



Consultation on the European Pillar of Social rights **Contribution by LO Sweden**

On the social situation and the EU social “acquis”

1. What do you see as the most pressing employment and social priorities?

Inequality and insecurity are the main phenomena that national, international and EU policies must address and the EU must support the Member States in their efforts to cope with these challenges. Policies in all domains should support the social objectives. It is not enough to use social policies to correct economic policies and a single market that lead to inequality.

The LO wants rules that make it possible to demand that Swedish collective agreements should apply to work carried out in Sweden. Rules that impede this must therefore be changed, for instance the Posting of Workers directive. The EU treaty must be changed to ensure respect for basic trade union rights and equal treatment in the single market. Since 2008, the LO together with the European trade union movement demands that a social protocol be included in the EU treaty. Basic trade union rights cannot be subordinated to the economic freedoms in the EU. In case of a conflict between rules, trade union rights and freedom must take precedence. For the LO, this is a prerequisite of the realization of a social Europe.

As the forthcoming white paper on the EMU will probably suggest more long term reforms that require a change of the EU treaty, the LO believes that the Commission could then also support this trade union demand. The LO wants to point out that the ETUC Congress in Paris in 2015 decided that: *The ETUC will reject treaty changes that do not include the adoption of a Social Progress Protocol.*

Wage differences are unreasonable; many workers have low salaries. To have a job does not protect the worker from poverty. Wages must be determined nationally but in general, wage increases are necessary for a great number of people who work in the EU. The income security for the unemployed must also be raised.

The technological development requires new capacities. We therefore need working models for conversion on the labour market.

Gender equality must be mainstreamed in all EU and national policies.

2. How can we account for different employment and social situations across Europe?

The labour market policies and most of the social issues are national responsibilities. The EU can support Member States in their efforts to manage them, and adopt certain minimum standards. To be effective, these standards must be ambitious and should not in any way limit the Member States'



possibilities to adopt rules that give higher levels of protection and standards, either through legislation or collective agreements.

The open method of consultation and the Europe 2020 strategy can be used to support the Member States in their efforts in the areas concerned. The social partners must always be involved as the questions are closely linked to working life and the labour market.

The proposal of a European Social Pillar has been developed to deepen cooperation within the EMU. The LO believes that it is obvious that the euro zone requires enhanced cooperation to strengthen the common currency. As Sweden is not a member of the euro group, we have no clear views on what the euro countries should do to improve their cooperation. The LO, however, doubts that the proposed social pillar is what is needed to strengthen the euro.

The LO stresses that deeper cooperation within the EMU must not result in Sweden and Swedish citizens being discriminated against in the EU. Furthermore, the LO believes that social rights, at least to a large degree, must be the same for all of EU and the single market. It is, for example, important that the cooperation between EU countries to ensure that workers who make use of the freedom of movement get their accumulated social entitlements recognized without discrimination, when compared to people who do not cross the borders. There are thus basic questions in all LO answers related to the proposal of a European Social Pillar: will the pillar apply to all EU countries or to euro countries only? What legal status should the proposed pillar have? What is it that we, as a non-euro country, should consider when deciding whether to join or not?

3. Is the EU “acquis” up to date and do you see scope for further EU action?

The present rules are appropriate in general, but they are the result of compromises and may therefore need to be adjusted to the development. The LO does not see much space for more new EU legislation or other measures. Functioning labour market models must not be destroyed. Instead, other EU policies should be adjusted and improved to support the social objectives and promote an increasing convergence. The economic policy and the design of the single market must pay more attention to social matters. Economic policies as well as legislation on competition must serve the welfare of people and support a favourable development of the social situation. The objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy should weigh heavier in this context.

Existing EU rules and regulations must be reviewed to promote the social objectives and strengthen workers' rights. The EU and its rules must benefit people. Even if most measures to combat poverty are national and the responsibility of the Member States, the EU must do more to fulfil the commitments made within the Europe 2020 strategy against poverty. This is done not only through social policy efforts, but the objective must permeate all policy areas in practice. The fight against poverty should be considered in the European Semester and work along the Europe 2020 strategy and coordinated with the global Agenda 2030 commitments.



On the future of work and welfare systems

4. What trends would you see as most transformative?

Demographic changes (aging, migration)

Technological change

Inequality

5. What would be the main risks and opportunities linked to such trends?

Demographic development: migration gives possibilities of growth if we succeed in integrating the newcomers into the labour market to fill the gaps when more and more people retire, which depends on our population's age structure. If the integration is not successful we risk increased unemployment. An increasing number of women on the labour market is an important factor for a successful economic and social development, and for enhanced equality.

