

BroadVoice

Broadening the spectrum
of employee voice
in workplace
innovation

National Report - Sweden

Deliverable 3.1



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1. Executive Summary

Forms of influence and participation in working life are an important part of the European labour market. It is becoming increasingly common for employees to be invited to participate directly in the development processes that take place in workplaces. In the EU project BroadVoice, the aim is to shed light on the different conditions of participation, both the indirect participation through the union's representation and the direct participation in the workplace through new technology, improved work environment or skills issues. For further information, see: <https://workplaceinnovation.eu/about-broadvoice/>.

In this report we describe the situation in the Swedish labour market based on three studies: a literature review, an inventory of the institutional framework surrounding participation, and four case studies that exemplify the state of the art in Sweden.

In the Swedish literature review we found that almost all the Swedish examples shows that direct participation have been successful from an employee perspective. Most have some connection to Lean production and the methods that are included there, i.e. daily planning, quality work and suggestion system. One can then ask how this is possible without the unions having an active role in the projects, lean production can be quite challenging from a union perspective.

To understand this, one must be familiar with the Swedish institutional framework based on strong trade unions that shapes the labour market with collective agreements without interference from the state, the so-called Swedish or Nordic model. That picture is not quite true when it comes to Sweden, during the 1970s there was close cooperation between the trade unions and the Social Democratic government that led to extensive worker-friendly legislation in the labour market. The most significant was the Co-Determination Act that came into force in 1974, which contains an obligation to inform (and negotiate) before all technical and organizational changes made in the workplace. There is basically no opportunity for companies to go under the radar and ignore the views of the trade unions.

In this context with indirect participation, we can also see two types of institutions that support direct participation; those that create the conditions for increased direct participation, such as training for increased professional skills (i.e. AFA, Prevent, Suntarbetsliv, Gilla jobbet) and those that are created specifically to increase direct participation (i.e. The Production Leap', Universally Designed Workplaces). The two strategies are of course intertwined, where one is the other's premise and vice versa.

In our study we cannot find any conflict between direct and indirect participation in Sweden. There are many programs and activities that support direct participation, but the unions have a hand in all of them, often together with the employers. We find no example of an organization with a hidden agenda in which employers try to sidestep the unions in any organized way in order to weaken their position. There is a consensus of ideas that rational and efficient production is the basis for the wealth that can be distributed in negotiations between the parties. This consensus falls back on a collective agreement that was reached as early as 1938.

The Saltsjöbad agreement was preceded by a high level of strikes and unrest in working life. The miners' strike in 1969 was another turning point and stimulated the Social Democratic government, supported by the trade unions, to take the step in the Swedish model through legislation. During the 1970s, extensive reforms were carried out in working life and in adult education - many in

conflict with employers. During the 1980s, the trade unions pushed forward ideas about good work that also included the opportunities and protection of the welfare state for the individual.

Section 5 includes four case studies, The Workshop Company, The Mine, The Municipality and The Warehouse. The cases are not randomly chosen, but we have, after consultation with union officials at the central level, looked for cases that in some interesting way shed light on direct participation and how it meets the Swedish model, which is largely based on indirect participation.

The impression one gets when the four cases are studied together is the optimism and faith in the future that characterizes the manufacturing industry and the private service sector, while in the public sector it is about solving urgent problems to make the business work without increasing costs. The Workshop Company and The Mine both have plans to expand their operations, while The Municipality is busy solving acute problems with both high staff turnover and sick leave in combination with a requirement from The Swedish Work Environment Authority to improve its work environment. The Warehouse is somewhere in between when faced with a new way of organizing logistics and tasks, a way that can entail a risk of algorithmic control of the work with monotonous and impoverished tasks as a result. In our studied company, employers and trade unions have tried to avoid such a development. The so-called twin transition – digitization and green transition was not so visible in our case studies.

In one way or another, all of our case studies have faced major challenges but found good solutions where direct participation has been an important part. While there are structural similarities between the different case studies that can often be linked to the Swedish model, there are major differences and interesting anomalies which are discussed further in our text.

2. Introduction

BroadVoice project aims to explore the role of worker representatives and industrial relations (i.e. collective bargaining, co-determination, consultation) in promoting, regulating and implementing workplace innovation via direct employee voice. To achieve this goal, BroadVoice gathers research institutes with experience in both industrial relations and work organisation from 6 EU countries (Italy, Sweden, Ireland, Slovenia, Bulgaria and the Netherlands), responsible for conducting in-depth qualitative research and developing stakeholder engagement activities and empowerment tools. BroadVoice also involves 14 national and EU-level social partners as Associate Organisations and each partner's network supporting data collection and dissemination of main project outputs. This project is coordinated by the Association for International and Comparative Studies on Labour Law and Industrial Relations (ADAPT), Italy.

The Swedish part of the project has been carried out by a research group at Luleå University of Technology consisting of professors Kenneth Abrahamsson, Lena Abrahamsson and Jan Johansson in collaboration with Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) as Associate Organization. In this report, we present the Swedish part of the study.

In addition to an *Executive summary* and an *Introduction*, the Swedish national report contains four parts:

Section 3, *National literature review on direct worker participation and the role of industrial relations*, is based on a literature search in Scopus and Web of Science and resulted in 22 texts (out of 1184) that were considered relevant. To these we have added some additional references that we have found through other channels.

Section 4, *National institutional framework on direct worker participation and the role of industrial relations*, gives a depiction of the institutional framework for direct participation. To understand the whole picture, we also provide an overview of the strongly established framework for indirect participation that characterizes Sweden, the so-called Swedish model. The model is well established and easy to describe. The model for direct influence is more flexible and adapted to the situation.

Section 5, *Case study development*, contains new empirical data in the form of four case studies, two from the manufacturing industry and two from the advanced tertiary sector. The case studies have been preceded by consultations with trade union representatives at central level to find interesting cases. The interviews followed a semi-structured project-wide template that has been adapted to the Swedish context. For each case, three people are interviewed for approximately one hour each, representing companies, trade unions and in one case an external consultant who assisted the company in the work. The interviews have been recorded and then summarized in this report. We have protected the integrity of the company and have replaced the company names with a name that reflects its function. The results of our case studies have been shared with all interviewees via a web-based workshop on February 27, 2025. Those who were unable to attend the meeting were given a link where the presentation could be viewed afterwards as well as the PP images that were presented. At the meeting, there was consensus that we perceive the image of the Swedish system in an adequate way.

The first case, *The Workshop Company*, describes a privately owned small contract manufacturer (110 employees) with high ambitions for direct participation that will introduce lean production in all processes.

The second case study, *The Mine*, describes a huge technological innovation that contains major challenges when it comes to new work organisation, skills upgrading and gaining social acceptance among the employees. The mining company it is about replacing about 250 truck drivers with autonomous trucks. In addition to the truck drivers, the staff who control and plan the current manual traffic are affected.

The third study, *The Municipality*, is a municipality with just over 1,800 employees. The Swedish Work Environment Authority conducted an inspection in 2021 and found several shortcomings that the municipality had to address, and this became the starting point for extensive change work. The purpose of the project is to bring about a shift in perspective where the high staff turnover and high absenteeism should not be seen as a recruitment problem, but as a work environment problem. The focus should be to increase work environment, job satisfaction and reduce job turnover by more direct influence on working hours.

The fourth study, *The Warehouse*, is a Swedish company that is part of an international group with operations in 15 countries. The business in Sweden is focused on consumables in healthcare sector, almost everything except medicines. Its customers are regions, municipalities and the state. Our study covers the warehouse part, which employs approximately 170 employees. A few years ago, the company made a strategic decision about a Lean-inspired organization with daily management where they wanted to bring parts of the management and control down to the team level.

It is difficult to give an overall picture of Swedish industrial relations and various forms of participation from four cases and an overview of the systems. The Swedish labour market model is institutionalised in larger corporations and in the public sector. The conditions at SMEs and micro-firms might differ.

Finally, in Section 6, *General conclusions and recommendations*, we analyse the four Swedish case studies from a broader theoretical perspective where direct participation is at the centre.

3. National literature review on direct worker participation and the role of industrial relations

3.1. Briefly about the method

The study began with a concept analysis together with two librarians, which resulted in the following search string.

Search	Search string
1	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((medinflytande* OR medbestämmande* OR inflytande* OR delaktig* OR participation OR voice* OR "joint decision*" OR involve* OR involving OR "co-determin*" OR codetermin* OR influence OR demokrati* OR democra*) W/1 (företag* OR arbet* OR "privat sektor*" OR "offentlig sektor*" OR industri* OR employer* OR employment* OR organisation* OR organization* OR business* OR comp an* OR concern OR corporation* OR firm OR workplace* OR job OR enterprise* OR jobsite* OR industry OR medar betar* OR anställd* OR tjänsteman* OR tjänstemän* OR yrkesverksamma* OR "privat* anställ*" OR "offentlig* anställ*" OR employe* OR worker* OR personnel* OR staff OR profession* OR workforce* OR labor* OR labour* OR "public official*" OR "civil servant*" OR "public servant*" OR co-worker* OR coworker*))
2	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("workplace innovation" OR "organizational innovation" OR "organisational innovation" OR "industrial relations*" OR "employment relations*" OR "labour* relations*" OR "labor* relations*" OR "democracy in work*" OR arbetstagarinflytande* OR arbetsplatsdemokrati*)
3	TITLE-ABS-KEY (sverige* OR svensk* OR swede* OR swedish)
4	S1 OR S2
5	S4 AND S3
6	AND PUBYEAR > 2013 AND PUBYEAR < 2025
7	AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "english") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "swedish"))

In simple terms, the search strategy is as follows

S1: (Participation block) NEAR/1 (Workplace/Worker Block)

S2: (phrases for industrial democracy)

S3: (block for Sweden)

S4: S1 OR S2

S5: S4 AND S3

+ filters for publication year 2013 to 2025 and languages (Swedish and English).

The search was carried out in Scopus and Web of Science and resulted in 1845 articles. After the removal of duplicates, 1184 remained. After a further purge of the librarians, 226 articles remained and were handed over to the researchers for further review. After reading through the abstract and an initial review of the texts, a further 204 texts could be excluded and 22 texts that were deemed relevant remained. Of these, 21 are cited in this report. To these we have added additional 17 references that we have found through other channels.

3.2. Eurofound - two surveys

Sweden is included in two studies of direct participation from Eurofound (the European Foundation for Living & Working Conditions); The European Company Survey (ECS, 2019), a questionnaire-based representative sample survey of more than 20,000 business establishments with at least 10 employees and The European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS, 2021) included over 70,000 workers that provides a wide-ranging picture of job quality in 36 European countries.

Data direct worker participation BroadVoice project			
European Working Conditions Telephone Survey 2021 (Eurofound, 2022)			
Questions to employees	value	EU	SE
Ability to choose or change methods of work	% often/always	46	52
Ability to choose or change order of tasks	% often/always	53	52
Ability to change speed or rate at work	% often/always	49	33
Ability to influence decisions important for work	% often/always	57	63
Involvement in improving the work organisation or work processes	% high	57	56
Organisational participation and discretion index	% high and high	31	31
European Company Survey 2019 (Eurofound and Cedefop, 2020)			
Questions to managers	value	EU	SE
Direct employee influence payment schemes	% great/moderate	33	25
Influence on training and skills development	% great/moderate	57	66
Influence on work organisation	% great/moderate	57	71
Influence on working time	% great/moderate	51	48

Level of direct influence of employees on management decision making	% high	34	35
Meetings between employees and their immediate manager	% yes regular	59	82
Online discussion boards	% regular	8	15
Suggestion schemes	% yes	36	57

The Swedish results in the European Company Survey (ECS) 2019 show that on average they are high on all variables with the exception of "Direct employee influence payment schemes" which can be directly related to the high level of collective agreements that regulate the wage levels. According to the European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (2021), Sweden does not achieve as high results. What is low is primarily the variable "Ability to change speed or rate at work" where Sweden is well below the average for both the EU and the six BroadVoice countries. This figure stands out and deviates from other indicators. It might correspond with national statistics on increasing levels of job stress expressions.

3.3. Direct participation in the Swedish context

Direct participation, i.e. the employer involves employees in planning and decision-making without involving the trade unions, is seen as a trade union problem in many countries. It is seen as an attempt to undermine the union's position as the primary representative of the employees, and in the long run as a threat to the union as a voice for the employees.

Direct participation is not an issue that is explicitly discussed by Swedish trade unions, at least not as a problem. Although direct participation is a feature that occurs in almost all industrial development, it is not seen as a problem for the union, but rather its opposite, a natural part of the organization of work, which has the full support of the union as long as it follows the rules of the labour market. How should we understand this?

To understand the Swedish approach to direct participation, one must understand the Swedish model and the institutional framework surrounding it (a more in-depth description can be found in Chapter 4). In short, it can be said that labour market relations in Sweden have been characterised by cooperation between the social partners based on collective agreements. A crucial agreement was signed in 1938 which stipulated that collective agreements should form the basis for wage formation and general conditions in the Swedish labour market, without the involvement of the state. An example of a difficult issue that has been solved within the framework of collective agreements is the *Work-Study Agreement* (i.e. Working hours assessment Agreement) from 1948, which meant that the unions fully accepted rationalizations according to Taylorist principles, provided that there was full transparency in the process.

3.4. Employee voice is regulated by the union

During the 1970s, this order was disrupted, and the state became a more important player. The trade unions were able to ally themselves with the Social Democratic Party, and the government

passed several laws that strengthened the trade unions as a voice for the employees, most notably *the Board Representation Act* (1972) and *The Co-determination at Work Act* (1975), which gives the trade unions transparency and to some extent participation in all company activities. Carlson (2023) has analysed the development in the article "*The perspectives of legal regulations and employee voice: Insights from Sweden*" and points to the strong legal regulation of the Swedish labour market and claims that the employees' voice can almost exclusively be heard through the trade unions in Sweden. She means that workers are informed, consulted and involved in co-determination and joint decision-making through the trade unions and workers' participation in the trade unions. The Swedish trade unions are keen to maintain this model, which is based on a single channel to make the workers heard. Carlson describes it as a union monopoly of power when it comes to individual employees' complaints. Tengblad & Andersson (2024) argue that co-determination practices are highly institutionalized but may not provide better conditions for workers than in many other advanced industrialized countries with a lower degree of formal co-determination.

Svensson (2020) describes the new power structure in the labour market as the two-party model having been replaced by a tripartite corporatist system based on collective bargaining where the state stays in the background but is ready "for action" in an institutionalised dialogue between the parties on basic conditions and main goals. Another important change, according to Svensson, is that the centralized negotiation system has gradually been replaced by more decentralized forms. Today's collective agreements are usually signed on two levels; central and local, the central one that sets the external framework and the local one that adapts to the local conditions. (Kjellberg & Bender 2024). Sweden has no legislation on minimum wages, but most central agreements set a minimum level for the local agreements. If the parties have difficulty agreeing, there is a government agency, the *National Mediation Institute*, which is responsible for well-functioning wage formation, mediating in labour disputes and being responsible for wage statistics.

The Swedish labour market model can be seen as an example of the broader concept of the Nordic labour market model based on collective agreements but also inter-country variations. Hvid & Falkum (2018) state that the Nordic countries have the best working life in the world. Unlike in many other countries, global competition has not created inequality, insecurity, long working hours, standardisation and restrictive management of company management. The main reason for this lies in the way interests are expressed, and conflicts are resolved. Both employees and employers are well organized, and both recognize the other's interests. According to Hvid & Falkum, working life develops in a constant interplay between conflict and compromise.

3.5. The Swedish model is stable....

Anxo (2021) points out that the Swedish model has been sustainable over time. Despite the fact that the degree of union membership has declined over the past two decades, it is still the Swedish social partners who have the main responsibility for labour market norms and regulations that affect terms of employment. According to Anxo, the Swedish experience is still a good illustration of the positive "productive" role played by a developed bipartite social dialogue based on powerful and independent social partners, especially regarding the mitigation of potentially negative consequences of globalization, external macroeconomic shocks, rapid structural and technological changes, and the transformation of the world of work. The model creates a favourable institutional environment for negotiated compromises aimed at balancing flexibility, security, efficiency and

social fairness in an open economy that is highly exposed to international competition and growing economic turbulence.

According to Johnsen et al (2021), a contributing factor to the relatively open tone of conversation between the social partners may be *the Swedish Leadership, Organisation and Co-determination programme* (the LOM-programme) which was carried out during the period 1985 to 1990 and supported by the Swedish Work Environment Fund. The programme was motivated by calls for more collaboration within enterprises. During the programme period, 800 dialogue conferences were conducted. In these conferences, representatives from all layers of an organisation worked together to define common tasks related to challenges. Placed in their context, the dialogue conferences can probably be seen as a bit of an alternative to in-direct and representative participation (Gustavsen 1990).

There have also been other similar initiatives that have opened up for direct participation, the largest of which was the *Working Life Fund*. The Working Life Fund was a temporary authority that operated between 1990 and 1995. Companies and administrations could apply for funding for workplace programmes that would include a holistic view of the development of the business where the work environment, organisation, rehabilitation and productivity are integrated. Support from the Working Life Fund means that measures for better profitability and efficiency go hand in hand with a better work environment. The fund implemented almost 25,000 programs at a cost of at least SEK 8.5 billion. Combined with the employers' own efforts, this amounts to approximately SEK 27 billion that has been invested in a better work environment and increased productivity during the first 3.5 years.

3.6. but the Swedish model is constantly under new challenges

According to Koch (2017), the Scandinavian labour market model and its results have been an icon beyond its geographical borders. But the model has also been exposed to challenges, including demands for a more open Europe and a more mobile workforce. Koch gives the example of the construction sector, which has been characterised by peaceful cooperation, a productivity pact, a well-trained and organised workforce, and a high level of occupational health and safety management. Koch believes that in recent years, however, the construction sector has seen a large influx of foreign companies and labour, and they contribute to a dual labour market with a Swedish labour market that remains at a high level and a foreign one that works with lower wages and worse conditions.

