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Success factors for effective labour market projects

A comparative study of fifteen Social Fund financed projects

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Clara Lindblom

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Innehåll

Introduction

Introduction

For decades, the Swedish municipalities have had a major responsibility for the implementation of active labour market policy, despite the fact that the formal responsibility for this policy area has rested with the Swedish Government. In addition, Sweden's entry into the European Union opened up the opportunity for municipalities and other local actors to apply for money from the European Social Fund (ESF) in order to conduct local labour market projects. During the most recent Social Fund programme period, 2007–2013, local actors have accounted for a majority of the Swedish projects implemented using financing from the Social Fund, whereas only a few have been implemented by the central government agencies working in the field of labour market policy. The knowledge on local labour market policy measures remains limited however. This is true of both the regular activities conducted by the municipalities in this area and the Social Fund financed projects that have been implemented by various types of local actors.

This qualitative follow-up study describes and compares the contents of the work of fifteen local labour market projects that have been financed with money from the Social Fund during the 2007–2013 programme period. The objective is to identify common denominators among projects that produce better results than the regular activities conducted by the Public Employment Service and that at the same time distinguish these projects from projects that perform worse by comparison with the Public Employment Service. The hope is that it will be possible to utilise the study's conclusions to formulate hypotheses as to which factors contribute to producing successful labour market policy measures for the relevant target groups, which can then be tested in future quantitative research based on larger samples than the one it has been possible to study in the context of this report.

The report presents a qualitative follow-up study of results presented in an earlier report by Szulkin et al. (2013), which examined the effects of participation in Social Fund financed projects by comparison with participation in the regular activities organised by the Public Employment Service for the corresponding target groups. Since it is the task of the Thematic Group on Inclusion in Working Life (TIA) to analyse the significance of project activities for the integration into working life of individuals born abroad, the principal focus of the report is directed at the effects of project participation for foreign-born participants and their children. The projects included in the follow-up study have been selected by means of a stratified random sample drawn from among the projects included in the quantitative effect evaluation in order to obtain the maximum possible variation on the dependent variable. The data were then collected by means of deep interviews with project managers and project workers from each project and by means of a text analysis of a large quantity of project documentation. In order to allow

for a structured and transparent analysis of the data collected, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) has been employed, which allows for the identification of common denominators among the projects studied that produce different types of outcomes by comparison with those produced by regular labour market activities.

The report begins with a chapter that presents the overarching focus of the Social Fund during the most recent programme period, common models that are employed to explain the weak position occupied by foreign-born individuals on the Swedish labour market and previous research on active labour market policy measures. The report then moves on to describe the sample of Social Fund projects from the most recent programme period, together with the organisation and contents of the fifteen Social Fund projects included in the sample examined in the current report. Chapter three presents more detailed analyses of the significance of the contents of the projects for the project participants' labour market outcomes, while the final chapter summarises the report's central results and discusses the lessons that can be learned in relation to the coming programme period.[1]

Finally, the author would particularly like to thank Moa Bursell, Ryszard Szulkin, Magnus Bygren and Jonas Karlsson for their valuable comments and support during the production of the report. The same also goes for research assistants Erik Normark, Sarah Philipsson, Nina Johansson and Michell Grönlund, who have devoted a great many hours to transcribing the extensive material employed in the analyses. The responsibility for any remaining errors and deficiencies lies solely with the report's author.

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1. The report employs a number of concepts that may briefly be defined as follows. The terms foreign-born individuals and individuals born abroad refer to individuals born in a country other than Sweden, while native-born individuals are persons born in Sweden. The term Swedish background refers to native-born individuals with at least one parent who was also born in Sweden.

Chapter 1
Background

Background

This part of the report begins by describing the direction of the European Social Fund (ESF) in Sweden during the most recent programme period and also the target groups described in the National Structural Fund Programme. It then moves on with a section that is intended to define the concept of integration and that presents some of the most common models employed to explain the weak position occupied by foreign-born individuals on the Swedish labour market.

The Social Fund in Sweden

The Social Fund has been utilised in order to bring about convergence in relation to social and economic disparities within the European Union (EU) since the union was founded in 1957. During the most recent programme period, over six billion SEK from the common budget were allocated to finance Social Fund activities in Sweden.[2] The overarching focus of these activities was specified in the National Structural Fund Programme, which was produced by the Swedish Government in consultation with the EU Commission. The Swedish ESF-Council, which is the agency that has been appointed to assume responsibility for the administration of the Social Fund in Sweden, has then awarded funding to projects that were assessed to contribute to the specified overarching objective. This objective was improved economic growth, which was in turn to be achieved by ensuring that required levels of skills are available and by increasing the supply of labour (ESF, 2007).

The activities that have been conducted within the framework of the National Structural Fund Programme have been divided into two programme areas. The first area has been used to promote the development of competencies among those already in employment, while the second has had the objective of financing projects that work to increase the chances of employment among individuals positioned at a substantial distance from the labour market. According to the guidelines for programme area two, measures intended to facilitate the establishment of foreign-born individuals on the labour market are to be given special priority. The same is the case for young people who are either in transition between studies and employment or who have been job-seekers for at least three months, and also for individuals who have been on full- or part-time sick leave for a period of at least six months. The goal has not only been to generate effects at the individual level, however, but also that Social Fund financed activities should contribute to organisational and policy development in relevant policy areas,

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2. One condition for the payment of funding is that the member states contribute at least the same amount in the form of public sector co-funding. Thus the total budget for Social Fund measures in Sweden for the period in question will amount to at least 12 billion SEK.

structures and institutions. The Swedish ESF-Council has also financed a number of so-called process support and thematic groups in order to support the projects and to work to disseminate knowledge learned from Social Fund activities to other actors within the field of labour market policy (ESF, 2007; 2011).

Models for explaining the employment gap between native-born and foreign-born individuals

According to the National Structural Fund Programme, special priority should be given to measures focused on improving integration in working life, at the same time as the implementation of the measures should ensure participation and the ability to exert influence among the groups affected by these integration efforts (ESF, 2007). As is often the case with concepts that are commonly found in everyday speech, however, the contents of the integration concept are taken for granted in the document at issue. One of those who has theorised about the integration concept is the Swedish sociologist José Alberto Diaz, whose doctoral thesis *Choosing integration*, published in 1993, describes integration as a long-term process that takes place in the context of interactions between social institutions, organisations and individuals. This process in turn has the objective of ensuring that the foreign-born individual becomes a functioning part of areas of society where desirable resources are distributed. The integration concept is thus defined as a condition in which foreign-born individuals achieve a varying degree of equality with native-born individuals in terms of participation in different types of social relations such as working life, housing and politics in the receiving country (Diaz, 1993:31 ff.).

The integration concept
The multidimensional model of integration employed in Diaz's thesis was developed by the German sociologist Hartmut Esser (1980). Integration is understood as a process that takes place along a number of different dimensions, which means that it should be analysed in relation to social interactions and the distribution of resources within several different areas of society. An individual can thus be viewed as being well-integrated on one dimension at the same time as his or her level of integration in the remaining areas is limited. Diaz (2004) places special emphasis on the significance of five dimensions of integration. One of these is labour market integration, which is defined in terms of inclusion in working life in the form of paid employment or self-employment. Social integration, in turn, means having access to a social network that involves creating contacts with native-born individuals, while civil integration involves participation in social institutions, which is made possible by means of political rights and the exercise of political citizenship roles. The housing integration dimension is used to describe access to residential areas where the ethnic composition of the residents is mixed, as well as the opportunity to choose one's place of residence on one's own terms. Finally, subjec-

tive integration relates to the individual's perceptions regarding his or her integration and the sense of belonging in the receiving country.[3]

This report is primarily focused on the significance of Social Fund projects for the labour market integration of the participating individuals, which constitutes only one of the dimensions involved in the integration process. The background is the fact that the National Structural Fund Programme for the period 2007–2013 placed a special emphasis on the significance of employment for improved integration, among other things via the specification of the quantified objectives for programme area two of the Social Fund, which have been focused on effects specified in terms of the individuals' labour market outcomes subsequent to participation in a Social Fund financed project (ESF, 2007).[4] At the same time, from an individual perspective, the degree of labour market integration may be assumed to be of significance to the development of the integration process on the other dimensions. Being able to support oneself by means of employment or self-employment contributes, for example, to changing an individual's living conditions and opportunities in a number of respects. Having a job also means having access to a social context that may be assumed to contribute to expanding the individual's social network and increasing the sense of belonging within the majority society (Diaz, 2004; Eriksson, 2011).

The employment gap between native- and foreign-born individuals on the Swedish labour market is larger than that found in most other European countries. There are, however, major differences in the situation of foreign-born individuals on the Swedish labour market depending on the time of and reasons for migration, the length of time they have been in Sweden and their country of birth. The employment rate is lowest, for example, among individuals who have been in Sweden for less than 10 years and among individuals who were born in Africa and Asia. Although the employment rate increases with the length of time spent in Sweden, there remains a substantial gap in relation to the native-born population even 25 years subsequent to the date of arrival (Olli Segendorf & Teljosuo, 2011:5; Szulkin et al., 2013; le Grand et al., 2013).

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3. A similar perspective is employed in the report *Using EU Indicators of Immigrant Integration* (Huddlestone et al., 2013) which was commissioned by the EU Commission. The authors describe integration as a long-term process and propose a series of indicators that may be used to compare the level of integration in the EU member states. Within the labour market field, the indicators relate to among other things the employment and activity rate within the group of foreign-born individuals in the respective member states and also the proportion of individuals who are self-employed or who may be regarded as over-qualified for their current position. These are supplemented with a range of indicators across a number of other areas, such as education, social inclusion, and perceived discrimination in the receiving country. The report builds on the Declaration on Common Indicators that was adopted at a meeting of the EU's integration ministers in the Spanish city of Zaragoza in April 2010. The declaration's objective was to facilitate the following-up of the degree of integration among native-born and foreign-born individuals in the respective member states.

4. At the same, deficiencies regarding the systematic collection of data on participating individuals and on the work of the projects restrict the opportunities for multi-dimensional analysis. No collection of standardised questionnaire data has been conducted in connection with the participants entering and leaving the projects. The collection of data of this kind would make it easier to estimate the effects of the Social Fund projects in relation to more subjective dimensions, such as the individuals' perceptions of the projects' significance for the development of their language skills and the expansion of their social networks (Szulkin et al., 2013).

Human capital theory

One possible explanation for the employment gap would be that foreign-born individuals on average have less human capital than other groups on the labour market. The human capital concept is usually used to refer to factors that directly influence the individual's productiveness on the labour market, such as education, employment experience and language skills (Becker, 1962; Ben-Porath, 1967).[5] The point of departure for human capital theory is that productivity-related proficiencies can be acquired. This may occur during childhood through parents transferring knowledge, norms and habits to their children. But the central focus of the theory is that individuals can themselves choose to increase their productiveness, for example by investing in a higher education.

At the same time, human capital may be of varying value in different contexts. A decision to migrate involves as a rule a reduction in the value of an individual's human capital, since language skills, cultural competence and local knowledge may have less currency than in the country of origin (Chiswick, 1978; Borjas, 1999). It may also be difficult to directly transfer an existing education and existing employment experiences to the new labour market. An individual may therefore be forced to utilise the period immediately subsequent to arrival to supplementing his or her education, learning the language and acquiring other forms of knowledge that are specific to the country in question. Individuals who have left their country of origin as refugees have limited opportunities to choose the receiving country that provides the best match for their human capital. Experiences in the country of origin and circumstances arising as a result of having been forced to flee may also have left traces on an individual's mental and physical health (Sjögren and Zenou, 2007; Eriksson, 2011).

The differences in the average level of education between native- and foreign-born individuals are small in Sweden, however, although there are differences between different groups among those born abroad. Among individuals born within the EU and North America, the average level of education is higher than in the rest of the population, while individuals born in Africa, Asia and European countries outside the EU have a significantly lower level of education than individuals born in Sweden (Aldén and Hammarstedt, 2014). Empirical studies show, however, that these differences can only explain a small part of the employment gap between native- and foreign-born individuals. At the same time there is research indicating the significance of whether some part of an individual's education has taken place in Sweden, and there is international evidence that employment experience obtained in the country of origin is ascribed less value than experience obtained in the labour market of the receiving country (Nordin, 2007; Rooth and Åslund, 2007).

The relationship between labour market outcomes and Swedish language skills has been studied by Rooth and Åslund (2006). The study shows that the likelihood of being in employment increases by ten percentage points if an individual has a good knowledge of the Swedish language. For immigrant academics with a good knowledge of

5. In a broader sense, the concept may also include social contacts and individual health.

Swedish, there is also a 30 percent increase in salaries. Kennerberg and Åslund (2010) have examined the relationship between participation in "Swedish for immigrants" courses and subsequent labour market outcomes for individuals who migrated to Sweden during the period 1994–2004. The study shows that to begin with the participants were characterised by lower employment rates and incomes than comparable individuals who had not started the Swedish language course. After ten years of residence in Sweden, however, the employment rate among individuals who had completed the course was approximately five percentage points higher than among the comparison group.[6]

Access to social networks

Another explanation may be that the norms, search activities and networks of foreign-born individuals differ from those of other groups. This may involve differences in the choice of search methods and the intensity with which search activities are conducted, or differences in attitudes towards employment. According to Eriksson (2011), however, there is little research to indicate that foreign-born individuals seek employment to a lesser extent than other groups on the labour market. Arai et al. (1999) show, for example, that foreign-born individuals who seek employment are more likely to respond to advertisements and more often take direct contact with employers than native-born individuals in the same situation. In addition, foreign-born individuals both have more intensive contacts with the Public Employment Service and have a greater propensity to make use of their informal contacts to obtain information about possible employment opportunities.[7]

On the other hand, it is possible that the social networks of foreign-born born individuals are more limited by comparison with those of other groups on the Swedish labour market. An individual's network can in turn be of significance for his or her labour market outcomes, by providing information about potential employment opportunities and functioning as a provider of references for employers who are uncertain regarding the productiveness of the individual in question. Olli Segendorf (2005) shows, for example, that native-born individuals benefit from the utilisation of informal channels of communication, whereas the opposite is true for individuals who were born outside Europe. One possible explanation for this finding is that there are compositional differences between the networks of native- and foreign-born individuals respectively. Behtoui (2007) has found, for example, that native-born individuals more often have social networks that are comprised of people with more highly-qualified occupations. Fo-

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6. The greatest differences between the groups were found among women and those with a low level of education. According to the authors of the study, the findings cannot be directly interpreted as being a result of the Swedish for immigrants course, since the decision to participate in the course may have been affected by a number of factors that is was not possible to control for in the data available to the study. The improvement in the participants' labour market outcomes may also have been caused by factors other than their having improved their Swedish language skills more than the members of the comparison group. It is possible, for example, that the course functioned as a signal to employers or made it possible to obtain entry to a labour market policy measure which then subsequently had a positive effect on the individuals' chances of obtaining employment (Kennerberg and Åslund, 2010).

7. Similar conclusions can be found in a study by Olli-Segendorf (2005), which shows that individuals born outside Europe are more intensive in their job-seeking than native-born individuals. At the same time, foreign-born individuals who do not engage in higher-intensity job-seeking activities are at high risk of remaining unemployed.

reign-born individuals who utilise personal contacts thus have access to less highly-resourced networks than native-born individuals.[8]

Discrimination
Another group of explanatory models proceed from demand-related factors that first and foremost focus on employers' demand for labour. Foreign-born individuals may, for example, find it more difficult than other groups on the labour market to fulfil employers' requirements to be regarded as employable. The demand for labour among employers, particularly with regard to language skills and country-specific human capital, may have changed over time as a result of rationalisations and technological developments. But foreign-born individuals may also be exposed to ethnic discrimination on the labour market, which involves individuals being paid lower wages or being passed over for employment or promotion despite their having qualifications that are equivalent to those of other job-seekers.[9]

There are several studies that indicate the presence of discrimination on the Swedish labour market. Bursell (2007) and Arai et al. (2008), for example, sent fictitious applications for a number of jobs in Stockholm that had been advertised on the Public Employment Service's website. Two equivalent applications were sent for each job, with one being signed using a Swedish-sounding name and one using an Arabic-sounding name. Taken together the results show that the likelihood of being called to a job interview was significantly lower if the application had been signed using an Arabic-sounding name, while Carlsson and Rooth (2007), in the context of a similar field experiment, found that the difference was greater in relation to less-skilled than in relation to more highly-skilled occupations. Results pointing in the same direction have also been presented by Arai and Skogman Thoursie (2009), who studied the effects of a name change for the employment incomes of foreign-born individuals. The study showed that individuals who change from a foreign-sounding to a Swedish- or neutral-sounding name obtained an increase in their employment incomes during the years immediately subsequent to the name change.

Policy-related factors
Policy-related explanations instead focus on institutional factors that may have an obstructive effect on the chances of foreign-born individuals becoming established on the labour market. It is possible, for example, that language and introduction courses

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8. For more studies of how native- and foreign-born individuals use informal channels to seek work, and the significance of this behaviour for individual labour market outcomes, see for example Behtoui (2007), Edin et al. (2003), Bevelander and Lundh (2006) and Hensvik et al. (2009:24).

9. The research usually differentiates between different forms of ethnic discrimination, with preference-based discrimination (Becker, 1971) and statistical discrimination (Phelps, 1972; Arrow, 1973) being the types that are of most significance to explaining the weak position occupied by foreign-born individuals on the labour market. Preference-based discrimination involves employers excluding foreign-born individuals when making employment decisions, because either they themselves or their employees or clients have a negative attitude towards people born abroad. Statistical discrimination, on the other hand, involves employers proceeding on the basis of assumed group characteristics in situations where it is difficult or expensive to assess a specific individual's productiveness. An employer who perceives it to be expensive to call job-seekers to an interview, for example, might dismiss an application signed by a person with a foreign name because the employer assesses there to be a risk that the individual in question will speak worse Swedish than the other applicants.

directed at recently arrived immigrants serve to obstruct these individuals from app-lying for jobs at the same time as they are enrolled, while at the same time the courses fail to provide the participants with the skills they need to enter and remain on the labour market. Eriksson (2011) also emphasises the importance of giving the suppliers of labour market and integration programmes incentives to implement these measures effectively. Eriksson recommends, for example, that compensation systems should be linked to the achievement of goals, while at the same time consideration should also be given to the fact that compensation systems that are entirely focused on outcomes may contribute to weak groups being given a lower priority in the work of these programmes.

The incentive structures employed in relation to actors that supplement the work of the Public Employment Service and in relation to the Social Fund financed projects respectively have been compared in Szulkin et al. (2013). As a rule, the Social Fund pro-jects receive financial support during those hours in which the participant is actually participating in project activities. Thus a project's chances of obtaining compensation for an individual participant disappear completely if the individual in question ceases to participate in the project. No additional compensation is paid if the participant leaves the project to enter employment. By contrast, the compensation paid to supplementary actors is in part performance-based. Part of this compensation is paid when a partici-pant assigned to such a programme begins to participate in programme activities with the actor in question, while at the same time additional compensation is awarded if the participant enters employment subsequent to participation in the programme and if this period of employment lasts for a certain amount of time.

