minorities in Sweden only included very small Sami – the original Northern Swedish population – Finnish and Roma minorities. Today the proportion first or second-generation immigrants covers nearly 20 per cent of the total population including a large variety of ethnic groups, although among the foreigners living in Sweden the Nordic citizens still represent the largest group. Table 18 shows the proportion of the “non-Swedish” population with its different

types of status in Swedish society. What can be seen in table 18 is that nearly 11 per cent of the population was born outside Sweden in 1999 and

an additional 9 per cent were born in Sweden but had one or both parents born outside Sweden.

Figure 8. Yearly immigration as proportion of the population in Sweden (Statistics Sweden, Sveriges statistiska databaser)



Source: HWF Country Context. Sweden

In many ways this inclusion of ethnically non-Swedish citizens in the country is a great asset for the Swedish society socially and culturally, but the process of integration has for many groups become extremely complicated. The Non-Swedish citizens have a significantly higher unemployment than the Swedish population (see table 1) and their situation has been deteriorated during the Swedish economic crisis of the 1990s. Fur-

thermore the risk of poverty is significantly higher among Non-European immigrants than among Swedish and immigrants from Scandinavia and Europe – 50 per cent higher – and the same concerns their possibilities of coming out of poverty, which is 0.74 compared with Swedes in the late 1990s (Socialstyrelsen (2001) Social report 2001: 125-26).

Table 18. Proportion and number of individuals in Sweden born outside Sweden or have at least one parent born outside Sweden

	Proportion	Thousands
Total born outside Sweden	10.9%	969
Having resided in Sweden less than 5 years	2.1%	189
Having resided in Sweden more than 4 years	8.8%	779
Total born in Sweden	89.1%	7886
With both parents not born in Sweden	3.0%	265
With one parent not born in Sweden	5.8%	514
With both parents born in Sweden	80.3%	7107

Source: Statistics Sweden (1999) Valfärdsbulletinen nr 4 1999, 18-20)

2. LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

The overall goal of Swedish employment policy is full employment for both men and women: a vigorous employment policy is the key to fighting poverty. Swedish labour market policy tries to combine an efficient and flexible labour market with full employment and high economic growth. Already in the late 1940s and early 1950s the principles for the Swedish model of active labour market policy was developed by the two trade union economists, Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner. In their guide for policy they advocated a restrictive financial policy, a wage policy oriented towards solidarity with low-paid workers and an active labour market policy. The active labour market policy meant that the principle of work had priority for social benefits. Programmes creating jobs, job training activities, job mobility and rehabilitation to work were given priority compared to social benefits or early retirement (Furåker and Lindqvist 2002).

An important condition for implementing the active labour market policy in Sweden was a well-organised labour market where the social partners took an active part in the decision-making. Sweden as well as the other Scandinavian countries is thus characterised by a high level of unionisation and collective bargaining, which are highly coordinated. The Scandinavian unions are integrated into the state apparatus through their close con-

tacts with the political representatives and therefore have a large influence on many aspects of the national policy both in relation to the labour market and social protection.

One crucial element of labour market policy is the employment protection legislation, which in overall terms is strict in Sweden especially for permanent jobs, while it has been relaxed for temporary jobs, substitutes etc. The Swedish employers are free to choose the persons they want to employ but the free choice to recruit is in many respects tightly regulated. It is not possible to terminate a permanent job without long notice and if an employment contract is terminated due to shortage of work the discharged worker has the right to be re-employed in the job that he had earlier if the employer needs to take on new employees within a period of 12 months. Furthermore the employers have to respect strict regulation of equal opportunities in relation to sex, ethnicity and age in recruitment of workers and in wage bargaining (Lindqvist 2002).

Another important element of the Swedish labour market policy is its strong emphasis on work and active measures in creating full employment. Sweden has traditionally spent more money on active measures – job training, mobility and employment services – than other OECD countries.

Table 19. Public Spending on active labour market policies (ALMP) in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom 1985 and 1995.