The technological development requires new qualifications. Some kinds of work will require more and new capacities and may lead to increased productivity and profitability. There is, however, a risk that the technological development increases inequality through increased income differences and that some carry out work without being covered, completely or in part, by the social insurance systems.

Society and employers must assume increased responsibility for the development of competence so that it is not the individuals alone who have to live up to the qualification requirements brought about by the technological development. The labour market is already divided into two; some have relatively safe employment and access to up-skilling while others have time-limited employment and less access to qualification development.

Inequality leads to social tension and political challenges. Poverty, which is one aspect of inequality, also leads to low internal demand and thus weakens the economic possibilities for recovery and growth. A more active redistribution policy aimed at more equality benefits all and contributes to stronger social cohesion and a positive development.

6. Are there policies, institutions or firm practices – existing or emerging – which you would recommend as references?

Different countries have different conditions. It is therefore important that each country designs its own policies and institutions in a way that favours a positive social development. In the Nordic countries, the social model with major participation of the social partners works well, thanks to the fact that the employers' and workers' organizations are representative and have real negotiating mandates.



The LO advocates general welfare, i.e. that welfare must cover all, and standard security. Therefore, entitlements from social insurances are linked to the income the person has had. As a rule, all policies should be aimed at promoting equality. The Europe 2020 strategy is a good example of a joint EU policy in which the Member States are responsible for the implementation of the objectives and there is a clear respect of the social partners.

On the European Pillar of Social Rights

7. Do you agree with the approach outlined here for the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights?

The LO agrees with much of the description. However, the LO is against the transfer of competence from the Member States to the EU or the EMU, as in practice the labour market is mainly national. The challenges that now face the labour market in each country must be met by nationally adjusted measures.

The LO welcomes that the social issues gain importance in the general debate on the EU policy and its orientation. In this context, however, we must remember that the proposal of a European Pillar for Social Rights is part of efforts to deepen the EMU. The LO points out that the euro zone certainly needs to develop its cooperation to compensate for existing imbalances. However, we cannot judge whether the proposals included in the Social Pillar give the right answers, especially as the consultation documents say nothing about the legal status, and therefore effect, that the proposed Social Pillar will have.

The LO stresses that important parts of the social issues must be dealt with within the EU also in the future, and as part of the single market. A clear example is the coordination of social insurance benefits for workers who during their professional life work and/or live in different EU-countries. The coordination of the social insurance benefits is a prerequisite of a well-functioning freedom of movement in reality. Workers must be guaranteed that periods of work in different EU-countries are accumulated and that entitlements accrued are not reduced when the right to freedom of movement is used.

Another example is the working environment standards that contribute to a fair competition in the single market. These must continue to be a common responsibility for the EU even if the EMU countries deepen their cooperation through a Social Pillar that does not include all EU countries.

The LO underlines that the social partners must have autonomy when wage formation and working conditions are concerned. The right to negotiate and sign collective agreements must be guaranteed regardless of the form given to the proposed pillar.



Detailed comments by domain

1. Skills, education and life-long learning

All persons shall have access to quality education and training throughout the life course to acquire an adequate level of basic skills and key competences for active participation in society and employment. Low skilled young people and working age adults shall be encouraged to up-grade their skills.

For the LO, the right to an education is of fundamental importance. This applies to schools for children and adolescents as well as to education and up-skilling later in life. People must be able to adjust to changes in working life and start anew or develop qualifications in the profession or employment they already have. Initiatives for education must be looked upon as investments. Educational policies, however, are national responsibilities even though the exchange of experiences between countries is positive for sharing good examples.

2. Flexible and secure labour contracts

a. Equal treatment shall be ensured, regardless of employment contract, unless different treatment is justified on objective grounds. Misuse or abuse of precarious and non-permanent employment relationships shall be prevented.

b. Flexibility in the conditions of employment can offer a gateway to the labour market and maintain employers' ability to swiftly respond to shifts in demand; however, the transition towards open-ended contracts shall be ensured.

The LO agrees with the description of challenges, but does not believe that the principle should be introduced at EU-level. Employment security is closely linked to national systems of collective agreements and legislation. The definition of worker determines who is especially worthy of protection. If the possibilities to regulate these issues at EU level are increased, the power of trade unions and their influence over issues of central importance to workers will be reduced. The values raised in the material of the Commission, i.e. equal treatment and flexibility, are important but the balance between them should be discussed within the national states. The LO does not see any need for further or more complicated EU regulation of minimum levels on these issues.

