

17. 'SEARCH II' in Sweden

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1. About CAN

„CAN“ is the Swedish center for information on alcohol and other drugs with 40 non-governmental organizations as members. Many of them are temperance organizations, but parent-, sports-, client-, and youth organizations are also represented.

The council receives financial support from the Swedish government. The chairman of the board is government appointed. The member organizations appoint the majority of the board members.

CAN's mission is to prevent alcohol and other drug abuse through the provision of facts, documentation and information. It aims to circulate objective information, serving people and organizations involved in drug prevention work.

For this purpose CAN produces information resources, runs a library service and arranges training courses, seminars and conferences.

CAN also monitors trends in the drug use and abuse, carrying out its own surveys and studies such as annual surveys on drug use among students and military conscripts. It is also compiling and summarizing survey findings, statistics and other data sourced from external researchers. CAN provides a link between research and the community.

CAN arranges a series of conferences in a number of Swedish counties every year, in cooperation with local organizations.

CAN has a staff of research secretaries charged with keeping abreast of the latest research findings and with producing popular scientific publications and reports.

There are also consultants who support organizations in their prevention work. The press secretary supplies the media with basic facts and the latest results.

CAN produces fact sheets and guides, reviews and popular scientific publications. The main publication "Rapport" (Report) contains a review of the alcohol and drug situation in Sweden, including statistics on consumption and new trends in the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Another periodical is issued once a year. It contains popular scientific articles and follows the debate on alcohol and drug policy, treatment and other issues.

A large number of lectures arranged by local organizations receive financial backing from CAN.

CAN has a representative in each county in Sweden, 28 all told.

2. Alcohol and drug abuse among asylum seekers and immigrants

Sweden as an immigration country

People have been immigrating to Sweden for many centuries. The main motive for immigration has been the need for labour. German tradesmen settled in a number of Swedish cities as early as the 13th century. They were accompanied by skilled craftsmen. In the 16th century immigration was stimulated by state initiatives. The state showed particular interest for Dutch, Scottish and German tradesmen and industrialists who brought with them large groups of skilled workers. In the 17th century the importation of workers intensified in connection with the establishment of an expanding textile industry. However, the number of immigrants remained very low in Sweden until modern times. For example, in 1860 there were fewer than 8,000 "foreign born", of whom most came from Germany and the Nordic countries.

The war years represented a turning point in Swedish immigration history. Sweden transformed itself from a nation of emigrants to a nation of immigrants. In the 1950s this strong immigration (primarily workers) and the number of foreign born reached 300,000 by the end of the decade. Finnish immigrants represented the largest group, but many also came from Italy, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia to work. Among refugees, Hungarians predominated. Sometimes immigration occurred in organised forms, through the involvement of the labour market authorities. But most immigrants found their way to Sweden on their own.

At the end of the 1960s a Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) resolution introduced regulated immigration. This meant that those who wanted to immigrate should acquire their residence permits before the journey. For those who wanted to work, it was necessary to have a residence permit in hand or else for the immigration authorities to have carried out a labour market analysis together with the labour market side. Permits were only approved if the country needed foreign workers. If there were unemployed persons in Sweden who could perform the work, then no residence permit was issued. In the meantime, exceptions were allowed for citizens of the Nordic countries, refugees, and for immigrants who wanted to reunite with relatives in Sweden.

In the 1970s non-Nordic labour force immigration declined while the Nordic, particularly the Finnish, grew dramatically. The non-Nordic chain immigration also increased. Refugees came in surges, often immediately following wars or crises. One important event was the military coup in Chile in 1973.

2.1. The 1980s – the decade of asylum seekers

In the mid-1980s asylum seekers claiming refugee status from countries outside of Europe grew in number. They came from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Eritrea. At the end of the decade many persons from Somalia, Kosovo or several of the former eastern European states joined the ranks of asylum seekers.

The influx of asylum seekers led to refugee centres being established in many towns. Since Swedish society was not prepared for the new situation, waiting periods also grew longer. Many asylum seekers saw their applications rejected when the "classic" motives for immigration did not apply. Aside from persecution and war, poverty, a lack of faith in the future and dreams of a better life in the new country became increasingly common motives for immigration.