The vulnerability of the model is also discussed by Ilsøe & Söderqvist (2023), who point out in an article that the GIG economy is another threat that can upset the Swedish/Nordic model.

3.7. Direct participation is the new normal

Participation is in itself a vague concept. You can participate in a study circle being a participant, without making comments that influence the issues being discussed. Our use of the concept participation implies that one is influencing or changing the working conditions. Below we do the distinction between work-role participation, strategic participation and HR-participation. In this context we refer to the two latter concepts, e.g., influential participation, not just doing regular work.

From our reasoning above, trade unions and collective agreements have a very strong position in Sweden. The workers' voice is strongly tied to collective representation through trade unions. In parallel with this, we see a rich flora of direct participation that seems to go alongside the union system.

In our literature search, we did not find many examples of direct participation that were documented in scientific journals, while a simple search on the web shows a large range of different variants. Among the scientifically documented articles, there was a predominance of the public service sector. Eriksson et al (2016) have studied how the lean production concept has been introduced in three Swedish hospitals. The three studied hospitals chose different strategies to implement lean production due to different contextual conditions. The ambition was to create a commitment and participation in lean production and that the implementation would be sustainable over time, but also that it should lead to lasting improvements in the work environment, quality of care, and efficacy of work. The results show that many different actors at different organizational levels need to participate in lean production to maintain and spread change processes. It is interesting here that the concept of actor is entirely linked to professions and organizational levels, while collective interests channelled through trade unions are not included in the concept of actor.

There are many examples of successful projects with direct influence where the unions are not involved. Samuelson et al (2024) have studied direct participation at a health centre in Sweden, which they summarize as "Standing together at the helm". Karlson et al (2023) have studied direct participation in primary care in Sweden with the aim of counteracting sick leave among staff. Another study in healthcare that shows positive effects of direct participation is presented by Tafvelin et al (2019). Nylén et al (2017) present a study from the social services where direct participation helped to facilitate an organizational intervention. Common to these studies from the public service sector is that trade unions have not had an active role, at least not one documented in the articles.

Worth noting is the changed context that has been shaped by New Public Management throughout the 2000s. Jansson (2022) has investigated how the self-image of a large Swedish trade union in the public sector, SKTF/Vision, changed after the sector's thorough privatization took place. The results suggest that due to the pressure of the privatization of the public sector, the unions abandoned much of their previous self-image and replaced ideas of the "collective" with individualism.

There are similar studies documented from the private sector. Sanyal & Haddock-Millar (2018) present an example of a study on direct participation from fast food distribution and Öhrling (2014) a similar study from the cleaning industry that shows positive effects of direct participation. In none of the studies are the trade unions mentioned.

There are also a number of studies in which the role of trade unions is at the centre. In a comparative study of the introduction of Lean production in the Swedish and French aircraft industry, Ahlstrand & Gautié (2023) notes that employee engagement is higher in the Swedish context. The French model is characterized to a greater extent by top-down, while the Swedish model is based more on employee engagement. In the Swedish model, the trade unions were more positive and even the driving force behind the changes, while the French were defensive. A study by Fusco (2020) compares the strategies of the unions at Volvo with Fiat in connection with restructuring during the crisis years 2008-2010. The Swedish trade union managed to combine its ambitions with Volvo's to quickly take the necessary measures. Conversely, some Italian unions clung to old inefficient systems, which affected the company's actions and almost led to the closure of the factory.

There is also a difference between small and large companies. Fasth & Tengblad (2023) has interviewed 60 Swedish CEOs in small and medium-sized companies in depth about how to involve employees in strategic conversations. The results show large variations in employee participation, from virtually no employee participation to in some cases far-reaching corporate democracy. The authors note that this differs from the understanding of internal openness in larger companies, which has largely been developed within a framework of industrial relations and negotiated order between employers and trade-union representatives.

New technology can contribute to increased direct participation. Tan et al (2015) have from a Workplace Innovation (WI) perspective study the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), a medium-sized government agency and a local IT consulting company for small and medium-sized companies. The authors argue that the current discussions about WI are often about non-technical innovations, such as organizational innovation and process innovation. Tan et al believe that ICT has great potential to increase direct participation in the activities

In our literature search, we found only one study that explicitly addresses direct participation. Wikhamn, Wikhamn & Fasth (2022) has studied direct participation in 36 small and medium-sized Swedish companies (with a total of 617 employees). In this study, three forms of direct participation are introduced that the researchers try to relate to the employees' job satisfaction. The first form is *work role participation*, which includes the influence that employees exert on decisions that directly affect them and that are related to the job role itself, i.e. issues such as how and when work is organized and carried out, having a voice, and being consulted at work. The researchers call the second type of participation *HR participation*, which includes decisions such as recruitment, downsizing and staffing. The researchers supplement with a third category, *strategic participation*, which refers to participation in business decisions such as collaborations, goal setting, investment in assets and development of business models, products, services, processes and working methods. This distinction between these three forms of participation is crucial and very useful. Using data collected from top managers and employees, the researchers show that work role participation and strategic participation have a strong correlation with employees' job satisfaction, while HR participation is more difficult to interpret and, in some cases, shows the opposite effect.

3.8. Some conclusions from the Swedish literary overview

Almost all the examples of direct participation described above have been successful from an employee perspective. Most have some connection to Lean production and the methods that are included there. One can then ask how this is possible without the unions having an active role in the projects, lean production can be quite challenging from a union perspective.

One explanation is that there is a consensus of ideas that rational and efficient production is the basis for the wealth that can be distributed in negotiations between the parties. The largest trade union in the private sector, IF Metall, puts it this way that "we are not afraid of the new technology, we are afraid of the old". This consensus falls back on the collective agreement that was reached as early as 1938 (which is still in force) and which had a clear realization in 1948 when the unions accepted Taylorism principles as the basis for rational production.

Another explanation is the Co-Determination Act of 1974, which entails a duty to inform (and negotiate) before all technical and organisational changes made in the workplace. There is basically no opportunity for companies to go under the radar and ignore the views of the trade unions. A

consequence of this is that in most of the examples we have presented above, the trade unions have probably been involved even before the projects started and have been able to provide views on how they should be implemented.

The legal framework that surrounds the Swedish labour market, combined with 85 years of experience of collaboration within the framework of collective agreements, has created a sense of confidence that has allowed the trade unions to reduce the need for control in all situations. The union membership rate is indeed declining, especially for blue collar workers and in sectors with new forms of work; e.g. gig work, IT-related business, temporary and precarious work, but the position of the trade unions is not threatened, and their activities are quite institutionalized.

The review summarizes general patterns of the Swedish labour market, industrial relations and forms of social dialogue. There are, however, variations within the general model, e.g. SMEs or micro-firms. Another sector with less direct participation and influence, might be chains of sub-contracting, where the employees have temporary contracts or being part of the precariat.

4. National institutional framework on direct worker participation and the role of industrial relations

A prerequisite for understanding the institutional framework for direct participation in Sweden is that one can relate it to the strongly established framework for indirect participation that characterizes Sweden, the so-called Swedish model.

The model for indirect influence is strongly institutionalized in Sweden, with a high proportion of employees who are organized in trade unions. The model is well established and easy to describe. The model for direct influence is more flexible and adapted to the situation. There are a few examples of how direct influence can be institutionalized, and we will try to describe them at the end of section 4.

As stated in section 3 of the report, direct and indirect are closely integrated with each other, where the forms of indirect participation are determined through dialogue between the parties. The parties at the local level then have a relatively large room for local adaptations within that framework.

4.1. The industrial relations in Sweden

The industrial relations in the Swedish industry have their foundation in both national legislation and collective agreements between trade unions and employers, where the laws and collective agreements are strongly linked to each other. Swedish labour market policy is based on the industrial relations being set by the social partners in collective agreements. When this does not work, the partners seek political support for a change in legislation. Traditionally, there is a very strong link between trade unions and the Social Democratic Party, which has resulted in relatively labour-friendly legislation such as the right to holidays (5 weeks), parental leave (480 days), shorter working hours, labour representation in company boards, a better working environment,

participation in decision-making at the workplace, and increased employment security. This strong link between workers and the Social Democratic party is now disturbed by the fact that a large part of blue-collar employees vote for the nationalist conservative party Sweden Democrats.

4.2. Social partners.

Industrial relations system in Sweden consists of three major employers' confederations: the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (SN), the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR) and the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (Arbetsgivarverket). On the union side, there are three trade union confederations that coordinate the various trade unions: the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO)

In addition, there are several negotiation alliances that coordinate different unions depending on how the labour market in the sector is organized. An example of such an alliance is the *Public Employees' Negotiation Council* (OFR). OFR consists of thirteen different unions in public sector that coordinate and collaborate on wage negotiations and other matter. Together, the member unions represent roughly 573,000 members in the public sector. OFR has member unions that belong to TCO and SACO, respectively, and also unions that are outside the central organizations.

The LO only organises blue-collar workers; it is a Scandinavian peculiarity to have separate, nationwide trade union confederations for blue- and white-collar workers. The central confederation for salaried employees in Sweden is the TCO. A difference between the three trade union confederations is that while almost all the LO affiliates are industry unions, the SACO affiliates are based on occupations and the TCO unions cover about 50% based on industry and 50% based on occupations. Both the TCO and the SACO organise employees in the private as well as in the public sector.

One complicating factor in the bargaining rounds is that even though the three trade union confederations organize workers in the private as well as in the public sector, this is not the case with the employers' associations. In the private sector, the same association normally negotiates with affiliates of all three union confederations LO, TCO and SACO. Governmental bodies are represented by the *National Agency for Government Employers* The counties and municipalities are represented by *Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Salar)* .

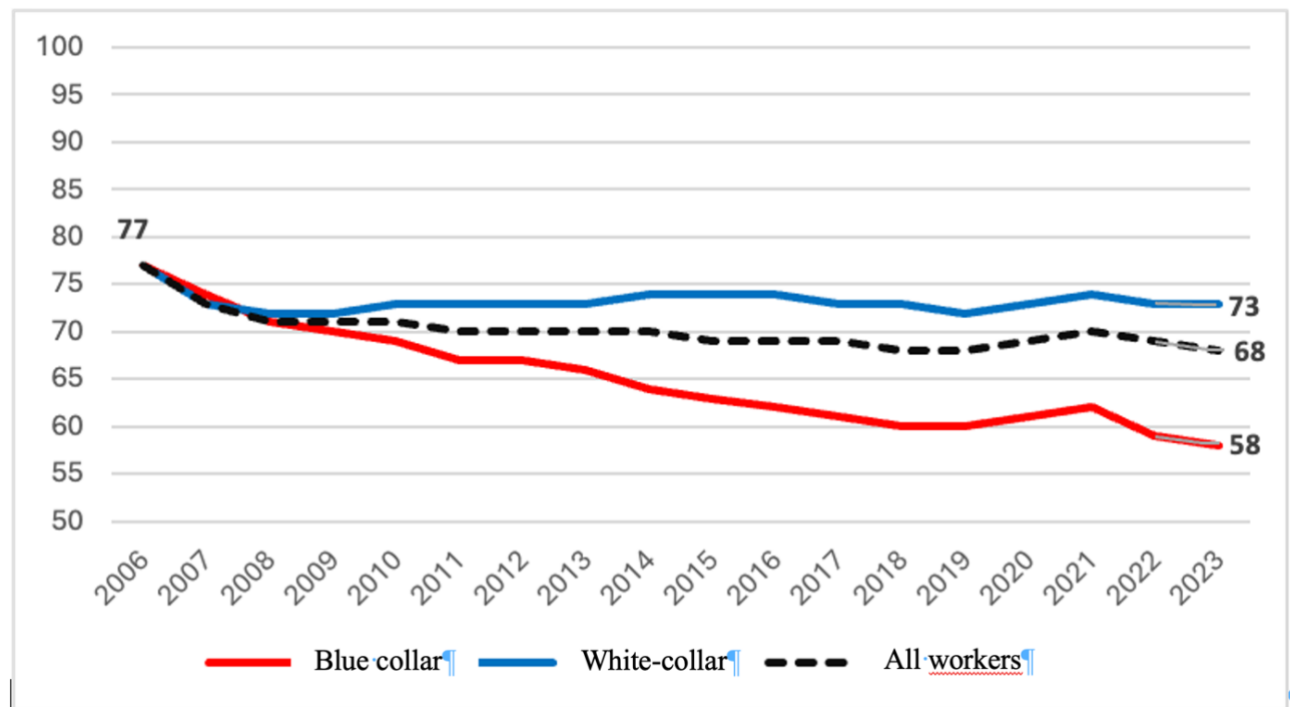
4.3. Trade union density.

The trade unions in Sweden have traditionally been strong and the trade union density is among the highest in the world. This is often explained by the insurance system with union-led unemployment schemes funded partly by (payroll) taxes and partly by fees paid by the members of unemployment funds. Another related variable of importance is the combination of strong encompassing central and local organisations. The centralisation prevents fragmentary union coverage, promotes bargaining power and facilitates solidarity wage policies, while an extensive network of local union branches well integrated into national unions brings the unions closer to their members. The unions formally negotiate over remuneration and other issues with their employer counterparts also at

firm level, in order to adapt the central agreements to the local environment, and there are no works councils in Sweden (Fulton 2013).

Over the years, the degree of organization has decreased for blue collar workers, while it has remained relatively constant for white-collar workers. In some sectors of the labour market do the employers have a better coverage than unions. Today, there is a strong consensus between the national organisations for employers and unions on the role of collective agreements, good work environments and productive and efficient work.

Figure 1. Unionisation rate over time



Source: Kjellberg 2024

Three unions are outstanding when it comes to the number of members. The largest one is *Unionen* (part of TCO) with almost 600,000 members (year 2021). The second largest union is the *Municipal Workers' Union (Kommunal)*, affiliated to LO and organising more than 518.000 employees (year 2021), of whom about 80% are women. The occupational groups belonging to the union range over a great variety of jobs, such as health care and nursing, cleaners, garbage collectors, school janitors, real estate caretakers, meter maids, preschool teachers, firefighters and many other services. In total, they make up one eighth of the Swedish labour force. The third largest union, *IF Metall*, has more than 240.000 members year 2021, of whom 23% are women. They are active in sectors such as mechanical engineering and plastics industries, building materials industry, mining, ironworks, textile and garment industries, and automobile repair-shops.

4.4. Collective bargaining in Sweden.

The overall level of coverage of collective agreements is high – estimated at 88%, with 82% coverage in the private sector and 100% in the public sector (Kjellberg 2024).

The key level for collective bargaining in Sweden is the industry level, but with considerable room for local complements. This is often done through a nationally agreed increase on the total pay bill, with local negotiations on its distribution. Agreements also often include fall-back arrangements, which set the increases to be paid if no local agreement is reached, and frequently there is also a guaranteed minimum increase for individuals. This decentralisation and flexibility are more common in the public than in the private sector. This means that the pay for more than three-quarters of employees is set by a combination of industry and local negotiations (Fulton 2013).

As well as pay and working time, most elements of life at work can be covered by collective bargaining. Some, such as topping up sick pay, compensation for accidents or pension levels that exceed state provision, both for disability and in old age, are dealt with through industry level bargaining. But local level negotiations can cover a range of issues like training or the introduction of new technology (Fulton 2013). Local negotiations are results of bargaining in the workplace. If the workplace has a local union club, the negotiations take place between elected union representatives and employer representatives. If there is no local club, representatives of the local branch negotiate with the employer.

The manufacturing industry in Sweden is dominated by two unions, IF Metall for blue-collar workers and Unionen for white-collar, which negotiate collective agreements.

4.5. Employee representation at work.

In Sweden it is trade unions who provide employee representation at work. There is no separately elected structure along the lines of the works councils which exist in many other European states. A key reason why unions have this role is the very high proportion of the working population that are union members (73% for white-collar and 58% for Blue-collar in 2023). The Swedish model is built on trust between the parties and union strength in the negotiations is not a result of legal requirements. The legislation which gives unions these wide-ranging powers at the workplace is the Co-determination at Work Act (1975) and the Development agreement (utvecklingsavtalet) (1982). The Development agreement provides instructions on how the Co-determination Act (MBL) is to be applied in the workplace. The agreement expresses the direction that the parties agree on when it comes to developing companies' efficiency, profitability and competitiveness and creating conditions for employment, security and development at work. A very important element of this union-based approach is that it leaves many of the practical details to be worked out locally through negotiations between employers and unions or union clubs. Unlike in some other European states, the legislation does not contain a series of detailed provisions which must be complied with (Fulton 2013).

The workplace representation is provided through the trade unions, operating under their own rules, and there are no statutory regulations which lay down how trade union representatives should be chosen; it is for the unions to decide. The 1974 Act on Trade Union Representatives does not set down a fixed period of time off for trade union activity at work. It simply states that paid

time off should be provided “as required” but should “not, however, be longer than what is reasonable considering the conditions at the workplace”. Local collective agreements often define what is regarded as “reasonable” and the position varies widely, but an indicator may be one full-time union representative for every 500 members in the local union (Fulton 2013). For multinational corporations also active in other EU countries, work councils form an additional structure for employee participation.

4.6. The Board Representation (Private Sector Employees) Act. The Board

Representation Act empowers employees to appoint board members in companies bound by collective bargaining agreements. The main purpose is to give employees, through the employees’ organisation, a better view of and influence over the management of the company. Employee representatives have the same standing and responsibilities as other board members, except when there may be a conflict of interest, such as issues regarding collective bargaining agreements and industrial action. Employees of companies with at least 25 employees are entitled to appoint two members and two deputy members to the board and in companies which more than 1.000 employees, three members and three deputy members. If there is an executive committee, employee representatives are entitled to participate in its work. This also applies to other planning bodies within the company, where such bodies deal with issues that are to be decided on later by the board of directors. The Board Representation Act plays an important role in the relationship between club and company. Many members hold these assignments for a long time and are not seldom also important people in the board’s internal work. Many CEOs choose to anchor initiatives early with union members.