Thus the system of compensation for supplementary actors contains more powerful financial incentives to work effectively towards shortening the time until participants obtain employment than is the case for a majority of the Social Fund financed projects. The Social Fund projects also benefit from participants being enrolled on a full-time basis, which may be viewed as being likely to increase the risk for lock-in effects if the measures do not have a clear labour-market focus and include direct contacts with employers.[10] Karlsson et al. (2014) show further that job-seekers assigned to Social Fund financed projects within the context of their enrolment in the Job and Develop-ment Programme and the Youth Job Programme move on into paid employment to a lesser extent than job-seekers who have participated in the regular activities of the Public Employment Service.

Implications for active labour market policy
Eriksson (2011) draws a number of conclusions about the formulation of active labour

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10. In the context of an audit of the administration of structural fund projects, the Swedish National Audit Office (Riks-revisionen 2012:22) noted that 80 percent of the projects in programme area two perceived that the co-funding system involved administrative requirements that were resource-intensive to either a "quite" or "very" substantial extent. The audit also found that projects focused on individuals on long-term sick leave and the young unemployed found it difficult to obtain sufficient co-funding, since the low levels of benefits these groups received from the Public Employment Ser-vice and the Social Insurance Agency meant that the projects as a rule also received only low levels of participant-based co-funding. By extension this involves a risk that projects will choose to avoid focusing on weaker groups of job-seekers for financial reasons.

market measures on the basis of theory and previous research on the position of foreign-born individuals on the Swedish labour market. These conclusions emphasise the importance of ensuring that measures such as Swedish language courses, introductory programmes for newly arrived migrants and labour market measures for individuals born abroad proceed from the needs and circumstances of the individual. This requires cooperation between the Public Employment Service, municipalities and course co-ordinators, and also functioning systems for charting individual needs, prior education, employment experiences and preferences. Municipal adult education provision was singled out for special criticism for not always offering teaching at a level that corresponds to the individual's existing knowledge and study experience.

Eriksson argues further that educational and labour market measures should be conducted in parallel and formulated in a way that is supportive of job-seeking and being in paid employment. Flexible Swedish language teaching that it is possible to combine with job-seeking, work experience placements or employment, for example, reduces the risk for the lock-in effect that tends to be associated with labour market policy measures. At the same time, Eriksson also emphasises the importance of measures with a clear connection to the labour market. Such measures are important in order to attempt to compensate for the losses of human capital and social contacts that are often associated with migration. Educational and introductory measures should therefore include direct contacts with working life in order to enable individuals to expand their social networks, at the same time as this can also contribute to maintaining the motivation to study. Measures that are formulated in close consultation with the parties on the labour market can also contribute to individuals' accumulating skills that are actually in demand on the labour market (Eriksson, 2011).[11]

At the same time, a governmental inquiry by Landell et al. (2012) emphasises the importance of offering tailored labour market policy measures to individuals with little education or who lack experience of employment in their country of origin. The inquiry argued that one shortcoming of the existing legislation is that large groups of newly arrived immigrants are not covered by the Act (2010:197) on Establishment Measures for Certain Recent Immigrants (Lag om etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare). This means that these groups are not entitled to the support provided within the framework of the Public Employment Service's introductory programmes, even where their needs for such measures are as great as those of others.[12] Newly arrived immigrants have constituted only a limited part of the target group for Social Fund financed

11. Eriksson (2011) emphasises the importance of well-functioning systems for the validation of foreign educational qualifications, which should proceed from the situation and needs of the individual concerned, and which should include competencies from both education and training and previous occupational experience from the home country. Thus the validation systems should not only direct people towards areas of the Swedish labour market characterised by a shortage of labour. It is also very important that such validation systems have legitimacy among employers and trade organisations, for which reason employer and employee organisations should participate in the formulation of these systems.

12. This is among other things due to the fact that the Act (2010:197) on Establishment Measures for Certain Recent Immigrants (Lag om etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare) that came into force in the middle of the programme period meant that the Public Employment Service took over the responsibility for introductory programmes for newly arrived immigrants that had previously rested with the municipalities. The Act does not cover all newly arrived immigrants, however, and responsibility for the group labelled "other family immigrants" has remained with the municipalities.

activities during the most recent programme period. At the same time, shortcomings associated with the system of introductory programmes for newly arrived immigrants may be assumed to affect the situation of projects that subsequently work to facilitate these individuals' entry onto the labour market.

Previous labour market policy research

According to the National Structural Fund Programme for the period 2007–2013, Social Fund projects were, by offering intensified job-placement activities, guidance and training measures, to make it easier for marginalised groups to enter and then remain on the labour market (ESF, 2007:39). There are a number of Swedish and international studies that have analysed the effects of this type of active labour market policy measures.[13] At the same time, while a relatively large range of different types of measures employed within the framework of national labour market policy have been studied, the research on local labour market policy measures and project activities conducted within the framework of Social Fund programmes is limited.

The effect of active labour market policy measures
A number of labour market policy studies based on register data have shown that job-placement activities such as counselling, the monitoring of job-seeking, and matching activities have a positive effect on job-seekers' chances of obtaining employment. In some cases, however, these positive effects are limited to certain groups, such as the long-term unemployed (Kluve, 2006). In the Swedish National Audit Office's (Riksrevisionen 2009:22) review of recent labour market policy research, it is also noted that job-placement activities are relatively inexpensive in relation to the results they produce by comparison with other measures.[14] The effect of these measures is probably due to a combination of programme effects and so-called threat effects. The latter term refers to the way in which intensified job-placement activities may lead to job-seekers increasing the intensity of their job-seeking activities or reducing their reservation wage levels in order to avoid e.g. reduced unemployment benefits or participation in other types of active labour market measures.[15]

While evaluations of intensified job-placement activities show predominantly positive results, the findings from studies that analyse the effects of different types of labour market training programmes are mixed. Kluve's (2006) meta-analysis of a large num-

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13. For research reviews see, for example, Nekby (2009) who examines Nordic experiences of active labour market policy measures with a focus on young people and immigrants, Kluve (2006) programmes in Europe, Martin and Grubb (2001) experiences in OECD countries, White and Knight (2002) youth programmes and Bergemann and van den Berg (2007) effects of active labour market programmes for women. Forslund and Vikström (2011) present the most up-to-date review of Swedish experiences of active labour market policy measures.

14. On the condition that the effects are at least as good as the effect of participation in other programmes in terms of increased chances of obtaining employment and reductions in the length of unemployment (Riksrevisionen, 2009:22).

15. There are also a number of experimental studies of intensified job-placement activities which have noted predominantly positive effects. See for example Hämäläinen et al. (2008), Vuori and Silvonen (2005) and Graversen and van Ours, (2008a, 2008b). Other studies also indicate that successful programmes are characterised by the presence of an explicit collaboration with potential employers, e.g. by locating a large part of the training programme in the workplace (Martin and Grubb, 2001).

ber of active labour market policy programmes from a number of different European countries shows that private sector wage subsidies and public sector employment service measures produce more powerful positive effects than training programmes. More recent research indicates, however, that the effects produced by labour market training programmes vary across different phases of the economic cycle. This finding is also in line with the Swedish literature, which shows neither positive nor negative effects of labour market training programmes during the early years of the 1990s. Studies based on data from before the economic crisis experienced in Sweden at the beginning of the 1990s find positive effects of training programmes, while two Swedish studies of occupational training programmes conducted subsequent to the end of the 1990s crisis also show large and significant positive effects on employment subsequent to programme participation in both the short and long term (de Luna et al., 2008; Richardson and van den Berg, 2008; Forslund and Vikström, 2011).

The effect of work experience on the labour market has in turn been studied by among others Sianesi (2002), who examines the effects of seven labour market policy programmes. According to this study, recruitment subsidies for employers constitute the most effective measure in both the short and the long term, while the effects of general, work experience related measures are limited and produce lock-in effects in the labour market measures system. These results are in line with findings reported by Carling and Richardson (2001), who show that work experience placements that are not linked to specific work tasks or some special competency are those that produce the most negative results.[16] By contrast, Forslund et al. (2013) found positive effects of participation in labour market work experience, such as an increase in future labour market incomes and a reduction in the proportion receiving income support. A comparison with the programme of labour market training showed, however, that a transfer of participants between the programmes would have increased their effect. It was found that participants in labour market work experience would have benefited more from participation in labour market training, whereas those who participated in labour market training would have benefitted to the same extent from participation in either programme.

Evaluations of measures focused on foreign-born individuals
Foreign-born individuals who are located at a substantial distance from the labour market are specified in the National Structural Fund Programme as a prioritised target group for Social Fund projects within programme area two, and several of the projects studied in this report were specifically focused on this target group (ESF, 2007). Few quantitative studies have been conducted to analyse the effects of labour market measures specifically focused on individuals born abroad, however.[17] One of the measures that has been evaluated is the trial programme Workplace Introduction for Certain Im-

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16. Franzén and Johansson (2004:5) in turn study perceptions about the significance of work experience for foreign-born individuals' establishment on the labour market among teachers, social workers and employment officers. Their interviews show that former work experience trainees report that their work experience placement was rarely related to their employment experiences from their countries of origin and that the placements as a rule were located in occupations with low qualification requirements.

17. See also Clausen et al., (2008) and Kvinge and Djuve (2006).

migrants (SIN), which was initiated in 2003 and involved a substantial intensification of job-seeking and matching assistance for both newly arrived immigrants with no ties to the Swedish labour market and foreign-born individuals with employment experience but a long period of unemployment behind them. In the trial programme, the participants had intensive contacts with personal case officers at the Public Employment Service, who also had substantially reduced caseloads in order to be able to provide a more active support to the participants in obtaining and remaining in employment. The case officers were also expected to interact with potential employers, contribute to resolving initial problems at work experience placements or the workplace and to follow up developments with the employer (Åslund and Johansson, 2006).

In their evaluation of the trial programme, Åslund and Johansson (2006) found that the project activities resulted in a greater inflow into the labour market policy measure work experience, and that the work experience provided within the framework of the project resulted in greater chances of employment than otherwise. The authors draw the conclusion that the methods implemented within the trial programme promoted better matching between the participants' individual needs and labour market measures, which can in turn help an individual to find employment. Further there is an assumption that foreign-born individuals may benefit from intensified matching measures as a result of the group's relative lack of social networks and contacts with employers in the receiving country.

Andersson Joona and Nekby (2009) employed in turn an experimental design in order to evaluate the Trial Programme for Certain Newly Arrived Immigrants (FNI). This trial programme had the objective of developing the Public Employment Service's measures focused on newly arrived immigrants and was initiated in a number of municipalities in the counties of Skåne, Kronoberg and Stockholm in 2006. Case officers who were recruited to the programme worked with significantly fewer job-seekers than the average within the employment service, at the same time as participants enrolled in the programme were offered labour market measures at an early stage in combination with Swedish language teaching. The labour market measures were drawn from the Public Employment Service's supply of regular activities and among other things comprised job-seeking activities, training and validation. Special emphasis was also placed on giving the participants the opportunity for work experience at a workplace within the framework of their enrolment in the programme.

Case officers at the Public Employment Service in the participating municipalities randomly assigned the newly arrived immigrants from the relevant target group to a trial group and a control group respectively. This ensured that the composition of personal characteristics would be divided equally across the two groups of individuals. The trial group then participated in the trial programme, while the control group participated in the regular Public Employment Service activities for this target group. When the study's authors later compared the labour market outcomes for the two groups, a positive programme effect was noted for participation in the trial programme. Participants in

the trial programme had up to a five percentage point greater chance of being in unsubsidised employment than participants in the control group, although the time it took to find employment had not been systematically reduced. In addition, the participants in the trial programme had a slightly more than a ten percentage point greater likelihood of moving on to a labour market training programme, and they also made this transition more quickly than the participants in the control group.[18]

Experiences of local labour market measures
According to a questionnaire survey conducted by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL), 94 percent of Sweden's municipalities allocate special funding for labour market measures in their budgets. The knowledge on the effects and contents of these local labour market initiatives remains limited, however (Eriksson, 2011; SKL, 2012). According to Salonen and Ulmestig (2004), there are flaws in the municipalities' systems for insight into and for following up their own labour market policy measures, which limits the opportunities for conducting evaluations of local labour market initiatives. One of only a few examples of an evaluation of local labour market initiatives based on relatively extensive register data is the study by Forslund and Nordström Skans (2006), who examined the effects of participation in the municipal youth programmes, which have subsequently been replaced by today's Youth Job Programme, which is implemented by the Public Employment Service. The study's authors note positive effects on the likelihood that the participants will move into regular studies, but that otherwise the results of the municipal youth programmes were discouraging. The same is the case for Giertz (2004), who studied eight local activation programmes in the City of Malmö.[19]

A number of studies have also attempted to describe the contents of the municipal labour market policy measures. Salonen and Ulmestig (2004) employed structured questionnaires distributed to all of Sweden's municipalities and found substantial variations in the formulation of municipal activation programmes for unemployed individuals who were in receipt of benefits. These activities are as a rule small-scale, and those working in the projects tended in the interviews to emphasise that the work of the programmes was based on intensive personal contacts with the participants. The programme content is rarely clearly specified, but rather includes a broad range of activities such as job-seeking activities, training measures, work placements and elements of treatment. The overarching objective of the activation programmes appears however to be activation, social training and the maintenance of daily routines rather than providing measures that are intended to lead to paid employment on the regular labour market following the conclusion of the project.

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18. For a discussion of the advantages of experimental studies based on the random assignment of participants, see inter alia Bygren et al. (2014).

19. Carling and Larsson (2005) have also studied the effects of participation in municipal youth programmes, and Milton and Bergström (1998) compared the so-called Uppsala Model with a district in the same city that did not work in accordance with the model. As is the case with all of the other quantitative studies mentioned, both found very limited employment effects for the participants.

Ekström (2005) evaluated the so-called Skärholm's Model (Skärholmsmodellen) by means of qualitative interviews with coaches, social workers and participants at a local job centre in Stockholm. One of the report's conclusions was that there was a discrepancy between the project workers' description of the contents of the project activities and the participants' perceptions of these activities. The project workers as a rule had a positive picture of the project activities, whereas a majority of the participants who were interviewed in the study were more critical. Among other things the participants had a perception that the project activities did not provide them with the support they needed. The job centre in Skärholmen was also one of the municipal activation programmes studied by Hjertner Thorén (2005). Hjertner Thorén notes that the activities studied in many respects were neither adapted to the individual nor improved the participants' competencies, which constitutes one of the intentions specified in the Social Services Act. The participants were, for example, referred to measures without individual assessment, and this referral was at the same time first and foremost governed by the availability of measures rather than individual needs.

A similar picture emerged when Dahlberg et al. (2013:21) used questionnaire data to study the support that participants at job centres in Stockholm perceived that they received from coaches and social workers. A majority of the foreign-born participants felt that the activity they were participating in was poor, and stated that they would rather have participated in occupationally focused work experience, training programmes or additional Swedish language teaching. The participants who stated that they had intensive contacts with their coach had a more positive view of the work of the job centres however.

Experiences of Social Fund financed projects
Evaluations of projects financed by the Social Fund have occupied relatively little space in the labour market policy research conducted in Sweden. The majority of the evaluations that have been conducted have had a qualitative focus and have been conducted by actors who have been contracted by the projects themselves to evaluate their activities (Törnquist, 2014). There are, however, a number of examples of qualitative studies of Social Fund financed activities that have employed a scientific approach. Engstrand et al. (2010:1), for example, conducted a detailed study of project workers' attitudes towards the participants, the projects' working methods and collaborations with other actors, while Larsson (2011:8) illustrates various forms of obstacles to producing integration in working life for individuals of foreign background. A recurrent theme in these reports is that project workers often come into contact with participants whom the project workers assess to be positioned at a greater distance from the labour market than was envisaged in the project application. This in turn creates a major need to be able to adapt project activities to individual participants, at the same time as the project workers often have to deal with manifestations of mental and physical ill-health among the participants which have often not previously been noted.

Szulkin et al. (2013:60 ff.) proceed in turn on the basis of the quantified objective for programme area two of the Social Fund, which specifies that the proportion of participants in paid employment 90 days subsequent to concluding their project participation should be ten percentage points higher than the weighted result for participants in the regular activities of the Public Employment Service for the corresponding target groups. Their results indicate that the assessment of the extent to which this target has been achieved depends on the form of regular Public Employment Service measure that is employed as the reference point. If the comparison is based on the preparatory training courses included among regular Public Employment Service activities, the Social Fund projects achieve the stated objective, although the difference in favour of the Social Fund participants declines as the length of the follow-up period increases, and it becomes significantly smaller if unsubsidised employment is employed as the outcome category. A comparison with participation in one of the major programmes for the long-term unemployed, the Job and Development Programme or the Youth Job Programme, however instead produces findings showing that the Social Fund projects do not achieve the stated objective (Szulkin et al., 2013:82 f.).

While Szulkin et al. (2013) only studied individuals assigned to Social Fund projects by a case officer at the Public Employment Service, Bygren et al. (2014) were able to include all individuals who participated in a Social Fund financed project over the course of a period of two years, irrespective of which agency had referred them to the projects in question. The project participants were compared with individuals from the remainder of the population with equivalent characteristics and employment experiences, and who were therefore subject to the same form of negative selection as the participants in Social Fund projects. The report's authors noted that the labour market outcomes of both groups improved markedly over time, although the project participants' recovery was somewhat more rapid at the beginning of the follow-up period. For individuals born abroad, however, a weak positive effect of participation in Social Fund financed projects was still found after three years. The opportunities for interpreting the results are limited by the fact that the report's authors had no access to information on the comparison group's activities during the period examined, however. Some of the members of the comparison group probably participated in municipal activation programmes or rehabilitation measures organised by the Social Insurance Agency, but it is also possible that a large proportion of the comparison group had not been the subject of any labour market measures at all.

There are also a small number of quantitative effect evaluations of individual Social Fund projects. Hallsten et al. (2002) evaluated the Rinkeby Work Centre project, which received funding from the EU's Objective 3 Programme. In order to study employment effects of participation in the project, the study's authors employed individual data from the Swedish Labour Market Agency's event database and were able to match project participants from Rinkeby with individuals in open unemployment in the Stockholm area on a number of background variables. The study shows that the implementation of project activities was perceived positively by both project workers and

participants, but that there was no positive effect on employment. At all four follow-up points, the proportion in employment was smaller among the project participants than in the comparison group.

Chapter 2

Interview study of fifteen Social Fund financed projects

Interview study of fifteen Social Fund financed projects

This chapter describes the organisation of the Social Fund projects examined in the study along with the contents of the project activities and the interview participants' experiences of working with the Social Fund's target group. The chapter begins, however, by describing the methodology employed to draw the sample of projects examined and for the study's data collection.

Methodological considerations

In the previous chapter it was noted that the majority of the studies that have focused on local labour market projects have taken the form of qualitative case studies of individual labour market measures. Studies of this kind can contribute detailed descriptions of the way the measures work and of how they are perceived by programme workers and job-seekers who have participated in the programmes. They can thus make important contributions to this area of research and provide valuable knowledge for a range of decision-makers in the field of labour market policy. The results from qualitative studies of the described type cannot however simply be generalised to other local labour market projects, since the sampling frame is too limited and the projects have not been selected in a way that provides a basis for drawing more general conclusions (Bygren et al., 2014).