3. Secure professional transitions

a. All working age persons shall have access to individualised job-search assistance and be encouraged to take up training and up-skilling in order to improve their labour market or entrepreneurial prospects and faster job and professional transitions.

a) The LO believes that national authorities, parliaments and governments in cooperation with the social partners should create possibilities for workers of all ages to enjoy a safe, sustainable career



readjustment over time. Through collective agreements we establish appropriate solutions for the individuals to achieve a professional and secure transition.

b. The preservation and portability of social and training entitlements accumulated during the career shall be ensured to facilitate job and professional transitions.

b) A good description, in which the efforts made by societies/ authorities and their responsibility for preservation and portability will be the basic principle. Through collective agreements, the social partners complement the necessary sectorial adjustments. It must be clear, however, that if an individual must change career, it is above all society's responsibility to make sure that the individual is given decent and reasonable economic and social conditions for this and becomes equipped for the challenges ahead on the labour market.

4. Active support for employment

a. All people under the age of 25 years shall receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

b. It shall be equally ensured that registered long term unemployed persons are offered in depth individual assessments and guidance and a job integration agreement comprising an individual service offer and the identification of a single point of contact at the very latest when they reach 18 months of unemployment.

The LO agrees with the basic background description, that quick and efficient support to the long term unemployed improves the chances to break social and labour market exclusion.

Measures for the long term unemployed in working ages must be adjusted to the individual's possibilities and society's need of manpower. The period dedicated to support efforts must be determined by the varying situations and possibilities of national authorities, as the EU is not a homogenous labour market with equivalent needs. Other driving forces than the time spent in unemployment are behind a country's productivity and possibilities to support individuals for new jobs.

The specific design of labour market policies is a national responsibility. The LO opposes EU regulations concerning the duration and design of measures. Each country must decide on programmes to support the individual's return to the labour market. It may, of course, be beneficial to exchange experiences and good examples between member countries, and it would be of help if all countries made efforts to combat unemployment and stimulate both men and women in working ages.



5. Gender equality and work-life balance

a. Gender equality in the labour market and education shall be fostered, ensuring equal treatment in all areas, including pay, and addressing barriers to women's participation and preventing occupational segregation.

b. All parents and people with caring responsibilities shall have access to adequate leave arrangements for children and other dependent relatives, and access to care services. 1An equal use of leave arrangements between sexes shall be encouraged, through measures such as the provision of remunerated leave for parents, both men and women.

c. In agreement between employers and workers, flexible working arrangements including in the area of working time shall be made available and encouraged, taking into account both workers and employers' needs.

The LO believes that the Commission gives an accurate description of how insufficient equality affects working life and the possibilities to combine work and private life. We welcome that the demands/rights have been linked to equality and work-life balance, and that it is stressed that women are not the only ones responsible for making everyday life work. It is good that it is stressed that different kinds of parental leave must be designed with financial compensation, even if the design of parental entitlements is a national responsibility and competence. However, flexible working hours and forms of employment as a way of creating balance, must not be determined by the employers' preference for an easily adjustable work force.

6. Equal opportunities

Labour market participation of under-represented groups shall be enhanced, ensuring equal treatment in all areas, including by raising awareness and addressing discrimination.

The LO upholds every individual's equal value and with that the right to equal treatment. We therefore value the above goal. The EU has contributed to a positive development of the European countries' work against discrimination. Active efforts in favour of equal opportunities and integration are important, not only to combat discrimination.

7. Conditions of employment

a. Every worker shall be informed in written form prior to the start of employment on the rights and obligations derived from the employment relationship.

b. If there is a probation period, the probation period shall be of a reasonable duration; prior to its start, workers shall receive information on its conditions.

c. Dismissal of a worker is to be motivated, preceded by a reasonable period of notice, and there shall be an adequate compensation attached to it as well as access to rapid and effective appeal to an impartial dispute resolution system.



The LO agrees with the challenges described. We do not, however, believe that the EU level is the right one for introducing the principle. The background given by the Commission provides a good picture of the labour markets in the Member States. Nevertheless, the LO does not believe that further regulations and strengthening of the employment protection should be introduced at the EU level. This should be made in collective agreements or legislation in the Member States, with respect for the different national labour market models. The LO cannot see any need for further or more complicated EU minimum regulations of these issues.