4.7. The Work Environment Act.

The Swedish Work Environment Act 1977 (Arbetsmiljölagen) points out the responsibility for the employer and stipulates the basic demands on a good work environment. The act emphasizes preventive actions as well as cooperation between employers and employees. However, the cooperation does not diminish or abolish the employer’s responsibility to carry out any measures necessary for the safety and health of the employees.

Safety committees. At every worksite where fifty or more persons are regularly employed, there shall be a safety committee consisting of representatives of the employer and of the employees. Safety committees shall also be appointed at worksites with smaller numbers of employees if the employees so require. Employees’ representatives shall be appointed from among the employees by the local trade union organization having a collective agreement with the employer. The safety committee shall participate in the planning of work environment measures at the worksite and observe their implementation. It shall maintain close observations of the development of questions relating to protection against ill-health and accidents and is to promote satisfactory work environment conditions.

Workers safety representatives. The main task of the worker safety representative is to make sure that the employer operates a well-functioning management system regarding work environment issues, especially issues such as planning for major changes. Safety representatives are typically

appointed for three years by the local labour union. If there is no union, then the employees can appoint representatives directly. The employer cannot appoint workers safety representatives.

4.8. The Co-Determination Act.

The Co-Determination Act concerns the relationship between the employer and the employees through their local employees' organisation. The most significant areas of the Co-Determination Act are the collective bargaining agreement and the peace obligation, the right to negotiate, the right to information, the right of interpretation and right to veto. The right of co-determination does not in principle go further than a right to information and consultation before the employer decides regarding significant changes. Some of the provisions of the Co-Determination Act are semi-discretionary and may be derogated from or supplemented by collective bargaining agreements, so called co-determination agreements. In summary, the law contains the following:

Right of Association. Both the employee and the employer have the right to join associations and to engage in their activities.

Right and Obligation to Negotiate. Employees' organisations have a right to negotiate with the employer in areas regarding the relationship between the employer and members of the organisation. An individual employee does not have a legal right to negotiate according to the Act. The obligation to negotiate does not cover the day-to-day management. Issues that must be negotiated are, for example, the introduction of a new organisation, downsizing, hiring of a new manager, changing an individual's area of work and similar significant changes.

Right to Information. The employer is obliged to regularly inform his local negotiation partners about the development of their business in financial and operational terms as well as about personnel policy guidelines. In principle, the Co-Determination Act states that there should be an open attitude at the company giving the employees access to information about the general progress of the company.

4.9. Competence and skills development is a prerequisite for participation

Competence and skills issues have always been at the centre of the discussion about influence and participation of workers at the workplace. Braverman (1974), Kern & Schumann (1974) and Polanyi (1967) and many others have emphasized the importance of competence issues for the balance of power in the workplace. Today's Swedish discussion of skills issues is not as strongly linked to the question of power, but rather to participation in collaboration with the employer. A prerequisite for being able to participate in a participative dialogue with the employer is that you communicate on equal terms. In Sweden, there are several institutions to support skills development in the form of laws and collective agreements.

The Act on Employees' Right to Leave for Training (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 1974b) provides a general right to study leave for employees in both the public and private sector. To be entitled to leave, the employee must have been employed for at least six months or a total of twelve months during the last two years. Employees who participate in training related to trade union issues are entitled to leave regardless of the length of employment. After the end of the study leave, the employee has the right to return to the same or equivalent tasks and salary as before the studies.

The Shop Stewards Act (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 1974a) also provides for the right to union studies during working hours.

The development agreement is an agreement between LO, PTK and Svenskt näringsliv (1985) as early as 1985, and which applies to large parts of the private sector, with the aim to promote skills development and increased mobility in the labour market. The agreement contains provisions on the right to training, skills development and transition support for employees. The goal is to ensure that workers have the skills necessary to face changes in the work and that employers can retain a skilled workforce. The agreement can also include funding for training initiatives and support for readjustment in the event of a shortage of work or technological changes.

The transition agreement between trade unions and employers aims to support workers who are made redundant due to a lack of work. The agreement was first signed between PTK and Svenskt näringsliv (2022) and has since been accepted by most other unions. The agreement offers financial support and help with finding new work. There are two types of financial support: a fixed severance payment or a financial supplement to the unemployment insurance fund. The financing is done by employers and trade unions allocating part of the payroll to a joint foundation. The transition agreements currently cover approximately 3.1 million people, and annually about 40,000 people participate in some form of transition support. For younger workers under the age of 40, the agreements often offer coaching and support, but poorer financial protection. The state supports the agreement by adapting legislation and offering financial support for restructuring measures. This includes compensation to employers who finance restructuring support within the framework of collective agreements. The agreement also entails changes to *the Employment Protection Act* (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 1982) with a weakened unemployment protection to increase mobility in the labour market and improved opportunities for skills development for employees.

Another institution for skills development is *the Workers' Educational Association* (Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund, ABF) (ABF 2025), which is Sweden's largest adult education association that offers study circles, courses, lectures and cultural events. ABF is politically independent but shares values with the labour movement. Among the member organizations are both the Social Democratic party and LO. ABF stands for a broader educational activity in social and cultural issues based on the values of the labour movement. ABF mainly finances its activities through government grants distributed by *the Swedish National Council for Adult Education*. Some Swedish residential college for adult education (folk high schools) organise education and training for trade union members, shop stewards and union leaders.

4.10. EU regulation and the Swedish labour market model

Sweden has been a member in the European Union since 1995. EU policies are characterised as a fragile balance between regulation and the role of subsidiarity. Labour market and occupational health policy are fields where the interface between national policies and EU policies and regulation. The Swedish labour market model is based on collective bargaining and collective agreements. There are around 650 collective agreements regulating various parts of the Swedish labour market. There is also a delicate balance between guiding principle, e.g. The European Pillars of Social Rights and various directives, as part of EU law.

In November 2017, EU leaders gathered in Gothenburg for a summit for fair jobs and growth. The summit resulted in an agreement on a *European Pillar of Social Rights* (EPSR), with 20 principles aimed at ‘guiding’ the EU towards the fulfilment of essential needs and the enforcement of social rights.”

Parallel to these guiding principles, there are EU Directives on WORKING CONDITIONS Work life balance (2019/1158) focussing parental rights of leave of absence, transparent and predictable working conditions (2019/1152), social protection of atypical workers and new minimum requirements for working conditions. Another directive regulates WORKING CONDITIONS Work life balance (2019/1158) implying rules for a fair social representation in different job positions, as well as a directive on Equal pay (2023/970, including methods to assess pay transparency. Thirdly, there is a directive on LABOUR LAW Adequate minimum wages (2022/2041) setting standards and objectives on minimum wage formation and collective bargaining. In an industrial relations context, it is the directive on Labour law, that has led to most discussion, between representatives of the Swedish labour market model and EU institutions.

4.11. National institutional framework on direct worker participation

It can be difficult to institutionalize something that lies outside the strong structured industrial relationships that characterize the Swedish labour market. We can identify two types of institutions,

- those that create the conditions for increased direct participation, such as training for increased professional skills and
- those that are created specifically to increase direct participation, such as increased autonomy in the work.

The two strategies are of course intertwined, where one is the other's premise and vice versa. We will start by describing some initiatives to create conditions for increased direct participation.

4.11.1. Afa försäkring

Afa försäkring (Afa insurance) is an organisation owned by Sweden's labour market parties, that insure employees within the private sector, municipalities and county councils. Today more than five million people are covered by at least one of their insurances. Afa's insurance activities are based on collective agreements between Sweden's labour market parties and provide financial support in the event of incapacity for work due to sickness, work injury, shortage of work, death and parental leave. In addition to the core insurance activities Afa work to prevent ill-health in the workplace. In this way, collectively agreed insurance lays the foundations for a better working life, with greater security for all.

Afa Försäkring is also a major financier of research and development in the field of work environment and health. Every year, Afa Försäkring invests annually SEK 150 million in research and development in the field of work environment and health. The research will be of practical benefit to employees in the private sector, municipalities and regions, as well as municipal companies. Government employees are not included.

Examples of some activities to spread knowledge about the work environment and health are events and seminars, press releases, films, different types of knowledge overviews and reports from the various research projects.

Afa Försäkring works closely with Prevent and Suntarbetsliv, which converts research results into practical advice and tools. For example, checklists, tips and training that help improve the work environment and promote health.

4.11.2. Prevent

The largest player in work environment education is Prevent, with just over 40 employees, which is a non-profit organization owned by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and PTK. PTK is a joint organization of 26 member unions, representing more than one million salaried employees in the private sector.

This means that everything Prevent does is developed by trade unions and employers together. The purpose of the association is to make it easier for workplaces to create a good work environment by informing, educating and developing useful products that are helpful in work environment management. Prevent's work is targeted and research oriented. The assignment also includes actively promoting trusting cooperation between the principals, the unions and the local parties in the companies. A good work environment means that everyone works safely and feels good, which contributes to increased health and profitability.

Prevent works primarily by producing printed and digital materials that can be used in work environment management. In 2023, they sold just over 57,000 books, 220 digital checklists and had 8,700 participants in its web-based training programs. Most of the training courses are adapted to the company and are primarily aimed for managers and safety representatives. Just under 20% of the courses are open and are aimed at anyone who is interested.

4.11.3. Suntarbetsliv (Healthy Working Life)

Suntarbetsliv, which is a non-profit association run jointly by the trade unions and employers' organizations in the public sector. Suntarbetsliv was founded in 2012 and has grown into a large organization with an office with just over 30 employees. The activities are led by a board consisting of representatives from the trade unions and employers' organisations in the public sector. The mission is to collect knowledge about preventive, health-promoting and rehabilitative efforts in the work environment area and to make this knowledge available and useful in the workplaces of municipalities, regions and municipal companies. The aim is to contribute to promoting well-functioning work environment management in collaboration between employers and employees.

The mission for Suntarbetsliv is to collect knowledge about preventive, health-promoting and rehabilitative efforts in the work environment area and to make this knowledge available and useful in the workplaces of municipalities, regions and municipal companies. Suntarbetsliv consists of a broad set of methods that can be combined into analyses and initiatives in the workplace.

A fundamental idea in Suntarbetsliv is a concept where a good work environment and work-life balance are crucial factors in creating healthy, sustainable and attractive workplaces. Work

environment management is therefore an important way to secure the supply of skills in municipalities and regions.

Healthy working life is based on eight *health factors* that deal with the conditions that make employees feel good and perform at work.

1. Fair and transparent organization
2. Present, trusting and committed leadership
3. Participation and influence
4. Communication and feedback
5. Prioritization of tasks
6. Skills development throughout working life
7. Systematic work environment management in everyday life
8. Early intervention and work adaptation

For each factor there is a discussion material that can be used when the concept is to be implemented.

The two concepts complement each other in that Prevent is aimed at the private business world and Suntarbetsliv at the municipal and regional sector.

4.11.4. Gilla jobbet

Gilla Jobbet (Enjoy your work) is an annual work environment conference organized by Afa försäkring, Prevent and Suntarbetsliv together with trade unions and employer organizations in the private sector and the municipal and county council sectors. The conference is an initiative by the social partners to inspire preventive and health-promoting work environment management in the country's workplaces. At the 2023 annual conference, 3,600 participants joined the digital broadcast and 1600 participated on site.

4.12. Programmes created specifically to increase direct participation

Common for Afa insurance, Prevent and Suntarbetsliv is that they focus on knowledge production which creates the conditions for increased direct influence, Afa insurance through extensive research that Prevent and Suntarbetsliv can use in their educations.

In contrast to Prevent and Suntarbetsliv, there are a number of programs that focus directly on increasing the direct participation in the work. The most successful is The Production Leap (Produktionslyftet).

4.12.1. The Production Leap's development programme

The initiative for Produktinslyftet (The Production Leap) was taken as early as 2007 by the employers' organization Teknikföretagen (The Association of Swedish Engineering Industries) and the trade union IF Metall with the aim of strengthening the ability to improve and renew the industry. Initially, it was about stimulating the introduction of lean production, but over the years,

the green transition and sustainable production have gained a more prominent place. The programme is currently run by a broad partnership coordinated by a national research institute and financed mainly through fees from the companies themselves. Through grants from various authorities, it has been possible to reduce the fees for the smallest companies. The program helps companies build structures that provide support for development, learning, and engagement at all levels. The participants also get to practice putting their new knowledge into action. Over 300 companies have participated in Produktinslyftet and the effects are well documented. Today, the program has broad recognition among companies, authorities and other stakeholders.

In a similar way to Produktionslyftet, there is Vårdlyftet (the Healthcare Leap) and Äldreomsorgslyftet (the Elderly care Leap), which are aimed at the public sector.

A difference compared to Suntarbetsliv is that Suntarbetsliv consists of a wide range of methods that can be combined into analyses and initiatives at workplaces, while Produktinslyftet mainly has a fixed design that the employer buys in its entirety. The similarity consists in the fact that tools and training are formed in agreement between the parties and can then be used by employers in the practical work environment management.

4.12.2. Universally Designed Workplaces

A partly forgotten prerequisite for both direct and indirect participation is that you really have access to a labour market in which to participate. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the Swedish Agency for Participation and the Swedish Public Employment Service, carried out the project "More ways in – Broadened recruitment", which has resulted in, among other things, a *Guide for Inclusive Workplaces* (SKL, undated) where the principle of Universally Designed Workplaces is developed (Arnell-Szurkos, 2022), a concept that is taken from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006).

UVA - The Association for Universally Designed Workplaces (UVA 2024) collaborates with several trade unions and companies for increased inclusion through education about how to design products, environments, programs and services in a way that as many people as possible can use them, without the need for adaptation or special design afterwards. Both the previously presented organizations Prevent and Suntarbetsliv have also developed practical training materials for increased inclusion. An important role is played by the mandatory occupational health care (*Occupational Health Care Act, revised 2021*) and its role in adapting workplaces to employees in need of rehabilitation or with reduced working capacity due to an occupational injury.

4.13. Conclusions

Participation is a complex process that takes place and is coordinated at many levels within the trade unions. The three trade union confederations (LO, TCO and SACO) are mainly concerned with strategic issues at the societal level, primarily labour market policy but also in other policy areas such as social policy and education policy. There are also some "think tanks" linked to the central level that can operate in the political debate in a slightly freer manner.

The central trade unions themselves (or in negotiation alliances) handle wage formation and the regulation of working conditions through collective agreements. The major unions themselves also

interact in the political process. For example, IF Metall is an important player in shaping industrial policy, where they sometimes take support from the employers. Almost all unions are active in work environment research.

Between the local and central levels, there is usually a regional level that coordinates and supports the local level, for example in matters of labour law. Employees of small companies that do not have local representation turn directly to the regional level in salary negotiations and all other issues where they need support. In companies where there is a local trade union, however, there is a great negotiation space for the local trade unions to sign agreements on wages and working conditions themselves. Here one could talk about union subsidiarity - i.e. trying to solve the problems at the local level before going to the branch or union.

There are also other trade union organizations such as the Syndicalists that organize certain smaller groups and operate more directly locally. There are no yellow unions but professional associations in different fields.

However, a clear conclusion is that there is no conflict between direct and indirect participation in Sweden. There are many programs and activities that support direct participation, but the unions have a hand in all of them, often together with the employers. We find no example of an organization with a hidden agenda in which employers try to sidestep the unions in any organized way in order to weaken their position.

We are aware that there are exceptions, mainly American companies that have tried to ban the activities of the unions (for instance Tesla, Toys "R" Us, McDonalds), but most have adapted and signed collective agreements or left the country as Toys "R" Us

5. Case study development

Section 5 includes four case studies, two from the manufacturing industry and two from the advanced tertiary sector. In the latter, we have chosen one case from the public sector and one from the private service sector. The cases are not randomly chosen, but we have, after consultation with union officials at the central level, looked for cases that in some interesting way shed light on direct participation and how it meets the Swedish model, which is largely based on indirect participation. The results were shared and discussed with the participants at a web-based follow-up meeting. Those who were unable to attend were given a video link to view the presentation later.

We have chosen to anonymize our four cases, not because the companies and unions wanted it, but rather out of respect for the trust they have given us in the honest and sincere interviews.

- The Workshop Company is a small manufacturing company that introduces Lean production.
- The Mine is a large international mining company that carries out a major technical innovation with major social implications,
- The Municipality is a small Swedish municipality that is trying to change its approach to sick leave and staff turnover
- The Warehouse is a private company that has opened a large high-tech warehouse for the distribution of pharmaceuticals.

Before presenting the case studies, we shall provide a brief industry overview.