Political scientists such as George (1979) have argued that standardised and theory-driven data collection by means of so-called comparative case studies may be used as a means of identifying social mechanisms that contribute to certain types of outcomes. King et al. (1994:77) emphasise however that drawing causal conclusions requires a comparison with a counterfactual outcome. A researcher who is interested in studying the significance of participation in a labour market measure must thus take into consideration what a given individual's chances of employment would have looked like if he or she had not participated in the measure in question. The most reliable way of conducting a comparison of this kind is to employ a structured experimental design that randomly assigns participants to either the measure being studied or a control group. If the conditions necessary to conduct an experimental evaluation are absent, the alternative is to construct a reliable control group retrospectively (Card et al., 2010; Morgan & Winship, 2007; Rinne, 2012).

Research design
Szulkin et al. (2013) employed a design utilising a control group and data from the Public Employment Service to compare the labour market outcomes of job-seekers

who had participated in Social Fund financed projects with the outcomes of individuals who had participated in regular Public Employment Service job-placement activities. These quantitative analysis were subject to limitations, however, as a result of the lack of systematic knowledge on the contents of the Social Fund projects' activities. This meant that while it was possible for average outcomes among job-seekers who had participated in Social Fund projects to be compared with the outcomes among participants in regular Public Employment Service activities, it was difficult for the study's authors to explain the variation in the project outcomes since this would require information regarding both the organisation of all Social Fund projects and the contents of their activities, which are at the present time not available in the form of quantified data.

The objective of conducting a more detailed, qualitative follow-up study of fifteen of these projects is thus to provide an improved understanding of the results presented by Szulkin et al. (2013) and to identify common denominators among the Social Fund projects whose results deviate from the average for the regular activities of the Public Employment Service. In this respect, this follow-up study can also be viewed as an example of how quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis can be combined in order to compensate for some of the limitations associated with the respective methodological approaches. It thus represents a pragmatic approach to the choice of research methodology, which has become more common in the field of socio-logical research over recent decades. Further, a majority of the mixed-method studies that have been published have utilised the two methodologies to compensate for one another in the way described. In addition to the use of qualitative follow-ups as a means of understanding the results of quantitative analyses, for example, quantitative analyses based on register data have been employed to test hypotheses developed on the basis of qualitative data collection methods (Small, 2013; Creswell 2007; 2011).

Sampling strategy
Szulkin et al. (2013) utilised the Public Employment Service's database, which includes information on all registered job-seekers. Their results are thus based on analyses of register data relating to all individuals assigned to at least one of 278 Social Fund projects by a Public Employment Service case officer during the period 2008–2012. This group was then compared with job-seekers who participated in regular Public Employment Service labour market measures during the same period.[20] Szulkin et al. (2013) then estimated the effect of participation in Social Fund projects in relation to the average for job-seekers registered in the Job and Development Programme (JDP) and the Youth Job Programme (YJP). The outcome variable employed was the likelihood of a participant in the respective projects being in paid employment 90 and 180 days subsequent to leaving the project, and at the final observation point registered in the database.

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20. The data set employed by Szulkin et al. (2013) comprised 30,034 individuals who participated in at least one of 278 Social Fund financed projects registered in the Public Employment Service's database. The Social Fund participants were compared with individuals who had participated in a regular labour market measure during the same period. The analyses include a total of 892,492 individuals. The study's authors were able to follow these individuals from January 2005 until the point at which their registration at the Public Employment Service was cancelled, although at most until May 2012.

Prior to the work presented in this report, additional analyses were conducted to estimate the mean likelihood for a participant to be in paid employment or self-employment 90 and 180 days subsequent to leaving a project and at the final observation point for each of the 278 Social Fund projects included in Szulkin et all. (2013).[21] Thereafter, these projects were divided into three groups on the basis of the strength and direction of the correlation with the mean result for foreign-born participants and participants with a non-Swedish background in regular Public Employment Service activities.[22] The first group is thus comprised of projects that produced strong positive effects on the participants' chances of employment, while the second group had been found to produce strong negative effects. An intermediate group was instead found to have produced weak or insignificant effects in the context of the comparison described. A stratified random sample of projects was then drawn from each of the groups produced. Prior to their inclusion in the study sample, the project managements were asked whether they would participate in the study. If it was not possible to make contact with a given project, the project in question was replaced by randomly selecting an additional project from the same group. By means of this procedure, a sample comprised of seventeen projects was selected. Two of these projects were subsequently excluded from the comparison for technical reasons, however, which means that the analyses presented in the report are based on a total of fifteen projects.[23]

One advantage of this sampling strategy is that the sample of projects is based on regression analyses which have controlled for systematic differences between the groups of job-seekers, such as the fact that participants in Social Fund projects have a significantly longer unemployment history than individuals assigned to regular Public Employment Service activities. This means that the estimates of the outcome also include controls for the fact that the composition of the participants can vary between different Social Fund financed projects over time, which reduces the risk of either over-

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21. The analyses also included statistical controls for individual characteristics (gender, foreign birth, newly arrived immigrant, age, level of education, type of education and disability), unemployment history (registration at the Public Employment Service prior to 2005, length of registration at the Public Employment Service, and number of times Public Employment Service registration had been cancelled between 2005 and 2007, long-term unemployment and membership of an unemployment insurance fund) and municipality of residence.

22. As was mentioned earlier, Szulkin et al. (2013) aimed to estimate the effect of participation in Social Fund projects in relation to the mean for individuals registered in the Job and Development Programme (JDP) and the Youth Job Programme (YJP). Individuals who were referred to Social Fund projects within the framework of their time in the JDP programme were thus compared with individuals registered within the same Public Employment Service programme, but who instead participated in regular Public Employment Service activities.

23. Following the data collection process, the report's author chose to exclude these projects from the sample. In one of the cases, the data showed that the project was comprised of five smaller sub-projects with different target groups and project contents. These sub-projects therefore contained very varied values on the independent variables that have been included in the analysis, while the outcome variable for the project measured the average effect of all of the sub-projects. In the second case, the project had produced a positive outcome in relation to those registered in the JDP programme but a negative outcome in relation to the YJP programme. Since the analytical strategy chosen for the study is based on each individual project producing either a positive or a negative value on the outcome variable, this project was also excluded from the sample.

or underestimating the effect of participation in the respective projects.[24] The sampling strategy also means that the projects studied have different outcomes on the dependent variable. This produces improved explanatory power by comparison with a study that only examined similarities between projects that produced the same outcome, since the focus, contents and organisation of projects that produce results which deviate in a positive direction can be contrasted with the other projects in the sample. This makes it possible to look for common denominators that appear in projects that produce such positive results while at the same time being able to test to see that these do not appear in projects that produce worse results than regular Public Employment Service activities. In order to be able to draw generalizable conclusions about factors that contribute to the positive effects of labour market policy measures on the participants' employment chances, however, the results must be tested in quantitative analyses based on a larger sample of projects drawn using a sampling strategy that is not based on values of the dependent variable (King et al., 1994: 141 ff.).

Data collection
The study data have been collected by means of a little over sixty semi-structured interviews conducted with project managers and project workers from the Social Fund projects, co-ordinators at the administering agency and officials with links to the structural fund partnerships that were implemented during the period May – November 2013.[25] The interviews were conducted at the respondents' current workplaces or by telephone if the possibilities of conducting a face-to-face interview had been exhausted. All of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The use of semi-structured interviews means that the interviewers have proceeded on the basis of an interview guide containing questions that were common to the respective staff categories in order to ensure that comparable information was collected for all of the projects studied. However, the questions were not always posed in the same order, and the choice of possible follow-up questions was governed by the interview participants' responses.[26]

Thirteen of the projects had concluded by the time of the data collection, which meant that participant observations of project activities and interviews with participants in Social Fund projects were not possible. The collection of this type of data would have

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24. If the sampling strategy had proceeded on the basis of the proportion of former participants who were in employment at one specific point, the estimate of the projects' performance would have erroneously assumed that the value of the dependent variable is constant over time. The reverse is in fact the case, the composition of the groups of participants may vary over time and the outcomes of individual projects may have been influenced by local labour market factors without this having anything to do with the effects of the project's contents and working methods. By estimating the mean likelihood of participants being in employment subsequent to leaving a project for the entire project period, the analyses come closer to an estimate of the actual effect of project participation on the participants' chances of employment, independent of random variations that may affect the projects during parts of their period of implementation. See also King et al. (1994).

25. The material comprises a total of 61 qualitative interviews, of which 34 were conducted with project managers and staff in the Social Fund projects, ten with responsible co-ordinators at the administering agency and ten with officials linked to the secretariats of the structural fund partnerships in all Social Fund regions. For practical reasons, seven of the interviews with project managers and staff were conducted in groups of up to three respondents.

26. The respondents were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and could be terminated at any time upon request. They have also been given the opportunity to read the interviews subsequent to their being transcribed in order to make changes and supplement their statements, and they have been informed that all the data would be anonymised prior to publication.

been of benefit to this report, however, particularly given that previous research indicates that the work of local labour market projects may be perceived differently by project workers and project participants respectively.[27] The interviews have however been supplemented by analyses of available documentation from each project, such as the project's funding application and its approved budget, status reports to the administering agency, minutes of steering group and reference group meetings, preliminary and final evaluations from the external evaluators and follow-ups of the project's work and notes to file made by the responsible co-ordinator. The objective of combining several sources of information is that of strengthening the validity of the results and of striving to ensure the correctness of the data collected (Creswell, 2007).

During the collection and coding of the data, the report's author and the interview participants were unaware of the studied projects' outcomes in relation to the mean outcome for Public Employment Service activities. The objective of using this approach was to avoid the respondents' statements about the projects' work being affected by their knowledge about the project outcomes. The same is the case in relation to the author's interpretation and categorisation of the data collected, which might otherwise be influenced by pre-existing knowledge of a given project's results in relation to those of the other projects included in the study. The sample of projects was thus drawn by the other authors of the Szulkin et al. (2013) report and their outcomes were made known to the author of the current report only once the data had been collected, coded and categorised. This approach is similar to that of the double-blind design that is common in the field of medical research and which has the objective of increasing the reliability of the results of first and foremost experimental studies (ESV, 2006).

Descriptive results

The national Social Fund programme divides its activities into two programme areas, of which the second has the objective of financing projects that work to improve the chances of employment among individuals located at a substantial distance from the labour market. On the basis of deep interviews with project managers and project workers, this section describes the work of fifteen projects financed by the Social Fund within the framework of programme area two. The section begins, however, by describing how projects are selected for funding on the basis of interviews with the respective projects' co-ordinators within the administering agency and officials linked to the secretariats of the structural fund partnerships.

The selection process – choosing which projects will receive funding
Prior to the most recent programme period, some aspects of the responsibility for the process of selecting projects was taken over by so-called structural fund partnerships

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27. See e.g. Ekström (2005) and Hjertner Thorén (2005).

in order to strengthen the regional foundations of the Social Fund programme.[28] Co-ordinators at the administering agency thus conduct a first official assessment of funding applications, and those that are approved are then passed on to the respective structural fund partnerships that make a prioritisation of the applications on the basis of regional structural fund plans and their own assessment criteria. This ranking of the priority of the projects is then binding on the administering agency with regard to the payment of money from the Social Fund (Prop. 2006/07:92).[29]

The administering agency's assessment of the applications they receive is based on the national selection criteria, which have been developed on the basis of the guidelines specified in the National Structural Fund Programme. During the most recent programme period, the selection criteria had the objective of promoting the development of innovative methods for integration in working life, learning environments and collaborations between relevant actors. A fourth criterion has at the same time been intended to promote projects that may be expected to be implemented in the context of regular activities and thus contribute to producing a strategic effect in the field of labour market policy. According to the National Structural Fund Programme, these selection criteria are intended to ensure that the programme contributes to the focus of the Lisbon Strategy on increasing growth and employment. Thus for applications to be approved by the administering agency, they must meet at least one of the stated selection criteria (ESF, 2007).

The significance of the programme's quantitative effect goals
As early as at the start of the programme period, the formulation of the selection criteria was criticised by the evaluation company Sweco (2008:9 f.), which was awarded the administering agency's tender to evaluate the implementation of the Social Fund programme. The evaluators have among other things argued that the links between the selection criteria and the quantified effect- and numerical goals for the respective programme areas are weak, which by extension may produce a situation which restricts the opportunities to select Social Fund projects that contribute to achieving the stated objectives of the fund. Further, according to the co-ordinators who have participated in the production of this report, no assessment is made of the project applications in relation to the quantified effect goals. The applications are examined on the basis of an assessment protocol whose objective is to assess the budgetary data, the co-funding plan and whether the application is consistent with relevant regulations, along with more qualitative aspects of the work for which the project is seeking funding. This part of the assessment protocol is primarily intended to test the application in relation to national

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28. According to the Structural Fund Partnership Act (2007:459) (Lag om strukturfondspartnerskap), these partnerships should be formed at the regional level and should comprise elected representatives of municipalities and county councils in the affected counties, representatives of labour market organisations and affected county administrative boards, the Public Employment Service, interest organisations and associations. The chairpersons of the structural fund partnerships are appointed by the Government, and the chairperson then appoints the remaining members following a nomination process.

29. Applications for Social Fund financing may only be made during limited application periods, following a call for applications by the administering agency. These calls for applications are as a rule formulated following consultations with the structural fund partnerships and state which of the national selection criteria will be prioritised during the relevant round of applications.

and horizontal selection criteria, however, rather than to attempt to assess whether the project may be expected to contribute to the quantified objective which states that Social Fund projects should produce outcomes that are ten percentage points better than the mean outcome for the Public Employment Service's regular activities.

> Our targeting has been very much about individuals, that we should reach out to a certain number of individuals within the relevant target groups. In that regard we have had a very clear reporting and follow-up of results the whole time. But this ten percent, we haven't touched upon it. But rather it's quite simply been more of a question of hoping that it would work.

In their turn, the structural fund partnerships say that assessing the extent to which the applications are consistent with the National Structural Fund Programme is primarily the responsibility of the administering agency, for which reason an examination of the projects in relation to the quantified objectives does not as a rule constitute part of their selection procedures. At the same time, a number of co-ordinators expressed the view that the quantified effect goals for programme area two are not adapted to the target group that the Structural Fund Programme states that Social Fund projects should work with.

> Yes, ten percent better than the Public Employment Service at the same time as we are to work with those who are located as far away as you can possibly get from the labour market. It's a contradiction, you know? When certain projects who work with, well, certain target groups are very easy – are easier to get out onto the labour market. With other target groups, it isn't even realistic that they will make it the whole way during a three-year project period.

The co-ordinator is referring to formulations included in the National Structural Fund Programme which specify that the measures in programme area two are to be focused on individuals who have, for example, been full-time unemployed for at least a year, are receiving income support or have been on full- or part-time sick leave for at least three months. Thus Social Fund financed projects are to work with individuals who are located at quite some distance from the labour market, and the perception among co-ordinators appears to be that comparable target groups do not actually exist within the regular activities of the Public Employment Service.

Assessments of the national selection criteria
During the most recent programme period, the national selection criteria have had the objective of promoting the development of innovative methods for integration in working life, as well as the development of learning environments and of collaborations between relevant actors. A fourth criterion has at the same time been intended to promote projects that may be expected to be implemented within the context of regular activities and thus contribute to producing a strategic effect in the field of labour market policy. According to the National Structural Fund Programme, these selection criteria are intended to ensure that the programme contributes to the focus of the Lisbon Stra-

tegy on increasing growth and employment. Thus for applications to be approved by the administering agency, they must meet at least one of the stated selection criteria (ESF, 2007a; 2007b).

According to the co-ordinators, the selection criteria were initially perceived as leaving a lot of room for interpretation, for which reason extensive discussions were required within the administering agency in order to arrive at a common interpretation of what the criteria meant. A number of co-ordinators stated, however, that there were still variations both within and between the regional units with regard to the application of the criteria, at the same time as the agency has over time been forced to lower the demands placed on the applications received. This latter was first and foremost the case in relation to the selection criterion stating that Social Fund financing should be used to support projects whose objective was to work to develop innovative methods for integration in working life.

> Very much common sense, I think it would probably be true to say. Then there is a massive element of trends in this. When I started during the last programme period, it was mentors, mentors everywhere. Mentors that were the big solution to every problem. This programme period it's coaching that's the thing, and [I] have colleagues who feel that they are so tired of all the projects because they do the same thing that people were doing in the 1980s. So sure, there is probably a big element of gut feeling in the whole thing.

The applications that are sent to the administering agency are usually extensive, while at the same time the focus of the projects tends to be described only in general terms. This can mean that repeated contacts and several additional texts are required from the applicant in order to clarify the type of work that is to be conducted within the framework of the project. A number of co-ordinators stated that it is difficult to reject a well-formulated application that meets the national selection criteria but which they assess will either be impossible to implement in practice, or will only have a limited effect on the participants' chances of obtaining employment. This is the case despite the fact that since the mid-point of the programme period, the co-ordinators have been able to grade the projects on a four-point scale in order to make a summary assessment of the extent to which the project application is consistent with the national selection criteria and the criteria specified in the relevant call for applications.

> This thing with the legal certainty, because in the end we are not dealing with individuals in that way in the Social Fund. We are not dealing with rights, applying for money. But rather this is an opportunity to achieve something, good objectives, both regionally and nationally and at the EU-level. So sometimes I wonder whether it wouldn't be very refreshing for everybody if we were clearer in saying, "No, I'm sorry, this won't do." Naturally with some form of reasonable explanation. I mean, maybe we get a bit excessively cautious just about being able to refer to legal provisions and that's the way it should be (…) But I'm sure all of the co-ordinators that you talk to could say that it's pretty clear that

projects have been passed that you actually wouldn't want to let through, but they've got all the formal requirements there on paper. And then you can't say no.

It can be seen from the interview material that a central factor in the co-ordinators' assessments of the applications received involves attempting to ensure that the applicant has obtained the endorsement of the agencies that are specified as those referring participants to the project. At the same time, there are cases where the project owner engages consultants who specialise in formulating project applications, but where the projects have not necessarily sought the endorsement of the project-owning organisation. Experience shows that where this kind of endorsement is lacking, the participant base may be overestimated, which can cause problems for Social Fund projects whose financing is dependent on referring agencies continuously assigning job-seekers to the project. Obtaining this kind of endorsement for the project is also assumed to increase the likelihood that the methods developed in the project will be implemented in the context of regular activities once the project period is over, which has been one of the objectives associated with the awarding of Social Fund financing during the most recent programme period.

Effective regional involvement

At the same time, the regional actors perceive that they only get to know about the projects at a rather late stage, and often not until they are passed on from the administering agency to be prioritised by the relevant structural fund partnership. Possible co-funders for Social Fund projects are contacted at an earlier stage than the regional actors, who argue however that their knowledge of regional conditions is required in order to procure the most strategically suitable projects. Several structural fund partnerships stated that they would therefore like to have more influence in relation to the calls for applications for Social Fund financing. Although there are consultations regarding the formulation of these calls for applications in most of the regions, a number of those interviewed stated that the partnership is not given a sufficient opportunity to influence the focus of the applications for Social Fund financing.