	Subsidies to regular employment in the private sector as a % of total spending on ALMPs		Direct job creation as a % of total spending on ALMPs		Total spending on ALMPs as a % of Gross Domestic Product	
	1985	1995	1985	1995	1985	1995
Netherlands	1.3	1.5	3.1	7.4	1.25	1.27
Sweden	4.7	7.6	15.2	19.0	2.10	2.25
United Kingdom	0.1	-	25.4	2.3	0.75	0.46

Source: OECD Labour market Policies: New Challenges 1997: 43

According to table 19 Sweden spend about twice as much on active labour market measures in percentage of GDP as Netherlands and three times more than the UK. It is especially on job creation that Sweden is the frontrunner in the 1990s. On the other hand the strong emphasis on active measures in the Swedish labour market policy has diminished during the 1990s due to the rapid in-

crease in unemployment, which forced the Swedish government to put more emphasis on cash benefits for the unemployed. However in the most recent years the active measures have again got high priority in the Swedish labour market policy with the aim of having 80 per cent of the population aged 20 – 64 in gainful employment by 2004.

2.1. Income, poverty and redistribution of income

The living standard of a typical household depends primarily on the labour market position of the household members and secondarily on how the welfare system has organised the system of social transfers. Two to three decades ago it was the labour market position of the male breadwinner who was decisive for the living standard of the household, today it is the combined labour market position of the adult household members. Dual earner households become still more common and the women's earnings are in this respect crucial for the standard of living. However women are still paid less than men in nearly all sectors. Based on data for 1995 from the structure of Earnings Survey we see that women in the EU on average are paid 73 per cent of men's gross hourly wages. The gender gap is highest in the UK and the Netherlands while it is significantly lower in Sweden.

Looking at the gender pay gap for part-time and full-time employed separately we find nearly

no difference between part-time and full-time in Sweden. Inclusion of part-time data reduces only the gender pay ratio by just 2 percentage points (from 87 per cent to 84.8 per cent), which indicate that Swedish women are well paid even in part-time jobs. In the UK women's pay compared to men drops significant when we include part-time data (from 73.7 per cent to 66.4 per cent) and the explanation is a high wage differential between full-time and part-time employees combined with a high proportion of women in part-time employment in the UK (Rubery 2001: 12). In the Netherlands the difference between the gender pay ratio for full-time and part-time jobs is even higher than in the UK while inclusion of part-time employees does not change the gender pay ratio much (from 70.6 per cent to 68.9 per cent). The number of Dutch women working full-time is small and does not count much in relation to part-time in the average gender pay ratio.

Table 20. Gender pay ratio by working time in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom 1995

	Gender pay ratio, all employees	Gender pay ratio, part-time employees	Gender pay ratio, full-time employees
The Netherlands	68.9	87.2	70.6
Sweden	84.8	88.9	87.0
United Kingdom	66.4	78.8	73.7
EU-14 (– Ireland)	72.7	80.6	75.0

Note: The gender pay ratio is the average pay of all female employees (all employees, part-time employees and full-time employees divided by the average pay of all male employees. Pay data refer to gross hourly earnings, overtime included

Source: Rubery et al 2001

Turning to the relationship between labour market performance and poverty among households we find that dual incomes in the household seems to be the best guarantee against poverty in most countries. According to table 21 the rate of poverty is high both among single adults not in work and in households with no earner. For both cate-

gories the risk of landing in poverty declines markedly when they receive an income from work and in dual households the risk of poverty completely disappears in both Sweden and the Netherlands when they receive a second household income.

Table 21. Poverty rates for the working age households by type of household, work status and the impact of social transfers and taxes on poverty rates in the Netherlands (1992), Sweden (1992) and United Kingdom (1991)

	Single adult		Two adult household			All working age households		
	In work	Not in work	Two earners	One earner	No earner	Pre-transfer Pre-tax	Post-transfer, pre-tax	Post-transfer, post-tax
Netherlands	12.1	27.8	0.7	3.5	17.1	21.1	5.3	8.3
Sweden	13.5	32.4	0.4	3.0	13.6	26.0	7.8	9.5
UK	7.0	57.7	1.0	12.7	52.3	26.0	16.3	17.5