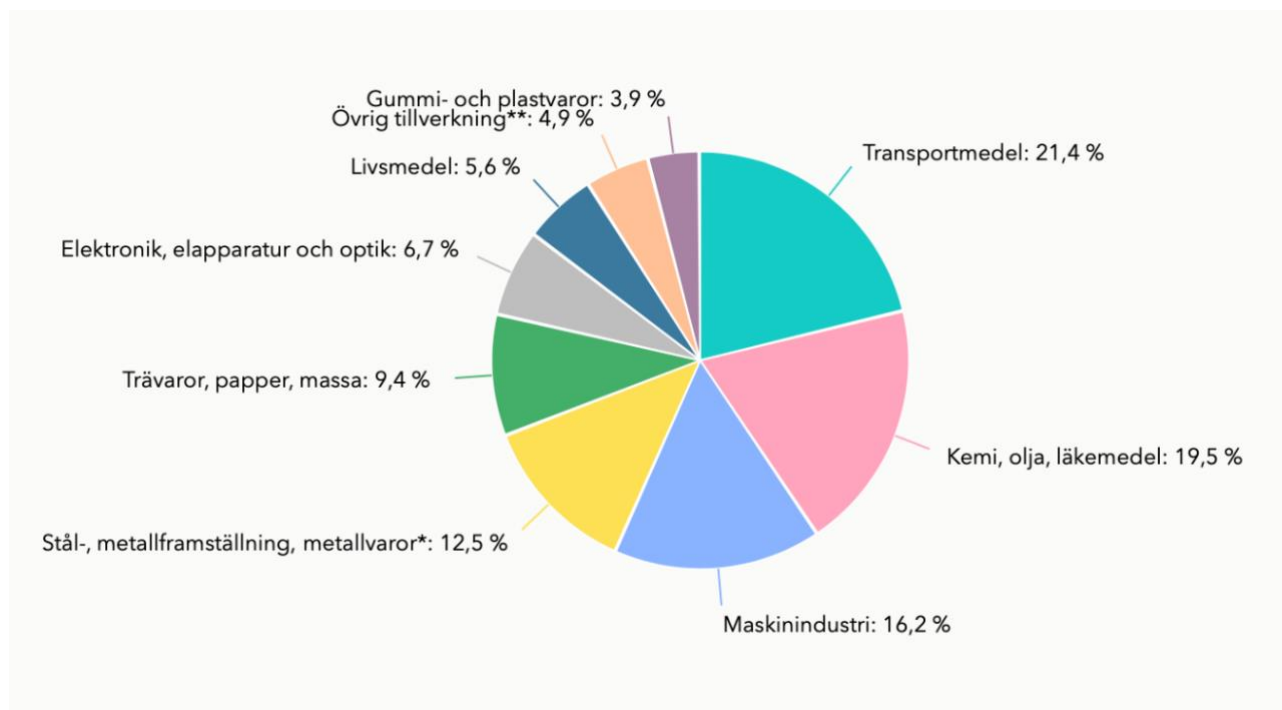
5.1. Manufacturing sector

The manufacturing industry is growing

In September 2024, 5,220,000 people were employed in Sweden. The number of unemployed was 468,000, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 8.2 percent (Statistics Sweden 2024). Just over 70 per cent of employed people work in the private sector. The public sector expanded strongly during the 1970s. During the same period, employment in the private sector was almost at a standstill. After the crisis of the 1990s, growth in the public sector came to a halt while it began to increase in the private sector. Virtually all employment growth since 1994 has been in the private sector. In recent years, however, the trend has also been increasing in the public sector. (Ekonomifakta 2024)

The manufacturing industry accounts for almost 20 per cent of the business sector's value added, which is included in gross domestic product, GDP. The chart below shows the share of different industrial sectors in the total value added in the manufacturing industry. Some of the most important industries are in the classic basic industries: the steel, chemical and forest industries. Another major sector is the motor vehicle industry. It is also within this that production has increased the most in recent years. (Ekonomifakta, 2024)

Figure 2. Industrial production in Sweden, year 2023. Clockwise: Transport equipment 21.4%, Chemical, oil, medicine 19.5%, Mechanical engineering 16.2%, Steel, metal 12.5%, Wood, paper, pulp 9.4%, Electronics, electrical machines, optics 6.7%, Food 5.6%, Other manufacturing 5.6%, Rubber, plastic products 3.9%.



Source: https://www.ekonomifakta.se/sakomraden/makroekonomi/produktion-och-investeringar/industriproduktionens-sammansattning_1213132.html

The biggest companies

Largestcompanies.se have compiled a list of the largest industries in Sweden in 2023 (Industritorget.se, 2024):

1. *Automotive industry* - The automotive industry is one of the most prominent and well-known industries in Sweden. With large companies such as Volvo and Scania dominating the market, the automotive industry continues to be an important part of the Swedish economy.
2. *Telecommunications industry* – Sweden is known for its strong telecommunications companies, such as Ericsson and Telia. These companies play an important role in the development of new technologies and infrastructure, both nationally and internationally.
3. *The forest industry* - The forest industry is another of Sweden's most significant industries, with companies such as Stora Enso and SCA as major players. Forest products such as paper, cardboard and wood products are important export commodities for Sweden.
4. *Food industry* - The food industry in Sweden is diversified and competitive, with well-known brands such as Arla, Oatly, and Orkla. This sector has grown rapidly in recent years, largely thanks to an increased demand for sustainable and vegetarian products.
5. *Energy industry* - Sweden has been a pioneer in sustainable energy, with a significant portion of its energy production coming from renewable sources such as hydropower, wind power, and solar energy. Companies such as Vattenfall and E.ON are leaders in the energy industry.

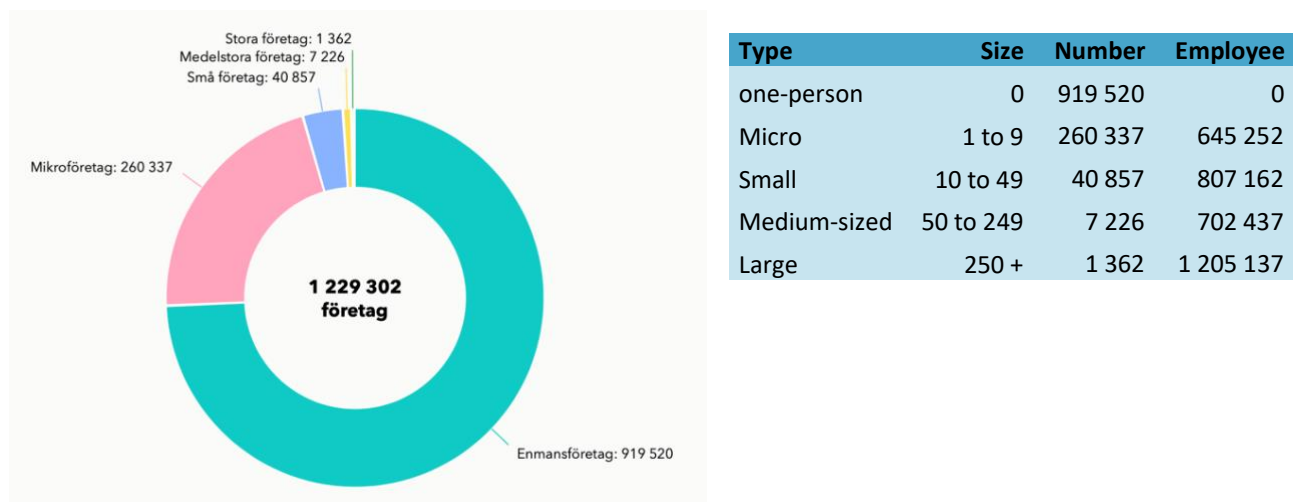
6. *The Life Science Industry* - With companies such as AstraZeneca, Elekta and Getinge Group, the life science industry is an important part of the Swedish economy. This sector includes, among others, pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical technology companies.

7. *IT and the technology industry* – Sweden is known for its technological innovation and a strong IT sector, with companies such as Spotify, Klarna, and King as successful examples. This industry continues to grow rapidly and attract investment from all over the world.

Most companies are small

According to Ekonomifakta (2024), there are 1,229,302 companies in Sweden. Of these, 99.9 percent are small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 250 employees. Only 0.1 percent of all companies in Sweden are large companies, i.e. have 250 employees or more. Also note that one-person by definition have no employees. However, this is not the same as no one working in the company. A one-person company is not counted as an employee, and the statistics do not show the extent to which the company is active.

Figure 3. Number of companies by size in Sweden, year 2024



Source: https://www.ekonomifakta.se/sakomraden/foretagande/naringslivet/foretagens-storlek_1212719.html?chart=1211203%2F%2F

Industrial relations in the manufacturing industry

The manufacturing industry is probably the most organized part of the Swedish labour market, both on the employer side and on the employee side. Here are the large, well-known companies that are often used as examples of the Swedish labour market model. They are all covered by collective agreements and they are all defenders of the Swedish model.

While the manufacturing industries is the most well-organized sector that strictly follows the Swedish model of union representation, they are usually positive to direct participation. Almost all of them have introduced some variant of Lean production where daily planning meetings are standard, not as a response to union demands but because it is a rational method to achieve efficiency in production, a method that is supported and encouraged by the unions.

The manufacturing industry is the sector with the highest degree of union membership in Sweden, but the degree of union membership has continuously decreased for blue-collared workers in the industry, from 78 percent to 72 percent in the period 2013-2023 while white-collar workers remained at 78 percent throughout the period (Kjellberg, 2024).

5.1.1. Case study 1: The Workshop Company

The Workshop Company is an example of a collaborative project within the framework of The Production Leap, which is a collaboration in which employers and the trade union organisation first negotiated an overall national framework that has then been applied to over 300 companies, including The Workshop Company.

The Production Leap's development programme

The Production Leap was initiated as early as 2007 by the employers' organization Teknikföretagen and the trade union IF Metall. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity for improvement

and renewal in industry, with the aim of creating conditions for sustainable competitiveness and sustainability.

The backbone of The Production Leap is an 18-month development program where participating companies receive help to build structures that provide support for development, learning and engagement at all levels. They also get practice putting their new knowledge into action.

The costs are paid by the companies themselves, but through subsidies from the state, it has been possible to reduce the costs for the smallest companies. Over 300 companies have participated in The Production Leap and the effects are well documented. Today, the program has broad recognition among companies, authorities and other stakeholders.

Company characteristics

The Workshop Company is a privately owned contract manufacturer that has been in business for more than 50 years. The production consists of entire products, subsystems, components and spare parts mostly based on steel, aluminium and stainless steel. The company strives for high quality and precision in its products as well as high flexibility towards its customers while safeguarding a good working environment. The company mainly works regionally and nationally but also has international customers. The core values are the right quality, competence, service and flexibility, which has resulted in close and long-term customer relationships.

The production facility is located in a small town located in southern Sweden, but the company's customers are spread throughout the country. Products manufactured by The Workshop Company are used by people all over the world.

The Workshop Company has 110 employees, of which 90 are collective employees (60 of whom are affiliated with IF Metall). Several employees have a foreign background, probably half, and many come from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Poland and Bosnia. Age and gender distribution are relatively evenly distributed. According to IF Metall's club chairman, the company is more equal than other comparable industries. Staff turnover is low. The company has signed a collective agreement with IF Metall.

The company's current CEO started as an employee of the company in 1982, at the age of 19. He worked in production and was gradually given increased responsibility. In 1999, he was given the opportunity to buy in as a partner in the company. In 2019, the management of the company was given an opportunity to take over the entire company. The company's CEO has made a career from being employed on the shop floor to 40 years later being the CEO and majority owner of the company. He now owns 60 percent of the shares, the remaining part is divided among three people in the management team with 15%, 15% and 10% of the shares, respectively. In total, the management team consists of seven people.

The collective employees are a fairly mixed group, with qualified skilled workers, but there is also a group that works with low skilled tasks. The company's CEO sees it as a challenge to further educate this group of employees giving them options to work with more qualified assignments, it can be about drawing reading, quality issues, etc.

All in all, The Workshop Company must be described as a well-functioning company where the majority of the management is a partner, something that gives an extra commitment and responsibility.

Why a development project?

According to the company's CEO, the company had expanded its production by about 10 percent per year over the past 20 years and at the same time had problems with poor logistics and too much capital tied up in work-in-progress products. It started to become unsustainable, both in terms of planning and premises, and when they took over as owners in 2019, they began to think about how to proceed in order to continue expanding in the future. The company needed to work in a different way to be able to grow ten percent per year.

The company's CEO was then contacted by a consultant who was working on a project called The Robot Leap. The aim of the project was to support automation in small and medium-sized industrial enterprises. The consultant also informed about The Production Leap and after a short time it was concluded that this was an investment that would suit the company well. Together, they formed a project that involved implementing large parts of lean production over a period of 18 months. The company bought the concept offered by The Production Leap and the change process started. The consultant became the coach that The Production Leap put in charge of the project. He was a civil engineer and works as his own consultant. He had been associated with The Production Leap for about 10 years and has previously worked as a production manager in a company in the area. The project started in the spring of 2021. The company attached a change manager to the project who, through his commitment, came to mean a lot. According to the coach, the company invested significantly more resources and commitment in the project than he had met in similar projects.

The goal of the project was to introduce a lean production in all processes. The company's CEO thinks the name is a bit misleading because the change affects all processes in the company, not just production.

Project implementation

The project started with a pilot project for a couple of months that was evaluated and corrected before being passed on to on to the next group. It took just over a year before all groups were engaged. A central part, according to the company's CEO, was the daily management, which was then supplemented with the production meeting, where issues that cannot be handled at the department level are handled. In addition, there are two more meetings, the administrative one, where all support processes are included, and the management group has its own meeting every other day for more general issues. Despite the many levels, the distances are perceived as short, the CEO can always be reached when needed.

According to the coach, the project can be divided into three phases. The first is the strategy phase, where they agreed on where they stand and plans the broad outlines of the upcoming development work. The company's CEO decided early that he had to prioritize the project and must follow the basic lean training programme to understand what you can get out of a developed production system. According to the coach, this was a crucial measure that showed that they were serious about the investment. The second phase is described as an experimentation where you learn the different methods that are included in the lean concept. All employees are given a review of the basic principles where you get to play a game that shows the different methods and how they are connected. The third phase is about the dissemination and acceptance of the new principles, where the first-line managers were an important target group.

The project has been linked to significant training efforts, both training within the framework of The Production Leap and training procured by external suppliers. Several have undergone certification training so that they can operate the most advanced machines. According to the company's CEO, continuing and further education will be something that characterizes the company in the future as well.

Two key components that have changed the work of employees are day-to-day management and decentralised operator maintenance.

The main idea of day-to-day management is to have a daily open dialogue where everyone can make their voice heard, regardless of hierarchical structures. Through a series of daily morning meetings, all information should flow through the business and at 8.20 a.m., everything should reach the management team and the company's CEO. The company is not bigger than that, if necessary, the CEO can get out into production himself to get a broader picture of reality.

Day-to-day management has meant that decisions have been moved down, and the operator can plan parts of the production himself. There is now a structure in the work where the operator knows where their own work fits into the whole. The operator can make decisions himself without having to contact his or her manager every time. The operator must think more broadly, it's not just about keeping the machines running.

An important component of the daily management is the system for deviation reporting, where all employees report disturbances and deviations in the production system or production flow. After a report, there must be feedback within 24 hours where they discuss how the problem should be fixed. The deviations can be reported either directly in the computer system (Teams) or through a note with pen and paper. Everyone thinks the deviation reporting and especially the quick personal feedback is interesting.

Decentralised operator maintenance means that some of the work performed by maintenance staff is distributed among the operators who do their part of the maintenance. If a problem arises, the operator tries to fix it themselves before calling for help. In this way, the operators' tasks have been broadened while the maintenance staff can concentrate on the more demanding tasks. According to the coach, planned maintenance suddenly became a dialogue throughout the company.

When the project was about to start, it was discovered that they had forgotten to inform IF Metall, an obligation that they have both under the Co-Determination Act and the agreements signed with The Production Leap. The problem was quickly corrected and IF Metall's club chairman became a part of the project's steering group. In addition to the union club chairman, the steering group also includes a union safety representative who has been able to broaden the perspectives and point out the work environment consequences of different solutions. In this way, a consensus has almost always been found before the measures are introduced. According to the company's CEO, IF Metall has had a positive attitude all along and they try to make their contribution.

The role of the trade unions in the project.

IF Metall's club chairman has been chairman since 2019. She is also a member of IF Metall's regional board and she is a member of the collective bargaining council that negotiates the collective wage agreements. In addition to club chairs at companies, she is also an insurance information officer and helps members with occupational injury insurance. The club chairmanship covers 50% of her working hours. The rest of the time she works as a workshop worker, which means that she can

jump in where needed, or where it is decided at the daily planning meeting at 7:30 every day (daily management).

The club board consists of five people, the chairperson, vice chairperson and treasurer, two safety representatives and one other additional member.

According to the Act on Board Representation (LSA 1987:1245), the trade union is entitled to two seats on the company's board of directors if the company has at least 25 employees and to three seats if the company has more than 1000 employees. In order to exercise this right, a decision must be made by the trade union that has signed a collective agreement with the company.

The trade union of our company is not represented on the company's board of directors, although it has the right to appoint two board representatives. According to the club chairman, there is no direct need to activate this right because you are so close to the company's CEO and can raise all issues directly with him. The company's CEO shares this view and believes that all important issues are discussed in the steering group. The day-to-day management means that there is no need for regular MBL meetings. All problems are dealt with directly in the day-to-day management. In addition to day-to-day management, there is also a safety committee where work environment issues are discussed. The club chairman says that "it should not be us and them between companies and unions, but only us. We are also interested in the company doing well."

The union does not know the background to how The Production Leap started, they were only called to be part of the steering group once the project started.

The union has no measurements of its own that show how the employees have experienced the effects of the project, but IF Metall has started a project to follow up on how the members enjoy their work and here the results of The Production Leap will be reflected. The chairman of the union is very positive about the outcome of the project and points out in particular that the members get to be involved and that their voice is heard. A contributing factor to this is the deviation reporting system where you see that things are really changing, that you are being heard.

Other positive effects of The Production Leap are that there has been calmer work, freer conditions and broader professional roles. The employees have also had the opportunity to undergone more training.

The club chairman also points out that the work environment has generally improved through The Production Leap. They have improved logistics that have made it easier for employees, new lifting aids and better chemical handling. Sick leave has decreased, and the quality of production has also improved. According to the club chairman, the project has facilitated the way to handle work environment issues, a natural forum to pursue the issues.

Issues regarding Lean production have been discussed by the unions at the local department level, but IF Metall centrally has not been directly involved in the project in question. According to the chair of the local club, there has also been no need for such support. Discussions and support have, however, taken place in the regional IF Metall section.

The Production Leap has meant financial gains for the company and according to the club chairman, the employees have benefited from it in the form of salary increases, in the last negotiation it was 1% more than what the central agreement says.

How did it turn out:

According to the company's CEO, it has reduced its inventory levels and products at work have been reduced by almost half. The financial effects of the project have been difficult to assess, but according to the CEO, this is due to other things that have not been linked to the project, such as the Covid pandemic and large cost increases for energy and materials. According to the company's CEO, they feel equipped for a 10% increase in production per year also in the future

On the plus side, the production boost has meant a lot to the staff. The company conducts regular employee surveys and the indicators of well-being and the work environment are better than they were before. There is a more open and freer atmosphere in the workplace and the work environment has improved significantly, something that is also confirmed by the union club chairman (see above).