> Those who sit in the structural fund partnership can signal to their officials, they can talk to other politicians and so on if they feel that "This is terrible, we've got too few projects for people on sick leave, we have to do something." So they can take a range of initiatives because they're good to have and because they want to implement a good programme of course. Participation and influence constitute an important component, so you have to understand this. That's the way people function. Then if they just say yes and no to projects right off, without caring whether they're for people on long-term sick leave or the right target group or anything, that's like something else altogether. You don't need politicians for that. What's important is the whole.

Structural fund partnerships that perceive themselves to have too little influence over the formulation of calls for applications want to be able to link these to regional development and growth strategies to a greater extent. Those who do have the opportunity

to influence the focus of the calls for applications choose, however, as a rule to give them a broad focus, which some co-ordinators expressed frustration over. This frustration was due to the fact that broadly formulated calls for applications that do not specify individual target groups or areas of need are perceived as reducing the accuracy of the applications process. The structural fund partnerships, however, motivate the broad focus of the application process by pointing to the fact that project owners are at different stages of the process of formulating a project application. More narrowly focused calls for applications could thus prevent project owners from sending in project applications that could be relevant from a regional perspective even though they do not meet the criteria of the current round of applications.

Among the structural fund partnerships, opinions are divided as to whether a change in the assessment method employed by the administering agency would contribute to an increased level of effective regional involvement. A majority of the regions felt that the nature of their involvement could be improved if the administering agency also took the regional plans into consideration when processing applications. In practice, this would mean that applications that were not relevant for prioritisation would be sifted out prior to being sent to the structural fund partnerships. At the same time, however, a couple of regions emphasised that the necessary knowledge regarding regional development work does not exist at the administering agency but is rather to be found at actors such as those who are responsible for growth at the regional level. Here the view was therefore that the administering agency should only conduct a strict test of whether the applications met the required legal criteria and that they should then be passed on to the partnership for an assessment of their relevance in relation to regional policy.

> It's a question of a division of roles: which role you should have, who should conduct an assessment of a project's contents, how well these correspond or do not correspond to regional development. The regions view this in terms of policy. It's regional policy, it is the regions who make the decision, and so we live in accordance with the programmes, strategies and make the assessments, we who are administrators at different levels. The administrators at the ESF-Council are an administering agency, which is a central organisation, even if they have regional offices, and it shouldn't be done there because in the end regional actors have been given the task of regional coordination.

As a rule, however, the partnerships agree that a greater focus should be directed at the period prior to a call for applications being formulated. Regional and national actors should assume a greater responsibility for the initiation and construction of Social Fund projects. According to the regions, the Social Fund should be used as a complement to the work of regional development to a greater extent, and for this reason there needs to be improved coordination between the Social Fund and the regional fund during the next programme period, and the calls for applications need to be linked more clearly to regional and local needs. Further, some of the regions argued that it ought to be possible to assign the work of obtaining endorsement and support for the projects to employees at the administering agency or one of the regional actors.

No satellites of process support as has been the case now. It should be integrated, either it should be assigned to these administrators, to look a little once again at the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, at how you're actually a kind of ambassador for regional development. You have close contacts with regional councils, you stay abreast of what is current and if you're not abreast of things then you can consult, you can have joint information meetings with the projects, both regional council and administering agency, I mean start to process, it is after all a form of process support for the applicant, instead of first go to them, and then go to them, and they say different things and so you never find your way.

What emerges most clearly from the interviews conducted with the structural partnerships, however, is that an improvement is required prior to the coming programme period in the regional feedback provided by the administering agency. This feedback usually takes the form of the agency presenting national figures for the number of participants who have participated in projects within each programme area, and follow-ups of the amount of funding paid out. The partnerships also have the opportunity to invite individual Social Fund projects to their meetings to describe their work, but argue that it is difficult to obtain a comprehensive picture from isolated examples of projects. They say that they would like statistics that have been produced separately for the respective regions, showing projects that have previously been prioritised by the respective partnership, the target groups covered by these projects and the sectors in which the projects have been active.

The question is if you had been given more continuous feedback on what you have said yes to, and that feedback had shown deviations from what had been said, the objective and so on. It's possible of course that this could then have led to the partnership being able to think a bit differently in relation to prioritisations as well. We just don't know. But I mean there were of course certain target groups that were very difficult to reach at all. Those on sick leave probably, among others, and some other target group too. And sure, we made well-focused calls for applications for this too, but once again I think that the partnership has felt it's been lacking – a lack of feedback, results and learning.

The view of the structural fund partnerships is that regular regional feedback increases the opportunities to improve the targeting of calls for applications, at the same time as a comprehensive picture of the payments made from the Social Fund can make it easier for the representatives on the partnership to take a political responsibility within their regular organisations. One of those interviewed stated that the likelihood of methods and work approaches developed in Social Fund projects being implemented within the context of regular activities would also increase if the projects were more clearly based on regional and local needs than they are perceived to be today.

The projects examined in the study
According to a study by Szulkin et al. (2013), just over half of the Social Fund projects implemented during the most recent programme period were run by municipal actors,

while private sector companies and central government agencies each stood behind less than ten percent. The distribution of projects across different types of project owners is similar among the projects studied in this report. Seven of the projects were run by municipal actors, three by voluntary associations, two by private sector actors, two by educational institutions and only one project by a central government agency. The projects are relatively well distributed around the country and are spread across six of eight Social Fund regions. Since a number of the projects included in the report have worked in more than one municipality, interviews have been conducted with project managers and project workers active in a total of 18 municipalities.[30]

The projects were implemented at different times during the programme period, and have thus been active during somewhat different parts of the economic cycle. Since both the cyclical conditions and the local business structure may be assumed to have an effect on project outcomes, Szulkin et al. (2013) included controls for municipality and the month when drawing the sample for this follow-up study. This means that the estimate of the participants' mean labour market outcome for each project takes account of the fact that the projects have been active in partially different environments.

The projects' objectives
When applying for Social Fund financing, the projects specify a number of objectives for the project activities. The objectives that have been specified in the applications for the projects studied in this report have as a rule proceeded from the overarching objectives of the National Structural Fund Programme for programme area two. As in the Structural Fund Programme, the applications usually specify goals regarding the number of participants during the project period. Slightly over half of the projects also formulated objectives in the form of specific percentages regarding the proportion of participants who should either be in employment or perceive themselves has having moved closer to the labour market following their participation in the project, while four of the projects only specified objectives regarding the proportion who should be in employment.[31] Three of the projects only specified that the participants should move closer to the labour market, while one of the projects had the objective that the participants would obtain experience of working life through work experience placements. The proportion of participants that the applications specified should be in employment varies, with one of the projects specifying 80 percent as the target figure, while others specified a target of 40 percent.

30. The National Structural Fund Programme specifies eight geographical programme areas for the implementation of the national and regional structural fund programmes, and in which the Swedish ESF-Council also has regional offices. These regions are Upper Norrland (the counties of Norrbotten and Västerbotten), Central Norrland (the counties of Jämtland and Västernorrland), Northern Central Sweden (the counties of Gävleborg, Dalarna and Värmland), Stockholm (Stockholm County), Eastern Central Sweden (the counties of Uppsala, Södermanland, Örebro, Västmanland and Östergötland), Western Sweden (the counties of Västra Götaland and Halland), Småland and the islands (the counties of Kalmar, Kronoberg, Jönköping and Gotland) and Southern Sydsverige (the counties of Blekinge and Skåne) (ESF, 2007).

31. Projects define these objectives in different ways. One of the projects included work experience placements. Another employed formulations such as "improved knowledge of their opportunities".

Thus the projects focus in their applications on two of the structural funds three quantified objectives, although the levels at which these objectives are specified varies between the projects. One of the projects specified different objectives for different target groups, for example by specifying higher targets for participants assigned to the project by the Public Employment Service than for participants assigned by the Social Insurance Agency and the municipality. In certain cases, the quantified objectives were also supplemented with formulations stating that the project would also, for example, work to promote improved health, motivation and self-esteem among participating individuals. Two of the projects stated, for example, that one of their objectives was to contribute to improved self-knowledge and to formulate individual action plans for all participating individuals.

The interview data show that the majority of project managers had not participated in the formulation of the project application, but had rather been recruited subsequent to the application being approved by the Swedish ESF-Council. This also means that they had not participated in the formulation of their project's quantified objectives. One problem that emerged from the interviews was that a number of project managers felt that the objectives that had been specified in the approved application did not take into consideration the types of problems that are found within the target group for which the project had been formulated.

> I thought that 40 percent was pretty high. Because I'd worked with similar issues before, in another municipality. Because then I worked with unemployed young people up to the age of twenty who didn't want to be in school. These drop outs or sit-at-homes, or what you want to call them. And also foreign-born adults who were... almost finished at Swedish for Immigrants or in the final stages. And very difficult to get them out into work. And then I felt like: 40 percent is a pretty high figure given that we can't create jobs out of thin air. We can't start a factory here.

At the same time, the project leaders felt themselves to have been very restricted by the project application. Several of them used expressions such as "the application landed in my lap" and "desk product". The formulations employed in the application were perceived as being impossible to translate directly into practical project work, which meant that they often had to be interpreted and then subsequently reformulated by the project workers. In some cases, the premises and staff available in the relevant regular activities had been overestimated. In several projects, the first participants had been assigned to the projects only a short time after the project workers had been employed. Thus the project workers had been forced to work with the first group of participants before the premises had been put in order, or a schedule had been specified and lecturers booked.

> There was a lot of uncertainty, and one day didn't look like another, and that's what it's like in a project. But that there was so much insecurity and quick solutions and I think the participants felt that too. Sometimes we sat down and felt sorry for them because they

weren't getting the quality that they deserved, because the rest of it wasn't organised, that we couldn't focus on the coaching, I couldn't focus on what we were actually supposed to be doing, instead we were forced to sort out the other stuff.

The majority of the projects did not only work with objectives at the individual level however. Instead most have also proceeded from the Structural Fund Programme's selection criteria on producing a strategic impact and on the development of innovative methods. The objective that is most commonly found relates to the development of routines for collaboration between different agencies with the area of social and labour market policy. In certain cases, the project application referred to a limited area, such as the lack of collaboration within a certain city district or a need to chart the respective responsibilities of different agencies in relation to a certain target group. Two of the projects expressly worked with urban development, while a further three stated that they would be endeavouring to influence employers' attitudes towards marginalised groups on the labour market. Several of the projects therefore stated that they would like to see follow-ups and evaluations that also focused on other outcome variables in addition to the transition into employment or studies.

> Some of our participants didn't find work, certainly, but it could be the case that they felt better than they had for a long time during their three years in the project. They could also feel themselves that they had made major changes in their lives. Take a fifty-year-old man, for example, who had been a substance abuser and never had a job in his life. When the project was over, he had renovated his entire mouth. He proudly described that he eats a piece of fruit every day, he'd started cycling and had lost quite a few kilos, and he'd made new friends. He had developed a completely different quality of life. But we didn't get a "point" for him because he didn't get into work. So when you follow up what has happened, you never see these journeys of personal development. Aren't they results that should also be measured?

This project leader also questioned the possibility of measuring the effect of individual labour market measures in a reliable way. He argued that these effects may emerge several years subsequent to participation and are furthermore rarely the result of a single measure. The project leader later also drew a parallel to people with obesity who manage to lose a lot of weight. A lifestyle change of this kind is rarely the result of a specific measure that only lasts for a limited amount of time, but such a measure may contribute to a learning process that the individual in question can benefit from in the future and in other contexts.

The significance for the projects of the co-funding system
Public sector co-funding constitutes one of the conditions for making Social Fund payments to projects working in programme area two. The model for co-funding that is most commonly employed involves including the benefits paid to participants by the Public Employment Service, the Social Insurance Agency or municipal social services in the public funding requirement. This means, however, that the projects in question

can only receive financial support for those hours in which the participant participates in project activities. The projects thus cannot receive funding for those days when the participant is absent for any reason, and the possibility of obtaining funding for specific individuals disappears completely if these individuals terminate their participation in the project in order, for example, to start a job or to transition into regular studies (ESF, 2007; 2009).

All of the projects included in the report employed this form of benefit-based compensation as the primary basis for the co-funding requirement. The majority of projects included both benefit-based compensation and part of the costs of premises and working hours as co-funding. Without exception, however, the projects stated that the co-funding system constituted an obstacle during the implementation of the projects, although some projects experienced more difficulties than others. All projects stated, for example, that participant-based co-funding produced an increased administrative burden on the projects. A number of project managers with prior experience of managing Social Fund projects also stated that the administrative work associated with co-funding has increased during the most recent programme period.

One contributing factor is that the system of participant-based co-funding means that documentation confirming the participants' attendance and their benefit levels must be sent in to the administering agency every month before funding can be paid out to the projects. In addition, funding is only paid for payments that have already been made and accounted for (ESF, 2011). Since participants are often assigned to the project from a number of different agencies, the collection of this information is viewed as time-consuming, and the projects also state that the relevant agencies still lack well-developed routines to deliver the correct information on the benefits paid to participating individuals on a monthly basis. The projects' budget-planning process is also made more difficult by the fact that the project management is only given information on what individual participants have generated in the form of co-funding after the event. For projects that are not run by public sector actors, the long lead times can also lead to problems maintaining the liquidity of the project.

Among projects that have periodically experienced significant difficulties with co-funding, the Swedish ESF-Council has strikingly often approved the project budget on the basis of incorrect estimates of the number of participants and the size of their benefits. For three of the projects, for example, the project budget was based on an assumption that the projects would have a full complement of project participants within a month of the start of the project. At the same time, the project managers state that Social Fund projects tend to have the highest number of participants in the middle of the project, while the number of participants is lower at the beginning and towards the end of the project period. This is also the case for projects that have been endorsed at the management level within the referring agencies and where an agreement has been reached on

the number of participants who will be assigned to the project. According to the project managers, these agreements are rarely passed on to the case officers at the relevant agency, which produces a situation where repeated contacts with case officers are required before these assign sufficient participants for the project to meet its co-funding requirements.

> A longer start-up period was needed, you know you can't count on having 70 participants after a month. You have to get out there with information and chat people up, and there have to be brochures saying that there's a project so that people apply for it. I can't now count on having 70 people from the first month, you know. There's no chance. It takes longer to start up, so to speak, even if you've had your phase before and made preparations, it's nonetheless the case that when it actually starts, it takes a while before you're up. And there we've had to work to catch up by taking in more participants. Then certain periods which have meant a fairly inhumanly heavy workload from time to time, with a massive number of people in. So it's a bit, maybe people should have thought of it earlier.

The lag in co-funding may also be caused by the fact that the budget that has been approved for the project is based on participant benefits being estimated at significantly higher levels than the benefit levels that are common for the relevant target group. In one of the projects studied, for example, the adopted budget proceeded from an assumption that the participants would be receiving the highest level of unemployment benefit. And this despite the fact that the project only worked with youths, who tend to receive low levels of benefits from unemployment insurance funds or not to be affiliated with an unemployment insurance fund at all. This type of overestimation of the benefits received by participants is not however limited to projects run by actors from the voluntary sector. Incorrect calculations can also be seen in projects where the agency responsible for the payment of benefits to participants had participated in the formulation of the project or is specified as the project owner.

The project's co-funding plan should be assessed by the co-ordinators at the administrative agency in connection with their examination of whether the applications received meet the required legal criteria. The specified budget is inspected, for example, by the agency's economists and the assessment protocol contains a special section intended to assess whether co-funding has been guaranteed. It is not always clear from the assessment protocol whether the co-ordinator has discussed the plausibility of having a full complement of project participants from day one. On the other hand, there are cases where the responsible co-ordinator has referred to the referring agency and stated that the co-funding plan ought to be correct since the calculations have been conducted by the agency responsible for making the benefit payments. In one case, the co-ordinator also requested special clarification to ensure that the estimated benefit levels were correct. It emerged during the project period, however, that the participants' benefit

levels had been overestimated, despite the responsible agency having provided the requested clarification.[32]

When a project does not achieve the estimated number of participants until the project has been ongoing for a while, or when participants' benefit levels are lower than was estimated, the deficit must be compensated for later on in the project period. This is usually achieved by projects taking on a significantly larger number of participants than planned, while maintaining the planned staffing levels. In addition, time is allocated for visiting Public Employment Service offices in order to market the project and increase the number of participants assigned to it. Even in projects that did not state that the issue of co-funding had caused significant problems for the implementation of the project, however, uncertainty about co-funding always appears to be present.

> *Respondent 2:* Uncertainty about your job security, what is happening, you feel the whole time that if you don't have the right number of participants, then we are risking our co-funding; if our co-funding is at risk then this has an effect on something in the end. And that's not easy to work with.

> *Respondent 1:* Above all how much co-funding the person is bringing with them, that's also a question that isn't always particularly pleasant.

> *Respondent 2:* No, it's not fun. Sitting and saying the one you work most with has no money inside the project, then you have to put that aside and think [that] we do sometimes indirectly work with people for free. Because we can't say no to a person because [s/he] isn't bringing any money with them.

What these respondents are referring to here is the fact that participants with different levels of benefits generate different amounts of co-funding. Thus a large number of participants who have qualified for high levels of unemployment benefit from the unemployment insurance fund means a greater degree of economic stability for a project than can be found in projects that primarily work with individuals assigned to them by the municipal social services. These problems can be particularly difficult for projects that only work with youths or with individuals who have not yet qualified for sick leave benefits. These groups have very low incomes and therefore generate very little in the form of co-funding. This is the case despite the fact that these groups are often perceived to be in need of more support from project workers than participants assigned to projects by the Public Employment Service.

The projects also stated that the co-funding system affected their opportunities to adapt the intake of participants to the focus chosen by the project. Prior to the start of a project it is common for the project workers to have formulated criteria for partici-

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32. In certain cases, the budget has even been based on assumptions that are in conflict with the agency's regulations. The budget may, for example, have been calculated on the basis of participants being on work experience placements for five months, while the Public Employment Service can only make decisions on such placements for three months at a time. In the cases of this kind that are included in the study, the Public Employment Service is stated to have participated in the formulation of the application.

pation in the project which are then communicated to the referring agencies. These criteria tend however to be relaxed over time, because a project requires a certain number of participants in order to maintain its budget. This may of course also be due to the fact that the size of the project's target group was overestimated in connection with the formulation of the project and that the referring agencies do not need to assign participants from the relevant group to the extent required by the project's budget. However, since projects have ongoing costs for staff and premises, the initial targets regarding the number of enrolled participants are often retained nonetheless. This leads to a situation where projects attempt to compensate for the shortfall in co-funding by working with a broader target group of individuals than was initially intended.

> After a time, people came who didn't at all want to do work experience. And then that was a typical, you could say, quite simply wrong referrals in terms of the project (...) And that, that's something that you have to accept of course, in the sense that you are getting co-funding and that it's important to get a participant in. In the sense of doing what the project says that you should be doing, it doesn't work. But there the economics often win, if you're talking about the co-funding system.

The project manager is here describing a dilemma that can have a particular effect on the implementation of projects with a specified focus for their work, such as projects focused on the use of work experience placements or on preparing participants for work in a particular sector. Such projects are often dependant on continuously being assigned new participants in order to maintain their level of co-funding, which means that the projects strive to maintain good relationships with case officers at the Public Employment Service and collaborating municipalities. The project managers therefore find it difficult to say no to a case officer who wishes to assign a participant to the project, even if the participant in question has no interest in working in the sector that the project is focused on. The assignment of such participants can thus affect the project's ability to work in accordance with the focus chosen for the project, but is accepted because it contributes to the maintenance of the project's level of co-funding.