Source: Marx and Verbist 1997: 9, 12 and 22

In the UK, the lack of a second household income increases the risk of poverty more than in the other two countries because the incidences of low paid work is substantially higher in the market-driven British labour market than in the high centralised Dutch and Swedish labour markets. In both Sweden and the Netherlands the social security system plays an important role in diminishing the risk of landing in poverty for households. Looking at the rates of poverty among all working age households we find that in Sweden the rates are reduced from 26 per cent to 9.5 per cent when comparing rates of poverty for households pre-transfers and post-transfers. In the UK the pre-transfer poverty is on the same level as in Sweden but the effects of transfer and redistribution through the tax system is more modest and 17.5 per cent of the households are still in poverty in the post-transfer situation. Looking at the situation for only households with low-paid heads and dependent children the difference between the Swedish and British social security system is even more remarkable. Whereas the Swedish system reduces the rate of poverty from 34.7 per cent pre-

transfer to 5.7 per cent in the post-transfer situation we find only a slight reduction among British low-paid households with dependent children (Marx and Verbist 1997: 80).

Income inequality can be expressed in a single measure by the GINI-coefficient. This measure shows a similar pattern between the three countries in the distribution of relative income, poverty rate and inequality, which should come as no surprise since the poverty measure is in itself an inequality measure. What can be read from this measure of inequality is that Sweden and the Netherlands, with less than 10 percent of all households in poverty, display relatively low rates. United Kingdom as a contrast displays a high rate of poverty, with nearly one quarter of all households being poor. The GINI-coefficient indicates the sum of incomes to be transferred from the richer to the poorer part of the population in order to achieve a totally equal distribution of income. Hence the smaller the values, the more egalitarian is income distribution in society. When we view the GINI-coefficients it is clear that Sweden is more egalitarian than the United Kingdom.

The high level of income equality in Sweden measured by the gender pay ratio as well as by the GINI-index has been accomplished through a variety of measures among which the most important are: 1) the solidaristic wage policy implemented by the unions, 2) a policy of equal payment for men and women doing the same type of work, 3) a guaranteed basic minimum pay in most

industries, 4) a redistribution of market-based incomes through the progressive income taxation system and finally 5) high rates of replacement for benefits during periods of unemployment, sickness and leave. The last type of egalitarian measure is especially important for low-paid employees and prevents employers from offering very low salaries.

Table 22. Income inequality (Gini-index) in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom mid-1990s

	Inequality by disp. income (Gini-index)	Inequality by net earnings (Gini-index)
The Netherlands	0.295	0.623
Sweden	0.242	0.521
United Kingdom	0.357	0.650

Notes: 1. Disposable income is computed per household and sums for all household members and then adjusted for number of consumer units
2. Net earnings are post tax personnel income from employed and self-employment

Source: Vogel (1997) Living conditions and inequality

Table 23 confirms that Sweden is the most equalised labour market concerning income distribution, closely followed by the Netherlands but far ahead of United Kingdom and the average for the OECD-countries as we noticed by calculation of the GINI-index in table 22. Especially for large families Netherlands and Sweden come close to each other while Sweden has a higher basic replacement level for single persons. The combination of high rates of replacement for income trans-

fers and the redistributive tax system are the main components of the egalitarian Swedish income distribution system. According to table 21 a relatively high proportion of households have incomes below the poverty line, defined as 50 per cent of the median average income, when calculated on the market-based income before transfers and taxation, but this proportion is reduced significantly when calculated after transfers and taxation.

Table 23. Net replacements rates from unemployment benefits in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom in percentage of average income 1994/95 (Net of taxes replacement rates)

	Single	Couple, no children	Couple, two children	Couple, two children and receiving housing benefits
Netherlands	68	69	71	82
Sweden	81	75	78	85
United Kingdom	23	36	41	67
OECD-average	56	60	66	71

Note: Replacement rates refer to the main unemployment benefit programmes. The worker is assumed to be 40 years old and to have worked continuously since age 18.

