

# Workplaces in all the colours of the rainbow



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in all the colours  
of the rainbow**

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# Foreword

Respect for the equal value and rights of all people is a common thread in all parts of Unionen's activities.

For Unionen, it is a given that a workplace should be welcoming and open to everyone. An inclusive workplace means that no individual needs to feel restricted or alienated by fear of prejudice or contempt due to the fact that they do not live in accordance with the hetero-norm.

Work for equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is not about the right to "deviate" or be "different"; it is a matter of your given and non-negotiable right to be yourself at work.

It is an indisputable fact that one condition for feeling good at work, and feeling good because of it, is that you are respected for who you are.

Many big steps have been made with regard to LGBT-inclusion in working life, not least thanks to the companies and agents of change interviewed in this book. But a great deal of work remains before all workplaces have all the colours of the rainbow. It is Unionen's hope that this book will be used by elected representatives and employers who need inspiration and guidance in order to bring about active and systematic work for inclusion from an LGBT perspective.

**HENRIK EHRENBORG**, Manager of Socio-Political Section  
Stockholm, July 2018

# Introduction

This book, *Workplaces in all the colours of the rainbow*, is based on interviews conducted with representatives of the companies which won Unionen's LGBT award during the period 2013–2017.

The interviews were conducted in accordance with an interview guide and touched on areas such as:

- How the company is working to ensure that the workplace is inclusive irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- Concrete examples of activities and measures implemented by the company.
- Why they in particular were a recipient of Unionen's LGBT award.
- The role of management in the work.
- The role of the HR function.
- The union's involvement.
- How they will ensure the work is long-term and sustainable.

- Tips for companies and organisations wanting to commence efforts to achieve a work environment which is inclusive, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Apart from the information in the interviews, the companies have also provided, in different ways, various checklists, surveys and regulatory documents relevant to their work with LGBT matters at the company.

All interviews and quotations have been consented to by the respective interviewees.

The names and titles are those applicable at the time when each interview was conducted during the period October-December 2017.

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Fredrik Haraldson,  
Henric Hedberg

# The Swedish American Football Federation

**GENERAL SECRETARY** Fredrik Haraldson

**DIVERSITY OFFICER** Henric Hedberg

**UNIONEN REPRESENTATIVE** Monica Gårdström

In 2017, the Swedish American Football Federation received Unionen's LGBT award and the jury's reasoning was as follows:

*The Swedish American Football Federation is the first sports federation in the world to gain LGBT certification.*

*There is an ambitious LGBT action plan in the workplace which clearly states that inclusion from an LGBT perspective with regard to the clubs and members must permeate both the workplace and the organisa-*



*tion as a whole. The Swedish American Football Federation has realised the importance of working in parallel with the staff policy perspective and the organisation perspective in order to achieve full inclusion from an LGBT perspective.*

*The Swedish American Football Federation is a pioneer in the sporting world. It is Unionen's hope that the Swedish American Football Federation's systematic and persistent work for inclusion from an LGBT perspective will have a ripple effect so that everyone's equal opportunities for an active and healthy life, as well as the right to be part of the community offered by sports, becomes a reality in the near future.*

The Swedish American Football Federation, SAFF, is tasked with promoting and administering American football in Sweden, as well as representing the sport abroad. It shall also endeavour to make the sport of American football accessible to everyone.

SAFF has 60 clubs which together organise over 10,000 members. Some 4,000 of these are counted as active licences. They have 5 district associations divided into geographic regions in Sweden. SAFF has four national teams; men's, women's, the junior and youth team, and a flag football national team, which is another branch of American football.

As of December 2017, the SAFF office has five employees. They are to assist with coordination, support and development for all district associations, clubs and the organisation as a whole, in accordance with their joint vision, action plan and the established budget.

Together with all members of the Swedish Sports Confederation, SAFF strives for:

- Life-long sporting activities, where more choose to participate in sports in associations and thus achieve more success internationally.
- Living and standing for the values behind the sport.
- Further development of the sport, giving good opportunities for sports in associations.
- The sport to play an even more prominent role in society.

In December 2016, SAFF became the world's first sports federation to gain LGBT certification.