The projects' target groups
When Szulkin et al. (2013) analysed the labour market outcomes of individuals who had been assigned to a Social Fund project by the Public Employment Service, they noted that there is a negative selection of participants to Social Fund projects. At follow-up following the conclusion of their participation in Social Fund finance projects, the labour-market outcomes of the project participants were more negative than those of job-seekers within the Job and Development Programme who had participated in regular Public Employment Service activities. However, when unemployment history was controlled for in the analytical models, the difference between the two groups declined substantially. This was interpreted as indicating that the job-seekers assigned to Social Fund projects by Public Employment Service case officers are generally located at a greater distance from the labour market than those assigned to regular Public Employment Service activities. Whether the same is also true for the job-seekers assigned to

Social Fund financed projects by other referring agencies, however, is something that we do not know at the present time (Szulkin et al., 2013:83).

The majority of the projects studied in this report stated that they had in practice only had a small number of criteria for project participation that they had communicated to the referring agencies. The majority of the projects stated, for example, that they did not work with individuals with ongoing substance abuse problems or with very weak Swedish language skills. Four of the projects had a special focus on young job-seekers, while the remainder were focused on the long-term unemployed, irrespective of the individuals' age. Two of the projects stand out, however, in having had a more clearly defined target group than the others. One of these was focused directly on foreign-born individuals whom the Public Employment Service regarded as being in need of measures to improve their language skills, while the other worked with individuals suffering from some form of physical or mental illness in combination with unemployment.

Ten of fifteen projects stated that the target group that the project came to work with was more homogeneous than the project owner had expected at the time the project application was formulated. The project managers said that the participants tended to be older and to have been unemployed for a longer period of time than had been assumed when the project was formulated. The interview data also show that there had initially been a hope that participants with different types of background, unemployment history and of different ages would come together in the same project and thus be able to learn from one another.

> You always imagine that it's going to be a mixed group with different, how far people are situated from the labour market. But I still think ... If you look, then it's probably most often people that are at a very great distance, it turned out, who needed extra support. We didn't say that we wanted people with some kind of problem complex. We never said that. But almost all of the individuals had one. They weren't just unemployed, but there were a lot of things around them, a lot of social problems, around almost every individual, that we had to help with and delve into and that kind of thing.

A majority of the project managers reported that the opportunities to influence the types of individual assigned to them by the referring agencies were limited. Several also stated that they competed for participants with supplementary actors, since the Public Employment Service had been instructed to assign a certain proportion of their job-seekers to these supplementary actors and had to fill their places first. Taken in combination, these factors mean that several of the projects periodically found it difficult to obtain a sufficient number of participants to maintain their level of co-funding and that they therefore relaxed any criteria that they had specified in relation to participants. Instead they attempted to adapt their work to the more difficult target group by working at a more preliminary and supportive level than had initially been intended. Among other things this meant working with the participants for a longer period of time than had been intended prior to starting the work to match them with a possible

work experience placement, and that the work of the projects adopted a more general preparatory focus with lectures on social studies and labour market studies.

Half of the projects stated that it would have been of benefit to their work if the project had been able to establish a collaboration with the healthcare sector in order to deal with the often complex problems found among the project participants. First and foremost they felt there was a need for contacts with the psychiatric sector and to be able to offer participants supportive counselling in combination with guidance and activities focused on employment. Some of the projects also reported that they had lacked access to doctors, occupational therapists or some other professional group qualified to assess the participants' physical capacity to work. A number of the project managers stated that during the project period they had sought to establish a collaboration with the healthcare sector but that they had rarely succeeded because the local healthcare centre was under a lot of pressure and had long waiting times among their regular patients.

Most of the projects reported that they had periodically experienced problems with low attendance levels, which had affected the project's co-funding. Several project managers expressed frustration, however, that the project had not had the opportunity to apply for funding for those days on which individuals were absent, since such absences often meant additional work for the project workers. The interview data show that absences often meant that someone from the project visited the individual participant's home in order to try to make contact, or that they tried to organise a three-party conversation with the referring agency in order to discuss underlying causes and possible solutions. Quite generally the projects stated that they came to work with a more holistic approach than had been intended at the beginning of the project. A need emerged, for example, for the project workers to support the participants in their contacts with different agencies, to arrange contacts with debt restructuring services or to help the participants apply for special benefits from the municipal social services in order to see a dentist.

> We've had many like that, who we've helped to get some structure in relation to all those things. Gone with them, not to physical court cases, but accompanied them to the district court, stood outside and waited, accompanied them back. Sat and talked through it afterwards. Helped them with family support and nursery places [sighs] like anything and everything. That was what they needed and then it doesn't help for you to sit and bang on about how you should be applying for X number of jobs every week like you can hear sometimes. But then instead it's some other thing.

At the same time, several of the project workers also described a psychologically difficult work environment. As was mentioned earlier, incorrect estimates of the participants' co-funding could mean that the project enrolled more participants per staff member, at the same time as this often meant that the group of participants became more difficult to work with. A number of the project workers described not having been properly prepared to meet so much mental ill-health and social problems, and that the

competence required to deal with the problems found among the participants was often lacking among the staff.

The contents of the project work

The contents of the work of the fifteen studied projects was relatively similar, although the focus of their planning of activities varied somewhat. The participants' enrolment in the project usually began with an individual assessment that was intended to provide the project workers with a picture of the individuals' initial situation and prior employment experience. The majority of projects reported that the referring agencies provided the project with relatively little information on each individual, although there are projects that already had an enhanced collaboration in place in relation to the individuals at the time of enrolment. Some of the projects conducted the assessment on the basis of a structured protocol, while others chose to employ a more informal conversational assessment structure.

> We do have documents that they fill in at the first meeting, when they get a form that they fill in themselves. Then with the vast majority of them – as long as there wasn't some kind of mega-resistance – the majority brought their CV and their letter of introduction and you sat and talked about them (...) the whole time it's about, you know, charting in some way "what point is this individual at?" And some of them were, you know, really enthusiastic when they came, some of them didn't even want to be there. And then that's where you have to start. And try to find a motivation. Because a lot of it of course is about finding motivation the whole time. What is your reason for being here, and what can you take with you from here, and so on.

Most of the projects included different types of lectures as a central part of their work. Fourteen of the projects, for example, included elements of social studies and labour market studies in the form of lectures on the way the Swedish labour market functions, the relevant legislation and labour-related social insurance protection. Further, these lectures could focus on current events, the differences between the political parties or the organisation and governance of the public administration. Given the horizontal criteria of the Social Fund programme, which state that projects are to work with issues of access and gender equality integration, the majority of projects also had lectures and group discussions on e.g. gender roles, discrimination and gender stereotyped educational and labour market choices. Most projects also included lectures and exercises focused on personal development, such as techniques for formulating personal goals or increasing one's motivation and self-knowledge.

Most of the projects also included different types of activities intended to improve the participants' job-seeking techniques. The majority of projects stated, for example, that they included lectures on different recruitment channels, on charting personal networks and the formulation of letters of introduction. There were also various types of training to prepare participants for job interviews. As a rule, the participants also

had access to computers in order to look for jobs either on their own or with the help of staff. The majority of projects also invited employers to come and talk about the recruitment process and to describe how job applications are assessed. This was often combined with different types of role-play and exercises intended to provide improved insight into the perspective of employers. Some of the projects arranged study visits to different workplaces in order to provide the participants with a greater insight into working life and to encourage them to apply for jobs in new sectors.

As was noted earlier, only one of the projects was directly focused on foreign-born individuals, and the proportion of foreign-born participants varied among the remainder of the projects included in the study. These projects stated, however, that their work did not include measures specifically focused on individuals born abroad, other than providing the possibility of additional Swedish language teaching, which was included in nine of the projects. The project workers instead expressed that the projects had consciously chosen not to conduct their work in a special way in relation to foreign-born individuals, and did not necessarily see any reason why this group would be in need of special treatment. Several of those interviewed also emphasised the advantages of mixed groups of participants as a means of facilitating the development of language skills and facilitating inter-ethnic contacts among the participants. Only one of the projects had access to interpreting services during the project period, and these had only been utilised on rare occasions where there was a need to convey particularly important information.

Educational elements
In three of the projects, the central focus can be said to have been directed at basic adult education, which in two of the projects took the form of classroom teaching intended to improve the participants' ability to express themselves in written and spoken Swedish. As a rule, the individuals who participated in the project activities had undergone municipal adult education classes in Swedish for Immigrants prior to their enrolment in the project. The project workers, however, felt that Swedish language skills often deteriorate during a longer period of unemployment, and that these skills need to be improved before the participants go out into a work experience placement, for example. This is something that is important not least to employers, who want those on work experience to be able to understand verbal and written instructions during their placement period.

The third of the projects with an educational focus devoted just over half of the time the participants were enrolled in the project to practical and theoretical teaching in aesthetic subjects. A further seven of the projects also included certain general educational elements, such as the opportunity for special support in Swedish, maths, computer science or to study for the driving license theory test. The project workers stated that the level of computer skills varied dramatically within the target group and that these measures were often focused on providing a grounding in the use of word-processing

programmes or in handling an e-mail account. At the same time, several respondents stated that lacking a driving license constitutes a major obstacle for participants in their job-seeking, not least for youths.

In eight of the projects, money was set aside in order to be able to finance short-term occupational training courses for some of the participants. Courses of this kind that were found across different projects included courses focused on the forklift truck license, welding and cleaning, and courses focused on becoming a manicurist, security guard and bus driver were also mentioned in the interviews. However, only three of the projects reported that they had been able to finance courses on a substantial scale, and in most cases the opportunity to take a course was offered when a project worker assessed it to be motivated. In the remaining projects, it was a question of purchasing individual occupational training courses, often in connection with a specific employer having stated that there was a possibility of employing the individual concerned if he or she obtained a fork lift or welding license that was valid for the Swedish labour market.

Health and wellness
Eight of the projects included both practical and theoretical health and wellness work, while a further four allocated time for lectures and discussions on health-related issues. The practical health and wellness work could involve project workers and participants going for walks together or giving the participants access to a fitness centre a number of times per week. According to the project workers, this physical activity was intended both to increase the participants' mental and physical wellbeing and to prepare them for subsequent work placements and employment. The project workers often returned to the idea that long-term unemployment is often associated with physical passivity, which they argued breaks individuals down both mentally and physically.

> It's quite common if someone goes out into a store, who has been outside the labour market for a long time (...) that they more or less hit a wall of physical pain and think that they're going to die and that they can't cope with it. It is often due of course to having been inactive and not used their body and so on and they get a great deal of aching and stiffness and so on. And that's something you can prevent for example by being physically active before you go out to a workplace. It's happened very many times, I would say. That people want to break something off because they're experiencing bodily pain. It's actually the kind of pain that you get after intense exercise, but the lack of familiarity means that it's perceived as something much more than that.

Some of the project workers also maintained that going for walks provided an opportunity for informal conversations between project workers and participants, and that they could improve the level of solidarity within the participant group. During these walks, reserved individuals have the courage to take more space within the group, and the participants can ask the project workers questions that they do not want to raise within a large group. This practical health and wellness work is often combined with the

inclusion of lectures and discussions about e.g. the importance of physical activity, good diet and stress management in the planning of the projects' activities.

Individual coaching

Thirteen of the projects employed individual coaching in order to support the participants and follow up on their development. The frequency of these coaching sessions could vary from once a month to several times per week. They often had the objective of following up the individuals' activity plans and of setting new goals. Only one of the projects had project workers who were certified in the use of a specific coaching or counselling methods, however. Those interviewed often stated that certification was too expensive for the projects, but that they had been on courses or been inspired by aspects of other methods. Several projects stated that they also worked on the basis of a specific value base, approach or way of relating to people that they felt was unique to their project. The approach in question was often about promoting empowerment, creating a sense of planning one's own future and having a holistic view of the individual's situation and needs.

> You're the boss, a winning strategy to survive. After a couple of years I've learned that "you're the boss" is the best way of getting to keep my money, to get out of there and I'll actually do anything to keep you happy. The question is: is this the way to get people to grow, and by extension to get out into work, no. I mean what we're talking about here is empowerment. Very important.

The project managers also tended to repeatedly return to the fact that staffing levels are higher in Social Fund projects than is assumed to be the case in regular labour market activities. They often made comparisons with case officers at the Public Employment Service who have a considerably larger number of job-seekers per employee. The higher staffing levels lead them to feel they have significantly closer contacts with their participants. They stated that this contributed to them being able to develop a relationship of trust with the participants, which makes it easier to make demands or to ask uncomfortable questions. The project managers argued that they often uncovered underlying problems that had not previously been identified in the context of regular labour market activities, such as neuropsychiatric disabilities or dyslexia. Some project managers argued that it was also significant that the Social Fund projects do not have the status of public sector agencies, since this placed the relationship between project workers and participants on a more equal footing.

> And then you should also remember that what we said to the participants was that we're no public sector agency, we're a project; that means that we don't have to report everything. If you open yourself up to a case officer who has control over the economic decisions, then you don't tell the truth if you don't absolutely have to because then you risk that the person sitting in front of you will say: "Yes, but then you're not at the disposal of the labour market, and then we terminate your registration, and then you're not entitled to financial assistance." I mean it's only human; what we look to is our need to be provided

for, to have food on the table, for ourselves and our children. Then maybe you don't tell someone the way everything is exactly.

When the projects discovered underlying problems, however, they usually referred the participant back to the Public Employment Service, which would then be able to initiate an investigation of an individual's capacity for work or to investigate whether it was appropriate to code the individual in question as having a disability. Several of the project managers stated that this enables the individual to obtain the kind of support they require for their job-seeking efforts, which in itself is something positive. At the same time, however, the projects could not count this outcome as a positive result, since the official statistics usually focus on transitions into work as the outcome variable.

The degree of individual activity planning
The factor that distinguishes the different projects from one another the most is that they varied in the extent to which they employed an individual planning of the participants' time in the project. In eight of the projects, the project activities were primarily conducted in groups and the participants were enrolled on a full-time basis in relation to their capacity for work.[33] The activities followed a joint schedule, which was the same for all participants, with a major focus on joint lectures and group activities. The project managers from these projects stated that the high degree of group activities made the co-funding of the project easier, since a larger number of individuals could be included in activities on the project premises simultaneously. At the same time, many expressed the view that it was tough going for the project workers to prepare and conduct the group activities while at the same time also having to both allocate time for one-on-one conversations with the participants and find the time to deal with the administration required by the co-funding system.

> More individually, is how I would have done it. I wouldn't have laid out a schedule that was Monday to Friday. In part because the staff who were working, four girls – there was one who left – were very tired. Very stressed out on Fridays. I mean... who had their shift then. The coach maybe had three shifts a week in total. And who [inaudible] has to maintain contact with all of the case officers, write everything into our documentation, our statistics, inform the case officers about attendance every week and register payments and things like that. And then I come along and like "can you sort out some statistics on this? Can you produce this? I need this for the group ..." and... yes, they were pretty tired on a Friday [laughs]. If you were going to write an application for the next project, then more individually focused.

In five of the projects, group activities were combined with individual planning. A fixed schedule could, for example, be fixed for the mornings, while in the afternoon, the project workers held individual coaching sessions with certain participants while others visited employers, sat in a computer room or worked on their own with homework. The

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33. In certain cases, the individuals could be on part-time sick leave, in which case a full-time enrolment corresponded to 50 percent of a normal full-time job.

objective with this type of format appears to have been to free up time for more individual coaching and guidance counselling with the participants, and in certain cases also to reduce the level of congestion on project premises, which were often felt to be too small in relation to the number of enrolled participants. The project managers stated, however, that both co-ordinators at the administering agency and the referring agencies often objected to increased levels of individual planning and instead recommended full-time activities on the project premises. According to the project managers, the criticism voiced by the ESF-Council was often that the project should be able to verify that the individuals were engaged in activities during those hours for which the project received co-funding for their project participation.

> We got into a discussion that was: what is attendance? And so they say: Physically at the place. And on what premises? Yes, in the teaching room. Yes... But the activities can, you know, take place at a workplace, we have even said that you can go to the library if you want to sit and do some work undisturbed. "We want to see the accounts." This is modern, we're preparing people for modern working life. Do you think I sit in an office for eight hours? [laughs] I can work... Completely bizarre! I mean, I thought ... Should we put people in manacles?

Two of the projects, however, based a majority of their activities around individual planning. The participants participated in a small number of group activities every week, such as joint lectures on labour market or social studies, study visits or talks by guest speakers. In addition to this, they worked on tasks that they had been assigned during their coaching sessions, which in these projects were also longer and somewhat more frequent than in the other projects. One of the projects which only had individual planning stated that this was quite simply the project's working method, while the other reported that the method had been chosen because many of their participants were not ready for group activities. The latter project has also had problems with a referring agency, which would have preferred to see more group activities.

> But that destroys the whole method, of course. Because the individuals are the focus. And we've discussed this time and time again. In the end we said that, then I pulled out the project plan. Because I remember that I had read it when I started in the project. And I said that now we had to have an end to this discussion. It's about the individual. We can have group activities. And it varies over time. Some of them are in fact ready to go to a lecture.

In the one project, the referring agencies had participated in the formulation of the application that had been approved by the Swedish ESF-Council, and in which it was clearly stated that the project activities would proceed on the basis of individual planning. In spite of this, the project had continuously had to remind the referring agencies that the project had been formulated to be based on this format.

Work experience

Twelve of the projects stated that they actively worked to provide the participants with the opportunity to participate in work experience placements during their period of enrolment in the project. Seven of these projects also had special work experience co-ordinators who conducted outreach work in relation to businesses in the area in which the project was located in order to obtain work experience places for the project participants. The objectives associated with these work experience placements varied, however, both within and between the projects. For two of the projects, obtaining work experience placements, the matching of participants to businesses and the support provided to project participants during their time in work experience placements, constituted the central element in the work of the project. Thus for these projects, employment with the business that provided the work experience placement was the explicit objective of using such placements. But in the other projects, the goals associated with work experience could vary. There could be a clear hope that work experience could be transformed into a job. But the objective could also be to provide the participants with insights into different types of occupation and different sectors, updated references for use in their job-seeking or to facilitate the development of the participants' language skills.

> It depends. It might be anything from, if you've never had a job in your life, then maybe the goal isn't to get a job, that you don't have any expectations. That here we have to be realistic and what is the goal – well, the goal is that you should get some work-training. This thing that you can't take the job tomorrow and work 40 hours. You wouldn't have succeeded.

It can be seen from the interviews that the projects often used work experience placements to compensate for a participant lacking a social network. Several of those interviewed stated that they attempted to build trust and long-term relationships with employers. "It's us they're employing," said a project manager from a voluntary organisation during one interview, for example. The employer should be able to be sure that the project staff will be available if problems should arise during the work experience placement, so that these don't lead to unnecessary extra work. The project managers stated that they were often concerned about "burning" work experience placements, meaning that the employer could lose confidence in the project's capacity to support its participants as a result of a participant being placed in the wrong type of environment or of participant misconduct during the placement.