2.2. The 1990s – the period of ethnic cleansing

During the 1990s many trouble spots vanished, but from the point of view of refugee policy they were "replaced" by the emergence of the Balkan Wars. Sweden became home for around 100,000 former Yugoslavs, mostly Bosnians and Kosovo Albanians. At the same time, the stream of Iraqis, particular-

ly Kurds, and also asylum seekers from the Middle East and Somalia continued. Various Russian speaking peoples from the republics of the former Soviet Union saw themselves as being discriminated in their "old-new" homelands.

2.3. The situation today

Census data shows that at the moment some 500,000 foreigners are living in Sweden. The number of foreign born persons makes up circa one million individuals, which corresponds to eleven percent of the population. The number of second generation immigrants is around 800,000. Taken together, the two aforementioned groups make up almost twenty percent of Sweden's population. (Ekberg p. 25)

2.3.1. Asylum seekers – general reception and living situation

For many people immigrating to Sweden today it takes a long time to integrate into Swedish society. Two very important aspects of this are education and work/welfare. This applies to young and old people, asylum seekers and immigrants who have received residence permits. "Work for everyone" has been the most fundamental political vision in Sweden for more than half a century. To have work and to be able to take care of one's self not only entails economic freedom for the individual but also gives him/her self-respect, self-confidence and the opportunity to lead a meaningful life.

Many immigrants received a poor education in their home countries. When a young asylum seeker attends a Swedish school, language is not the only hindering factor. The fact that he/she had a sporadic school education makes it impossible to place him/her among students of the same age. This can be experienced as frustrating and underscores their outsider status. But it should also be emphasised that many young people are receptive and learn both languages and adapt considerably more quickly than the older generation. Older immigrants with poor school education often end up in a vicious circle where unemployment alternates with low status jobs or undeclared labour. Unfortunately, education does not always help. Studies show that many highly trained immigrants do not receive the qualified jobs which persons born in Sweden with the corresponding education receive.

According to a state study, the reason why so many immigrants remain outside the labour market (to name just one irrational trait in Swedish society) is as follows: employers, personnel directors etc. have not been mentally conditioned to hire people with exotic names and different educational backgrounds. That can be seen as both inhuman and negative for Swedish society, and in order to change this it will be necessary to take an honest look at the new situation and to institute thorough changes in the relevant institutions, laws, regulations and routines. Most systems – both social systems and those within the private sector – are largely based on and oriented toward a native population which has grown up and been educated within the country.

The goal of Swedish integration policy, at least on a purely theoretical level, is both to adapt general policy to a multiethnic population and to develop and offer special measures to new immigrants so that they can quickly become able to live under the same conditions as the native born and contribute to the same extent to the development of their own and society's development. This applies both to asylum seekers who have often had to put up with long waiting periods before they were informed of a potential residence permit and to those who have received one.

Behind the difficulties encountered by new immigrants in recent years lie both long-term structural changes in the Swedish labour market and the profound economic slump. A growing number of refugees and new nationalities with different backgrounds and expectations have also played a role in organising and implementing the reception of refugees. According to the report "Settling in Sweden. SOU 2003:75", the existing organisation and the tasks it was given in the first phase did not function as the goal-oriented and effective "kick-off" which had been intended. "All too many newcomers have spent all too much time sitting on (school) benches waiting until they are 'cleared to play', even though we knew that we can only learn the game's rules and become good players if we are out there on the field

and playing.” (SOU: 75 p. 35) Research shows that perhaps the most important factor for the adaptation of refugees to the conditions of Swedish society is early contact with the Swedish labour market. Other factors such as age, nationality, education in the homeland, education in Sweden, waiting period in the reception system and one’s marital status appear to have less importance. It is worth noting that an asylum seeker is not prevented from working during the waiting period if it is anticipated to last longer than four months. In some cases the waiting period is considerably longer. The authorities in charge bear a high responsibility for the conditions described above. It is clear that the outcome of this must be to try to improve and intensify early efforts and to create a clear and unambiguous labour market institution so that "new recruitment" to unemployment and welfare dependence can be prevented. Experience shows that foreign born persons who become dependent on welfare more frequently remain dependent on a much longer basis with, among other things, risks of negative psycho-social consequences than native Swedes.

