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EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SWEDEN ⁽¹⁾

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ABSTRACT

The goal of Swedish labour market policy is to give the opportunity for earning their bread and butter to all persons in the society. Namely, the goal of Swedish employment policy is full employment. Persons with disabilities are obviously included in this "all persons". In other words, the aim of the Swedish labour market programmes for the disabled is to provide persons with disabilities a greater chance of participating in society. In Sweden, there is no employment quota system for person with disabilities. However, the employment rate of person with disabilities in Sweden is higher than the employment rate of disabled people in OECD countries where employment quota systems for the disabled are introduced. The purpose of the paper is to investigate why the Swedish employment rate of person with disabilities is not low without employment quota systems for the disabled.

Keywords: disability, labour market policy, quota system, employment, normalisation, Inclusion.

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to WHO & World Bank (2011), persons with disabilities make up 15% of the world population. Moreover, 3% of the world population are persons who have severe disabilities. Recently, the number of persons who have mental disorders is increasing gradually all over the world. Under these circumstances, the "inclusive society" where all vulnerable persons can actively participate in society throughout life is required. For the adult disabled, the best way to participate in society is to have a job and stand on his/her own feet. From the individual standpoint of view, employment is an important and core factor for social status and personal identity in working age. For guarantee of equal opportunities and full participation in social life, employment is of great importance. In addition, it becomes more important in the future that persons with disabilities participate in the labour market because all OECD countries are facing the falling birth rate, aging society and shrinking population. Thus, to involve more people into the labour market is necessary for the future sustainable economic activities. However, disabled people have been faced with difficult situations in the labour market. Both the labour market participation rate and the employment rate for person with disabilities are much lower than those for persons without disabilities among all OECD countries. Compared with other OECD countries, both the labour market participation rate and the employment rate for the disabled in Sweden are much higher.

Many OECD countries have adopted employment quota systems for person with disabilities that require public

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and private organisation to employ disabled persons. The purpose of employment quota systems is to provide working opportunity to the disabled. In Sweden, there is no employment quota system for person with disabilities. Regarding measures for encouraging disabled employment in Sweden, only the anti-discrimination law exists. Many surveys and research have indicated that anti-discrimination laws have not contributed to increase disabled employment. Nonetheless, Sweden has achieved the highest labour participation rate and the employment rate for the disabled among OECD countries.

The purpose of the paper is to investigate why the Swedish employment rate of person with disabilities is not low even though employment quota systems for the disabled don't exist there. In other words, the paper identifies what kind of measures and institutions promote disabled employment in Sweden. The next section of the paper overviews the facts on the disabled labour market in Sweden. In Section III, I shall review the Swedish employment policy for the disabled. In Section IV, I try to identify what kind of measures and institutions encourage disabled employment in Sweden. Section V concludes.

II. FACTS ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

I review the current Swedish labour market situation for disabled persons. Figure 1 shows the Swedish labour market situation in 2017. As we can see from Figure 1, around 15 percent of the population aged group 16-64 (and around 9% of total population) report having a disability. This corresponds to around 912000 people. In Sweden, the disabled persons in the labour market are statistically classified into two groups: (i) disabled persons without reduced ability to work (*funktionsnedsatta utan nedsatt arbetsförmåga*); (ii) disabled persons with reduced ability to work (*funktionsnedsatta med nedsatt arbetsförmåga*). Among persons with disabilities, 66 percent consider that the disability leads to reduced working ability. This implies that 10 percent of the population aged 16-64 have reduced working capacity. This corresponds to 606000 persons. The number of male disabled persons is almost same as the number of female disabled persons. However, women, to a greater extent than men, consider that their disability has led to reduced working capacity. The level of education among persons with disabilities is lower than the level of education among persons without disabilities. Among those with disabilities, there is a greater percentage with compulsory education and smaller percentage with post-secondary education than persons without disabilities.