8. Wages

All employment shall be fairly remunerated, enabling a decent standard of living. Minimum wages shall be set through a transparent and predictable mechanism in a way that safeguards access to employment and the motivation to seek work . Wages shall evolve in line with productivity developments, in consultation with the social partners and in accordance with national practices.

The Swedish labour market tradition builds on the social partners' strong autonomy. Together with the employers, the Swedish trade union movement has for a long time successfully protected the Swedish wage formation from direct government interference. Today there is a broad agreement between the unions, the employers and the state on this. We do not believe that the price of work is something that should be determined by political decisions. In this context, it does not matter if the interference comes directly from the Swedish government or indirectly through the EU institutions.

The LO is worried by different attempts at European level to regulate and control the wage formation without respect for the independence and role of the national social partners. Such a development will not only undermine national labour market models but also the role of the social partners, their responsibilities and independence.

Wage issues are and must continue to be of national concern and competence. This is the base of wage formation that considers productivity development at the same time as it promotes it. In Sweden, it is also a condition for a wage policy based on solidarity and pay equity.

It is important to strengthen EU's economy and competitiveness. The gaps must be reduced, the number of jobs must increase and the real wages be raised. Europe needs growth based on demand, but we will never accept or contribute to legitimizing country-specific wage recommendations, institutions or rules and regulations that directly or indirectly reduce the national wage formation or the autonomy of the social partners. Wage issues can therefore not be dealt with as suggested by the Pillar.

The Social Pillar, on the other hand, could include the formulation of joint guidelines to strengthen and rebuild national models for the social partners. That way, the EU could contribute indirectly to the development of wages through active support of the social partners' responsibilities, with respect for the various national labour market models without intervening directly in the wage formation.



9. Health and safety at work

An adequate level of protection from all risks that may arise at work, with due support for implementation, notable in micro and small enterprises, shall be ensured.

The LO agrees in part and wants to underline that new employment conditions and new forms of work challenge health and safety work. We think, however, that the challenges and the principle presented give a too narrow picture of today's and tomorrow's working life and of the preventive efforts needed for a working life characterized by equality, sustainability and development possibilities.

Today, 27 per cent of European workers state that they will not be able to continue in the same job till they are 60 (see Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) (2015), 'Sixth European working conditions survey – 2015').

To meet the challenges of today and the future, health and safety matters must be seen as strategic instruments for the development of people and society. The health and safety issues are also political, with factors such as workers' security, health, development and job satisfaction as well as innovation, competition and growth.

The present European health and safety policy must be broader and more long term to achieve a sustainable labour market in which everybody can enjoy a full working life and retire in good health. This is one of the most important challenges for the future. A sustainable working life can only be achieved if there is a political will to give priority to systematic, goal oriented work in the areas of health and safety/labour market policies. Health and safety must be a self-evident factor to consider within all policy domains.

A good working environment increases the productivity and the availability of manpower and improves the labour market adjustment capacity. It is simple: people who feel well work better. It is easier for them to change profession. Health and safety contributes to the achievement of the employment policy objectives of the Member States and the EU.

The single European labour market requires common work environment rules. It is important to counteract the development of an unhealthy and thwarted competition in which some employers desist from investments in preventive and corrective health and safety measures. Every individual, regardless of the form of employment and size of the company, has a right to work in environments that are safe, healthy and offer development.

10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers

a. Social partners shall be consulted in the design and implementation of employment and social policies. They shall be encouraged to develop collective agreements in matters relevant to them, respecting national traditions, their autonomy and right to collective action.



b. Information and consultation shall be ensured for all workers, including those working digitally and/or operating across borders, or their representatives in good time, in particular in the case of collective redundancies, transfer, restructuring and merger of undertakings.

The European Pillar of Social Rights must be based on a stronger social dialogue (cooperation between the social partners) and an improved right to collective negotiations and agreements. This should be the fundamental way to implement the rights of the Pillar. It should also include the right to join a union, regardless of profession and place of work. The ILO core conventions and ILO convention 144 on Tripartite consultation should be the point of departure. These documents should be observed and respected in practice by the Member States.

The Social Pillar should be designed to support the recreation of formal structure for social dialogue and tripartite consultations, where such structures have been weakened by economic recession or lack of respect of the social partners' autonomy. In some countries, the social dialogue must be promoted and built from the ground, as it has not yet been developed. The social dialogue needs to be strengthened all over the EU, not only within the euro zone. The European Pillar of Social Rights should build on and promote a social dialogue that respects national, well established structures and makes use of existing good examples, for example www.theglobaldeal.com.