Eleven of these projects had also developed routines in order to prepare and support their participants during their time on work experience – routines which they often emphasized in their contacts with employers when working to obtain work experience places. The preparation of participants could take the form of a study visit to the workplace where the placement would be conducted in order to go through the work tasks that the participant would be given during the placement and discussions of various

scenarios that might arise and codes of conduct at the work place in question. During the period of the placement, the projects also conducted regular follow-ups, with the responsible coach or work experience co-ordinator maintaining contact with the project participant via mail and telephone, and visiting the workplace on a number of occasions. The projects stated that this follow-up work was intended to ensure that the participant was given clear guidance during the placement, to follow-up the participant's development and to sort out possible misunderstandings that might have arisen between the participant and the employer.

> We hold their hands during the first meeting we have, meet the employer, both parties agree that we will start. If they start, then they know where they have to be and what time and they do that by themselves. Then they go there on their own and they start and then we do a follow-up the first, second or third week depending on the type of person. If it's people we feel we need to have more intensive contacts with, then we have more intensive contacts. If we feel that this individual will cope for a longer period, then we take a bit longer.

The interviews show that attempting to motivate the participants to go on work experience constitutes a challenge for the projects. Several project managers stated that the participants as a rule had a negative picture of work experience. Many of them had been on several work experience placements without any of them having led to a job, which creates a sense of being exploited. The projects attempted to deal with these perceptions among the participants in different ways. A number of the projects stated that they tried to ensure that the workplaces used for work experience had recruitment needs before matching a participant to them, and also that they employed relatively short work experience placements in order to avoid participants feeling that the business was using work experience instead of employing workers. The projects stated, however that it could be difficult to determine when it was time to terminate a work experience placement that didn't look like it might lead to employment.

> We can't govern what the employer has decided of course. We were very much in their hands, there. Whether or not there would be a job. And a lot of employers are very vague in those assessments. Or they don't want to say, "We'll have to see what the orders are like next month," and you had to take a lot of difficult decisions. And sometimes it drags out longer than anyone would have wanted (...) and sometimes they finished up saying, "No, I'm afraid it isn't possible for us to employ anyone." It happened a couple of times, I know.

Three of the projects stated however that it was only in exceptional cases that the participants went to businesses on work experience placements during their time in the project. One of these projects had a clear focus on education and relatively weak links to the labour market. The project manager stated, however, that the participants were encouraged to look for work experience places, but that there was a lack of interest. In two of the projects, however, it was the project workers who expressed a sense of distrust

about work experience placements, which they said in some cases lead to lock-in effects due to the participants devoting all their time to work experience instead of looking for different ways to find employment.

> We don't really want to use work experience (...) there is a point with work experience, and it's that they have to get up in the morning and meet people and test new things and so on, but we don't work on the basis that work experience is the best thing. Jobs are the best thing, and we mustn't belittle them by believing that work experience is all they're capable of. But rather we believe that they can get a job, and if it then turns out that no, it's not possible – okay, then we can look at work experience. But it's secondary or tertiary if you like. Look at other possible solutions first.

A number of projects stated that the opportunities to obtain work experience places for their project participants became worse in line with the sharp downturn in the economy. Several project managers reported that redundancy notices issued by companies contributed to trade unions saying no to work experience placements, while at the same time reorganisations at businesses could make it difficult to organise the necessary supervision. Others stated that the project experienced the effects of competition for work experience places more or less throughout the entire period of the project, since both municipal labour market projects, regular employment service activities and supplementary actors were actively looking for such places.

> It's always difficult with work experience places, and there are many who are struggling with it. There's the municipality, there's the schools, there's the projects, there's, I mean different projects, it's not only projects, it's everyone you can think of (...) the municipality has an agreement with the nurseries, so we have no opportunities to get in there, for example....

Other projects stated that most of all they lacked access to work experience places where the thresholds to getting in were lower. Some project managers stated they would like to see so-called sheltered workshops, where work tasks could be provided to individuals who had been outside the labour market for a very long time, or who had certain mental or physical health problems. Only one of the studied projects had access to places in this kind of activity, where funds had also been set aside to compensate the workshop's staff in order to ensure good supervision of the participants. There was a perception that many workplaces placed high demands on things such as performance, work rate and social ability, at the same time as certain participants needed to begin at a slower rate and more on their own terms.

> On the other hand, I would like to have access to what I think and what you can't have in the other project, in spite of the fact that it's a municipal project, then I'd like to have access to work experience placements within the municipality. Because some people aren't suited to starting outside.

One project manager stated, however, that sheltered workshops often involve work tasks that are overly simple, which can sometimes be perceived as offensive by the individual participant. On the other hand, the projects would have liked to have access to work experience places at businesses that could perhaps be indulgent towards arriving late or periods of poor attendance, since they worked with young people who often had a poor daily rhythm and were experiencing psychological problems. There was a perception that it can take time for these individuals to develop normal routines, but that this didn't work at the majority of workplaces.

Collaborations with other actors

The National Structural Fund Programme states that promoting collaboration is one of four selection criteria for Social Fund projects. At several different points, the programme also notes the importance of the Public Employment Service and the municipalities collaborating with public and private sector employers, associations and the social economy in order, for example, to prevent young people from becoming marginalised. Collaboration is also built into the programme in the sense that parts of the responsibility for the selection of projects to be awarded Social Fund financing has been taken over by the regional structural fund partnerships while at the same time the projects are encouraged to appoint so-called steering and reference groups to assume responsibility for the strategic management of the projects' work and to promote the lessons learned from the projects being fed back into the group members' own organisations (ESF, 2007).

The steering groups' significance for collaboration

All of the projects included in this study had appointed steering groups, whose memberships varied in terms of their composition, while a few also combined these with the appointment of reference groups. Eight of the projects had steering groups that were comprised of the project management and the project owner together with representatives from co-funding agencies. In three of these projects there was only one co-funding agency, which meant that representatives of either the Public Employment Service or the municipality participated in the steering group. A further four projects, in addition to co-funders, also included representatives from the business sector and in some cases also the social economy, while three instead expanded the steering group by including representatives from the Social Insurance Agency and in certain cases also the regional coordination associations. Some of these projects stated that they had hoped that the actors included in the steering group would be able to contribute different perspectives on their work, and also provide the project with access to resources located at the respective actors. One project manager stated, for example, that the project management had hoped that having the Social Insurance Agency represented in the steering group would facilitate contacts with the healthcare sector.

> Yes, given that the level of ill-health in this area was fairly high and that the pressure on the area's health centre was substantial, we also needed a collaboration with the healthca-

re sector. But on the other hand, they had so very much… And to prioritise, so there were difficulties in the beginning, but during the last of these three years, a very good collaboration started actually.

At interview, however, eight of the projects expressed perceptions of a lack of steering from the steering group. During the project period, the steering group had primarily become a forum for reporting about the work of the project, where the project managers described planned activities and the inflow and outflow of project participants. A number of those interviewed stated that low attendance at these meetings was a recurrent problem, while certain project managers stated that the group members tended to monitor the interests of their own organisation rather than viewing the project as a joint responsibility for the steering group. The project managers stated that they would quite generally have liked to see more strategic discussions about the focus of the project activities and earlier preparations in order to ensure that methods developed in the projects would be implemented in the relevant regular activities. Some also stated that they would have liked more support and that focused education and training measures should be directed at the steering groups by the administering agency.

> The steering groups were very much disseminating information, disseminating results, good examples – those kind of things. And the difficulty with steering groups is getting these people to say "No, no, no" or "Yes, yes, yes" and so on. (…) That it becomes more than just a listening role. And that isn't entirely easy; it's easy for there most often to be good intentions within the people who are there, but they go to lots of meetings, that's how it is. So it could have been a lot better with the steering bit on the basis of the needs that existed in the respective local areas.

One of the factors that the project managers felt could have a negative effect on the work of the steering group was that the group members were often drawn from lower levels of their own organisations, since this could mean that they lacked any mandate to make decisions relating to these organisations. Problems could also arise where the relationship was the reverse of this however. The project managers stated that it was common for the steering group members to be senior managers with the mandate to produce directives in relation to the relevant regular activities, but that they lacked daily contact with the case-officer level. This could lead to decisions made in the steering group regarding, for example, the referral of participants to the project, guidelines for collaboration between case officers and project workers or the planning of work to implement methods in regular activities not being passed down to the case-officer level within the organisation concerned. At the same time, a functioning collaboration with the relevant case officers was often crucial to the project, since it was the case officers who made the decisions on assigning participants to the project, and who governed a large part of these individuals' activity plans.

> What we felt didn't work to some extent, that was maybe that all of the senior managers had signed the collaboration agreement, but then in places it failed with regard to passing

on this information and a mandate to the next level of management which in turn – and now unfortunately I'm talking about the Public Employment Service – didn't follow up or give a mandate to its staff. So that's something that often came up as something of a despairing complaint: it was just this that there was a bit of a disconnect within the organisation.

In other words, projects are dependent on resources that are located in various parts of other organisations. At the same time, only seven of the projects had developed routines for a formalised collaboration at both the management and case-officer levels within their referring agencies, while five projects primarily contacted case officers when special needs arose.[34] Five of these projects had had steering groups that comprised senior managers from agencies within a relatively large geographical area, at the same time as there was a collaboration at the case-officer level via local reference groups in each participating municipality. While the steering groups were responsible for the strategic focus of the project, the reference groups were intended for discussions of enrolled participants and the project's working methods.

Collaboration at the case-officer level
Through the reference groups, the project workers regularly met case officers from all referring agencies for discussions about coming participant referrals, reviews of individual cases and for the formulation of joint activity plans. The reference groups could also discuss possible method development work that was being conducted within the framework of the project in order to promote the inclusion of this work in the relevant regular activities.[35]

> It is at the participant levels and the whole objective is somehow that "This is Stina, and this is how we've worked with Stina," "OK, but have you done that?", "But hey, we've been doing this." And so you can talk through it in order to see, okay, what direction should we be moving in? It becomes like a mini-study for the participants somewhere with the participants' best interests as the goal.(...) Otherwise you have two hands that don't know what the other is doing. It's pretty basic actually.

Two of these seven projects can be said to have been located on the same premises as their referring agencies. This meant that case officers from the referring agencies were included in the project group that was responsible for the project's operational activities and at the same time had the agency responsibility for the project participants. The staff at the projects in question stated that having the relevant agency and project acti-

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34. So-called three party meetings between the participant, the project and the referring agency were common for example in the event of misconduct, poor attendance or if the project had received new information about the participant that led the project workers to feel that the participant's activity plan at the referring agency should be altered. As was noted earlier, the projects reported that their close contacts with the participants meant that they became aware of e.g. mental or physical ill-health, dyslexia or suspected neuropsychiatric disabilities that had not been detected in the context of the relevant regular activities.

35. This form a collaboration, however, raises the issue of the agencies' confidentiality obligations, which the projects dealt with by having the participants sign a form which provided consent to deviate from the confidentiality regulations. In certain cases, project workers stated that questions assessed to be of a sensitive nature were dealt with at special meetings in the presence of the affected project participant.

vities located on the same premises contributed to reducing lead times since possible ambiguities could be sorted out and necessary decisions on the participants' activities taken without a long period of waiting. In cases where case officers from several agencies were located together at the project, the project workers were also able to make use of the fact that the agencies had various types of resources. The Public Employment Service, for example, is responsible for labour market training programmes and wage subsidies, which are not available to the municipal social services.

> In the end it went extremely smoothly to, like... Just take this referral thing; I mean if a social worker is sitting here in the municipality, and thinks, yes, you need to go, it's my client, you have to go to the Public Employment Service, I can book a time, I refer you there. In two months you get a time. Here all you [inaudible] had to do was go through the cloakroom to the Public Employment Service. "Listen, I've got a girl or a boy here, that we, you'd be able to put in a few support measures here, what can we do?"

Similar experiences can be found among the staff of projects who had conducted their activities on the same premises as employment service or municipal labour market units, even if the case officers from these had not formally been part of the project. One project worker described, for example, the significance of the social interaction between case officers and project employees in break rooms and corridors. This daily contact led to a sense of finding it easier to get in touch with the responsible case officer at the respective agencies and an increased propensity to attempt to find joint solutions to problems that arose. At the same time, a number of project managers emphasised that it was beneficial for the contacts with participants for the projects not to be an agency, but rather specifically to be a Social Fund financed project. These project managers stated that many participants were distrusting of agency staff, whereas Social Fund projects were perceived more neutrally. Certain project managers also stated that it was beneficial for the project not to be responsible for the payment of financial benefits, since this created a more equal relationship between the participant and the project worker, at the same time as the project worker could find out about obstacles to employment that the participant had not dared to reveal to the responsible case officer. One of the projects had instead experienced this as an obstacle, however, since it reduced the opportunity to make demands on the participants with regard to their attendance and activity levels.

Obstacles to collaboration

All of the project managers stated that they sought to have a collaboration with the case officers at their referring agencies during the project period. The interviews show, however, that the collaboration concept was used in different ways by different respondents. For some project managers, this collaboration appears primarily to have been intended to ensure that the referring agencies would continuously assign new participants to the project, while others spoke of collaboration in terms of direct cooperation in relation to the formulation and implementation of the participants' individual activity plans. It also emerged from the interviews, however, that the project workers'

attitudes towards collaboration and their interpretations of the collaboration concept were not the only determinants of whether a collaboration had been developed during the period of the project.

The opportunities for collaboration could, for example, be restricted by reorganisations within referring agencies, or by a high level of staff turnover among case officers, which made the establishment of stable forms of collaboration more difficult. Several project managers also expressed frustration in relation to government agencies such as the Public Employment Service, which they perceived to be overly centralised and rule-governed. The project managers argued that detailed collaboration within the framework of a Social Fund project required both case officers and low-level managers to have a mandate to participate in the formulation of local collaboration solutions and also the opportunity to participate in the work of steering groups and local collaboration groups.

> I would wish that somewhere in some appropriation directions they would write something about the Public Employment Service having to actively participate in developmental work. Today there is nothing in the Public Employment Service's appropriation directions about working actively with developmental work. If they were to get this, then I believe that they would allocate resources. Because they're not bad people, but they are so highly governed by their appropriation directions.

The projects' opportunities to collaborate with actors in their local areas could also be reduced by frictions between the Public Employment Service and the relevant municipality, which would indirectly affect a project's ability to formulate a joint activity plan in relation to specific individuals who were in contact with a number of different agencies. In other cases there had been a distrustful attitude directed towards the project itself. There are examples where collaboration agreements had been in place prior to the start of the project without these agreements having been endorsed at the case-officer level. This led to case officers not feeling that they needed to refer individuals to the project in accordance with the agreement, or quite simply not seeing any point in building up new structures for collaboration, despite the fact that this was one of the objectives stated in a project application that the relevant agency had itself been party to and approved.

> So we invited ourselves in. Couldn't we, like, come and talk to the case officers? Because they had got the information a year earlier, but we hadn't been sent anyone. And of course we had a contact person there who was good. But he was banging his head against a brick wall with his colleagues, because they were like "Nah, we don't send [anyone] to that project," "Oh? Why not?" "Nah, we don't have a collaboration with them." "Yes but actually we do!" But he had like given up explaining to them that they had a collaboration.

At the same time, the projects felt that they were dependent on having functioning contacts with the case-officer level. This was necessary not least in order to be able to work

towards having any working methods developed in the project implemented in the relevant regular activities in accordance with the intentions of the National Structural Fund Programme. Although these relationships often appear to have improved over time, the lack of endorsement of collaboration agreements meant that project workers were forced to devote less of their time to methodological development, for example, in order to instead influence actors who had already formally agreed to collaborate in the implementation of the project.

Conclusions of the interview study

The objective of this chapter has been to describe the way Social Fund projects were selected during the most recent programme period and also the organisation and contents of the fifteen projects included in the study. In addition, the chapter also describes the interview subjects' experiences of working with the relevant target group and of perceived obstacles encountered during the implementation of the projects. Interviews have been conducted with project managers and staff at Social Fund projects, co-ordinators at the administering agency and officials linked to all eight regional structural fund partnerships. The studied projects have been conducted in different parts of the country by both municipal actors and voluntary organisations and also by private sector firms.

The goals of the project activities were not only focused on the participating individuals' labour market outcomes subsequent to their time in the project; rather the projects have as a rule also attempted to produce a structural effect. The most common project objective has been to improve the level of collaboration between actors in the field of labour market and social policy. In a majority of the projects, the project work has been small in scale and the staffing levels were perceived by the project workers to be higher than those found in the context of relevant regular activities. The participants were perceived to have been located at a substantial distance from the labour market, and half of the projects stated that it would have been of benefit to their work if they had been able to establish a collaboration with the healthcare sector in order to respond to the often complex problems found among the project participants.

The contents of the project activities were fairly similar in the sense that lectures on labour market studies and social studies, job-seeking techniques and personal development accounted for a relatively large proportion of the time the participants were enrolled in the projects. A majority of the projects also included elements of general adult education in Swedish, maths and computer studies as well as having the opportunity to finance individual short occupational training programmes for their participants. Individual coaching and health and wellness activities were also commonly included within the framework of the projects. A majority of the projects had a fixed schedule that was the same for all enrolled participants, while a few regulated the extent and contents of the participants' time in the project, and of the contents of project activities, in the form of individual activity plans.

The projects perceived the co-funding system to have constituted a significant obstacle in the implementation of Social Fund projects. Participant-based co-funding increased the level of administrative work and made the economic planning of the projects more difficult. A budget that had been adopted on the basis of an incorrect estimate of the number of project participants and their benefit levels could also produce a major strain on the project organisation. Further, the projects were dependent on a well-functioning collaboration with actors at a number of different levels in all of the referring agencies, and also on continuously having new participants referred to the project. The projects stated that they would have liked to see clearer guidance from the steering and reference groups that were tied to the projects, and that government agencies should be given a clearer directive to collaborate with the projects and should give their staff the mandate and the opportunity to conduct collaborations at the local level.

Chapter 3

Detailed analyses of possible success factors

Detailed analyses of possible success factors

This chapter compares the contents of the work of the fifteen Social Fund projects included in the report's sample. Six of these projects had foreign-born participants who were found to have a higher likelihood of leaving the project and making the transition into work or self-employment than comparable individuals who had participated in regular Public Employment Service activities. The remaining projects either produced results in parity with those of the Public Employment Service or performed significantly worse.

The chapter begins with a presentation of the statistical background to the more detailed analysis. It then moves on to examine the significance of project characteristics with the help of an analytical tool known as Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). The objective is to identify common denominators among those projects whose results deviate in a positive direction, which also differentiate these projects from the remainder of the sample. The hope is that the conclusions can then be utilised to formulate hypotheses as to which factors contribute to the success of measures focused on these target groups, and which do not.

Analytical method

The detailed analysis presented in this report employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), which uses Boolean algebra to analyse the relationship between the studied outcome and characteristics of the units included in the sample. In the current case, the method is employed to look for common denominators that can recurrently be found in Social Fund projects with outcomes that deviate in a positive direction while at the same time ensuring that these are not found in those projects that instead produce worse outcomes than regular Public Employment Service activities.