Source: OECD: Labour market Policies: New Challenges. 1997: 38

3. SOCIAL POLICIES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION RELATED TO FAMILY AND WORK

3.1. The relationship between labour market, the household and welfare state

Sweden has generally been seen as the ideal-type of what has otherwise been termed the Scandinavian model of welfare regime. The Swedish system of social protection is universal and comprehensive. Social security benefits are largely based on the principle of compensation for loss of income, with individual rights to basic benefits for all people resident in the country regardless of their social and economic status, marital position or sex.

In the Scandinavian model of welfare *universalism* and *egalitarianism* are considered as the two central values. In addition it is important to underline the importance of a third element, namely the *collectivisation of care* that is the conceptualisation in Nordic policies of *care as a public responsibility*. In the Nordic literature the public provision of social care has been identified as social reproduction 'going public', and terms such as the 'public family' (Hernes 1987) and the 'caring state' (Østerberg 1990) are introduced to capture the outcomes of the process. In Sweden as well as in the other Nordic countries, gender equality is often presented as integrated into the conceptualisation of citizenship: the 'passion for equality' (Graubard 1986), has been expanded to include not only different social classes and regions but also sex/gender.

The basic idea of social citizenship in Sweden has been founded on the principle of universalism and on a high degree of egalitarianism. Universalism is a central principle in the development of the welfare state as a social services state, for example, when all citizens/residents – regardless of income – have access to services such as education and health care on equal terms. It is often argued that the most crucial aspect of Scandinavian welfare states since the mid-1960s has been the mutually supportive relationship between welfare-state expansion and way-of-life changes. What in this respect has been important from a cultural point of view is the *security* or *'insurance' aspect* (supporting the way of life of

wage earners) on the one hand, and the *reproductive aspect* (supporting the dominant way of life of families and the changed gender roles) on the other (Goul Andersen 1993:27).

The principle of universality is also central in the systems instituted to provide income security in specific risk situations when income from the market fails, such as old age, unemployment, sickness, and disability (e.g. Sainsbury 1996, Anttonen & Sipilä 2000). It should be noted though, that universality does not necessarily entail equal access to all benefits: some benefits are for all, some are employment-related and some are related to the care of dependent persons. Moreover, when it comes to income security, universalism in coverage does not necessarily entail equal benefits for all. Generally employment-related benefits are more generous than benefits derived from doing unpaid work and care, a structure that clearly entails a differentiation by gender.

The traditional approach in analysing the variety in the type of welfare state and its development has primarily focus on the relationship between state and market. In other words, how the welfare state intervene in the distribution of income through transfers and thereby provide security for workers during periods of unemployment and sickness. Most systems of social protection were based on a male breadwinner model where the husband earned the money needed for the household and the wife cared for the family – children and in the Southern Europe the elderly relatives. This societal family model faded away in the 1960s and early 1970s in Sweden as well as in the other Scandinavian countries, which has led to much critique of the mainstream welfare state theories. The main argument here has been that the welfare state has changed from a transfer system to a service system. This development has been most obvious in the Nordic countries. It is primarily the feminist critique of the dominant welfare state theories which has led to a reformu-

lation of the relationship between welfare state, labour market and household thus emphasizing the position of women in relation to citizenship and the importance of the family for providing social services (see e. g. Langan & Ostner 1991, Lewis 1992, Orloff 1993, O'Connor 1996, and Sainsbury 1994 and 1996).

The involvement of the welfare state in the labour market takes several different forms. Entry into the labour market is determined by educational credentials achieved through publicly financed training programmes and a variety of labour market policy measures have a strong impact on job mobility, labour flexibility, and labour market restructuring. Similarly, exit from labour market is also highly influenced by welfare state arrangements such as on the one hand access to early retirement schemes and generosity of social benefits and on the other hand the conditions for old-age pensions and replacement rates. Furthermore, when the welfare state to a larger extent

took over the responsibility for social reproduction in the household, the demand for social services increased dramatically. In Sweden this has had as a consequence that the welfare state as service provider accounted for the majority of employment growth in the service sector during most of the 1970s and 1980s. In this section, we shall focus on how the policies for social protection, for family issues and for employment regulation are situated in relationship to care for dependent children.

In the first part of this paper we discussed the access to paid work for different groups in Swedish society and the conditions under which they were employed. Here we shall analyse the involvement of the welfare state in shaping people's life and its capacity through supporting individual capability to form and maintain a autonomous households, and in supporting especially women in reconciling work and care obligations.