The coach is also very pleased with how the project has developed, he has carried out about thirty development projects over the past 10 years and believes that this has been the most successful, something that has been confirmed by the fact that the company made it to the finals in the competition for the Swedish lean award, an award that aims to highlight good examples of the introduction of lean production in Sweden.

The biggest problem, according to the company's CEO, has been to keep up the pace of change. It can be difficult to get all the departments to keep their pulse. There was some scepticism at first, but it worked out. Most are positive now and contribute to the work. The management's lack of presence was pointed out early in the project, which has been corrected. The goal is for management to try to be present at least three workplace meetings a week.

Case study 1 in brief

Company characteristics	Company context Privately owned contract manufacturer based on steel, aluminium and stainless steel. The company has 110 employees and works mainly regionally and nationally but also has international customers
	State of innovation To introduce Lean production
Industrial relations	Trade union density rate at the company level 90 collective employees of whom 60 are affiliated with IF Metall
	Workplace labour representation structure characteristics IF Metall's club chairman paid 50% by the company
	Company-level collective bargaining The company signs collective agreements with IF Metall
Direct worker participation	Direct participation as the subject of organizational tools Advanced form of direct participation with daily planning meetings throughout the production
	Direct participation as a vehicle for workplace innovation <i>Regulation:</i> Initiated by management without a collective agreement <i>Intensity:</i> Daily planning meetings for bottom-up consultation or joint analysis

	<i>Scope:</i> Mainly executive and managerial but also health and safety issues <i>Objectives:</i> For the management, organisational efficiency and employee engagement; for the trade union, workers' self-determination in the workplace
The role of industrial relations in direct worker participation	A framework was formed at the national level where both employers and the union support the basic principles of The Production Leap. No collective agreement has been signed, the project is based on mutual trust.
	Model of integration b/w direct participation and industrial relations Democratic (participatory) model
	Breadth and depth of participation Direct participation is both breadth and depth and includes all employees. An interesting form is the system for deviation reporting, where the employee is guaranteed some form of feedback within 24 hours.
Difficulties	There was some scepticism at first among the workers – some were more reluctant, other saw it as an opportunity for work development
Impacts	No tools to measure the economic impact of participatory practices. Significantly improved working environment and safety. Worker enthusiasm and engagement have increased.
Future prospects	The project has reached the point of no return. Both employers and IF Metall are satisfied with the results.

5.1.2. Case study 2: The Mine

Company characteristics

The Mine is a large Swedish mining company with roots in northern Sweden. The metals of the mine are zinc, copper, nickel and lead. Other metals that The Mine produces include gold and silver. The North mine is a copper mine with silver and gold located about 15 kilometres from a small town in northern Sweden with 8,000 inhabitants. The mine is Scandinavia's largest open pit mine and one of Europe's largest copper mines. The North mine has about 900 employees and is the largest private employer in the municipality.

The reason why the North mine has been chosen as a study object is that the project contains major challenges when it comes to gaining social acceptance among the employees, it is about replacing about 250 truck drivers with autonomous trucks. In addition to the truck drivers, the staff who control and plan the current manual traffic are affected. Today, 17 trucks have been converted to autonomous out of a total of about 45 trucks. The others will gradually be replaced with new ones over the next 10 years. It is thus a matter of mixed traffic with autonomous and manual control, which places very high demands on the safety systems that exist. The manual vehicles in the production zone must be equipped with special communication equipment (transponders) and have specially trained personnel.

Strong trade unions

Of the 900 employees, just over 600 are collective employees and members of IF Metall's mining club number 136. The degree of affiliation to IF Metall is between 90 and 95 percent, which is very high even in a Swedish context. The other trade union affected by the transition is Unionen, which has about 100 members, 15 of whom are affected by the transition itself.

IF Metall's union club in the North mine has a board with a full-time chairman, a vice chairman and two chief safety representatives. We have interviewed the chairman, who has worked in the mine since 2006 and as union chairman since 2021.

Unionen has a board that is responsible for all Swedish mines in the mine company. The mine in the North mine has three representatives on that board. We have interviewed one of the board members who has had a special responsibility to follow the project in question. The interviewee has worked in the company since 2005 and in parallel with her union assignment, she has worked as a training coordinator in projects.

For union coordination between the various unions and mines within the mine company, there are two bodies, The Mining Trade Union Collaboration (FSG), which coordinates the company's Swedish operations, and for the coordination of activities abroad, there is the European Workers Council (EWC), which is actually a regulation of forms of cooperation on the initiative of the EU. Representatives of employers also participate in the EWC meetings. At the local level, there is the Mine Union Council that coordinate the unions within the North mine. In addition to these groups, there are meetings for reconciliation directly between the unions and the company. For IF Metall, these meetings are regular and for Unionen, they call when necessary.

A project for increased safety

The project is called Autonomous Haulage System (AHS) for Open-Pit Automation. The company describes the project primarily as a safety project, where it is a matter of moving personnel from the hazardous production environment to safer workplaces located outside the production zone. The system will lead to increased productivity by requiring fewer trucks to handle the same production volume. The trucks will not go faster than the current ones, but they will run at the same speed all the time, 24/7, and with reduced stops and set-up times. IF Metall shares the description that it is a work environment project and emphasizes the importance of getting away from the whole-body vibrations that trucks driving entails. Unionen believes that the automation project is essentially a project for increased productivity, but with large elements of improved working environment. Many of Unionen's members work in production and are exposed to the same workload as IF Metall's members.

Before choosing the system, an inventory was made of which systems are available on the market, which were then evaluated from commercial and technical aspects. Technology is developing so fast and it was considered important to have a large supplier that will be present on the market even if the technology changes. The project manager believes that the company has such knowledge of the technology that it can actually change systems in the future if necessary.

Technically, this means that existing trucks are converted to autonomous ones by equipping them with a control system developed by Komatsu and tested in several other mines. Several new work roles are attached to the new system:

- AHS shift supervisor who is a supervisory function for the entire AHS system.
- Pit patrollers who are down in the mine like the extended arm of the central controller. They can change routes if there is any disruption and also take over control of a truck and manually drive it to a workshop if necessary. The truck always goes in the same track, but it can occasionally get off track, then the truck stops and the pit patroller has to step into the truck and manually drive it back into the right position and then let the autonomous system take over again. The pit patroller also assists other machines that need to be in the area. There are three pit patrollers during the day shift and two during the night. The training of a pit patroller takes about 8 weeks.
- Central controllers are those who control the production flow in the mine with the help of an advanced control and planning system. The central controller decides which machines should do what, which excavator should load each truck. They also decide who gets access to the production area. To help the central controller, there is the pit controller who is on site and reports what is happening. The central controller is mainly newly recruited with a university education and organized in the white-collar union, Unionen or SACO (the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations). Some are further trained operators from the old manual control system. Training of the central controller takes about 12-15 weeks depending on what prior knowledge they have. There are two Central Controllers on site during the day shift and one during the night shift. According to IF Metall's chairman, the final union affiliation has not been fully discussed.
- Dispatcher is an old professional role that controls the manual part of the vehicle fleet. That part will gradually decrease. The dispatcher is currently organized in IF Metall, but the company wants to make them white-collar workers because they also have a supervisory function. However, IF Metall believes that the development of the role of dispatcher is a natural part of professional development and that they should consequently remain with members of IF Metall. Unionen does not share this view but sees them as its members.
- AHS Trainer that trains new and existing employees on the new system. Extensive training is required for those who will work with the system. To date, about 80 people have been trained. It is not only trucks drivers, but also other machine drivers working in the mining zone together with the autonomous trucks. There are a total of 11 trainers, five who are employed by the mine company and six who come from the system supplier.
- Truck technician is another new professional role that will maintain and service the control system on the trucks, existing workshops are used for ordinary maintenance. There are two technicians per shift and they are employed by the system supplier.

An important part of the project has been training, both training on how the new system works and training in safety behaviour in the autonomous zone. No one is allowed into the autonomous zone without having undergone adequate safety training. Education has thus been the entrance ticket to working in the new system. When the project started, you had to register an interest in training to be part of the new system. There was an initial resistance that gradually diminished as the project's contours became clearer. In the autonomous area, only English language applies for safety reasons, which can be a contributing factor to the negative attitude, people were worried if they would be able to do it.

The project started as a development project in 2021 with a letter of intent, but already in 2018 the trade unions had been informed about the plans to introduce autonomous trucks. During the

second half of 2021, the new control room and the training building were built. In 2023, they started installing the hardware and putting the system into operation, at the same time as training the staff. After barely a year in operation, the system worked well enough that responsibility for continued operation could be handed over to regular production. However, there are still problems that need to be solved.

There is no forthcoming threat of redundancy. The staffing for trucks and dispatchers has not decreased significantly during the time due partly to the fact that the company has increased production at the same time and, partly because no new truck drivers are hired since the project was started, any shortage of truck drivers is solved by hiring drivers from staffing companies. Since the project extends over such a long period of time, 10 years, the company does not expect any layoffs of personnel, but it is solved through natural staff turnover and retirements. The project manager believes that the lack of redundancy discussion has been a major reason why it has been relatively easy to gain acceptance for the project from both unions and staff.

Acceptance of the change

In order to gain acceptance for the change, a communication plan was formed, and a communicator was hired so that everyone would understand what the project is about and gain confidence in the change. The communicator spent time out in production and informed about the project and its effects. The communication plan was based on a comprehensive risk analysis but evaluated risks and opportunities in different phases of the implementation process. The company summarizes the communication plan in six sentences:

- Management and managers are key
- Resistance or negative reactions to a change should be seen as a sign of a healthy organization
- The importance of a dialogue as a method for success
- Flexible and continuous development
- Transparency and speed
- Questions should be requested and dealt with (strategic listening)

The implementation strategy was based entirely on accepting and using the established structures that existed in the company. At an early stage, managers and supervisors were trained in change management and communication. There were many meetings with the trade unions and participation in many MBL meetings. The project manager believes that the trade unions have been constructive and contributed with relevant issues. There are a number of difficult questions, such as which forms of shift should be applied, where it has been difficult to find consensus. There has also been a discussion about the boundaries between the unions when it comes to the positions in the control room.

Separate meetings were held with the safety representatives where the company explained what the new technology is and how it works. A number of safety representatives participated more actively in the project and took part in the work on risk and safety analyses. It has been important to build confidence in the safety features of the new technology.

During the course of the project, the project management has participated in workplace meetings and informed about the project, and they have had "open house" days when they informed in more

relaxed forms and offered hamburgers. Information has also been provided at the mine companies annual safety days where all employees participate.

Another way to make your voice heard is to use the system for deviation reporting. Via their mobile phone, all employees can report if something is not working. The report goes to the manager who will investigate and handle the case, it is a manager's responsibility to give feedback on the reporting.

IF Metall believes that the relatively smooth introduction is due to the fact that the rules of the game in the Swedish model have been followed. There has been some resistance among the members that has gradually softened when it becomes clear that no one will be fired. One success factor is that a working group was created relatively early on in which IF Metall was a part. There, they have been able to raise the members' questions, "instead of 600 members coming with their questions, we channel them into the process via the union". The members expect the union to solve the problem. The union is interested in the company doing well and creating jobs in the future as well.

Unionen emphasizes that there was a good dialogue with the employees right from the start, with workplace meetings where employees were able to make their voices heard. That dialogue has been important in order to eliminate speculation, and to make people feel safe. Unionen claims that they received a lot of information at the beginning of the project, but it has gradually decreased, and their questions has become more in the background. Due to their size, IF Metall has been able to put their questions in the foreground. The representative of Unionen does not feel that they have been run over, but their questions have been forgotten along the way. An exception is risk analysis where they have been involved the whole time.

How did it turn out?

The project has been completed and responsibility for continued operation has been handed over to the regular operating organization. The project manager is satisfied that the system is in place and working, but not as satisfied with the production levels. There are still problems and some optimizations remain. According to the project manager, it is natural that there will be problems when you hand over responsibility for the operation to a new organization, the new responsibilities has not had time to settle down, and new problems appear all the time.

The project manager also believes that there has been a more open climate in the workplace that is based more on trust, but there is still some resistance from employees who prefer to work with the old manual technology. The project manager estimates that at present, about 80 percent are interested in working with the new technology, while 20 percent still want to work with the old as before. The old technology will remain for another ten years, albeit to a lesser extent.

A strong contributing factor to the relatively smooth implementation and acceptance has been that the company has not had any redundancies. There have been enough work tasks for everyone to find a new position, either by training to the new technology or training to manage other machines. There is still a need for more truck drivers, but the company does not hire any new ones, when a need arises, truck drivers are hired through a staffing company.

Both IF Metall and Unionen largely share the company's view and emphasize that the project has not led to any layoffs. The employees have been given new work tasks in the new system or have

moved on to other tasks within the companies, such as road maintenance, truck maintenance and loading that is still done manually. There will also be a need for the older age groups until they retire.

Case study 2 in brief

Company characteristics	Company context A copper mine with about 900 employees that is part of a large international mining company. The Mine is the largest private employer in a municipality with 8,000 inhabitants.
	State of innovation A pure technical innovation with major social implications
Industrial relations	Trade union density rate at the company level Extremely high, 90 to 95%
	Workplace labour representation structure characteristics Advanced with board representation and a full-time union representative paid by the company. European Work Councils' participation on company level.
	Company-level collective bargaining Many collective agreements for both wages and cooperation in the company
Direct worker participation	Direct participation as the subject of organisational tools The project follows the Swedish model of consultation via the unions. As a complement, workplace meetings have been used for a direct dialogue with the employees.
	Direct participation as a vehicle for workplace innovation <i>Regulation:</i> Initiated by management without a collective agreement <i>Intensity:</i> Occasional dialogues with employees to gather experience and build trust <i>Scope:</i> Mainly trust building <i>Objectives:</i> For management, organisational efficiency and employee trust; for the trade union, safe and attractive work tasks
The role of industrial relations in direct worker participation	Mainly via the trade unions within the framework of the co-determination act. Separate meetings were held with the safety representatives. No collective agreement has been signed for the project.
	Model of integration b/w direct participation and industrial relations Hybrid (cooperative) model
	Breadth and depth of participation Participating primarily through union representation with direct participation as a complement to create trust)
Difficulties	Certain workers' fear of redundancies and lack of trust The hybrid production processes with parallel systems - the traditional model and the new model - interactions and disturbances between them.
Impacts	The change has been successfully implemented and will be permanent until the next technological step is taken. Productivity and product quality have increased. Significantly improved safety. Worker trust and engagement have increased during the project

Future prospects	The technology will be implemented in other mines within the mining company,
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5.2. Public sector and Private service sector

Swedish public sector

In international comparison, Sweden has a large public sector, which is reflected in high taxes for the citizens. In 2022, the Swedish tax burden amounted to 42.5 percent of the gross national product (GDP), compared with the EU average of 40 percent. Public expenditure corresponds to about 50 percent of the GDP. Social security, which includes old-age pension payments, is the single largest item. Health care, education and social care account for about a third of public expenditure.

The administration of the public sector is divided into three hierarchical levels the State, Regions and Municipalities. All levels are led by a democratically elected parliament that has considerable freedom within the scope of its mandate. There are 21 regions and 290 municipalities in Sweden. Before we go into the case studies, we will try to sort out which issues and responsibilities lie at each level.

The State

The Riksdag (The Parliament) is Sweden's legislative assembly and consists of 349 members who are elected every four years in general elections. The most important tasks of the Riksdag are to pass laws, decide on central government finances and monitor the Government's work.

The Government governs Sweden and is a driving force in the work to change our laws. The Government is accountable to the Parliament and must have the support of the Parliament in order to implement its policies. To help in this work, the Government has a Government Offices with a number of ministries, as well as government authorities and companies.

In Sweden, there are 367 government authorities (Statskontoret, 2024) that are under the government and are sorted under the various ministries. Their task is to implement the decisions made by the Riksdag and the Government in practice. The authorities employ approximately 250,000 employees.

The state as an employer is represented by its own authority, the Swedish Agency for Government Employers, which is an employers' organisation for all government agencies, public enterprises and other employers with a connection to the central government sector. The Swedish Agency for Government Employers' task is to be responsible for central negotiations with the trade unions, represent the state in labour law disputes and develop and coordinate the state's employer policy through collaboration with its members.

ST is the largest trade union in government activities with over 99,000 members working in government agencies and authorities, companies with a government mandate, universities, colleges and state-funded foundations.

The Regions

The regions are responsible for tasks that are common to large geographical areas and often require large financial resources. The largest area of responsibility for the Regions is health and medical care, which accounts for about 90 per cent of the expenditure. Other extensive tasks include public transport and regional development. The Regions are obliged to have certain activities by law. Other activities are voluntary and are decided by local politicians.

The Regions are governed by politicians who are directly elected by the county's residents. The regions are autonomous, but their activities are largely governed by the Riksdag's legislation and various authorities. The Regions have the right to tax its inhabitants and are financed 68 per cent by direct tax revenues and 23 per cent by subsidies from the state. The remaining part is financed through tariffs and fees. (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2024).

The Municipalities

The municipalities are responsible for a large part of the public services that exist in their area. Among the most important tasks are preschool, school, social services and care for the elderly. Municipalities are obliged to have certain activities by law. Other activities are voluntary and are decided by local politicians.