A number of failures in the reception of refugees have been demonstrated, including:

- The waiting period in the reception system has not been used for goal-oriented, integration-oriented measures;
- The responsibility which local communities have assumed for asylum seekers has come to be regarded as a comprehensive rather than co-ordinating responsibility;
- As a result, other players have not felt responsible for the newcomers, nor have they been given a clearly defined mission;
- The duties of local communities have been unclear and vary from community to community
- A "one thing at a time" philosophy has been disastrous and is built into the regulatory system which has contributed to the prolongation of introductory periods;
- The entry of newcomers to the labour market and future welfare possibilities have not been placed into a self-evident focus for all affected parties;
- The goal of the introductory period has been too general and comprehensive to function in a guiding fashion. (SOU 2003: 75 p. 36)

If the path to work and welfare is to be shortened in an orderly fashion for those who will stay in the country, it is important to pay attention to the time they spend in the asylum phase. That is why officials have started redesigning this period to make it more preparatory for immigration and more labour market-oriented. Even if the asylum seekers receive a negative response, this "education" can benefit them when they return to their home countries.

There is no advanced knowledge of how society’s efforts affect an individual’s qualifications for integration. Few studies have been made of former refugee seekers’ viability and adaptation to the conditions in their new homeland in relation to the duration of, the conditions during and the content of the asylum period. However, there are a number of mass media reports on individual asylum seekers who have fared very badly during the asylum period. The authorities now hope to shorten the waiting periods during the asylum examination as much as possible.

If waiting periods nevertheless continue to be protracted, the goal is now to give them as much content and make them as energising and useful as possible for both individuals and society. The traditional sharp dividing line between asylum seekers and persons who have received residence permits has gradually begun to fade. While in the 1970s and 1980s it was the express intention not to offer asylum seekers anything other than the bare necessities during the waiting period, the growing number of asylum seekers and longer waiting periods have led to an increased need to make waiting periods more meaningful. Among other things, this has led to the development of so-called organised activity. But until today the difference between asylum seekers and persons with residence permits has, for example, been characterised by the fact that Swedish language instruction has been less advanced for asy-

lum seekers than for other groups within the framework of the Swedish for immigrants programme in the schools.

The activity occurring during the asylum period has so far been motivated by the need to create meaning and structure in a waiting period which otherwise risks being purely destructive for the asylum seekers. Limitations in the efforts aimed at asylum seekers have been motivated by the desire:

- Not to invest large resources in persons who might leave the country soon
- Not to give the asylum seeker false hopes that his or her application for a residence permit will be approved
- Not to give the asylum period such an attractive content that it attracts persons to Sweden who have no grounds for asylum

Thus these activities now have the double goal of providing support for a continued life in Sweden or else as a form of meaningful content in case a return to one's home country becomes necessary.

2.3.2. One's own residence or refugee housing

One issue of interest is the possibility asylum seekers have of choosing their own residence. The possibility was introduced in 1994 because the government believed that this could be a way to encourage asylum seekers to seek their own residence and that the goal must be to make the reception system promote the opportunity for asylum seekers to live outside of the refugee centres as a first choice. Underlying this position was the wish to come out of the "caretaker trap" in the asylum system, to treat asylum seekers like adult, mature, responsible human beings. In mid-2003 some fifty percent of asylum seekers had their own residence.

Very soon after the introduction of one's own residence, critical voices began to be heard. People said that those who chose to live outside of the asylum centres fared badly and needed some sort of support from society. The question was tested again in the Riksdag (Swedish parliament) in 1997 in conjunction with a debate on integration policy. But no changes in the system were suggested. The individual's right to choose his/her residence during the asylum period was given great attention. The critique against one's own residence remained all the same.