3.2. Social protection – type and coverage

Like most other European countries, Sweden experienced a relative increase in social protection expenditure measured as per cent of the GDP during the 1980s but since 1990 the expenditures on social protection has stagnated or only slowly increased. The EU-average is 28.7 percent and both Sweden and the Netherlands spend more on social protection than the average while the UK spent a little less than this amount, with 26.6 percent in 1995. Sweden stands out as the all time biggest spender with more than 35 percent of GDP devoted to welfare provisions. As we can see from table 24 the overwhelming proportion of spending on social protection is public expenditures but in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom the private expenditures on social protection represent about 20 per cent of the total social expenditures while private spending in Sweden is very small.

This way of measuring the magnitude of welfare effort is relevant because it shows how much of the total resources (GDP) available are directed

toward welfare provision; but measured over time the disadvantage is that the value is influenced both by changes in the numerator and the denominator. Hence, a very high value for e.g. Sweden in 1995 may reflect a decrease in GDP as well as an increase in social expenditure. Therefore, we also have to look at the development of social expenditure per capita, which is shown in table 25.

Table 24. Total Expenditure on Social Protection at Current Prices as per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – in parenthesis: public expenditures

	1990	1995	1997
Netherlands	32.5 (29.1)	31.7 (27.0)	30.3 (25.1)
Sweden	32.9 (32.2)	35.6 (34.2)	34.8 (33.3)
United Kingdom	23.1 (19.4)	27.7 (22.7)	26.6 (21.1)
EU-15	25.4 (23.7)	28.5 (25.9)	28.7 (25.2)

Source: Eurostat 2000

Table 25. Total Expenditure on Social protection per Person in ECUs at Constant Prices. Index 1990 = 100

	1990	1995	1997
Netherlands	100	101	102
Sweden**	100	104	103
United Kingdom	100	128	130

Source: Eurostat 2000

During the 1990s expenditures on social protection in real terms have increased between two to four per cent in Sweden and the Netherlands and they were already high compared with other EU-countries in 1990, while they increased for as much as 28 percent in the UK from 1990 to 1997. The United Kingdom is catching up with the other EU-countries during the 1990s, but is nevertheless far behind both the Netherlands and Sweden when we look at the amount of expenditures on social protection measured in EURO per person in 1996 calculated in PPS.

According to table 26 Sweden has significantly higher expenditure per person than the other two countries measured in the purchasing power of the country. On the other hand Sweden is definitely not the front-runner in Europe – e.g. Denmark and Germany spend 500 – 700 hundreds

EURO more per person on social protection in 1996.

Regarding the division of social expenditure according to functions, table 27 clearly demonstrates that the category ‘old age’ represents more than 40 per cent of total expenditure in most European countries, while that is true for 37 per cent in Sweden; likewise ‘health’, which is the second largest category represents a marked lower proportion of the expenditures on social protection in Sweden than in the rest of Europe. The reverse trend is apparent with respect to disability; here the Swedish, Dutch and British proportions are nearly 50 per cent higher than the EU-average.

Table 26. Total Expenditure on Social protection in PPS per head of the population 1996

	EURO
Netherlands	5.662
Sweden	6.119
United Kingdom	4.839
EU-15	5.120

Note: Purchasing power standards (PPS) takes into account the differences in price levels between Member States when making comparisons of the level of spending in different countries. For the EU as a whole, figures in terms of PPS are the same as EURO figures.