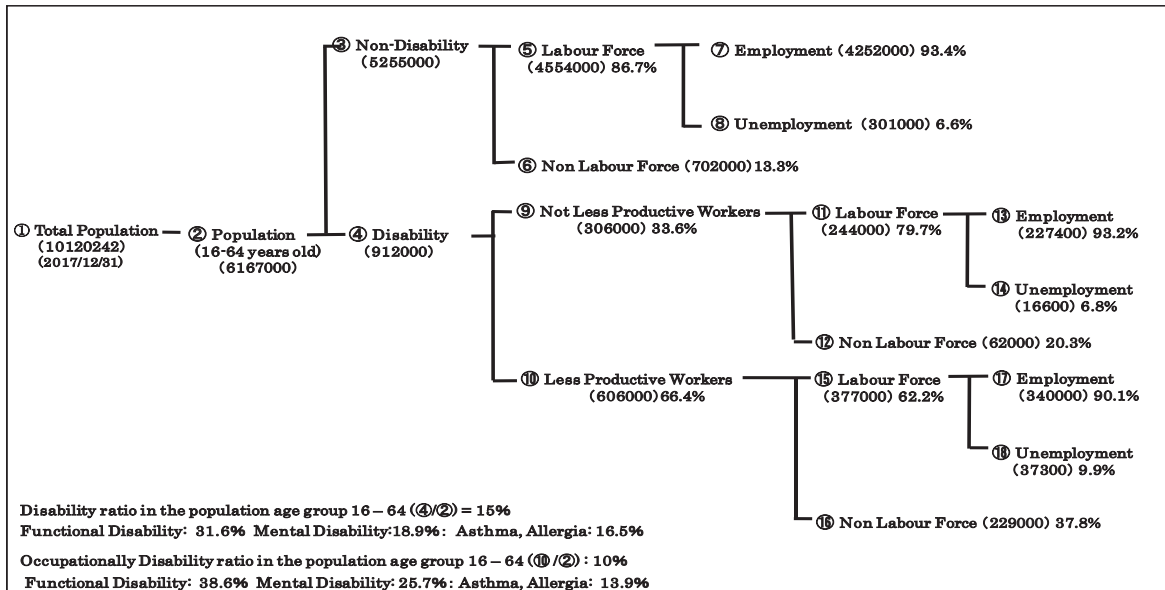
The labour participation rate for person with disabilities is lower than that for persons without disabilities. Among person with disabilities, 68 percent are in the labour market. The corresponding proportion for person without disabilities is 87 percent. This implies that the disabled with reduced working capacity has difficulties to enter and stay in the labour market.

The employment rate (the ratio of the employed to the working age population in the category) for person with disabilities is also lower than that for persons without disabilities. Among person with disabilities, 62 percent are employed in the labour market. The corresponding proportion for persons without disabilities is 78 percent. The employment rate for disabled workers with reduced ability to work is only 56 percent.

The unemployment rate is higher among persons with disabilities than among the persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate for the persons without disabilities is 7 percent and among persons with disabilities 9 percent. The unemployment for persons with reduced working capacity is almost 10 percent. However, the unemployment rate for disabled persons without reduced working capacity is almost the same as that of non-disabled persons and it is 7 percent.

A lower percentage of persons with disabilities are working full-time than in the total labour force. Among those with reduced working capacity, the proportion is slightly lower. The percentage of full-time workers is lower in particular among women with reduced working capacity. Barely 50 percent of women with reduced working capacity work as a full-time worker.

Figure 1: Swedish Labour Market (2017)



Source: Arbetsförmedlingen (2018).

Table 1 summarises the time-series data of the disabled labour market in Sweden. As can be seen from Table 1, the total number of disabled people is decreasing since 2000. The total population is increasing and thus the ratio of the disabled to the population aged 16-64 is decreasing drastically. The ratio of the disabled to the population aged 16-64 was 21.4 percent in 2000 and it goes down to 14.8 percent in 2017.

As I explained above, the labour participation rate for the disabled is much lower than that for the non-disabled. At the same time, the difference in the labour participation rate between for the disabled and for the non-disabled has been gradually expanding for the last ten years. The reason is the following. As we can see from Table 1, the labour participation rate for the disabled was almost the same for the last ten years and it was around 69 percent. But the labour participation rate for the non-disabled was slightly increasing last 10 years. Namely, it was 81.9 percent in 2006 and it rises up to 86.7 in 2017.