The major reason for asylum seekers choosing their own residence is the desire to be close to family, friends and fellow citizens. The disadvantages include:

- The asylum seekers and their children often fare badly during the asylum period. The children experience no stability in their schooling, and being passed to and fro between different foster families means having to change schools and frequently a long way to school. The foster families' own incipient integration is delayed and is made more difficult when they are confronted with the asylum seeker's restlessness during the review period, and the asylum seekers have difficulties in participating in organised activities.
- Tight living conditions, conflicts with the foster family and with subtenants, evictions by foster families because they disturb the neighbours or damage their flat.
- Those who live in their own residence contribute to their own outsider status and to growing ethnic segregation, which also represents a social problem.

It is especially important that children do not fare badly. When this occurs, it is the local communities which have the legal means to examine the circumstances and to intervene as necessary, even if they are formally included in the Migration Board's reception system. A study of thirteen communities shows that such interventions have occurred in many cases.

The problems related to finding one's own residence should also be balanced by the many positive experiences which have been shown to accrue from living on one's own. The fact that there is always a free choice and that the possibility to move to a refugee centre is always available probably should also be interpreted as showing that asylum seekers appreciate having their own residence. "To be able to choose for one's self whether one wants to live in refugee housing or perhaps share a flat with strangers or with relatives or friends whom one knows makes a contribution to the experience of being able to influence one's life situation and thus one's well-being." (SOU 2003:75 p. 45)

In order to carry out a co-ordinated transformation work aimed at strengthening and enhancing co-operation between the affected authorities and regional and local players who work together in the introduction of asylum seekers, an agreement has been made between the Labour Market Board, the Integration Board, the Migration Board, the National Agency for Education and the Swedish Community League in April 2001. An example of this effort is the fact that the Integration Board concluded an agreement with seven employment organisations concerning co-operation for the sake of promoting ethnic variety in working life and to counteract xenophobia and racism. The point is to develop more effective co-operation in bringing about a successful introduction. (KORTNYTT, 2 Jan 2004) The Swedish system for refugee reception with the possibilities of appealing rejection which exist often means that asylum seekers spend years waiting for a decision on their residence permit, a period during which they in practice are provided for by state support. This is followed by the introduction into the communities which can also extend over several years - a long time during which they do not have to think about their support. (Rapport 2001)

In psychological terms, the asylum period can be a very trying period because of the long wait and the insecurity. Upon their arrival and in the immediate period thereafter a certain elation can be observed among the new arrivals. They have achieved their goal, a difficult and thorny path has been completed. Many have great expectations of being cared for and they also experience it as such. But soon they are confronted with everyday life, which is characterised not only by monotony but also by disappointment over not receiving a decision. Mental health deteriorates, sleeping problems and psychosomatic symptoms begin to appear. There is reason to suspect that many people in such situations begin to ease their restlessness or else flee from a pitiless reality with the help of alcohol and drugs.

Although an asylum application can be processed after only a few days of active work, for most people it takes months or years. In 2001, the auditor of the Riksdag examined how long it took for the authorities to give asylum seekers an answer in the period from 1996-2000. The goal set by the government is six months of processing for an asylum examination by the Migration Board and the same amount of time at the Foreigners Commission, i.e. a total of one year.

In reality it often took much longer. Among those seeking asylum in 1998, half of them had to wait longer than eleven months and a quarter more than fourteen months. Among those seeking asylum a year earlier and who were finally approved by the Foreigners Commission, half had to wait more than twenty-two months and a quarter more than twenty-seven months. Of those who were rejected in 1997, half had to wait more than fifteen months and a quarter more than twenty-two months.

There is very little in the literature about the hardships of the asylum period. There is a dearth of information concerning the relationship of asylum seekers to alcohol and drugs. By contrast, in the media there are regular reports of varying quality. In some cases they even discuss drug abuse. Most segments discuss "Kat" abuse among Somalis.