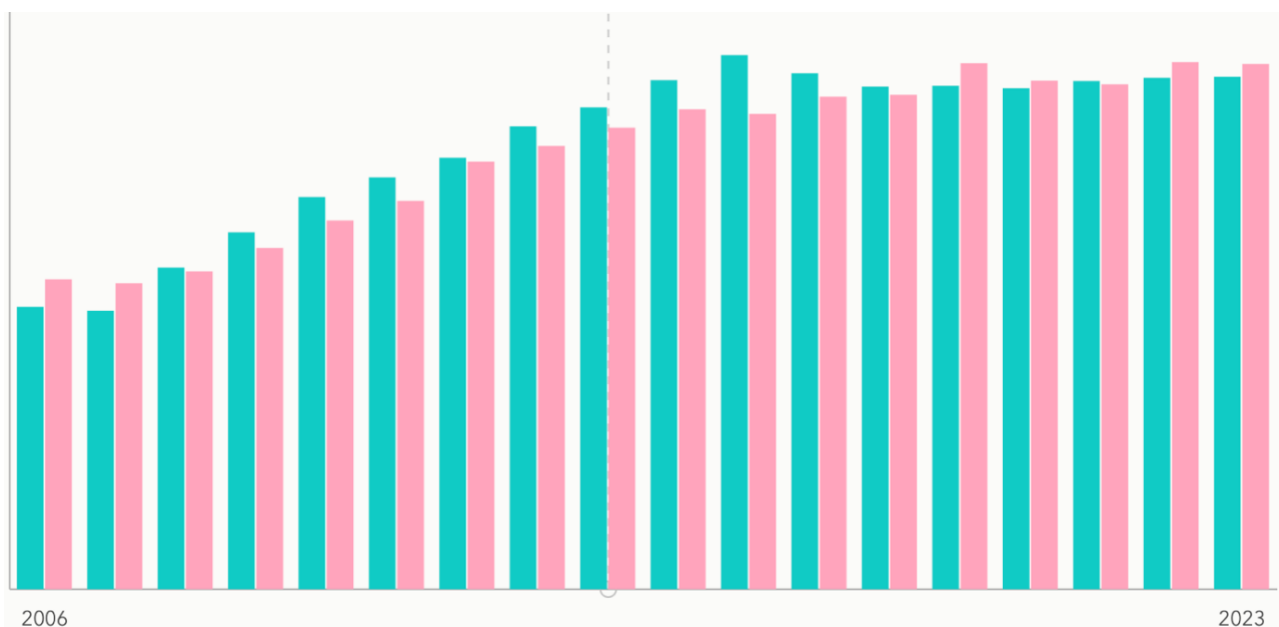
The municipalities are governed by politicians who are directly elected by the citizens. The municipalities are autonomous, but their activities are largely governed by the Riksdag's legislation. The municipalities have the right to tax its inhabitants. The municipalities' activities are financed 67 percent by direct tax revenues and 21 percent by subsidies from the state. The remaining part is financed through tariffs and fees. (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2024).

Privatization of the public sector has slowed down

In Sweden, the distribution between the private and public sectors is quite clear. The private sector dominates in terms of the number of companies and employment, but the public sector is mainly responsible for areas such as education, health care and social services and has the state, regions (county councils) or municipalities as employers.

However, they do not have to perform the services themselves. Instead, they can buy the service from another actor, such as a private company, which then performs the service. In the figure below, we see how the proportion of private actors in both municipalities (green) and regions (red) has doubled during the period 2006 to 2016 and then stabilized at around 13%.

Figure 4. Municipalities and regions' purchase of activities from private companies as a proportion of the total cost.



Source: https://www.ekonomifakta.se/sakomraden/foretagande/offentlig-sektor/offentlig-sektor-i-privat-regi_1213088.html

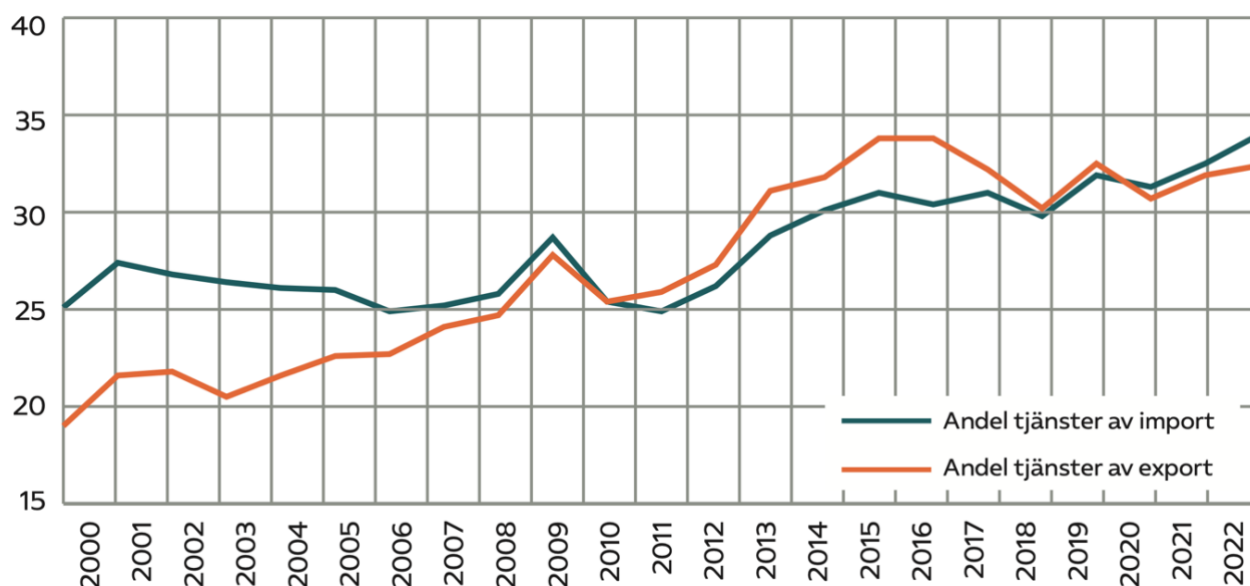
Public sector unions

On the collective side, the conditions are relatively simple, with the trade union Kommunal as the dominant party, while on the white-collar side, the picture is more complex with 13 different unions representing different professions. To coordinate these unions, a joint negotiation organization, *the Public Employees' Negotiation Council* (OFR), has been created, which represents more than 573,000 members. OFR is divided into seven union areas that coordinate negotiations with the three employers, State, Region and Municipality. A fundamental idea in the organization is that decisions on common issues can only be made when all the unions concerned agree. Each federal area has a far-reaching right to independently conduct negotiations and sign agreements for the union area. If only one union is part of a federal area, this union takes over the powers of the entire federal area.

The private service sector in Sweden

The Swedish service sector produces 52% of Sweden's gross domestic product (GDP) and creates employment for 47% of all people working in Sweden. The private service sector accounts for 85% of all new businesses. Growth in the sector has primarily been driven by knowledge-intensive business services and trade. Trade is the largest sub-sector of the private service sector, accounting for 11% of GDP. The second largest is information and communication, which is also the fastest growing subsector, accounting for 8.3% for the year 2022. The service sector is becoming increasingly internationalised, and its share of Swedish exports is increasing. (Almega 2024)

Figure 5. The service sector's share in percentage of Swedish exports (blue) and imports (red) for year 2000-2022



Source: Almega 2024

Productivity grew rapidly in Swedish business and industry until 2007 but fell noticeably thereafter. In the service sector, on the other hand, productivity growth has continued to be higher than in the service sector in other similar countries. IT-development has played a major role in productivity development as development increasingly focuses on different service processes. A contributing factor is that Sweden ranks high in international rankings of IT skills and competencies. (Almega 2024)

According to the employers' organization Almega, the potential for continued growth is great. A prerequisite is that the industry has better access to skilled labour. Industry representatives are asking for reforms to facilitate the financing of skills development. (Almega 2024).

The social partners in the services sector

Almega is the employers' organization for private service companies in Sweden. The organization has more than 11,500 member companies employing some 600,000 people. Its role is to represent the employers in negotiations and to develop relations between employers and employees as well as public policy issues for our member companies.

Almega offers expertise in employment and labour law, union negotiations, salary setting processes, work environment, labour insurance, and equality/discrimination matters. Additionally, our economic analyst keeps track of the service sector and offers analyses and forecasts. Almegas sector associations are part of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv).

On the trade union side, the picture is more complicated by the fact that the sector organises both blue-collared and white-collared employees. The blue-collared ones are mainly organised in *The Swedish Commercial Employees' Union* (Handels), the white-collared ones are mostly organised

in *Unionen*, which we presented earlier in the text. Handels is a union within the LO family with approximately 155,000 members that can be found in stores, warehouses and e-commerce. Hairdressers, employees in the beauty industry and florists are also organized in Handels. Among the academics there are several unions, but they are mainly united in *Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO)*. Handels and Unionen sign traditional collective agreements with Almega. SACO signs collective agreements on how the salary setting process should be carried out but omits all figures in favour of individual salary negotiations.

5.2.1. Case study 3: The Municipality

The social partners work together on health and welfare

On 1 September 2023, employers and trade unions in municipalities and regions formed the Welfare Council of the Social Partners. The council will deal with strategically important issues for skills supply and the work environment. This collaboration between employers and trade unions is a clear example of the Swedish model. A joint investment in health factors in working life has been implemented. The Welfare Council addresses strategic issues and when it comes to operational work, the development arena *Suntarbetsliv* (Healthy Working Life) is used as a tool. The Municipality is an example of how a municipality has developed its operations with the support of *Suntarbetsliv*, a concept that has been developed in collaboration with the trade unions that are active in the public sector.

About Suntarbetsliv

Suntarbetslivs task is to collect knowledge about preventive, health-promoting and rehabilitative efforts in the area of work environment and to make this knowledge available and useful in the workplaces within municipalities and regions. The aim is to contribute to promoting well-functioning work environment management in collaboration between employers and employees. *Suntarbetsliv* consists of a broad set of methods that can be combined into analyses and initiatives in the workplace. See further in section 4.

The Municipality

The Municipality has just over 1,800 employees who are organized in three administrations: Municipal management administrations, social services administration and Children, education and cultural administration. In total, there are about 50 different occupations on the municipality's payrolls. There is a big difference between the different occupational groups, such as assistant nurses, firefighters, teachers. Most of the municipality's employees work in user-related activities, professions that do not require more than upper secondary education. The Municipality has a fairly high proportion of residents with a foreign background and unemployment is high among young people. In connection with the refugee crisis in 2015, the municipality received many immigrants who have now in many cases moved on. The municipality now has a declining population base and an increased proportion of elderly people.

The trade union representation in The Municipality

The municipality's broad activities mean that they have employees who belong to many different trade unions and there are many different collective agreements that regulate the activities.

Most of the collective employees are members of the trade union Kommunal while most of the white-collar workers are members of the trade union Vision, which is the dominant organization on the white-collar side with 212,000 members in Sweden. On the academic side, there is AkademikerAlliansen (The Alliance of Professionals) consists of 16 unions. AkademikerAlliansen is a negotiation organization that represents approximately 65,000 academics. The trade unions do not have their own direct cooperation forums, but small working groups can arise on specific issues, such as a new agreement to be signed, but no formal cooperation.

The union representatives are not at the municipal management level, but there is a parallel structure at three levels for dialogue and collaboration with the various trade unions.

- Central collaboration group where issues at the municipality-wide level are addressed. Here, all trade unions are represented, but some of the smaller ones collaborate in the AkademikerAlliansen, which represents several trade unions with highly qualified members. It is the municipality's HR manager who leads these meetings.
- Administrative collaboration group is limited to issues linked to the three administrations but is still at a relatively overall administrative level
- Departmental collaboration group and in some cases Unitary collaboration group deal with business-related issues where the views of the trade unions are obtained. There are several local variations on how they organize.

The statutory security issues and co-determination issues are dealt with within the framework of this collaboration structure.

In addition, there are Workplace Meetings (APT) at the local workplace level that are held 10 times a year. The union is not involved, but the dialogue takes place directly with the employees. Such a meeting takes about three hours, a couple of hours for common issues and then divided into departments or units for business-related issues. If it is to implement a change, it is first raised here and then raised to the collaboration group at the administrative level.

According to the municipality's HR manager, HR issues have been strengthened over time, and the business has become more proactive from being mainly reactive. The union representative has the same view that relations with the HR department have improved significantly during the course of the project. A negative image of HR has been turned into a positive one, a change that started in connection with the appointment of the new HR manager. The union representative believes that you get better influence if the employer does not see the union as a counterparty but as a partner who can contribute with solutions. According to the municipality's HR manager, the municipality's goal is for all employees in The Municipality to feel good when they go to work or are at work. This benefits the business both financially and operationally.

The project

The project was started due to shortcomings in the work environment. The Swedish Work Environment Authority conducted an inspection in 2021 and found several shortcomings that the municipality had to address, and this became the starting point for extensive change work. There

was a stated goal that The Municipality should have a systematic work environment management. The municipality's HR manager had to hire a work environment and rehabilitation specialist who would ensure that the systematic work environment management was coherent at all levels and that all supporting and governing documents should be in place. At the same time, the union representative we interviewed was linked to the project as the chief safety representative. His role was to represent all trade unions in the work of change.

The Municipality contacted Suntarbetsliv, which had a support team that could come out and implement a discussion about health factors in an organization, and it was also free of charge. The Municipality wrote an application in which it points to high sickness rates, high staff turnover and high management turnover. The project was initially intended as a small pilot project, but the municipality's management decided that it should apply to all activities under the municipality's auspices. According to the union representative, there were shortcomings in the beginning of the project, not all unions were invited to the initial discussions, which led to not everyone being fully engaged.

The purpose of the project is to bring about a shift in perspective in the municipality. High staff turnover and high absenteeism should not be seen as a recruitment problem, but as a work environment problem. The focus should be on getting the already employed to stay in their workplaces and to attack absenteeism as a work environment problem that must be analysed and addressed. According to the union representative, it is about implementing a shift in perspective, where we see what is good and try to make it better.

A working group was formed that included representatives of HR and the three administrations of the business, as well as a representative of the big trade union Kommunal and our union representative as the chief safety representative. This group met and discussed both the process of Suntarbetslivs workshops and how to continue working, for example with work material for the workplace meetings (APT).

The year 2022 was spent training all the municipality's managers in health factors, with a number of workshops dealing with health factors and the tools developed by Suntarbetsliv. There is a large set of tools, mostly courses and analysis guides, that they can utilize as needed. In 2023, The Municipality began to work practically with health factors out in the business. Each department or unit chose its own variant depending on the problems they considered themselves to have. We will present the work of a social care unit in more detail below.

A group home for the disabled

The interviewee is the unit manager responsible for a group home consisting of 6 residents and 8 employees.

The six residents all have some form of disability and have a decision by the municipality's social welfare board on special housing according to *the Act on Support and Service for Certain Disabled People (LSS)*. In addition to housing, the rights under LSS include that the disabled have the right to a good and independent life and have the opportunity to work, study or some other meaningful employment. The resident should also be able to participate in community life, for example be able to take part in the range of culture and leisure activities on the same terms as others

The staff consists of 8 people, one of whom is a group leader. The group leader is the unit manager's extended arm at the home. The unit manager sits with the other unit managers a few kilometres

from the accommodation, but he tries to visit the accommodation every day. The unit manager believes that the daily contact with colleagues leads to a valuable exchange of knowledge and learning. The home is basically staffed with two people during the day and one during the night, but there is flexibility depending on the residents' care needs. All employees have similar tasks, and most have upper secondary education as assistant nurses or childminders. The tasks do not differ between the employees. Most are women in their 30s, but there are a couple of older ones.

The employees are organized in the trade union Kommunal, which is Sweden's second largest trade union with half a million members in the public sector. At our workplace there is a union representative and a safety representative. The unit has a meeting for collaboration every five weeks that lasts about 3 hours.

The studied project is primarily about reducing an extremely high staff absence at the unit, which at sometimes was up to 40%, and to remove the uncertainty among both residents and staff that resulted from the large number of substitutes.

The problem was a short-term planning process that created conflicts. The employees had to shape their own work schedule once a month, which led to those who were best at helping themselves getting the best times and those who were quiet got the worst, a system that created major conflicts in the work group with high sick leave as a result.

The unit manager and the group leader analysed the need for care to see when the need for care was great and when it was a little easier. The results were presented and discussed with the staff at workplace meetings and when a reasonable consensus had been reached, the unit manager and the group leader formed a work schedule that applied for the whole year, something called a flexible basic schedule. The flexibility lies in the fact that the staff can switch with each other if there is a need for it.

The new schedule was met with both approval and disapproval. Liked because one could see far in the future how to work, and that the system was fair as everyone got to work the same amount. Disapproval because they have been deprived of the right to make the schedule themselves. After a while, the contradictions disappeared, and most people today think that the system is good and fair. The loss of influence over scheduling has been compensated by the fact that shifts can be swapped with each other if necessary.

In parallel with this restructuring of scheduling, The Municipality decided to engage Suntarbetsliv to increase health attendance. Although there was no direct connection to the work with the work schedule, Suntarbetsliv came to be a valuable complement. Suntarbetsliv broadened the perspectives on organizational change and the studied unit chose to work with the concepts and tools that Suntarbetsliv provided. With Suntarbetsliv, the previous efforts became measurable and seen.

The head of unit chose to start from the eight health factors (see section 4) that will provide a healthier working life. At the workplace meetings, a health factor was introduced and discussed each time, and the team suggested measures about what they can do at their own workplace. During the period leading up to the next workplace meeting (5 weeks), the employees themselves must think about what changes would be desirable. At the next workplace meeting, the experiences are summarized, and a number of changes may be agreed. When the question is solved, the unit manager introduces the next health factor that the team will work with over the next five weeks. After meetings, you describe what you have done in a digital form that goes to the HR unit.

How did it turn out

The results from the change at the group home are very good. According to the head of the unit, the previous absence, which could be up to 40 percent, is now down to 1-1.5 percent calculated over the past one and a half years. Relations between employers and employees have become much more open and better. The unit manager believes that there is now a feeling that they are a team.

The results for The Municipality as a whole are good, but do not reach the same extreme level as the group home. The Municipality has now reduced sick leave from 10% to 7.8 percent, which is seen as a direct consequence of the investment in health factors. On average, there were 200 sick days per day and staff turnover was particularly high among the new employees. This created major challenges for the supply of skills. Here there was a change of perspective, instead of focusing too much on recruitment, The Municipality is putting resources into getting the 200 who are sick back. They have been recruited once because they have the right skills.

One experience is that there are great differences in the managers' conditions depending on the type of business. If you have 10 employees, it is easy to get an overview and choose which issues you need to work on. If you are a manager in the home care service with maybe 50 employees that you rarely meet, it is much more difficult. Then there are no conditions for creating a good dialogue.