Regarding the employment rate, the employment rate for the disabled is much lower than that for the non-disabled. On the one hand, it can be seen from Table 1 that the employment rate for the disabled was almost the same since 2000 and it stays around 62 percent. On the other hand, the employment rate for the non-disabled is gradually increasing since 2000. As a result, the employment rate for the non-disabled is 30 percent higher than that of the disabled.

The unemployment rates both for the disabled and for the non-disabled stay at the same level for the last ten years. The unemployment rates for the disabled was around 10 percent and that for the non-disabled is around 7 percent. Thus, the difference in the unemployment rate between for the disabled and for the non-disabled stays constant.

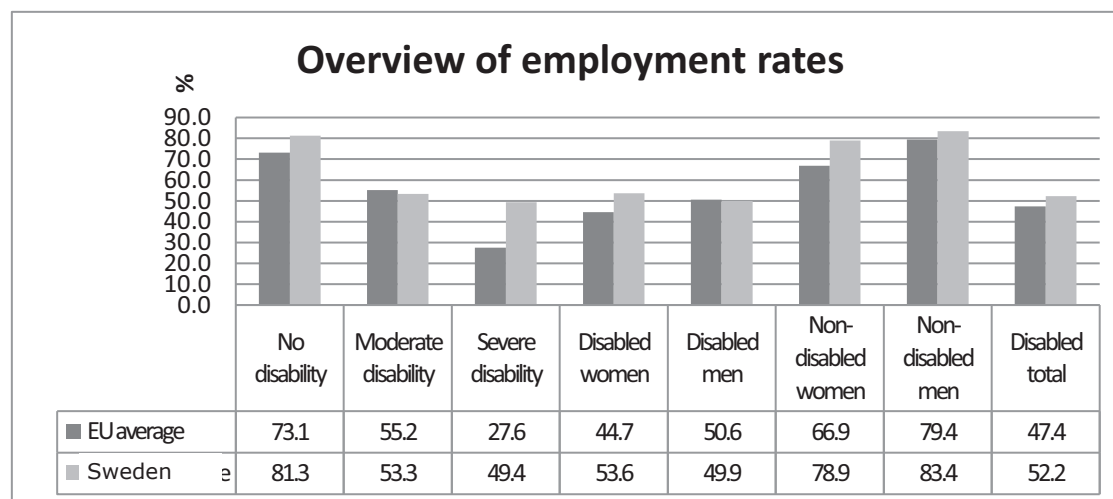
For the disabled, the labour participation rate, the employment rate, the unemployment rate for the disabled have been almost at the same level for the last 10 to 15 years. This implies that the labour market situation for the disabled has not been changed for the last 10 to 15 years. For the non-disabled, both the labour participation rate and the employment rate has been increased for the last 10 to 15 years.

Table 1 Trend for Swedish Labour Market of the Disabled (2000-2017)

	(1) No. of the Disabled	Share of (1) in Total Population aged 15-64 (%)	(2) No. of the Employed with Disability	Share of (2) in Employed Population (%)	Labour Participation Rate		Employment Rate		Unemployment Rate	
					Disability (%)	Non-Disability (%)	Disability (%)	Non-Disability (%)	Disability (%)	Non-Disability (%)
2000	1200000	21.4	805000	19.2	N.A.	N.A.	67.1	76.8	N.A.	N.A.
2002	1184000	20.8	769000	18.2	N.A.	N.A.	64.9	76.8	N.A.	N.A.
2004	1080000	18.8	665000	15.9	N.A.	N.A.	61.6	75.5	N.A.	N.A.
2006	919000	15.7	578000	13.2	68.7	81.9	62.9	76.8	8.5	6.2
2008	921000	15.5	569000	12.8	67.5	82.3	61.8	77.1	8.4	6.4
2013	987000	16.4	612000	13.3	69.0	86.3	62.0	79.4	10.2	8.0
2014	961000	15.9	596000	12.8	69.2	86.7	62.0	80.2	10.5	7.5
2015	957000	15.8	591000	12.6	68.5	87	61.8	80.6	9.9	7.3
2016	923000	15.2	576000	12.0	69.6	87.5	62.4	81.6	10.4	6.8
2017	912000	14.8	567000	11.8	68.2	86.7	62.2	80.9	8.7	6.6

Source: Arbetsförmedlingen (2018)

Figure 2 compares the employment rates between Sweden and EU. As we can see from Figure 2, the Swedish employment rates are higher than the average EU employment rates in almost all categories of workers. What is most remarkable is that the severe disabled worker's employment rate in Sweden is about 50 percent. This number is almost twice as high as EU average. This shows that the Swedish labour market is much generous to the severe disabled workers.