3. Asylum seekers and substance abuse

Assuming that the asylum period is a time of mental hardship, the suspicion that various types of substance abuse are being employed to help reduce inner tensions or as an escape mechanism cannot

be rejected out of hand. ANTONOVSKY (1997) has described physical and mental health as a feeling of connection constituting a dynamic process in which the individual strives to understand, deal with and find meaning in his/her life. Of special importance for healthy behaviour are social networks and socio-economic factors. Many asylum seekers lack these preconditions.

3.1. The incidence of alcohol and drug abuse among asylum seekers

In order to find out about the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse among asylum seekers, I first surveyed the literature. My research shows that there are no scientific studies on this issue. However, there is some material dealing with immigrants and substance abuse. This group mainly includes immigrants who receive residence permits and who thus are not asylum seekers. By the same token, there is material in the mass media which takes up the problem, but they rarely distinguish asylum seekers from immigrants.

The next step in my investigation was the interviews/conversations I carried out with some fifty key persons. These were persons who, whether through their profession or through volunteer work come into direct contact with asylum seekers and immigrants or else who encounter immigrating persons in the course of their general activity (e.g. general practitioners, social secretaries).

3.1.1 General personnel in refugee centres

I conducted interviews in three large refugee centres in central Sweden: Gimo, Carlslund and Flen. I met with supervisors, desk officers and health care personnel in both the adult and juvenile departments.

Despite the fact that the personnel and the asylum seekers are in the same area every day, the personnel stated unanimously that they did not have any great understanding of the asylum seekers' daily lives. The asylum seekers live for themselves in individual flats or in corridors where they attend to their own cooking and practical affairs. None of those interviewed had seen any sign of alcohol or drug abuse. At the youth department in Gimo, where contacts between personnel and school-age youths is more intimate than in the adult departments, there was no indication of alcohol or drug abuse.

3.1.2 Health care personnel in refugee centres

When the asylum seekers arrive at a refugee centre, they are offered a general medical examination. Many take advantage of this offer and receive adequate care. As far as the asylum seekers' mental health is concerned, they are frequently "on top of the world". The experience of having achieved one's goal, having "the whole thing over" permeates the new arrivals, making them experience a profound satisfaction with their lives.

It is only after a while, for example three or four months, that their mood starts to change. The new arrivals had expected to receive attention for their case and their concrete concerns. Instead, nothing visible happens at all. Disappointment sets in, often leading to anxiety. The new arrivals realise that they can take nothing for granted, that they are at risk of receiving a negative answer. This realisation, combined with inactivity, occasionally causes a restlessness which in some cases can only be eased through artificial methods. The nearest solution at hand is to request psychotropic drugs from the care personnel, subduing their restlessness and/or easing sleep. Judging from my interviews, this represents a high consumption of medications which often borders on abuse. If the responsible physicians attempt to reduce their prescriptions, there is a danger that a black market will develop for these substances.

3.1.3 Officials

Interviews with employees in various authorities, police, social administration, the correctional system, the mental care system, and the narcotics system have resulted in general formulations nearly identi-

cal to those among the personnel in the refugee centres. These persons have chance encounters with immigrants, but no one has any special opinion or knowledge of asylum seekers.

I followed the work of the social secretaries at the Outreach Unit in central Stockholm over a long weekend. During this weekend we also did not encounter any asylum seekers suffering from substance abuse.

3.1.4 Voluntary associations and volunteer workers

In Flen there is a voluntary association, "Solidarity House", which concerns itself with refugee affairs. They hold office hours on Thursdays and try to support asylum seekers in case they require help with appeals or other bureaucratic matters. They also give advice on help with psychological issues and whatever else comes up.

According to the staff at "Solidarity House" there is no evidence to show that their clients abuse alcohol or drugs. However, they remark that there is a demand for sedatives and sleeping pills.

There are also voluntary associations which work secretly, for example because they support illegal immigrants with advice, funds and health care. A central figure in these associations has stated: "I see no substance abuse among our clients. But they might well drink a glass or two, thinking about how badly they are being treated by society."