Source: Eurostat 2000

Table 27. Expenditure on Social Protection by function as per cent of total expenditures, 1995

	EU	Netherlands	Sweden	UK
Sickness	4.6	7.1	4.9	3.7
Health	21.8	20.4	16.5	21.2
Disability	8.0	14.7	12.1	11.4
Old-Age & Survivors	42.4	35.5	36.6	38.0
Family & Children	7.3	4.4	11.2	8.7
Unemployment	8.1	9.6	11.0	5.7
Housing	1.9	1.0	3.4	6.8
Social Exclusion	1.6	2.2	3.0	1.0
Administration	3.4	3.8	1.4	3.5
Other	0.8	1.3	0.0	0.0

Source: European Commission 1998 after Greve 1999

Spending on families and children is significantly higher in Sweden, 11 percent, than in the rest of the EU at 7 per cent. A similar pattern can be found

regarding expenditure for unemployment; again Sweden spends considerably more than other countries, especially United Kingdom. The differ-

ences between the categories 'family & children' and 'unemployment' confirm the Swedish emphasis on a women-friendly approach to family issues and an active labour market approach with respect to unemployment and income replacement. Perhaps the most dramatic difference between the countries we can identify with respect to the social spending on housing where the UK spends double the proportion of Sweden, 6 times more than the Netherlands and three times the EU-level. Social exclusion is a newcomer to the social expenditure categorization, which should be added to the category of other to indicate the expenditures directly related to fighting poverty and social exclusion. Here Sweden is a clear front-runner. The sources of

financing the expenditures on social protection are shown in table 28.

The assumption that the Netherlands belong to the contributory welfare regime is demonstrated very clearly in table 28 showing the break-down of total social expenditure on sources of financing. While public authorities are responsible for nearly half the expenditure in Sweden and the UK, this is only true for slightly more than one seventh in the Netherlands. Instead social expenditure is paid through contributions, firstly from the employees and secondly the employers' contributions in the Netherlands. In Sweden the employees hardly contribute while employers' contribute substantially to the financing of social protection.

Table 28. Distribution of Financing of Social Expenditure 1996/97

	Employers	Employees	Government	Others*
Netherlands (1997)	22.6	46.4	15.6	15.3
Sweden (1996)	40.0	6.8	45.3	7.9
United Kingdom (1997)	25.0	15.2	47.9	11.9
EU-15 (1996)	39.2	23.7	31.9	5.2

Note: * Including self-employed and pensioners

Source: Eurostat 2000

3.3. Family Policy: Childcare and Parental leave

With respect to childcare and perhaps also other forms of care we can argue that the collectivisation of care has a double commodifying function. The arrangements for taking care of small children make two different things occur. On the one hand, nurses are employed to carry out the work in day care centres, which implies a process of commodification. On the other hand, those families who leave their children in the day care centres usually do that in order for the adult/s (primarily, the female spouse) able to work, i.e., this is a prerequisite for the commodification of potential workers. Thus when certain services are de-commodified – provided for independently of the market – somewhat paradoxically the female labour force is at the same time commodified (Sainsbury 1996, pp. 102-103). Basically these women working in the public service sector carry

out the same type of work as before, but they are educated for it, they get paid for it (although their wages or salaries are usually rather low), and to a large extent they have joined unions.

Table 29. Spending on Family Services as per cent of Gross Domestic Product in the 1990s

	1990	1995	1997
the Netherlands	0.5	0.4	0.2
Sweden	2.5	1.7	1.9
United Kingdom*	1.1	1.6	1.6
EU-15	0.7	0.8	0.9

Note: * Included cost for Family Income Supplement

Source: Arjona, Ladaique and Pearson (2001) OECD occasional paper no. 51

Table 30. The Swedish system of childcare and leave in the late 1990s

THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE CARE – childcare	THE RIGHT TO TIME FOR CARE – leave for care
<p>State and municipal responsibility for right to child care. Little market role.</p> <p>Age 0-2: Daghem: 31 % Family day care: 9 %</p> <p>Age 3-School-Age: Daghem: 54 % Family day care: 13 % Förskola (5-6 years): 29 %</p> <p>Fee Depending on income, number of children and hours of day-care</p>	<p>Leave: <i>Maternity/Parental:</i> Length: 64 weeks – can be shared but 60 days are reserved for the other parent. Compensation: Full leave period (450 days): 71.9 % Restricted leave period (330 days): 80 % <i>Paternity</i> Length. 10 days Compensation: 85 %</p> <p>Possibility for part-time work: There are statutory possibilities to work 75 per cent of full-time, until the child is 8 years. Leave can be taken as 25 %, 50 %, 75 % or full-time.</p> <p>Sickness leave: Each parent has right to 30 days of leave with child's sickness a year until the child's 8th year. Parents of children aged under 12 are entitled to 60 days extra leave in case of child being ill long-term.</p>
Sources: Almqvist & Boje (2000)	