QCA was originally developed for use in comparative field studies in the fields of political science and sociology, where the analyses were based on qualitative data sets relating to small samples of units (Ragin, 1987). The analytical strategy has since come to be used to study everything from social trust and trade union mobilisation to wage dispersion and differences in the employment gap between native- and foreign-born individuals on the European labour market.[36] While the early uses of the method were criticised for being based on deterministic foundations, more recent versions proceed from probabilistic correlations between the variables studied. In addition, a range of software packages have been produced that facilitate the use of QCA in quantitative

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36. See e.g. Epstein et al. (2008), Vaisey (2007), Dixon et al. (2014) and Bentele (2013).

analyses based on register data and large samples (Lieberson, 1991; Ragin, 2006; 2008, Longest and Vaisey, 2008).

According to Epstein et al. (2008) the analytical strategy is associated with a number of advantages by comparison with regression analyses, which are the most common analytical tool employed in quantitative research. These advantages can not least be seen in relation to studies where the sample size is restricted for some reason. This is particularly true if the researcher wants to be able to study how a number of different factors interact with one another in order to produce an outcome. This is because QCA treats the studied objects as configurations of different characteristics. This means that the different objects are comprised of different combinations of values on the independent variables, at the same time as the value of a given variable is dependent on the values assumed by the remaining variables. To take an example, two labour market projects may be very similar with regard to the contents of their activities, their organisation and the competence of the staff. But the significance of certain types of project work and competence might vary dramatically at different points of the economic cycle. Interaction effects of this type may be estimated in regression analysis by utilising so-called interaction terms, but this may be problematic when a sample includes only a limited number of observations. Furthermore, the effects of interaction terms that are comprised of a number of different variables can be difficult to interpret. QCA instead treats all of the variables studied as potentially being dependent on one another, and the respective objects studied as a coherent analytical unit (Epstein et al., 2008).

Unlike more common statistical analyses, QCA also takes into consideration the fact that several different combinations of characteristics can lead to the same outcome, a phenomenon known as multiple configurational causality (De Meur & Rihoux, 2002). The following analyses might, for example, show that all of the projects that included work experience placements showed a positive outcome in relation to the Public Employment Service at the same time as work experience was not included in the work of any of the projects that were found to have negative participant outcomes. The analyses might also show, however, that occupational training, where used, is also associated with a positive outcome, even in cases where work experience is not employed. This could be interpreted as indicating that the use of work experience is likely to contribute to improving the employment chances of participants, but that it is not the only way for projects to contribute to producing a positive labour market outcome.

QCA also analyses different types of multiple configurational causality, using the concepts of *sufficient* and *necessary conditions* respectively (Ragin, 2000). The results described above might, for example, be interpreted in the sense that the use of work experience placements constitutes a sufficient condition for a project to perform better than the average for regular Public Employment Service activities, since all projects that included work experience only showed positive outcomes. It is not a necessary condition, however, since the use of occupational training can produce the same outcome. Another possibility would be that the use of work experience placements only

produces a positive outcome if it is combined with intensive follow-up work and close collaboration with the referring agency, and does not do so when the work experience is associated with poor follow-up work and low levels of collaboration with other actors. This means that a combination of work experience, intensive follow-up work and close collaboration may be viewed as constituting a sufficient condition for the chosen outcome – while the use of work experience placements is not sufficient in itself (Epstein et al., 2008; Ragin, 2008).

For the purposes of this report, software developed by Longest and Vaisey (2008) has been employed, which makes it possible to employ QCA in the statistical software package Stata. This means that this analytical strategy can be combined with the customary methods of handling a data set and the application of significance testing. The version of the analytical employed here is known as fuzzy-set QCA (Ragin, 2000; 2008) which requires the data to be coded into numerical variables that can assume values along a scale between 0 and 1. The scale is based on a mathematical system founded on diffuse logic, and measures the degree of membership of a theoretical category.[37] Units that may be regarded as complete members of a given category are assigned the value 1, while units that may not be regarded as members of the category at all are assigned the value 0. The method also requires that the researcher has a detailed knowledge of the sample under study, since it is the researcher who calibrates the other values of the scale on the basis of the chosen theoretical points of departure and knowledge of the cases being studied. The researcher may, for example, formulate criteria for different degrees of membership in the chosen category on the basis of theory and previous research, against which each individual case is then tested. The units studied by the researcher are thus not ranked mechanically in relation to one another, but are instead coded into numerical variables once they have been examined in relation to each of the theoretical categories selected (Ragin, 2008).[38]

According to Longest and Vaisey (2008) the software employed will then estimate the relationship between the chosen outcome variable and all possible Boolean combinations of the set of conditions included in the models. If the outcome and the selected conditions are included in the model, QCA will estimate which combinations of conditions present the greatest likelihood of being associated with the outcome. When the analyses are based on the use of dichotomised variables, as in other versions of QCA, the correlation between the studied outcome and possible configurations can be evaluated by calculating the conditional probability for each configuration in accordance with the

37. Diffuse logic is also, and more commonly, known as fuzzy logic (Zadeh, 1965).

38. This is also one of the advantages associated with the use of fuzzy-set QCA by comparison with earlier versions of the software. The use of crisp-set QCA, for example, requires the variables to be dichotomised, which means that a substantial amount of the variation in the conditions chosen for study is lost. The coded variables are then subsequently labelled as a set in order to clarify that they represent a certain degree of membership in each of the chosen theoretical conditions. Further, combinations of a number of sets are referred to as configurations. In this report, for example, selected variables have been categorised on a five-category scale, which means that a certain degree of variation is retained. The selected conditions have thus been assigned the values 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 or 1 (Ragin, 2008; Longest and Vaisey, 2008).

formula Pr(Y|A•B). This formula is in turn read as meaning the probability for Y, given that A and B have already occurred.[39]

In the current case, however, this formula cannot be used because fuzzy-set QCA also permits partial membership of the theoretical categories. Each studied unit can thus present different degrees of membership in several logically possible configurations. In order to be able to determine which possible configuration is most suited to describing a given unit, the software employs a least membership function in order to calculate the degree of affiliation with each respective configuration. This means that a unit that has been ascribed the values 0.7 for A and 0.9 for B, will be assigned a membership of 0.7 in the configuration A • B (Ragin, 2008).[40]

The correlation between the studied outcome and possible configurations can then be estimated by applying a formula for calculating the degree of correspondence or "consistency score" between each respective configuration and the observed outcome in the data set. The software developed by Longest and Vaisey (2008) applies the following formula to calculate the consistency score.[41]

$$I_{XY} = \sum \min(x_i, y_i) / \sum x_i$$

In this formula, X represents the predicted configuration, Y the studied outcome, x_i the respective unit's degree of membership in configuration X, and y_i the respective unit's degree of membership in the outcome Y. At the same time, *min* means that the lowest of the stated values will be selected. When all the values of x_i in the equation are more or less equal to the value for the degree of membership y_i, the product of the equation will thus be 1, which indicates a perfect consistency score and thus a strong correlation between the configuration and the studied outcome. The final product is marginally affected if a small number of values of x_i are greater than y_i. If several values deviate more substantially, however, this will produce a final value that is below 0.5 (Ragin, 2008:117; Longest and Vaisey, 2008:82).[42]

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39. The theoretically possible configurations of the two conditions will thereafter be represented by means of upper- and lower-case letters. This means that upper-case letters represent the value 1 and thus complete membership of the chosen theoretical category, while lower-case letters represent the value 0 and complete non-membership. The theoretically possible configurations of the chosen conditions are in this case A · B, A · b, a · B and a · b, with the symbol "·" representing the expression "and" in accordance with Boolean terminology (Longest and Vaisey, 2008).

40. The degree of membership of the respective configurations is thus calculated in accordance with the formula A•B = min(A,B), a•B = (min{(1-A), B} and so on. Each studied unit can only present a membership of over 0.5 in one theoretically possible configuration. A membership value of over 0.5 thus indicates that the unit is more of a member than a non-member in the relevant configuration. It is then up to the researcher to determine which configurations are to be viewed as relevant to the continued analysis. This determination is made by the researcher specifying a criterion for the smallest number of member units that a configuration must have in order to be regarded as relevant. According to Ragin (2008), the number of observations and included conditions should among other things serve as a guide in connection with the specification of this type of criterion. When using sample sizes similar to that employed in this report, it is usually regarded as sufficient for a single unit to exceed the value of 0.5 in relation to a given configuration for this configuration to be regarded as relevant.

41. See Longest and Vaisey (2008:82).

42. This formula for calculating the consistency score is thus more permissive of small differences, such as a value of 0.85 for x_i and 0.80 for y_i. Small differences thus affect the final product to a lesser extent than large differences (Ragin, 2008).

The individual researcher determines in turn the consistency score that is required for a configuration to be regarded as a *sufficient condition* for the outcome at issue. Ragin (2000, 2006) proposes that all configurations where I_{XY} >0.8 be coded as sufficient. This threshold will also be applied in the analyses below even though the software developed by Longest and Vaisey (2008) allows for the specification of other threshold values. Once the relevant configurations have been coded as sufficient, the software will employ the so-called Quine-McCluskey algorithm which simplifies Boolean functions by identifying the minimum number of prime implicants that can be used to represent a given function. If both $a \cdot B \cdot C$ and $A \cdot B \cdot C$ have been coded as sufficient conditions for the outcome Y, these configurations will, for example, be simplified to $B \cdot C$, which represents the minimal functional expression for these configurations. This then also provides a description of the sufficient conditions for generating the outcome under study (Longest and Vaisey, 2008:82).

Provided that the above simplification has identified a number of sufficient conditions, the degree of coverage can then also be calculated for these conditions.[43] The term coverage here refers to the proportion of variance in the outcome that can be explained by reference to the identified conditions. The formula employed for this by Longest and Vaisey (2008) is identical to that used to calculate the consistency score, as described above.

$$C_{XY} = \sum \min(x_i, y_i)/ \sum y_i$$

Since the objective is to calculate the significance of X in relation to Y, a high degree of coverage is obtained if all values of x_i in the equation are less than or equal to the corresponding value of y_i. The product of the equation will then be equal to 1, which indicates that the relevant configuration is a *necessary condition* for the outcome. This because it is the only configuration in the data set that is followed by the outcome under study in the analyses. However, since the chosen analytical strategy takes into account the possibility that several configurations of selected conditions can lead to the same outcome, the degree of coverage for a specific configuration may be less than 1. By comparing the degree of coverage for each configuration, it is thus possible to assess which of these may be regarded as most empirically relevant. The two measures of consistency and coverage are thus also used to assess whether the configuration is to be regarded as a necessary or sufficient condition for the outcome of interest. As always, however, the generalizability of the results is dependent on e.g. sample size, sampling strategy and the quality of the data (Ragin, 2006; King et al., 1994).

The project characteristics examined

The objective of this report is to identify common denominators among projects that present strong and significant positive effects on the employment chances of foreign-born participants by comparison with mean results produced by the regular acti-

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43. See further Ragin, 2008.

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vities of the Public Employment Service.[44] The report's objective was formulated on the basis of the overarching objectives of the National Structural Fund Programme which state that Social Fund money is to be used to finance activities that show clear benefits in relation to the relevant regular activities, and that good examples are to be disseminated by means of strategic efforts by projects and thematic groups to exert influence (ESF, 2007).

As with traditional regression analysis, the use of the QCA software requires the researcher to specify a model of the set of studied conditions on which the analysis will then be based. Amenta and Poulsen (1994) and Berg-Schlosser (2012) discuss a number of alternative strategies for use in the selection of such conditions. One of these involves combining parts of different theories in the relevant area in order to test their validity, as well as conclusions drawn by previous research.[45] An inventory is thus conducted by the researcher of the relevant research field, who then employs step-wise selection of different sets of conditions in order to test the validity of the theories and to identify interaction effects between different factors described in relevant theory and previous research. Yamasaki and Rihoux (2008) note, however, that different approaches are often combined in empirical studies, and that more inductively focused approaches may be more appropriate when selecting which conditions to include in the analysis in the case of qualitative studies based on relatively small samples and where there is a lack of theoretical guidance.

In the analyses that follow, conditions derived from previous labour market policy research have been successively tested by means of calculating odds-ratios, traditional bivariate analyses and subsequently also fuzzy-set QCA. This has been combined with a more inductive approach, which has involved the report's author testing possible explanatory models that have been formulated on the basis of the knowledge obtained about the cases under study during the data collection process. The following sections present the conditions that were finally included in the model and also a description of how they may be expected to contribute to the outcome of interest.[46]

The studied outcome

The studied outcome in the following analyses is a *significantly better performance* than the mean outcome for regular Public Employment Service activities following control for among other things participant composition, measurement point and municipality.

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44. The projects studied in this report have been selected on the basis of the likelihood of foreign-born participants in the respective projects being in paid employment 90 and 180 days subsequent to concluding their participation in the project, and at the final observation point registered in the database. The outcome variable has been constructed in accordance with the broad definition of employment used by Public Employment Service, which includes unsubsidised work, subsidised work and new start jobs.

45. The term employed by Amenta and Poulsen is "a perspectives approach", which is defined as "supplying a mixed bag of variables derived from the main theoretical perspectives in an empirical literature" (Amenta & Poulsen, 1994:25).

46. Separate analyses have been conducted for projects focused on individuals in the Youth Job Programme (YJP), and analyses have also been conducted that excluded certain projects in order to test the sensitivity of the analyses. The variables that have been included in the final models have either presented some form of correlation with the outcome variable in bivariate analyses or have produced high odds-ratios. These correlations were not always statistically significant, but the variables have been included in the QCA analyses in order to ensure that there are no interaction effects.

The coding process was begun with three projects that presented very powerful and positive effects on the participants' chances of employment by comparison with regular Public Employment Service activities being coded 1 on the outcome variable, while four projects that presented powerful and significant negative effects were coded 0. A further four projects that presented no significant effect on the participants' chances of employment were instead coded 0.5, which represents their being regarded neither as members or non-members of the chosen condition. Three projects that performed somewhat better than the mean result of the Public Employment Service were coded 0.75, while one project that had performed somewhat worse was coded 0.25. The reason these projects were coded as intermediate categories is that the effects are relatively weak and their placement in relation to the mean might be due to selection effects that had not been possible to capture in the statistical data set. Thus the variation in relation to the projects that presented more powerful effects is relevant and should therefore be taken into account in connection with the calibration of the outcome scale (Ragin, 2008).

Work experience focused on employment
Work experience placements constitute one of the most common labour market policy measures employed with the objective of facilitating foreign-born individuals' integration into the Swedish labour market. Previous research indicates, however, that general work experience without ties to specific work tasks or competence is associated with negative effects on individuals' chances of employment and produces lock-in effects in the policy measures system. In a majority of the projects studied in this report, there is some form of work experience during the participants' period of enrolment in the projects, and the projects have as a rule also put routines in place to support the participants during their time spent on work experience placements. It can also be seen from the interviews, however, that there was a variation in the extent to which the projects employed work experience placements that had a clear focus on subsequent employment, e.g. by attempting to ensure that the business in question had future recruitment needs and that the work experience was perceived by the employer as a means of testing out a job-seeker for subsequent employment at that specific firm.

Projects that have been assigned high values in relation to this condition predominantly employed work experience placements that served as a means of testing out participants for employment at workplaces with recruitment needs, or alternatively with the objective that the participants would be able to acquire concrete occupational skills that may be assumed to strengthen the individuals' position in their continued search for employment. Low values, on the other hand, have been assigned to projects that for various reasons had not utilised work experience placements at all, with an intermediate category of projects being specified that predominantly utilised more general work experience placements during the participants' period of enrolment in the project.

High degree of labour market focus
One common criticism directed at labour market policy measures is that they can pro-

duce lock-in effects since participation restricts the amount of time that the individual can devote to continuing to seek employment. This might, for example, be the case for general educational and work experience measures that lack any direct link to skills for which there is a demand on the labour market and where contacts with potential employers are limited. Research shows instead that measures that are similar to regular jobs are those that produce the clearest effects on individuals' chances of employment. Close contacts with different types of employer during an individual's period of enrolment could also contribute to extending the individual's social network, which may be assumed to be of special benefit to foreign-born individuals who lose a substantial amount of their social capital in connection with the move from their countries of origin.

The studied projects worked to a varying extent to facilitate their participants having ongoing contacts with potential employers and continuing to seek work, and also to encourage them to test different paths into employment. Projects that have been assigned a high value on this condition have as a rule formulated their work in close consultation with the local business community and/or employer and union organisations and their activities included ongoing contacts with several different types of employer. In a very small number of cases, projects have also had the opportunity to finance short-term subsidised periods of employment at public sector employers. Projects with a low degree of membership in this category lacked routines intended to maintain participant contacts with potential employers, at the same time as these projects were either focused on general educational measures or were tied as a result of their approved project application to working with a focus on a sector where the demand for labour was low, which had served to limit their contacts with employers with recruitment needs.

High degree of individual activity planning
An examination of the projects' preliminary and final reports showed that most of the projects included in this study emphasised that their working method proceeded on the basis of the individual participant's situation and needs. The interviews showed, however, that the projects' opportunities to provide their participants with individual activity plans varied, although a majority of those interviewed stated that having been able to do so would have been desirable. In slightly over half of the projects, the activities followed a pre-determined schedule, at the same time as the participants were in attendance on the project premises during the hours that corresponded to the individual participant's specified capacity for work. According to those interviewed, a greater degree of individual planning would serve to increase the opportunities to adapt the work of the project to the needs of the individual and to organise the participants' attendance in a way that was assessed to produce the greatest effect. This might mean working independently away from the project premises, for example, in order to visit employers or solve tasks that had been assigned to the participant in connection with guidance counselling with the responsible project coach.

A high degree of individual activity planning may also be assumed to reduce the risk for participation in the project producing some form of lock-in effect with negative conse-

quences for the individual's chances of employment. Projects that have been assigned high scores in relation to this condition exclusively employed individual activity plans, with the extent and intensity of the project measures varying in accordance with the participant's situation and needs. Low values have instead been assigned to projects where the majority of the time spent enrolled in the project was organised on the basis of an activity plan that was the same for all enrolled participants and where there were limited opportunities to make adjustments at the individual level. Between these two groups there is an intermediate category comprising projects where approximately half of the daily activities proceeded from a common activity plan, while the remainder of the time in the project was organised on the basis of individual activity plans.

Enhanced collaboration
One of the national selection criteria during the most recent programme period was that of promoting collaborations, since these are among other things assumed to be able to contribute to facilitating young people's chances of entering and then retaining a position on the labour market (ESF, 2007). Research on the effects of collaborations between different public sector actors in the field of labour market policy is relatively limited. Lundin (2007) argues, however, that these effects depend on the type of issue on which the collaboration is focused, with collaborations focused on the implementation of more complex policy measures appearing to produce better outcomes than collaborations focused on more simple tasks. At the same time, enhanced collaboration could lead to projects obtaining access to resources that are not to be found within their own organisation, such as the opportunity to make decisions on wage subsidies or to approve an investigation of the participant's capacity for work. Against the background of the fact that Social Fund projects work with individuals located at a relatively long distance from the labour market, there is also reason to assume that individuals enrolled in Social Fund projects may be in need of both labour market policy and health-promotion measures, which in turn requires parallel efforts and a collaboration between different types of actors.