3.2. Immigrant associations

There are many immigrant associations in Sweden, many more than the number of ethnic or national groups. The explanation for this is that the associations sometimes place their emphasis on different areas of interest. In addition, there are conflicts within groups coming from the same country. That can be caused by the fact that they come from different geographic regions, or that they have a different political or ethnic base. Clan tensions within the same ethnic group have been imported to their new homeland and it is difficult for the antagonists to belong to the same association. For example, there are five different Roma (gypsy) associations in Sweden.

One umbrella association which can be found in many locations is called SIMON, Swedish Immigrants Against Narcotics. It is more or less active from time to time and is intended to stand above national and ethnic boundaries.

There are various estimates of substance abuse among one's fellow citizens within the different immigrant associations. But the question is sensitive and its existence is denied by some. This denial may, of course, also arise from a lack of knowledge. Six immigrant associations seeking funds from the Social Administration to combat alcohol and drug abuse evaluated the situation among their countrymen in the following way:

► *The Turkish Youth League*

"One issue which the Turkish Youth League takes very seriously is that of drug use among young people of Turkish background. Within the Turkish Youth League, we have in recent years become more aware of the fact that the use of various drugs is common among young people. Leaders, parents and young people have expressed their concern over the reality which they see and experience in segregated towns, particularly the dramatic increase in drugs, as well as the consequences which this has brought about among young people of Turkish background." In addition, the league has taken up the problem of tobacco smoking, which they see as the first step towards the use of other drugs. A survey shows that almost seventy percent of girls and seventy-three percent of boys of Turkish background say they have tried smoking and that over thirty-five percent smoke regularly.

► *Somali Association in Malmö*

Abuse of the drug "Kat" is common within the Somali immigrant group. According to the Somali Association, social and economic problems are associated with Kat abuse. Here is a quotation from

the association's programme:

"In itself, the use of Kat is relaxing and leads to passivity. Smuggling is a fact and represents another problem. Smuggling occurs in such a way that adults make use of young people. Both adults and young people are affected, although in different ways. Adults, women and men, who use drugs often become passive and neglect their family responsibilities, resulting in the break-up of the family by divorce. Young people neglect school and education, which can lead to exclusion and involvement in the drug scene."

➡ *Greek Youth League*

The Greek Youth League says that studies pointing to a series of risk factors for alcohol and drug abuse are also strongly affected by areas of high immigrant density. *"In our contacts with parents and young people, we in the Greek Youth League have seen that this also affects young people of Greek background. After having met many of our young people of Greek background, we can state that in nearly all cases they have the possibility of turning to someone in their circle of acquaintances who knows how to get hold of alcohol and drugs."*

➡ *Roma Associations in Malmö*

Romano Trajo, Roma Life, is an association which has been working to resist substance abuse and social decay among the Roma (gypsies) in Malmö. A large part of the Roma groups live isolated from other social groups. Unemployment is high and many feel discriminated. Alcohol and narcotics abuse is considered to be widespread. The abuse pattern resembles that of Swedes, i.e. high alcohol consumption and a very high incidence of amphetamine abuse.

➡ *Bosnians Against Drugs*

"We, Bosnia-Herzegovina's Muslim Youth League (BeMUF), believe that one can observe a growing abuse of narcotics and growing alcohol consumption among Bosnian young people who are members of the BeMUF and among young people with whom we come in contact in the BeMUF. It is our opinion that the increase we have noted among the young people with whom we come in contact is part of a general increase in the consumption of alcohol and narcotics which is occurring in Sweden. "The increasing abuse of alcohol and narcotics which our members in the local Bosnian youth associations have noted among Bosnian young people is believed to derive from social problems, family discord, very poor adaptation in Sweden etc."

➡ *The Kurdish Youth Association*

The association begins by noting that drinking among young people has increased in Sweden in recent years. They have added the following description of the situation:

"Young Kurds have also been affected by alcohol in recent years. In a study by the 'Kurdish Radio in Gothenburg' it was shown that the drinking of alcohol among Kurdish youths has become more common. Abuse is hidden among the Kurdish young people because they do not talk about their problems in front of parents or relatives. Some of them began drinking because of the tensions and social problems in Kurdistan, others became abusers because of the same reasons in Sweden. There are many Kurdish girls who begin drinking alcohol because of pressure from their families or conditions at home or the clash of cultures. Some girls turn to sexual clients to get money for alcohol."