11. Integrated social benefits and services

Social protection benefits and services shall be integrated to the extent possible in order to strengthen the consistency and effectiveness of these measures and support social and labour market integration.

There are considerable differences between various models of welfare systems as regards social benefits and social services provided by the European countries. A general transfer of competence from the national to a European, supranational level, may have a negative influence on the design of systems and levels in the areas concerned. This is the case especially for countries that have solutions that are very different from the European average, for example the Nordic countries. Furthermore, the design of the sub-systems concerned differ considerably between the countries, for example where the lines between legislated, collective agreement based and private social benefits are drawn. There is an obvious risk that increased supranationality makes it difficult to maintain and develop the various social safety nets that exist today with respect for the different welfare models.

EU cooperation to coordinate social entitlements accrued during work and life in different EU countries is necessary for the functioning of the single market. Workers who use the free movement must be treated the same way as those who live and work in one country only. As to accrued pension benefits/rights, it is reasonable that they stay in the country where they were accrued until they are needed for retirement. Portability in the form of capital transfer when there is a change of employment would not be positive for the workers. There is, on the other hand, a need of real guarantees that entitlements are not deteriorated with a change of employment or move.



12. Health care and sickness benefits

a. Everyone shall have timely access to good quality preventive and curative health care, and the need for healthcare shall not lead to poverty or financial strain.

b. Healthcare systems shall encourage the cost-effective provision of care, while strengthening health promotion and disease prevention, in order to improve the resilience of healthcare systems and their financial sustainability.

c. All workers, regardless of contract type, shall be ensured adequately paid sick leave during periods of illness; the participation of the self-employed in insurance schemes shall be encouraged. Effective reintegration and rehabilitation for a quick return to work shall be encouraged.

We agree with the problem description that states the importance of everybody's right to access to high quality care at a reasonable cost. People who fall ill should not become poor. Preventive health care and efforts to reduce health inequalities are other important areas concerned. The poor fall ill more often than others. The LO also believes that it is good to underline the fact that equal access to health and hospital care contributes to social gains, and that all Member States should introduce compensation systems in case of illness and absence from work. It is necessary to discuss how ques to private health care and health insurances affect the sustainability of the systems and general access to health care.

13. Pensions

a. Pensions shall ensure all persons a decent standard of living at retirement age. Measures shall be taken to address the gender pension gap, such as by adequately crediting care periods. According to national specificities, the participation of the self-employed in pension schemes shall be encouraged.

b. Pension systems shall strive to safeguard the sustainability and future adequacy of pensions by ensuring a broad contribution base, linking the statutory retirement age to life expectancy and by closing the gap between the effective retirement and statutory retirement age by avoiding early exit from the labour force.

Pensions are accrued within a context, as part of payment for work carried out. The design of the pension system cannot be seen decoupled from the labour market, wage formation, other systems of social insurance and social benefits for the elderly etc. in the EU-countries. The construction of these systems varies considerably in the EU, which in turn affects the design of existing pension systems. This makes it difficult to establish principles that are to apply to all.

The LO believes, of course, that pensioners must have a reasonable income that enables them to live decent lives. The principle that *the pension* alone should guarantee a decent standard of living, however, becomes problematic. There are other benefits than pensions, that make it possible for the individual to enjoy a decent standard of living. If that principle was to be introduced and applied in



Sweden, we should have to double today's guaranteed pension. Now, the person who only gets the guaranteed pension receives an addition in the form of a housing supplement for old age pensioners and income support for the elderly to reach a decent standard of living. Each EU-country must have the possibility to choose the design of their social insurance systems to guarantee pensioners a decent standard of living.

The principle that care periods of different kinds should give pension rights may also pose problems, if this becomes an alternative to the creation of equal possibilities to work for women and men.

The principle that there *must* be a fixed pension age linked to increased longevity becomes problematic. In Sweden, for example, we do not have a fixed retirement age and can therefore not link the increased longevity to that. Our system, however, is designed so that increased longevity affects the size of the pension. It becomes higher or lower depending on when the individual starts to collect it and it is related to life expectancy, but that is not the same thing as the establishment of a fixed retirement age.

14. Unemployment benefits

Action to support the unemployed shall include the requirement for active job search and participation in active support combined with adequate unemployment benefits. The duration of benefits shall allow sufficient time for job search whilst preserving incentives for a quick return to employment.