Figure 2 Overview of Employment Rates (2017)

Source: Gustafsson (2018).

III. LABOUR MARKETS POLICY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SWEDEN

History of Labour Market Policy for Persons with Disabilities in Sweden

The disability labour market policy in 1960s mainly focused on eliminating the obstacles for the disabled at workplace. In 1970s, the Employment Protection Act (Lag om anställningsskydd, 1974:12, LAS), Work Development Act (Lag om vissa anställningsfrämjande åtgärder, 1974:13) and Work Environment Act (Arbetsmiljölöag, 1977:1160) come into force one after the other. These laws played an important role for expanding employment for the disabled. The wage subsidy programme (Lönebidrag) was introduced in 1980. The wage subsidy programmes cover a part of the salary which firms pay to disabled workers and encourage firms to employ the disabled. At the same time, the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, henceforth denoted PES) established the Labour Market Institute (Arbetsmarknadsinstitutet, AMI) to reinforce rehabilitation programmes for getting a job.

During the 1960s and 1970s, normalisation and integration became national goals for the Swedish disability policy. In the 1980s, the goals for the disability policy was embodied in the Social Service Act (Socialtjänstlag, 1980:620) and the Health and Medical Services Act (Hälsa- och sjukvårdslag, 1982:763). These laws established the right of all persons in society to basic social security and good health and medical care. In many respects, the Government's 1982 action programme for disability issues embodied the ideological developments that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. The programme shows that the Swedish disability policy shifted from the "medical model" to "social model". The medical model defines the disability from medical perspective. Thus, it considers that the situation of disabled people is associated with the actual functional impairment and physical condition. Moreover, the term "disability" in the medical model is solely related to the individual. The social model defines the disability as an environmentally related difficulty. Thus, the disability arises in relation to the demands made by the surrounding environment on a person and their functions. This means that the term "disability" is relative to circumstance surrounding persons with disabilities.

The revised Employment Protection Act (Lag om anställningsskydd, 1982:80, henceforth denoted LAS) comprehensively protects employees against arbitrary or unjustified dismissal. In 2007, the act was amended and permitted the possibility to hire a short-term contract worker. The LAS is a general labour law which promotes an inclusive labour market for persons with disabilities. With a view to keeping people with reduced ability to work, the LAS sets standards for the accommodations which must be provided by employers, in order to ensure that workplaces are inclusive. In the case of lesser capability because of age, disease or disability, the employer has first to try to adjust the workplace, to rehabilitate the employee or to transfer the employee to other suitable work. In the case of redundancy, employees with a reduced ability to work are exempted from the last-in, first-out principle.

In order to further inclusion of the disabled in society, many laws have been introduced since the 1990s. Those are the Act Concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (Lag om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade, 1993:387, henceforth denoted LSS), the Assistance Benefit Act (Lag om assistansersättning, 1993:389, henceforth denoted LASS), Prohibition of Discrimination in Working Life on Grounds of Disability Act (Lag om förbud mot diskriminering i arbetslivet på grund av funktionshinder, 1999:132), the Discrimination Act (Lag om förbud mot diskriminering, 2003:307). All kinds of acts related to discrimination were integrated into the Discrimination Act in 2008. The Discrimination Act was amended in 2015.

Current Labour Market Policy for Persons with Disabilities in Sweden

In order to receive support in the Swedish labour market, job seekers have to register at the PES. The PES identifies which support programmes match best for a job seeker. There are mainly three different labour market programmes targeted on job seekers with an occupational disability in Sweden: (i) the wage subsidies programme (lönebidrag, henceforth denoted WS); (ii) the sheltered public employment programme (skyddat arbete hos offentlig arbetsgivare, henceforth denoted OSA), (iii) the employment programme at Samhall. Samhall is a Swedish state-owned company whose aim is to provide employment for persons with severe disabilities. Among these three programmes, the most utilized programme in Sweden is the WS. The main economic principle behind wage subsidies is to reduce the cost of hiring in order to stimulate the demand for disabled workers and thus increase their probability of employment, as well as their earnings. If lower productivity is the main reason for the difficulties in the labour market for the disabled, the wage subsidy serves as a compensation for a reduction of productivity because of

disability. An employer can receive wage subsidies for a certain employee during at most 8 years. The PES decides upon the wage subsidy amount, as a function of the wage of the employee and the level of work capacity. The maximum amount per month is 18300 SEK (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015a).