According to the union representative, the employees have gained greater direct influence, they work more transparently, which means that they can be more involved. He believes that participation often falls on not being transparent and not bringing things up at the right time to be able to influence. At the same time, the union representative points out that not everyone has taken on board the meaning of the change of perspective and takes on the health factors quite instrumentally, especially if the manager is stressed, "we can't handle it", then it is easy to fall back on treating one health factor at a time, instead of taking on the more complicated perspective shift. It is important to include all health factors at the same time. It's fine to separate them in an introduction, but then you have to work with everyone at the same time.

According to the union representative the union has not had much influence on how the project is carried out in practice, it is largely based on how managers and employees have understood the importance of a change of perspective. Those who are good at seeing the union as a partner also see the employees as a partner, while those who see the union as a counterpart also see the employees as a counterpart, which the union representative sees as an old-fashioned way.

If you summarize the efforts so far, the project has yielded:

- Support, training and structure for the managers. Here, they initially took support from Sutarbetsliv.
- HR should be a partner that supports when needed. There has been a shift from individual issues to organizational issues.
- The project has so far focused to a large extent on management in order to give them instruments to work with.
- The various departments and units are now responsible for driving the continued work forward. There, the participants have the opportunity to disconnect from Sutarbetsliv and can choose how they want to proceed.

- The studied group home is a micro-case where the opportunities for improvement were extremely good - a bit of a golden case - but where the possibilities of generalizing to other similar workplaces should be done cautiously.

Case study 3 in brief

Company characteristics	Company context Small municipality with approx. 1,800 employees and a declining population base and an increased proportion of elderly people. High staff turnover and high sickness absence
	State of innovation New mindset focused on work environment through developed workplace dialogues
Industrial relations	Trade union density rate at the company level Many different unions with an average of just under 70% membership
	Workplace labour representation structure characteristics Follows the Swedish model for trade union participation in the public sector, i.e. no interference at the political level but great influence in the day-to-day operations
	Company-level collective bargaining Many unions, which means many central and local collective agreements
Direct worker participation	Direct participation as the subject of organisational tools Direct participation that follows a script supported by the central organizations.
	Direct participation as a vehicle for workplace innovation <i>Regulation:</i> Initiated by management without a collective agreement <i>Intensity:</i> Monthly planning meetings for bottom-up consultation or joint analysis <i>Scope:</i> Mainly health and work environment issues <i>Objectives:</i> For the management, reduced sickness absence and staff turnover; for the trade union, improved work environment and increased well-being
The role of industrial relations in direct worker participation	A framework was formed at the national level where both employers and the union support the basic principles of Suntarbetsliv. No collective agreement has been signed for the project
	Model of integration b/w direct participation and industrial relations Democratic (participatory) model with the HRM model as a basic structure in the municipality
	Breadth and depth of participation Varies between different parts of municipal operations depending on how the managers have accepted the concept. Both breadth and depth in the "golden case" we have studied in depth
Difficulties	Gain acceptance from the managers who will implement the changed way of working

Impacts	Reduced staff turnover and sick leave. Increased well-being and improved work environment at the unit we studied in depth
Future prospects	Depends on whether the problems with high staff turnover and sick leave are solved in the long term, but the already implemented work environment improvements will persist and be deepened

5.2.2. Case study 4: The Warehouse

About the company

The Warehouse is a Swedish company with Swedish owners that is part of an international group consisting of 50 different companies in 15 different markets. The business in Sweden is focused on medical consumables in the healthcare sector, which means almost everything except medicines. Its customers are regions, municipalities and the state. Private healthcare in Sweden has a very small sector and is usually tied to regions and uses their purchase agreement.

A delivery from the warehouse can be directly to a healthcare clinic, but also to a region's own warehouses, some regions have their own warehouses, others do not. In the case of municipalities, it is mainly nursing homes, and in the case of the state, it may be a matter of building up emergency stocks in case of crises or the state donating consumables to others in need, such as Ukraine or a refugee camp. The company also delivers to private individuals via a special company that is actually a website under another name to order from. The fact that healthcare is the main customer means that quality issues are important.

The Warehouse's philosophy is to offer system solutions that extend all the way into the customer's business, for example that you can automate order management and keep track of what you have in stock. The Warehouse uses a system called 4PL, or fourth-party logistics, which means that they monitor the entire supply chain for a company. The Warehouse purchases, owns, stores, and distributes the products to customers on demand.

The Warehouse is part of a group that has operations in 15 different countries. In each country there is a Country Organization that is commercially responsible and takes care of customer contacts. There is also an Operating Organization, supply chain, that handles articles, item data, purchasing, purchasing agreements and order processing. It is there that we find the warehouse we have studied. Within the Group, however, the various companies have a great deal of freedom to choose and adapt standards and procedures to the national context. There is learning in collaboration between the different countries within the framework of what is called a Centre of Excellence. Often the collaboration takes the form of being part of a reference group in a project that is run in another country, where you share your experiences and at the same time win new ones.

About union representation

There are two unions at the company, the blue-collared Handels and the white-collared Unionen. Most of the employees in production are sorted under Handels, which is a large trade union with 155,000 members that can be found in stores, warehouses and in e-commerce. Unionen has many members within the company but only a few who work in production, most of whom work in sales and administration. Unionen does not have a local union club at the company.

At the company, Handels is organized with a local club that has a board consisting of a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, insurance manager, information officer and study organizer (several of them are also safety representatives). The chairman has 20% of his working hours paid by the company for his union assignments, something he thinks is too little. The membership rate to the local club is about 60 percent. The explanation for the somewhat low membership rate is that the company has recruited many new employees recently, it has increased from 120 to 170 employees and Handels has not had time to recruit them as members. At the company, there are always 10-15% temporary workers from staffing agencies that are used as a buffer. According to the logistics manager, 10% is low compared to similar companies in the industry, which often have 25-30 percent hired labour. However, the union is not happy with it, but such is the reality, so you must accept it. The temporary workers can also be affiliated with the union, but not with the local club. The club's chairman believes that the company in general is good at employing the temporary staff who show that they are suitable for the task.

Handels has been member of the company's board since last summer and the club's chairman thinks they have been well received. Collaboration (indirect participation) takes place mainly through monthly meetings with the company where lighter ongoing issues are discussed, i.e. issues that do not require regular MBL negotiation. When an issue is brought to MBL negotiations, they try to do it locally as much as possible. If you turn to the regional level for support, they usually bring the employer's representative (Almega) with them and then the issue is almost always raised to central negotiations. Both the union and the company want to avoid this, so they always try to find a local solution first. Then it will be a local agreement. The safety committee and safety representatives have their own structure and meetings, but several of them are also members of the club's board. The relationship between Handels and HR departments is strained. The club's chairman thinks it is much easier to talk directly to the production management. Many managers have a background in production and understand the problems. Even though the company is part of an international group, the club has no representation in the international Work Councils.

A few years ago, The Warehouse took a strategic decision about a Lean-inspired organization with daily planning where they wanted to bring parts of the management and control down to the team level. The teams were supposed to be more self-sufficient and take more responsibility, and this has now permeated the entire company. The direct participation follows the normal template for a Lean production project where each team (10-17 people) has a Team leader who acts as a contact person to the supervisor. Supervisors have a daily meeting with their Team Leaders where they set up the day's goals and production. For example, it may be that you need to move some between the different teams depending on the day's order structure and possible absences. The team leader has a daily meeting with the team at the start of the shift where he or she passes on the information they have received from the supervisor and then they decide how the work should be organized for the day. If necessary, there may be a follow-up meeting in the middle of the day. The team has a lot of freedom on how to choose to solve the task. The role of the team leader has changed over time, with him or her being less and less involved in production but taking on a more leading role. At these daily meetings with team leaders, questions are also raised about how flows and production can be improved, so-called continuous improvements.

The safety organization has a life of its own with its own committees and here the union closely monitors its positions, i.e. that the union must represent all employees. The company believes that there are many who are not members of the union who must also be allowed to make their voices heard. By the company applying day-to-day management, it should be possible to integrate some

of the work environment issues more closely there. The club's chairman thinks that the system works well but points out that some work environment issues cannot be solved with technology. For example, there is a risk that you can get stuck in the machine if you have long hair. You can only solve this by informing that you must have your hair up or tucked into a cap.

The logistics manager emphasizes the importance of having a well-functioning union at the company: "I would have hell working at a company if there was no collective agreement or union organization." He also says that the company is quite dependent on their employees, it is not so easy to get hold of people: "The GIG industry is all well and good, but you can't take a loan and get a house on a gig job." According to him, the company has a good collaboration and an open dialogue with the union, but at the same time he believes that the union has a little difficulty adopting the new technology and is stuck to the Swedish model where everything must go through the safety committee. He also believes that union work environment training is not quite up to date: "Technology is developing so fast that it can be difficult for the union to assess whether something is good or bad". The logistics manager also points out that there is something positive about being forced to do the formal, it leads to a certain amount of reflection that can be useful. He also believes that collective agreements should be more open to local adaptations.

About the automated warehouse

The facility is 6 years old, so the technology is not up to date. There are more modern systems on the market, and the company has started planning for a new warehouse. A first impression of the facility is that even though it is an automated warehouse, there are many people involved in the production.

The warehouse is divided into a manual warehouse and an automated one. The manual warehouse is a traditional buffer warehouse where goods are received, stored and forwarded at the customer's request. The Warehouse receives 800-900 cargo pallets every day that are placed in the buffer warehouse. Then the flow is controlled depending on how you are going to handle the order.

The flow through the warehouse can be briefly described as the products to be distributed coming in by truck to the buffer warehouse where they are spilled into three categories; products that are stored for later shipment the customer, products that are buffered to be handled manually later, and products that are to be loaded into the automatic picking system. Currently, 40% go through the automatic system, but in the future, 70-80% will be automated.

Larger orders that include entire cartons are handled manually, the picker drive a forklift and pick them, but there are also some products where they use autonomous forklifts. Automated picking is used on the smaller unit packs. In the future, the handling of whole cartons will be automated, because there is quite a heavy burden on the individual and there is an increase in sales of whole packages.

The products to be loaded into the automated picking system are divided into smaller units, such as a pack of surgical gloves, which are placed in a transport box that goes into the machine and is stored there for a short time. The system then calculates how a customer order should be picked and places the transport boxes on a belt in a queue that goes to the Picking Station, i.e. a classic shuttle solution, goods to person. The picker is instructed how many he or she should pick from the transport box and put in the customer's packaging carton, which comes pre-folded in a suitable size. The increased algorithmic control when work orders appear on a screen is not popular with the

workers. According to them, the picking work has become more complicated with more lifts compared to the previous system with picking lists. The advantage is that it is easy to learn. From picking, the customer's carton goes to Unloading, where the carton is manually packed and supplemented with filler material and taped shut for further delivery. It is heavy work; the customer orders have become larger with increased weight as a result.

The system has been supplemented with a system called SuperUser, which can solve minor technical problems in the machines, and a number of operators have been trained to use the system and received a small salary supplement. The company also hired a chief technician who has two technicians to help. The technicians belong to Handels and not to Unionen. Handels claims according to the main principle that they belong to Handels because they solve production problems.

The work environment at The Warehouse

The plant was delivered by a German company, and the company had a lot of faith that they could deliver a good plant, which they according to the Handels club chairman did not. They had not taken into account that there were people working in the plant with many static tasks that led to high workloads and stress. They put the strongest to the heaviest jobs, which was the picking. The solution to the workload problems was a rotation system where no one worked more than 2.5 hours with the same task.

The warehouse company has a fairly large sick leave, 8%, divided 50-50% for short and long time sick leave. The employees have problems with their shoulders, knees, feet, hips and back. They leave their shift with fatigue rather than job satisfaction. According to the union's chairman, however, not much thought was given to the tasks and the work environment when the facility was designed; "You have to twist your body many times and it is not heavy lifting that is the main problem, but that it is so repetitive". This has been improved and now there is a systematic work rotation that evens out the load. Now they have robots that fold all the cartons, something that used to be a heavy task. Another risky work environment problem is picking from a great height, the risk is especially great when reaching for parcels. The logistics manager points out that mental illness is also a major work environment problem, that is, making everyone feel part of the team.

Most people have the warehouse as an entry-level profession and do not work for very long, they move on to other jobs or studies. Many have quit within three years. There are those who have worked for a long time and if necessary, you can be placed on tasks where the load is lower. The working hours are recorded with a time clock for In, Exit and for lunch, a quarter of an hour break per day paid and half an hour of unpaid lunch. There is a wellness allowance and a small gym. Handels would like to get in an hour a week when you can exercise during working hours but has not succeeded yet.

The local club chairman believes that the work environment has become very much better compared to the old system and says: "it is better to vary the tasks than to stand eight hours in the same workplace". Communication and information have improved, and the working climate has become softer, the club chairman states that "we are better at helping each other, there is less stress, you can take a break or go to the toilet without being questioned". He believes that the union is also interested in the company doing well, "we are not on different sides". There is a consensus that if the company does well, it benefits everyone.

According to the logistics manager, the green transition has not had much impact on daily work. For The Warehouse, it primarily affects transport choices, property issues and the choice of consumables, but the individual warehouse operator probably hardly notices this.

A new warehouse is planned

It is necessary to be able to store more products within Sweden's borders due to the emergency preparedness requirements. To meet this demand, The Warehouse will build a new and larger warehouse. The new warehouse will contain more automation, but above all larger inventory volumes.

According to the logistics manager, manual picking will remain in the new warehouse, but to a lesser extent, among other things to meet the delivery reliability requirement. The healthcare sector makes high demands on delivery reliability, and to manage this, a certain amount of staffing is required if the technology system is knocked out. The Warehouse does not want to push the degree of automation too high, then they become vulnerable, one need to be able to switch to a manual system relatively quickly if necessary. A hospital should be able to keep its stock for a week and The Warehouse should have 3-6 months' consumption of its stock. The hospitals are now trying to build up their preparedness from a week to a month.

The new warehouse will be of the highest class in terms of working environment and ergonomics. The company has hired a work environment engineer to monitor the work environment. At the new warehouse, the trade unions will be much more involved in the planning, mostly the safety representative organization. Later in the project, there will be two project groups in which Handels is represented, one for the office part and one for the warehouse. Handels is careful to ensure that they are represented in all groups, but the company also wants to include those who do not have shop steward duties. There are those who do not want to be part of the union and the company want to listen to them as well. Handels does not have a problem with that.

The new warehouse will be more automated. The chairman of the Handels club believes that it is good to have the experience from the current situation with them into the planning process. Suppliers have also had to think more about the work environment than they did before, otherwise they are not allowed to sell their products.

The new warehouse will be a big technological leap. Skills development will be needed. There is also a discussion about whether the new professional roles should belong to Unionen or Handels, here a problem may arise. Handels does not yet know if there will be any redundancies when the new warehouse is taken into use. According to the logistics manager, there will not be greater demands on competence, but there will be different professional roles, including more monitoring, simpler maintenance and planning that require increased knowledge of item data. It will be more fun and more varied tasks, more enjoyable.

Case study 4 in brief

Company characteristics	Company context
	State of innovation Algorithmic control in an automated warehouse

Industrial relations	Trade union density rate at the company level Two unions, average of just under 70%
	Workplace labour representation structure characteristics At all levels according to the Swedish model
	Company-level collective bargaining Central and local collective agreements according to the Swedish model
Direct worker participation	Direct participation as the subject of organisational tools Advanced, based on Lean production and daily planning
	Direct participation as a vehicle for workplace innovation Yes
The role of industrial relations in direct worker participation	No collective agreement has been signed, the introduction of Lean production and daily planning is based on mutual trust.
	Model of integration b/w direct participation and industrial relations Democratic (participatory) model
	Breadth and depth of participation Both breadth and depth and includes all employees
Difficulties	To create an attractive workplace giving employees options and motivation for staying long time and not being “young transition workers” just staying a few years.
Impacts	Significantly improved safety, enthusiasm and engagement
Future prospects	The new warehouse will be of the highest class in terms of working environment and ergonomics

5.3. Discussion of the case studies

The immediate impression one gets when the four cases are studied together is the optimism and faith in the future that characterizes the manufacturing industry and the private service sector, while in the public sector it is about solving urgent problems to make the business work without increasing costs. The Workshop Company and The Mine both have plans to expand their operations, while The Municipality is busy solving acute problems with both high staff turnover and sick leave in combination with a requirement from The Swedish Work Environment Authority to improve its work environment. The Warehouse is somewhere in between when faced with a new way of organizing logistics and tasks, a way that can entail a risk of algorithmic control of the work with monotonous and impoverished tasks as a result. In our studied company, employers and trade unions have tried to avoid such a development.

While there are structural similarities between the different case studies that can often be linked to the Swedish model, there are major differences and interesting anomalies. We will start by discussing what is unique in each case study and then return to the structural differences and similarities.

5.3.1. Major differences and interesting anomalies

The Workshop Company

- Unique in this case is that there was a framework where both employers and the union support the basic principles of The Production Leap. This creates a trust that is also strengthened by the fact that one of IF Metall's former presidents is chairman of The Production Leap. Once the project was implemented, there was no support from or contact with IF Metall at a central level. The local union club chairman said that there was no need for such support. This can perhaps be described as direct participation on the union's terms
- An interesting observation is that the local trade union club refrains from activating its legal right to board representation, partly on the grounds that there is no need. The day-to-day management works well and captures the wishes of the trade union. According to the company's CEO, there is no such need either, as all decisions are made in the companies' management team and not in the board. The Workshop Company has created a positive workplace community with low level of job turnover, which might be explained by that the local labour market is limited.
- One observation is that the employer forgot to inform the union organization that they had started the project, something that was quickly discovered and corrected. The union was thus not involved in the process that led to the start of The Production Leap.
- The project is permeated by an advanced form of direct participation that is very developed with daily planning meetings throughout the production and at all levels. As far as possible, the operator should be able to make decisions themselves without having to contact their manager every time problems arise.
- An interesting form of direct participation is the system for deviation reporting, where the employee is guaranteed some form of feedback within 24 hours.
- The green transition is included as something that the company must be able to handle in the future, but it is not something that has directly affected this project.