3.3. Independent survey

In an attempt to gain concrete knowledge of the field, I recently circulated the following survey at "Solidarity House" in Flen. The personnel posed these questions to its visitors. It is still too early to say

to what extent this has provided any deeper knowledge.

1. In general terms, what in your view is the state of alcohol abuse among the asylum seekers whom you know or whom you have heard of?
 don't know very little somewhat widespread very widespread
2. Are there any special age groups or ethnic groups who, in your opinion, have problems with alcohol consumption?
 don't know very little somewhat widespread very widespread
3. What is your view of the use of sleeping and/or sedative tablets among the asylum seekers whom you know or whom you have heard of?
 don't know very little somewhat widespread very widespread
4. What is your view of the use/abuse of drugs among asylum seekers?
 don't know very little somewhat widespread very widespread
5. Are there any special age groups or ethnic groups who in your opinion have trouble with drugs?
6. If drug abuse occurs: do you know which drugs are being used?

Commentary on the question of drug abuse among asylum seekers:

To a large degree, this problem is a hidden problem. No one wants to volunteer such information, among other reasons because they believe that this will diminish their possibilities to stay. Representatives of ethnic groups do not want to present their own group in a bad light.

It is also possible that the problem is generally more limited than with other groups.

Asylum seekers have little money and many do not know where to find drugs.

The problem varies in prevalence according to ethnic group, personality, the content of the asylum period etc.

It appears clear that the consumption of psychotropic drugs is generally high.

4. Preventive measures

4.1 Direct measures

This section will examine the measures which are directly aimed at preventing or reducing substance abuse among asylum seekers. Today, with the exception of various projects by the immigrant associations, there are few or no special programs for this group. Within the Swedish social welfare system measures are being carried out in order to help people with their problems and not to divide them into categories such as asylum seekers, immigrants and Swedes. Some examples from the immigrant associations' programme are examined below. Note that they are not aimed solely at asylum seekers.

► Turkish Youth League, TUF

The objective of TUF's preventive work is expressed in the association's own words as follows:

- To identify the causes of drug use among young people of Turkish background.
- To present a programme of measures and new work methods to counteract drug use in co-operation with young people on the local level on a long-term basis.
- To inform young people and their parents about the consequences and side-effects of drug use.
- To launch a debate and dialogue with politicians, government authorities and the media concerning drug problems among young people of Turkish background.

► Somali Association

A quotation from the programme of the Somali Association:

"The primary goal is to change Somalis' attitudes and behaviour toward drugs and in this way to prevent the abuse of Kat. The project shall also increase Somalis' understanding of the harm the drug does in social and economic terms. The project shall develop effective action plans for both target groups.

The secondary goal is to activate the Somalis' involvement in society, increase their participation in Swedish society and to take responsibility for their own and their families' situation. This means transforming an entire lifestyle and getting these groups involved in society.

Schools may be interested in using the results from the project to stop alcohol and narcotics abuse among students."

The project used the methods of roll playing, discussion, conversation and information.

► Greek Youth League

From the league's programme:

"We are identifying the alcohol and drug habits of young people of Greek background. Opinion-forming and information efforts are being adapted to different communities. Education and native language teachers can function as a link between young people, their parents and school. Local Greek associations are working closely with social authorities and other organisations in order to discover young people in risk zones early on."

► Romano Trajo

A brief summary of the association's activity. The association works with emergency response and crisis management. It visits parolees, institutions, supervisors etc. Here the members serve as mentors, ombudsmen and contact persons. *"Because of our background, young people have an easier time identifying with us, which eases contact and leads to the conditions necessary for attitude-promoting work,"* says one leading member. The preventive work includes visiting schools, hostels, institutions etc. They carry on discussions with both parents and young people and try to activate the youths in order to make their leisure time more meaningful. In connection with meetings, they show an information film called "Grofo", which is a good way to get the debate going. Another good way of coming into contact with and influencing young people is to take excursions together where they stay over in another town and take part in a programme which is both entertaining and informative.