The OSA can only be provided by public employer. There are two target groups for OSA. The first group is job seekers with socio-medical impairments. The second group is job seekers who are entitled to assistance according to the LSS. The LSS is an entitlement law aimed at improving living conditions for people with extensive and permanent functional impairments. The LSS applies to persons with an intellectual developmental disorder or autism; persons who have considerable and permanent intellectual impairment following brain damage; and persons who have some other lasting physical or intellectual impairment that is not due to normal ageing and are thus in need of extensive support. The target group for the OSA programme is more negatively selected with respect to labour market outcomes compared with the wage subsidy programme. In terms of working duration, the OSA programme differs from the WS. The Maximum working duration at the OSA is one year and no possibility to extend the working duration. Apart from this, OSA involves wage subsidies at the same level as the WS (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015b).

Samhall is a state-owned company with a government assignment to provide employment to people with severe and multiple disabilities. Sheltered employment in Sweden began in the 1960s and was operated in a decentralized manner until the end of the 1970s. The responsibility for organizing the various initiatives was spread out among various government and municipal bodies. The activities consisted of sheltered workshops, office work, or homebased work. In 1980, all kinds of sheltered employment for the disabled were merged into Samhall. The purpose of Samhall was to provide meaningful jobs for persons with disabilities. Samhall produces goods and services in general demand, and thereby provide meaningful and developing jobs for persons with disabilities. About half of the revenues come from Samhall's own business and the rest of the revenues are received from the government. To get an employment at Samhall, a job seeker has to have severe and multiple occupational disabilities. In the long run, the purpose of a Samhall employment programme is that workers at Samhall get a job in the regular labour market. Unlike the OSA, there is no time limit for a Samhall employment. Wages and other employment benefits are set according to the collective agreement in the sector (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2017).

The number of the disabled who registered as a job seeker at the PES was 173811 in 2016. The 54% of those, 94257 persons, got a job and started to work. Among 94257 who started to work in 2016, the 81 percent (76266 persons) got a job via WS and the 12% (11165 persons) got a job without any support from wage subsidy programmes. The rest of the registered disabled job seekers in 2016 (6826 persons) received the special wage subsidy for persons who entered the labour market for the first time.

IV. NEEDS FOR EXPANSION OF EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

One of the most common employment policies for persons with disabilities in OECD countries are employment quota systems and anti-discrimination laws. In general, higher employment rates for person with disabilities can be found in countries where employment quota systems and other employer obligation rules are introduced. Regarding employment policies aiming at expanding the working opportunities for the disabled, on the one hand, many studies on the employment effect of employment quota systems conclude that employment quota systems have a positive effect on employment for persons with disabilities. On the other hand, most of studies on anti-discrimination laws on employment of disabled people show that anti-discrimination laws have no significant positive effect on disabled employment (Acemoglu & Angrist, 2001; Jones, 2008, Burkhauser et al., 2011; Lee & Lee, 2015; Mori & Sakamoto, 2018).

However, employment rates for person with disabilities is also higher in some OECD countries where none of obligatory measures such as employment quota systems for encouraging disability employment are implemented. Sweden has the anti-discrimination law, but no obligatory measures such as employment quota systems. Sweden has achieved one of the highest employment rate for the disabled among OECD countries.

Angelov & Eliason (2014a) investigate the effects of Swedish labour market programmes targeted on job seekers with disabilities. More precisely, they examine the effects of the wage subsidies programme, the sheltered public employment programme, and employment at Samhall on the labour market outcomes including labour income, employment and un-subsidised employment. They show that all these three programmes increase labour income and employment both in short run and in medium run. Among three programmes, the wage subsidy programme has most significant and large effects on labour income and employment of targeted job seekers. At the same time, the wage subsidy programme has the strongest negative effect on un-subsidised employment. In addition to Angelov & Eliason

(2014a), many studies demonstrate that the wage subsidy programme and the sheltered employment programme increase employment of the targeted group (Forslund et al., 2004; Mont, 2004; Skedinger & Widerstedt, 2007; Gupta & Larsen, 2010; Holmqvist, 2010; Baert, 2016; Deuchert & Kauer, 2017).