The Mine

- In The Mine, we see examples of both direct and indirect participation. The direct influence through the fact that the company was out at the workplaces at an early stage to inform and obtain views directly from the employees. Direct influence can also take place through the deviation reporting system that is open to all employees. In the area of safety, direct influence has had a major impact on how the system is designed and the work organized. Here, a group of experienced safety representatives through their unique expertise have had an active role from the early safety analysis to the final design of the work and workplaces.
- The indirect influence has been extensive, with the employees' voice being channelled through their union representatives in various planning groups and in a large number of meetings according to the co-determination act. Here, the Swedish model has been followed and mainly the established channels have been used to inform and discuss the project. There has been no pressure from the union to push the issues through them, but there is an expectation from the union members that that the union will solve the problems. The unions have nothing against the company having a dialogue directly with the employees. But they want information in advance so that you know what is going on.

- We see a certain discrepancy between the two unions. IF Metall emphasizes the importance of the Swedish model and the established negotiation system, while Unionen places greater value on the dialogue that the company has had with the employees. One explanation may be IF Metall's numerical dominance and the fact that it has a membership rate of 95 percent.
- Both the employer and the unions were positive to the industrial transition. From the corporation it is about higher efficiency and productivity. The If Metall stressed the value of reducing vibrations and decrease ergonomic risks., in that context, the industrial transformation in the mine can be seen as a win-win project.
- The green transition is included as a major task in the future. The current vehicle fleet is diesel-powered but must be replaced with some form of electric drive if the company is to meet their own environmental goals. The issue seems to be of low priority at the moment.

The Municipality

- The case study is based on the chain from the Welfare Party's Council focus on health factors in working life, where the joint development arena Suntarbetsliv has acted as an intermediary and assisted with analyses, support and methods.
- Interestingly, the introduction of a flexible basic schedule at the group home meant a direct reduction in direct influence while at the same time reducing absenteeism in a dramatic way. The explanation is that the direct influence led to a behaviour among the staff that affected others in a negative way. With a fair basic structure, it became easier to agree on how to distribute working hours in practice.
- The overall picture is that the project has meant an increased direct influence for the employees and significantly improved work environment.
- In the same way as in the previous projects, this contains a deviation report system, but it was focused on medical issues that are reported daily about the residents
- The project has largely been top down initiated by the HR department and focusing on management to give them instruments to work with. The Municipality has taken note of this and will in the future focus more on employeeship and what rights and obligations you have at work.
- While the parties declare that they want to go further than an instrumental approach to Suntarbetslivs eight health factors, there is also something positive with the instrumental approach; the instrumental gives a structure of the operation that makes it difficult to stop. The union representative would like to secure the activities by making it mandatory in the collaboration agreements.
- The unit that was highlighted in our study has a bit of a "golden case" character. They have succeeded well both through the role of the unit manager and the new working time schedule, but also that the workload has not been as large and stressful as in other unit homes with a "heavier clientele" and other mental and physical challenges in the job.
- An important part of the social environment is also the role of the relatives. They make work easier and sometimes individuals can stay with their family, for example for a weekend. Excursions and cultural activities also contribute to creating a good working environment and a better social community.
- The project does not include any discussions of the green transition.

The Warehouse

- The project is permeated by an advanced form of direct participation that is very developed with daily planning meetings throughout the production and at all levels. As far as possible, the operator should be able to make decisions themselves without having to contact their manager every time problems arise.
- There is algorithmic control, but to a far lesser extent than one would expect in an automated warehouse.
- The work environment has gradually improved. With the new warehouse, there will not be greater demands on competence, but there will be different professional roles, including more monitoring, simpler maintenance and planning that require increased knowledge of item data. It will be more fun and more varied tasks, more enjoyable.
- The company wants to open the Swedish model for more direct participation because there is many who are not members of the union who must also be allowed to make their voices heard. The Handels union has no direct objections.
- The safety organization has a life of its own with its own committees and here Handels closely monitors its positions, i.e. that the union must represent all employees.
- The local union and the company agree to solve as much as possible locally and avoid interference from the central organizations
- It is unusual for a company to explain its dependence on a trade union and a functioning collective agreement in such a clear way.
- The changed world situation, with Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the traces of Covid, has changed the view of international production. There is an ambition that critical consumables should be available and controlled within the country's borders.
- The healthcare sector makes high demands on delivery reliability, and to manage this, a certain amount of staffing is required if the technology system is knocked out. The Warehouse does not want to push the degree of automation too high, then they become too vulnerable, one need to be able to switch to a manual system relatively quickly if necessary.
- The green transition primarily affects transport choices, property issues and choice of consumables, but the individual warehouse operator probably hardly notices this.

5.3.2. Structural similarities and differences

We leave the unique and concentrate on the structural similarities and differences and then we follow the structure in the report *Interview Guidelines and Table of Contents for WP3 national reports*, formed by Vassil Kirov (03.06.2024).

State of innovation

- The Workshop Company: Lean production
- The Mine: A pure technical innovation with major social implications
- The Municipality: New mindset focused on work environment
- The Warehouse: Algorithmic control in an automated warehouse

Trade union density rate at the company level

- The Workshop Company: 66%, slightly below the industry average

- The Mine: Extremely high, 90 to 95%
- The Municipality: Many different unions, average of just under 70%
- The Warehouse: Two unions, average of just under 70% At all levels according to the Swedish model

Workplace labour representation structure characteristics

- The Workshop Company: At all levels according to the Swedish model except in the board
- The Mine: At all levels according to the Swedish model
- The Municipality: At all levels according to the Swedish model except in political governance
- The Warehouse: At all levels according to the Swedish model

Company-level collective bargaining

- All have collective agreements, but none that regulate the studied changes

Direct participation as the subject of organisational tools

- The Workshop Company: Advanced, based on Lean production and daily planning
- The Mine: Through union structures, supplemented by direct workplace dialogue
- The Municipality: Advanced, based on Suntarbetsliv and workplace dialogues
- The Warehouse: Advanced, based on Lean production and daily planning

Direct participation as a vehicle for workplace innovation

- The Workshop Company: Yes
- The Mine: Yes, but more for trust-building
- The Municipality: Yes
- The Warehouse: Yes

The role of industrial relations in direct worker participation

- The Workshop Company: No collective agreement, based on mutual trust
- The Mine: No collective agreement, based on mutual trust
- The Municipality: No collective agreement, based on mutual trust
- The Warehouse: No collective agreement, based on mutual trust

Model of integration b/w direct participation and industrial relations

- The Workshop Company: Democratic (participatory) model
- The Mine: Hybrid (cooperative) model
- The Municipality: Democratic (participatory) combined with the HRM model
- The Warehouse: Democratic (participatory) model

Breadth and depth of participation

- The Workshop Company: Both breadth and depth and includes all employees
- The Mine: Primarily through union representation with direct participation as a complement
- The Municipality: Both breadth and depth in the "golden case" we have studied
- The Warehouse: Both breadth and depth and includes all employees

Difficulties

- The Workshop Company: Scepticism at first among the workers
- The Mine: Certain workers' fear of redundancies and lack of trust
- The Municipality: Gain acceptance from the managers out in the field
- The Warehouse: To create an attractive workplace giving employees options and motivation for staying in the company

Impacts

- The Workshop Company: Significantly improved safety, enthusiasm and engagement
- The Mine: Successfully implemented, will remain until the next technological step
- The Municipality: Increased well-being and improved work environment
- The Warehouse: Significantly improved safety, enthusiasm and engagement

Future prospects

- The Workshop Company: The project has reached the point of no return
- The Mine: The technology will be implemented in other mines
- The Municipality: Already implemented improvements will stay and be deepened
- The Warehouse: The new warehouse will be of the highest class in terms of working environment and ergonomics

5.3.3. Discussions and conclusions

In the Swedish case studies, we cannot see any contradiction between direct and indirect participation, on the contrary, we rather see how they have been integrated. There are no obstacles to the integration of direct and indirect participation, it is rather the norm and is encouraged both locally and centrally by the trade unions.

Behind this positive attitude to indirect participation is a mutual interest between companies and the trade unions that the companies must be productive and able to compete in an international market. IF Metall usually puts it this way that "we are not afraid of the new technology, we are afraid of the old" to mark that they are positive to changes that increase productivity for the company. In the case of The Mine, where 250 truck drivers are replaced with autonomous trucks, we see that the understanding of the need for efficiency also applies when the consequences are harsh for the union's members.

Direct and indirect participation overlap to a large extent and reinforce each other. In the case of The Workshop Company and The Municipality, we see how the parties at the central level have agreed on a framework (The Production Leap and Suntarbetsliv, respectively) within which the companies can operate in an independent way. In both cases, the employer has chosen models that in principle follow a pre-established template and which have been afterward accepted by the trade union. The Warehouse follows the same concept without taking support from an external mediator. In The Mine, the process has been more interactive and guided by the company's need to gather information and inform about the project.

In the cases of The Workshop Company, The Warehouse and The Municipality, the direct and indirect participation clearly acts in the same arena. The main rule is that when the company wants to introduce an organizational change, they take a dialogue with the trade unions within the

framework of the MBL Act. Often you don't see any major difference in practice, for example in The Workshop Company, it is considered that the MBL negotiation is completed by discussing the issues in the Daily Planning that is part of Lean production. In The Municipality, too, the formal co-determination negotiations have been integrated into the consultation groups that exist at different levels in the company. In The Warehouse, the discussion is more problematic where the union tries to allocate the issues within the framework of the bargaining model found in the Swedish model, especially issues related to health and safety.

What deviates most clearly is The Mine, where the indirect participation is clearly dominant. IF Metall sees itself as a representative in most issues. The local club chairman puts it clearly when he says that "the members expect us to solve the problems". In fact, the union has both the financial resources and the time to tackle the problems, and a degree of union membership that is close to total gives additional strength. There, the direct participation is seen more as a complement that is initiated by the employer to create confidence in the technical and organizational changes, something that should not be interpreted manipulatively but takes place in mutual understanding with IF Metall. Here we also see a difference in the fact that the significantly weaker white-collar union is more positive about indirect participation than the strong IF Metall.

The so-called twin transition – digitization and green transition was not so visible in our case studies. Algorithmic management was most present in the warehouse to monitor and control the flow of goods both internally and externally, and the green transition most present in the external transport part. For the mine, the digital challenges and the use of AI become a crucial production factor, while the trucks still use diesel as the major energy source. The workshop company had not so far, given priority to the green transition and the continuous morning meetings on deviations and deviation reports, had digital support, but was not part of an algorithmic management model. The Municipality, finally, used training, coaching and development work supported by the eight-step model of SuntArbetsliv (Healthy Working Life). Job quality, skill development and active participation were crucial production factors in all four cases. The twin challenges can also be seen as integrative parts of a sustainable working life, where job quality and the options to work until retirement, are becoming more crucial production factors in a shifting demographic development with increasing number of elderly people, shortages of labour and falling numbers of youth or middle-aged worker.

Finally, it is difficult to give an overall picture of Swedish industrial relations and various forms of participation from four cases and an overview of the systems. The Swedish labour market model is institutionalised in larger corporations and in the public sector. The conditions at SMEs and micro-firms might differ. Weaker employment relations as temporary jobs, reduced number of working hours, or jobs with restricted number of occasions to meet colleagues, also decrease the options for direct participation. The same goes for if you are employed in a subcontractor chain. Finally, working life crimes (not following the rules for taxes, document or evaluation) is another problem where union have to handle.

6. General conclusions and recommendations

In this section, we will, as far as possible, follow the framework presented in the BroadVoice report *Analytical Framework on Direct Worker Participation* (Armaroli, Franca & Virgili, 2024).

We start by discussing the role of industrial relations and labour representation in relation to direct and indirect participation. First, we can state that there is a broad consensus among the social partners in Sweden that indirect participation is the basis on which participation should be built. This is the backbone of the Swedish labour market model, which was formed as early as 1938, stating that industrial relations should be formed through collective agreements. This order has been preserved thanks to a high degree of organization among both blue-collar and white-collar workers. Indirect participation has since been strengthened through various reforms, the most important of which is the co-determination law that was introduced during the progressive 1970s.

Direct participation has of course been present all along, but it was not until the 60s and 70s that it became visible in the form of union demands for industrial democracy and autonomous groups. The question of the right to direct participation first pushed as a union issue worth fighting for, but with the economic crisis and when the discussion about Lean production and other new production concepts took off in the 90s, there was no resistance left, not out of concern for industrial democracy but for crass production economics reasons to improve productivity, quality and reliability in production.

What used to be an ideological struggle now takes place in consensus. Today, we see no difference between the parties' attitudes to direct and indirect participation. Indirect participation is regulated in collective agreements and sets the external framework for direct participation, which can then be shaped relatively freely in the workplace, usually without being regulated in agreements. More about this further down in the text.

Armaroli, Franca & Virgili (2024) present in their framework four models; the bipartite (adversarial) model, the HRM model, the hybrid (cooperative) model and the democratic (participatory) model. It is not possible to easily place the Swedish experiences under just one of them, but as can be seen from our four case studies, they include elements from several models. *The bipartite model* is probably still the dominant one. Despite strong legislation and signed collective agreements, many workplaces are still stuck in a traditional Taylors work organization with limited influence, both direct and indirect, but these are not the companies we have been looking for in our four case studies.

Common to our four studies is that they contain essential elements of *the democratic participatory model*, perhaps not so clearly in the part of The Mine that we studied, but a broader picture shows that lean production is deeply rooted in the company. In The Municipality, we can clearly see how HRM has taken the lead, partly because they had urgent problems that needed to be solved, but also because it is in the nature of the public sector to try to regulate and gain control over their activities. The democratic model is most evident in The Workshop Company and The Warehouse.

Let's go ahead and look at the design of the direct participation. Armaroli, Franca & Virgili (2024) describe in their framework six different key factors for determining the nature of participation: objectives, intensity, forms, modes of regulation, scope and breadth and depth.

When we refer to *objectives*, we see a clear shift in perspective from having a clear social, democratic and humanistic goal in the 1970s to primarily being about securing Swedish industry's competitiveness on the international market, in order to secure jobs. The direct participation has mainly been linked to American and Japanese production concepts (e.g. Lean, TQM, TBM, BSC) and we are now seeing a shift to the more European Industry 4.0 which is primarily linked to digitalization.

Intensity varies from case to case. The company's basic obligation to provide information and negotiate about changed production control and organization, takes place through the regulations that come with the Swedish labour market model. The results of these discussions and negotiations reach the members as information about decisions made. This became clear in The Mine, where the union chairman says that "the members expect us to solve the problems". The direct participation in the form of daily planning, of course contains a lot of information about decisions already made, but there is also room for dialogue and co-determination. An interesting observation from The Municipality was that they removed the staff's ability to set their own work schedules in favour of a fixed schedule. The increased participation created tensions within the group which they could not handle themselves

Forms for the direct participation vary, but often they follow some kind of concept, usually inspired by Lean production or Total quality management. This was evident in The Workshop Company, which uses The Production Leap as a model, and The Municipality, which uses Suntarbetriv. The Warehouse has adopted the lean concepts as a strategic decision made by the company, a top-down process supported by the unions. Common is often some form of daily planning. An interesting form of participation is the deviation reporting systems used by some of the companies. It is a system that is aimed at the individual employee, which is actually a modernized version of the old suggestion box, but here digital communication is used, and the issues addressed have been changed to include making the entire production work better.

When it comes to *modes of regulation*, the picture is more unambiguous, indirect participation is regulated by collective agreements, while direct participation is often not regulated at all. It is based on a balance of power between the parties where the trade union can always use indirect participation to influence the direct participation, partly with the support of the Co-Determination Act and partly through its high degree of affiliation to the trade unions. This balance has laid the foundations for a climate of cooperation based on mutual trust. The parties also have a number of common "institutions" that support this trust, such as The Production Leap, Suntarbetriv, Prevent and others that act as facilitators in this collaborative process.

The scope for direct participation is almost exclusively about the day-to-day management of production and issues related to the work environment. Involvement in social political issues is usually handled by the trade unions at the central level.

The direct participation is usually linked to one's own work environment, which means that *breadth* has a limited significance, the perspective becomes the close and the own. Participation in the more strategic business issues is taken care of by the trade unions within the framework of the regulations offered by the Swedish labour market model. One observation is that issues of health and safety have their own track in the organization, a track that is regulated by the Work Environment Act and is based on an organization with safety representatives appointed by the trade unions and safety committees where the employers are included. This does not mean that issues of health and safety are not addressed in direct participation, but when it gets serious, one leans towards the

representative form of participation. The Warehouse union clearly states that health and safety issues should be handled in a formal manner. The Work Environment Act has gradually been broadened and now also includes social and organisational issues. In practice, this means that these issues will be the subject of union discussions to a greater extent.

The *depth* of participation is more difficult to decide. From our four case studies it appears that it may have been difficult to initially gain acceptance for changes in the way work is organized, but in the long run it seems to have succeeded in all cases and our assessment is that the indirect participation penetrated quite deeply in the organization, some of the changes have passed the point of no return.

Finally, we will add an interesting observation from the cases of The Workshop Company and partly in The Municipality and The Warehouse, where the direct and indirect participation has been integrated in such a way that the union believes that the employer through daily planning and workplace meetings is good enough to meet the requirements for co-determination negotiations, which must be interpreted as meaning that the unions have a great deal of confidence in how the companies handle co-determination issues.

To conclude, direct and representative participation seem to go hand in hand. We can certainly see a shift over time where direct participation is becoming more prominent, but there is no debate in Sweden about whether it would affect the unions in any negative way. There is no discussion that there is a hidden agenda where employers systematically try to circumvent the unions. On the contrary, the trade unions are the initiators and affirm advanced forms of direct participation, at least as long as they have transparency and control over what is happening. The Swedish labour market model is of course based on representative representation, but it can handle the direct perception without risking their authority.

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