In Sweden governmental policy has for a long time been aiming towards the integration of women with children into the labour force. The proportion of part-time workers among employed Swedish women has for long been high. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, labour force participation increased most rapidly among women who preferred working part-time, such as married women with pre-school children. Secondly, Swedish women did not lose their social benefits by working part-time. Thirdly, a series of reforms have facilitated employee's opportunities for part-time work and reduced hours. Since 1974 it has been possible to take parental leave on part-time basis and from 1979 parents of children below 8 years have the possibility of working 75 per cent of full-time with the statutory right to go back to full-time work later on (Sundström 1997). In table 30 we have described the Swedish system of childcare – the right to receive care – and leave for caring small children – the right to time for care.

Compensation is calculated based on earnings for an Average Production Workers (APW). For maternity and parental leave: APW for a woman working part-time and for paternity leave: APW for a man full-time working (see Hansen 1997). Compensation rates do not take into account the taxes paid of the benefits

In Sweden, the right to return to the previous workplace after parental leave is combined with the right to work part-time while the children are small, along with the opportunity to combine part-time employment and parental leave. This makes it much easier for Swedish mothers and fathers to combine work and care for their children. In Sweden we find three different types of leave. (1) Parental leave that can be taken by both fathers and mothers part-time or full-time for a total of 450 days. This type of leave is used by all mothers and by 31 percent of the fathers. This figure only indicates how many fathers use parental leave over one individual year. Considered in

the long-term, parental leave is shared in about 50 percent of all couples, and among these couples where both took parental leave the fathers drew two months of leave days on average (see RFV 1994 from Näsmann 1999: 137). The proportion of fathers taking up parental leave measured on a yearly basis has increased during the recent decade from 23 percent in 1986 to 31 percent in 1997. (2) Fathers are entitled to ten days of leave following a child's birth. In 1995 the paternity leave – or 'daddy days,' as they are called in Sweden – was used by more than 80 percent of fathers and must be considered the greatest success in the Swedish parental leave system. (3) Swedish parents who return to work are eligible for temporary leave with social benefits covering 80 percent of their wages when a child is sick or for a medical visit, up to a maximum of 60 days per year. This leave may be used until the child is 12 years old. A significant number of fathers take advantage of this leave. On a yearly basis, nearly 40 percent of all fathers used leave days for a sick child, 31 days on average in 1997 (RFV from Näsman 1999: 141).

Table 31. Consecutive weeks of maternity and parental leave available to families in the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom in the late 1990s

	Equivalent Weeks Paid 100 %	Equivalent Weeks Unpaid	Total weeks of Leave
the Netherlands	16.0	26.0	42.0
Sweden	42.6	21.7	64.2
United Kingdom	8.6	31.4	40.0

Source: Bettio and Prectal; 1998, p. 19 after Plantenga and Hansen (1999)

The Swedish system for combining work and family life is more gender-balanced than the system in other EU-countries. First of all the fathers' rate of take up of parental leave is higher in Sweden than elsewhere and a period of parental leave of 60 days has to be taken by the secondary carer – normally the father. Furthermore it is possible in the Swedish system to combine parental leave and work – both on a part-time basis – which typically

makes it easier for fathers to be involved in caring responsibilities. Despite all these measures aiming at balancing the work and care responsibilities between fathers and mothers, Swedish mothers still carry the main responsibility for the housework and for the care of children. In the mid-1990s about half of the fathers took up part of the parental leave but they still took up only about one-tenth of the total number of days (Hass and Hwang 2000). This skewed division of care responsibility between women and men comes through when calculating the unpaid time spent on looking after children and other dependent relatives.

As we can see from table 32, Swedish families have a more equal division of the unpaid time spent on children and others than the rest of EU but women are still doing double the unpaid work of men while they in the EU as a whole are doing four times more unpaid work in relation to children than their male counterpart.