All of the Social Fund projects included in the study were involved in some form of collaborative work, usually in the form of steering and reference groups comprised of representatives from their referring agencies and which in certain cases also included other actors from the project's local area. The projects that have been assigned a high value in relation to this condition, however, had collaborated with a number of different types of actors, such as referring agencies, the local business community and the voluntary sector. In addition, routines had been developed for enhanced collaboration at a number of levels within referring agencies. This involved both regular cooperation with responsible case officers at the relevant agencies with regard to the individual project members' activity plans and collaboration at the strategic level in relation to the governance of the project. Projects that have been assigned lower values had more sporadic contacts with responsible case officers and also lacked a collaboration regarding the activity planning for participating individuals. In addition, these projects as a rule only collaborated with a small number of actors in the project's local area.

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A well-functioning project organisation

The work of Social Fund financed projects proceeds from the project application with its associated budget that has been approved by the administering agency and then subsequently prioritised by the relevant structural fund partnership. All of the projects included in the study can thus be regarded as working under relatively similar organisational conditions. At the same time, it can be seen from the interviews that deficiencies in the project application and co-funding plan can produce considerable obstacles in relation to the implementation of the project. The previous chapter described, for example, the problems that an approved budget based on an incorrect estimate of the number of participants and the amount of their benefits can cause in relation to the work of the project in question. Similarly, project applications based on incorrect assumptions about the prevailing conditions in the project area can also produce problems that have major consequences for the possibility of implementing the work of the project.

While projects that have been assigned high values in relation to this condition may well have perceived the co-funding system to constitute an administrative burden, these projects did not describe organisational problems that would have functioned as an obstacle in relation to the implementation of the project. Among those projects that have been assigned low values on this variable, by contrast, inadequacies in the project application and/or co-funding plan have instead led to significant obstacles in relation to the projects' implementation and have affected the day-to-day work of the projects with the enrolled participants. In some cases, these problems can also be traced back to serious deficiencies in project steering. The coding of the data has also taken account of whether the organisational problems have been of a transient nature or have instead had an effect throughout a large part of the project period.

Results of the detailed analyses

The detailed analyses of the data collected for this report have tested the significance of a range of project characteristics. The final analytical model only includes those conditions that have produced an effect when different types of project characteristics were tested in relation to the studied outcome.[47] These characteristics are a well-functioning project organisation (O), labour market focus (A), individual activity planning (I), work experience focused on employment (P) and enhanced collaboration (S). In accordance with Boolean terminology, projects that have been coded as members of a specific category are ascribed an upper-case letter, while projects that have been coded more as non-members of a category are ascribed a lower-case letter. This means that a project whose contents have been regarded as being associated with a high degree of labour

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47. Examples of conditions that have been examined by means of traditional statistical correlational analyses and via the application of the selected analytical tool include the opportunity to provide short occupational training programmes to project participants, the provision of basic Swedish language teaching, a high degree of interpersonal contacts between project workers and participants, access to competence in healthcare and psychiatric care within the project, access to work experience co-ordinators, the charting of individual factors, educational focus, target group, type of project owner, regional affiliation and the presence of practical health and wellness activities. These did not produce effects in the analyses, however, and have therefore been excluded from the final model.

Table 1. Truth value table from the analysis of all five studied conditions.

Well-functioning project organisation	High degree of labour market focus	High degree of individual activity planning	High degree of wok experience focused on employment	High degree of enhanced collaboration	Frequency	Consistency score in relation to studied outcome
1	1	1	0	1	1	1
1	0	1	1	1	1	1
0	0	0	0	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	3	0.917
1	1	1	1	0	1	0.833
1	1	1	0	0	1	0.833
0	1	0	1	0	1	0.778
0	1	0	0	0	1	0.727
1	1	0	1	1	1	0.727
0	0	0	0	0	1	0.636
1	0	0	0	0	3	0.533

Note: "Outcome" refers to the relevant configuration's consistency score in relation to studied outcome "significantly better performance than the average for the Public Employment Service".

market focus have been assigned the value "A", while projects whose contents have been deemed to be associated with a low degree of labour market focus have been assigned the value "a".

The coding of each project may be illustrated by means of a so-called truth value table, as in Table 1. The truth value table shows all logically possible combinations of the five conditions that have been included in the model, which in this case means that there are 32 (2^5) possible configurations.[48] Logically possible configurations that are not found in the actual data set have been excluded however in order to simplify the table for the reader. The table also shows the number of units that are best described by the respective configurations and their consistency scores. These scores measure the strength of the correlation between the respective configurations and the outcome under study.[49] The studied projects' membership of the five selected conditions is represented by means of the values 1 and 0 that are specified in the respective cells, which in the truth

48. The five conditions that have been included in the model are well-functioning project organisation (O), labour market focus (A), individual activity planning (I), work experience focused on employment (P) and enhanced collaboration (S). The truth value table shows all 32 (2^5) logically possible combinations. A project that has been coded as more of a non-member than a member of the category "high degree of labour market focus", for example, is instead assigned the lower-case "a", which represents a low degree of labour market focus.

49. The table presents two different types of coverage values, of which raw coverage describes the proportion of the studied outcome that can be explained by the relevant configuration. The unique coverage value describes in turn the proportion that can be explained by the configuration and that is not overlapped by the coverage of other configurations.

value table corresponds to membership or non-membership of the relevant theoretical category.[50]

The table shows that the most common configurations in the data set are well-functioning project organisation with high degree of labour market focus, high degree of individual activity planning, high degree of work experience focused on employment and high degree of enhanced collaboration (OAIPS), which is represented by three of the studied projects, and well-functioning project organisation, low degree of labour market focus, low degree of individual activity planning, low degree of work experience focused on employment and low degree of enhanced collaboration (Oaips), which is represented by a further three projects. The former combination is associated with a consistency score of 0.917 with the studied outcome. This means that projects with a well-functioning project organisation, high degree of labour market focus, high degree of individual activity planning, high degree of work experience focused on employment and high degree of enhanced collaboration are most often among the group of projects that deviate in a positive direction from the average outcome produced by regular Public Employment Service activities. Projects that can be described by the combination Oaips, on the other hand, are most commonly found in the group of projects that performed significantly worse.[51]

Since the objective of this report is not only to describe Social Fund projects that produce positive effects on the participants' employment chances by comparison with regular Public Employment Service activities, however, the analysis needs to be taken further. In order to identify common denominators among projects with outcomes that deviate in a positive direction, therefore, configurations associated with a consistency score corresponding to I_{xy} >0.8 following significance testing are coded as constituting sufficient conditions for the studied outcome.[52] Thereafter a test is conducted of whether there is an overlap with the remaining configurations by allowing the software to conduct a further simplification of the configurations. This in turn means that the number of configurations can be reduced to three, which are presented, along with their respective consistency scores and coverage values in Table 2.

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50. Each studied unit may present different degrees of membership in several logically possible configurations. In order to determine which of the possible configurations is most appropriate to describe a given unit, the software employs a least-membership function in order to calculate the unit's membership in each respective configuration in accordance with A•B=min(A,B), a•B=min[(1-A), B] and so forth. Each studied unit can only present a degree of membership of over 0.5 in relation to one theoretically possible configuration. The truth value table thus does not show the only possible configuration that could be employed to describe the project in question, but the configuration that most appropriately represents the project in accordance with the above.

51. At the same time, three configurations present a perfect correlation with the studied outcome. However, these represent only one studied project per configuration.

52. In this case, the configurations oaipS, OaIPS, OAIpS and OAIPS were consistent with the threshold value of I_{xy} >0.8, which was chosen on the basis of the recommendations of Ragin (2000, 2006). Membership has been significance tested by means of a so-called Wald test, which proceeds from the F probability distribution. This function is obtained within the framework of the software developed by Longest and Vaisey (2008) and is employed in order to determine whether a given configuration's consistency score in relation to the studied outcome y is greater than the consistency score in relation to n (1 – membership in y) given the chosen significance level of 0.05.

Table 2. Results of logical reduction

Simplifications obtained	Coverage value		Consistency score
	Raw	Unique	
o*a*i*p*S	0.267	0.167	1.00
Low degree of well-functioning project organisation*			
Low degree of labour market focus*			
Low degree of individual activity planning *			
Low degree of work experience focused on employment*			
High degree of enhanced collaboration			
O*I*P*S	0.433	0.067	0.929
High degree of well-functioning project organisation*			
High degree of individual activity planning*			
High degree of work experience focused on employment*			
High degree of enhanced collaboration			
O*A*I*S	0.500	0.133	0.928
High degree of well-functioning project organisation*			
High degree of labour market focus*			
High degree of individual activity planning*			
High degree of enhanced collaboration			
Total coverage value	0.733		
Total consistency score	0.957		

Not: * = The Boolean expression for "and". The raw and unique coverage value are defined in the text.

The first of the three combinations of project characteristics described in Table 2 presents a significantly lower coverage value than the others, however, which indicates that it is the one with the least empirical relevance of the final configurations.[53] The conclusion is thus that the combination of a well-functioning project organisation, a high degree of individual activity planning, enhanced collaboration and labour market focus or alternatively the use of work experience that is highly focused on employment, together constitutes the most important common denominator among the Social Fund projects

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53. By analysing each configuration's consistency score and coverage value it is also possible to draw conclusions about which of these combinations is most empirically relevant on the basis of the current data set. The consistency score describes the strength of the correlation between a given configuration and the outcome in the sense that the value 1.0 means that the outcome of interest is found in all of those cases where the configuration in question is found in the data set. The first combination of project characteristics described in Table 2 thus shows a perfect consistency score. As was mentioned earlier, however, it is important to take the coverage value into consideration in order to determine what significance can be ascribed to a given solution. In this case, the raw coverage value is significantly lower for the first configuration. These present a somewhat lower consistency score while at the same time the solutions describe a larger proportion of the projects included in the study sample (Epstein et al., 2008).

whose results deviate in a positive direction, and which distinguishes these projects from the remainder of the projects included in the study sample. It is also worth noting that the condition labelled enhanced collaboration can be found in five of the six projects whose results deviated in a positive direction. This cannot however be viewed as a necessary condition for the studied outcome, since the sixth project with results that deviated positively was not found to present a high degree of enhanced collaboration with referring agencies and other actors in the project area.

Chapter 4

Summary and concluding discussion

Summary and concluding discussion

This report constitutes a qualitative follow-up study of Szulkin et al. (2013). It compares the contents of the work conducted by fifteen local labour market projects that were financed with money from the Social Fund during the 2007–2013 programme period. The objective of the report has been to identify common denominators among Social Fund projects whose results deviate in a positive direction from the mean result produced by the regular activities of the Public Employment Service, and which distinguish these projects from the other projects included in the study sample. The report is based on interviews with project managers and staff from the relevant Social Fund projects, co-ordinators at the administering agency and officials linked to all eight regional structural fund partnerships. In addition, the study has analysed documentation from all fifteen projects and from the structural fund partnerships in order to check the correctness of the data collected. In order to facilitate a structured and transparent analysis of the data collected, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) has been utilised to identify common denominators among the successful projects and to simultaneously ensure that these were not present in the remaining projects in the sample.

Central conclusions

The significance of a range of project characteristics has been examined in the analyses, such as high staffing levels, access to healthcare and psychiatric competence within the project and having the opportunity to provide short-term occupational training programmes for project participants. The study's conclusion, however, is that the combination of a well-functioning project organisation, a high degree of individual activity planning, enhanced collaboration and a high degree of labour market focus or alternatively the use of work experience that is highly focused on employment, is what distinguishes Social Fund projects whose results deviate in a positive direction from the other projects included in the study sample. Taken in isolation from one another, these factors cannot explain the difference between projects with results that deviate in a positive direction and projects whose results deviate in a negative direction. In combination, however, the presence of these factors is associated with an increased probability that project participants will make the transition into employment subsequent to their participation in the project by comparison with participation in the regular activities of the Public Employment Service, given controls for the participants' personal characteristics and experience of unemployment.

At the same time it is worth emphasising that the results from this type of qualitative study cannot simply be generalised to other local labour market projects. This is primarily due to the fact that the sample of fifteen projects is too small to allow for general conclusions about factors that contribute to positive outcomes for participants in local

labour market policy projects (Bygren et al. 2014). At the same time, the sampling strategy has produced variation on the dependant variable, and the sample is also significantly larger than is usually the case in qualitative labour market research. This means that it should be possible to use the conclusions drawn here as well-founded hypotheses in future quantitative research, at the same time as they also contribute to the credibility of the report's descriptive findings.

Recommendations for the coming programme period

During the most recent programme period, the responsibility for the selection of Social Fund projects has been shared by the administering agency and regional structural fund partnerships that were formed with the objective of strengthening the regional foundations of the Social Fund programme. The selection of Social Fund projects is primarily based on national selection criteria and regionally formulated structural fund plans, whereas no part of the selection process has had the objective of examining applications in relation to the National Structural Fund Programme's quantified targets regarding the effect that participation in Social Fund projects should have on the participants' chances of obtaining employment. The low status of the quantified objectives during the selection process may be a result of the weak links between the national selection criteria and the overarching goals of the Structural Fund Programme, and of the fact that the objectives are not regarded as relevant to the work conducted using Social Fund financing. This has meant, however, that the possibility of using the selection of Social Fund projects as a targeting tool has been limited.

Further, the assessment of the contents of the project activities, and their expected effects on labour market outcomes of participating individuals, has constituted a limited part of the assessment of the applications received. Given the number of individuals who are referred to Social Fund projects each year within the framework of their enrolment in activation programmes, there may be reason to review the issue of whether the selection of projects could more clearly be based on evidence drawn from the field of labour market policy research. During the most recent programme period, the National Structural Fund Programme has emphasised that Social Fund financing should be used to promote the development of innovative working methods within the field of labour market policy. However, given that individuals referred to Social Fund projects can have their income in the form of activity benefit or income support stopped if they refuse to participate or break off their participation in a project, the projects that are intended to develop these working methods ought also to be such that project referrals will also have a positive effect on the participating individuals' chances of obtaining employment.

Deficient links to the structures associated with regular activities
It also emerged from the interviews that the extent to which the Social Fund projects are established within the structures associated with regular activities needs to be improved during the coming programme period in order to facilitate the implementation

of the projects and the degree to which the goals of the Structural Fund Programme are achieved. The calls for applications could be linked to national, regional and local needs more clearly than is the case today. It is important to bear in mind however that competition for Social Fund financing begins even prior to a call for applications because co-funding must already be secured when a project application is submitted. The affected public sector agencies and actors responsible for regional growth thus have a special responsibility to initiate and support project applications that are in line with both the National Structural Fund Programme's overarching goals and the regional growth strategies of the relevant region. This could contribute to a more effective utilisation of Social Fund money and produce increased synergy effects between the different structural funds.

Further, regional feedback processes have not functioned in a satisfactory way during the past programme period. All of the structural fund partnerships say that they would like to see regional statistics that are broken down on the basis of the geographical areas, sectors and target groups that have been reached by approved applications. The learning that has taken place during the past programme period has primarily occurred in the form of individual projects being presented in evaluations or via oral presentations to the structural fund partnerships. The opportunities for drawing conclusions on the basis of individual examples are very limited, however, and the lack of statistical follow up reduces the opportunities to utilise the selection process as part of the continuous targeting process during the implementation of the programme. It is also possible that regular regional feedback could increase the level of interest in the Social Fund among regional actors and make it easier for these actors to assume a greater responsibility for supporting the implementation of projects that are entitled to receive Social Fund support.

Szulkin et al. (2013) have noted that the administering agency has lacked routines for compiling the information from the projects, which has meant that it has not been possible to use the extensive amount of information that is sent by the projects each month for evaluation and research purposes. For it to become possible for the regional feedback to structural fund partnerships and other affected actors to increase during the coming programme period, standardised and thus comparable information will be required on the organisation of the projects and the contents of their work, including, for example, information on the principal focus of the projects and the measures that are provided for enrolled participants. The data that is collected should also be digitalised and handled in a way that ensures it will be available for future evaluations and research.

The need for increased support for the projects
Finally, it emerged in the interviews that many project workers had an ambivalent attitude towards the work of the Social Fund. By working within the framework of a project, the staff had greater freedom to formulate their work at the local level, at the same time as the financing provided by the Social Fund also provided an opportunity

both to test new ways of working with the target group and to work with higher staffing levels than they were used to in connection with their work in the relevant regular activities. On the other hand, the financial support involved a great deal of administrative work together with a system of financial regulations that was perceived as being both unwieldy and obstructive. The system of participant-based co-funding also made budget planning more difficult and created uncertainty among project staff. In many cases, the psychosocial work environment had been negatively affected by the fact that the level of mental ill-health found within the participant group was greater than had been expected, while at the same time the projects often lacked both the special competence required to deal with the special problems that characterised the participant group and access to external tutoring for project staff.

During the next programme period it is important that the conditions for conducting the work of Social Fund projects are improved by continuing to work to simplify the regulations relating to project financing and the co-funding system. Several of the projects interviewed also stated that they would like to see a greater degree of operational support in relation to project management and the financial administration of the projects, as well as training for steering groups, who have been perceived as providing insufficient support to the management of the projects. In addition, the Social Fund projects need to become more well-established within the regular structures of the labour market and regional policy fields. This is not only necessary in order to be able to guarantee the quality of project applications prior to their being sent to the administering agency for initial assessment and to increase the likelihood that the working methods developed in the projects will be implemented in the relevant regular activities subsequent to the conclusion of the project period. Having projects that are more well-established in this way could also facilitate the work of the project staff during the actual implementation of the projects, since their work environment and opportunities for offering their participants adequate labour market measures are to a very great extent dependent on a functioning collaboration with the Public Employment Service, the Social Insurance Agency and the municipalities.

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For decades, the Swedish municipalities have had a major responsibility for the implementation of labour market policy. Knowledge on local labour market policy measures is limited however. During the period 2007–2013, the European Social Fund awarded funding to a large number of labour market projects, of which the majority were implemented by local actors. This report presents a study of fifteen local labour market projects that were financed by the Social Fund.

The study's objective is to identify the factors that are common only to those projects that have succeeded better than the Public Employment Service in helping foreign-born individuals into work. The study is based on a review of project documentation and on interviews with project managers and staff at the relevant social fund projects, co-ordinators at the administering agency and officials linked to all eight regional structural fund partnerships.

The study concludes that there are four factors that in combination can explain the outcomes of the successful projects. These are having a well-functioning project organisation, a high degree of individual activity planning, enhanced collaboration and either a high degree of labour market focus or using work experience that is highly focused on employment.

The report also presents a number of problems that those interviewed perceived as obstacles to the projects functioning as well as they might. These include restrictions caused by the co-funding system, difficulties collaborating with those responsible for the relevant regular activities, such as the Public Employment Service and the Social Insurance Agency, and that the actors who participate in the process to select projects for funding base their assessments on different objectives. The report therefore also includes a number of recommendations for the coming programme period.

The Thematic Group on Integration in Working Life is one of the thematic groups financed by the European Social Fund and has the task of identifying and disseminating effective methods for integration in working life. The group comprises Ryszard Szulkin, Professor of Sociology, Magnus Bygren, Associate Professor of Sociology and Clara Lindblom, Research Assistant.

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