► Bosnians Against Drugs

The target group is young people between age fifteen and twenty. The association believes that it is possible to reach and influence young people in other ways than, for example, through parents or the authorities. It also uses popular education, such as conferences, study circles and lectures as a method. Current plans are aimed at organising seven regional conferences. From all of this they plan to put together workbooks, CDs and similar materials. All participants at the conference are invited to check out the association's anti-drug network on the Internet.

By means of these conferences, a number of interested members will be "skimmed off" to receive special training in alcohol and drug issues.

► Kurdish Youth Association

"Less alcohol – better health" is the heading of the association's project. They are attempting to motivate young people to become involved in meaningful activities while giving young people and parents information on alcohol and drugs. *"Through this project we shall help Kurdish young people deal with their problems and strengthen their social competence in order to reduce their desire for alcohol. – We*

want to influence Kurdish girls to become more independent and make use of their rights in society instead of trying to solve their problems with alcohol and drugs. Through this project we want to achieve these goals:

1. Reduce the drinking of alcohol among Kurdish young people.
2. Form networks between parents and the association.“

4.2. General measures

Here we shall look at some types of measures that are not directly related to substance abuse but which are directly aimed at the asylum seekers and that, if applied in the refugee centres, can have a restraining effect on its development against different types of abuse behaviour.

4.2.1. Activity project in Flen

In co-operation with the private company Management Mind UK Ltd (Swedish branch), the Migration Board in Flen has launched a project called "Organising activities for asylum seekers in project form". Here is a quotation from the project's programme declaration:

"The Board shall offer the asylum seekers organised activity – all asylum seekers who have the opportunity to participate shall do so forty hours per week, i.e. a normal work week. – By organised activity we mean activity which develops the individual and either accelerates integration in society or else eases the return of those persons who do not receive a residence permit."

There is a solid understanding of how important it is for asylum seekers to become active and how little is being done to address this problem. According to a study from the Riksrevisionsverket (Swedish Government Accounting Office, RRV:19), there have been great deficiencies in organised activity. Among other things, the study criticised that the asylum seekers spend too little time in organised activity and that practical activity and work are not practised to the extent that this would be desirable. Particularly activities which can improve the individual asylum seeker's financial situation are important so that the time the asylum seeker spends waiting for a decision can be experienced as meaningful. In today's situation, organised activity mainly consists of Swedish language instruction which is conducted in groups of around twenty persons for four hours a day. At the refugee centre in Flen, some also perform caretaking activities.

The new project is thus aimed at full activity. There are a number of examples of activities which can be seen as being meaningful. In the budget planning, resources have been distributed to activities in the following main groups:

- Health, with activities aimed at lifestyle, nutrition, personal care and the popular health education which we conduct in Sweden;
- Household skills, with activities aimed at cooking, shopping, handicrafts, home economics, the cost of living, economics;
- Technology, with activities aimed at plumbing, electricity, construction, cars and opportunities to develop one's abilities while participating in activity programmes;
- Information in general, with activities aimed at the gathering and use of information etc.

4.2.2. Educational project in Uppsala

The community of Uppsala has recently initiated a project designed to promote the linguistic competence of immigrants (and to some degree of asylum seekers) in order to ease their integration into society. Their programme states: "The combined language and culture shock affecting many new arri-

vals in one way or another requires conscientious strategies and increased co-operation between Swedish language instruction and labour market-oriented introduction. The working methods and models used so far have not been sufficiently effective in dealing with the needs of individuals and the demands of the labour market. Too many new arrivals have never entered the labour market. New forms of practical training need to be developed in order to open the labour market for newcomers.”

5. Closing remarks

As shown by the examples above, our understanding of the situation and needs of asylum seekers and immigrants has increased significantly in recent years. Sweden has taken in a very large group of asylum seekers every year while the nation's economy has lagged. A decisive question is whether these good intentions will remain mere words or else be transformed into actions. But this is not only a question of money. It is also a question of attitudes. Employers and authorities must dare to approach people whose background, language and culture is different from that of ordinary Swedes.

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