The LO agrees with the general description in the document, but wants to draw attention to the fact that the shaping of unemployment benefits is a national competence. The benefits are part of active labour market policies and linked to the health insurance which is different in different countries.

It is the national parliaments who must determine the level and duration of support to the unemployed. The principle of income-related benefit is important and should apply when national support for the unemployed is designed. The support should be given as long as the individual needs it. Due process is guaranteed through requirements and control in the system and arbitrariness kept at a minimum when the unemployed apply for support. This, in combination with the education systems and safe and secure conversion in the countries that address the individual's different possibilities and competences, leads people from unemployment to more long term employment.

15. Minimum income

Adequate minimum income benefits shall be ensured for those who lack sufficient resources for a decent standard of living. For those of working age, these benefits shall include requirements for participation in active support to encourage labour market (re)integration.

The European countries have different definitions of a reasonable standard of living and the issue of minimum income/income support is a national issue. It is certainly desirable that the national states, within and in respect of the different welfare models, raise the level of ambitions concerning reduced



absolute and relative poverty. But to include, for example, obligatory participation in different labour market programmes, as the text suggests, may lead to a kind of “workfare policy” that has been tried in Sweden without success when equal opportunities and worker perspectives are concerned.

16 Disability benefits

Persons with disabilities shall be ensured enabling services and basic income security that allows them a decent standard of living. The conditions of benefit receipt shall not create barriers to employment.

Our systems for support of persons with impairments (including sickness benefit) are built to follow the development of general standard of living. The present text can be read as if this support should be given as a basic income/basic security, which goes against the idea of standard safety. Swedish policy in this domain has a higher level of ambition than reasonable standard of living which means, among other things, that support should aim at increased equality and individual self-determination.

17. Long-term care

a. Access to quality and affordable long-term care services, including home-based care, provided by adequately qualified professionals shall be ensured

b. The provision and financing of long-term care services shall be strengthened and improved in order to ensure access to adequate care in a financially sustainable way.

The design of systems for health and care is a national competence, but we welcome that the EU level discusses and underlines how women’s participation in the labour market is affected by the lack of care of the elderly. The LO believes that access to high quality care in old age should not be a matter of personal finance but accessible to everybody. The system must include home help service as well as residential homes.

The LO points to the importance of public funding of elderly care. It is important that the care of children and the elderly is considered as a central public investment, in part to ensure that women who are caregivers can be part of the labour force and in part to guarantee quality care of the elderly, regardless of their financial assets.

18. Childcare

Access to quality and affordable childcare services, provided by adequately qualified professionals, shall be ensured for all children. Measures shall be taken at an early stage and preventive approaches should be adopted to address child poverty, including specific measures to encourage attendance of children with disadvantages backgrounds.

The design of child care must be a national responsibility, but it does affect both men’s and women’s possibilities to work. It is good that the access to high quality child care at reasonable cost is stated as a clear objective and that it is linked to the child’s needs and development as well as to the parents’ (men and women) possibilities to work. We welcome that the document underlines the role of pre-



schools and child care in the creation of more equality and better conditions for children from different social and economic environments.

In this context, the LO underlines that society's responsibility for funding child care must be clearly stated. The LO also means that it is important that child care is available when the parents are working; i.e. also during so called inconvenient working hours.

19. Housing

Access to social housing or housing assistance shall be provided for those in need. Protection against eviction of vulnerable people shall be ensured, and support for low and medium income households to access home property provided. Shelter shall be provided to those that are homeless, and shall be linked up to other social services in order to promote social integration.

The LO agrees with the description of the challenges present in the housing market. We do not, however, accept all the proposals on how to deal with those challenges. According to the LO, housing policies should form part of general welfare, and a concept such as Social Housing is not suitable in Sweden. Economically weak groups should instead be offered housing benefits that enable them to rent ordinary housing on the general housing market.

Social Housing also creates problems in the form of social segregation and the risk of stigmatization. The LO believes, however, that both article 34 and article 151 include the necessary principles of the need of housing and means to combat social exclusion.

In this context, it should be remembered that housing policies are about much more than just helping those most in need. The labour market, for example, depends on a sufficient supply of housing in places where there is employment. The possibility to study also often depends on the availability of housing in the place where the education is offered.

20. Access to essential services

Affordable access to essential services including electronic communications, energy, transport, and financial services, shall be ensured for all people. Measures to support access to these services shall be available for those in need.

The LO agrees to the objective stated.