Table 32. Gender Gap in unpaid time spent looking after children and other relatives 1995

	Men	Women	Gender Gap
Netherlands	6.2	19.3	0.3212
Sweden	8.5	19.3	0.4408
United Kingdom	5.4	14.9	0.3624
EU-13	3.0	12.6	0.2383

Source: EUROSTAT (ECHP 1995) after Plantenga and Hansen 1999: 80

So far we have only analysed the public arrangement for combining work and family arrangements. In most countries a variety of private firm-organised childcare arrangements are provided. In table 33 the frequency of these non-public arrangements is calculated.

Not surprisingly non-public caring arrangements are seldom provided in Sweden where the welfare state more or less has monopoly of these measures. Only 6 – 7 per cent of Swedish firms have set up additional leave schemes for their employees and less than one percent of Swedish women report that they have access to firm-based

childcare facilities. Both types of caring arrangements are most frequent in the Netherlands where private non-profit organisations have a crucial role in providing care facilities for both children and elderly citizens. Next comes the UK where these arrangements are typically provided as market-based solutions often at high costs to the

families. Looking at the proportion of workers who have the possibility for flexible working hours arrangements, it seems nearly the same in all three countries which just confirm the picture of high flexibility even in the strongly regulated Swedish labour market mentioned earlier in the paper.

Table 33. Indicators of family-friendly working conditions – non-public childcare arrangements for children below 15 years, flex-time working arrangements and voluntary part-time in Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom 1995/98

	% of female employees reporting existence of extra statutory arrangements for children under 15			% of women reporting firm-based childcare	% of employees with flex-time work	% of female employees in voluntary part-time
	Sickness	Maternity	Parental			
Netherlands	39.6	75.0	53.4	25.2	35.8	44.8
Sweden	6.2	6.6	7.1	0.7	32.3	20.3
UK	40.6	61.4	27.8	10.4	31.8	30.1

Source: John E Evans (2001) OECD Occasional Papers No. 48

CONCLUSION

Women's employment activities have increased in all European countries but most notably and earlier in Scandinavia where women's pattern of employment is more and more characterised by continuity. A continuous pattern of work among women – and especially among mothers – is correlated with a comprehensive and generous parental leave system and high provision of childcare (Ellingsæter and Rønsen 1996). According to a Eurobarometer survey from 1996 Sweden has the highest proportion of both men and women who agree in the statement 'I tend to agree that it is just as important for a woman to have a job as it is for a man' among the EU-countries. The Swedish welfare state is characterised as women-friendly and the general attitude in the society is highly egalitarian and not only women but also to some degree men adjust their work situation in order to accommodate having children (see Boje 2003).

However, even in a gender-equal society as Sweden 'the majority of women give priority to

the family (and the children), and let their working life play a secondary role during a certain phase of the life' (Bernhardt 1999). A study of Swedish couples with and without children (Ahrne and Roman, 1997) shows that the gender equality among Swedish couples is most pronounced among couples without children while a significant change takes place when the first child is born. Then a much more conventional division of labour appears in most families. The mother, but not the father, changes her attachment to the labour market and takes all, or nearly all, the parental leave and when the mothers return to the labour market they typically take up part-time employment in order to reconcile work and family obligations. In this respect the Swedish labour market is still highly gender divided and gender differences prevail in paid work, unpaid work as well as care. The high rates of employment among Swedish women are to some extent made possible because of the system of flexible parental leave, access to comprehensive childcare services and

the widespread possibilities for flexible working schemes.

Women and men behave thus markedly different in reconciling work and home when they become parents. This different behaviour has as the consequence that the Swedish labour market is still highly segregated with women over-represented in the care and service industries where work on part-time and temporary absence

from the workplace are accepted more easily than in the male dominated industries such as finance, business services and manufacturing. The different patterns of labour market involvement for women and men also means that Swedish women's career prospects are generally more gloomy than men's and the traditional gender gap in wages and income still prevail despite many years of solidaristic income policy.

NOTES

1. Using thirty year olds would of course show a somewhat higher educational level, and it should be kept in mind that the use of 25 year olds will show a lesser number with a longer tertiary education than using thirty year olds, this is probably more marked for men who to a large part have done military service.

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