However, the wage subsidy programme and the sheltered employment programme are the short- and the medium-term programmes and thus these programmes don't support the targeted group in the long run. As I discussed in Section II, the employment rate for persons with disabilities in Sweden has been maintained at a high level at latest since 2000. This implies that the high level of the employment rate of the disabled is not mainly accomplished by the wage subsidies programme, the sheltered public employment programme, and employment at Samhall. Rather than these three programmes, other factors contribute to achieve the high employment rate for the disabled in Sweden. One of the factors which promote employment for the disabled is the principle of equal opportunity for all persons in society. The principle of equal opportunity is the common understanding in Sweden. In terms of disability, principles such as "anti-discrimination", "normalisation", and "inclusion" presumably contribute to realise the high employment rate and the high labour market participation rate for persons with disabilities.

Normalisation principle spread in the Scandinavian countries in the late 1960s. The term "normalisation" was first used in the Danish Social Service Act for Mentally Retarded People in 1959 (59-loven om åndssvage og andre særligt svagt begavede). Normalisation principle was formulated by Bengt Nirje in 1969. He defined normalisation principle as to make available to the mentally retarded patterns and conditions of everyday life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society. Normalisation principle have been evolved to inclusion principle. The principle of inclusion is now the basis for current disability policy in the world. The principle of inclusion implies that individuals with disabilities should have equal opportunities to live, learn, work and play as those without disabilities. Sweden's well-developed system of comprehensive services and support for individuals with disabilities ensures a level of security and material well-being that allows these people to live and function within society at large.

In order to include the disabled, many laws have been introduced since the 1990s in Sweden. The most important institutional framework for inclusion of the disabled in society is the Discrimination Act and the existence of Discrimination Ombudsman (Diskrimineringsombudsmannenn). The Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination and promotes equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. The interesting and unique institutional organisation which monitors and supervises compliance with the Discrimination Act is the Equality Ombudsman. The duties of the Equality Ombudsman are described in the Discrimination Act. The Equality Ombudsman is an independent Government agency and it was established when the Discrimination Act came into force on 1 January 2009. The Equality Ombudsman works to ensure that discrimination associated with sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age does not occur in any areas of the life of society. The Equality Ombudsman has approximately 100 employees in 2018.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sweden has achieved the highest labour participation and employment for the disabled among OECD countries. Many OECD countries have adopted employment quota systems for person with disabilities to encourage an expansion of employment for the disabled. Sweden has the anti-discrimination law, but no obligatory measures such as an employment quota system. However, Sweden has achieved one of the highest employment rates for the disabled among OECD countries. On the one hand, many studies show that employment quota systems have a positive effect on employment for persons with disabilities. On the other hand, many surveys and research have indicated that anti-discrimination laws have not contributed to expand employment for the disabled. Nonetheless, Sweden has achieved the highest labour participation and employment for the disabled among OECD countries.

There are no obligatory measures such as employment quota systems that force employer to hire persons with disabilities in Sweden. However, there are incentive schemes such as the wage subsidy programme and the sheltered employment programme that encourage employer to hire persons with disabilities. The wage subsidy programme and the sheltered employment programme are the short- and the medium-term programmes and thus these programmes don't support the targeted group in the long run. From the fact that the employment rate for persons with disabilities in Sweden has been maintained at a high level at latest since 2000, the high level of the employment rate of the disabled is not mainly accomplished by the wage subsidies programme and the sheltered public employment programmes.

Rather than these incentive schemes, other factors contribute to achieve the high employment rate for the disabled in Sweden. The most contributing factor for the high level of labour participation rate and employment rate of the disabled in Sweden is the principle of equal opportunity for all persons in society. The principle of equal opportunity is the common understanding in Sweden. In terms of disability, principles such as “anti-discrimination”, “normalisation”, and “inclusion” contribute to realise the high employment rate and the high labour market participation rate for persons with disabilities.

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