**“It was important for the responsibility not to fall solely to the enthusiasts, which is why we chose to train 20 key persons.”  
Fredrik Haraldson**

Fredrik explains that he has been general secretary for 8 years. His work involves enforcing the board's decision and he is also responsible for staff working at the office. He has past experience in the movement and has played American football for many years, in both club teams and the national team.

Fredrik explains that it was the previous board which made the decision to commence the inclusion work in 2016. The federation

had insufficient knowledge and wanted to implement measures to remedy this.

“We began by speaking with the Swedish Sports Confederation, then we contacted RFSL – the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights – which has an LGBT certification programme which gives the organisation tools for working systematically with equal and respectful treatment. It was important for responsibility not to fall solely to the enthusiasts, which is why we chose to train 20 key persons. It was a conscious choice in order for the work to permeate the entire organisation. It is not solely the central office which is affected; it concerns everyone ‘working’ in the federation, the board, the office, the chair of the committee, club captains, team coaches and staff at RIG - riksidrottsgymnasium - in Uppsala,” says Fredrik.

In his role as general secretary, he goes on to explain, it is his responsibility to demonstrate that SAFF actually stands for the sport being inclusive and also living up to this. “What are we like and how do we communicate? Are there hidden messages in our communication?” Among other things, the training has meant that they have become aware of the importance of how they communicate. One measure has thus been to draw up a checklist for an inclusive communication.

“The federation received a great deal of attention when we won Unionen’s LGBT award. There was a lot of positive feedback, but also

a certain amount of criticism,” Fredrik explains. “Among other things, the critics maintained that the sports side would be given a lower priority as a result of the investment. I can understand that to some extent,” says Fredrik, “the media attention is easily skewed; it could perhaps look as though this is the only thing we’re doing. In these situations, it is important that the federation stands up for our inclusion work and explains that it is part of a conscious survival strategy. The sport has never been as subject to competition as it is today. We need to be entrepreneurial in our work and have the courage to think innovatively. At the same time, it is important not to lose speed, to hold out even once media attention has died down.”

**“Our work with diversity is not really a reaction to anything which has happened; it is rather a survival strategy. Without diversity, we do not exist.” Henric Hedberg**

Henric has been on the board for 2 years. He is a sports educator with a background of 15 years in sports. “Our work with diversity is not really a reaction to anything which has happened; it is rather a survival strategy. Without diversity, we do not exist,” Henric explains. “I think it’s important to challenge norms and it’s great that we have been recognised for the federation being at the forefront of developments,” he continues.

He believes that the LGBT certification was a prerequisite, and a

catalyst, for properly getting to grips with the inclusion work. He goes on to explain that work groups and nomination committees are also tasked with working to bring about a more equal gender distribution. “In order to move forward in the work with equality, we must also work on changing norms and attitudes. Through this certification, we have been given the tools to work with norms and values.”

“An American football team needs different types of people with different skill sets,” Henric explains. “We must be inclusive in the team; people of all walks are needed, and if one person doesn’t function in the team, the team doesn’t work.”

“In order for our diversity work to be long-term and sustainable, it must permeate the entire organisation. It must be on the agenda and worked into our structures; the work must be taken into consideration in our organisational planning,” says Henric.

“One important condition is that the LGBT initiative benefits the clubs; that it will go from federation level to club level.” He explains that the diversity and inclusion perspective must exist in everything they do; both in the meeting and changing rooms and among coaches and players alike. Henric goes on to explain that for this reason they have developed a long-term plan to enable clubs to undergo initiatives to increase their knowledge and even provide information to the new members of the federation. “We now offer our members a training course, ‘Introduction to inclusion’, which is a ‘light’ version of the LGBT certification. We allocate resources to this centrally. At the

moment, there are five clubs which have shown interest in taking the 'light' version of the LGBT certification," says Henric.

Henric feels that SAFF has received a small number of negative opinions and comments on its LGBT work. Criticism has mostly concerned the critics being of the opinion that the LGBT issues are political, which Henric feels is incorrect. "LGBT issues and matters of equality and diversity are about human rights."

## **“What is even more exciting now is that this has spread to the office environment.” Monica Gårdström**

Monica was employed as an administrator at the federation in February 2016, in the middle of the major LGBT investment. Apart from administrator, she is also an elected representative of Unionen. In her work, she is responsible for the service provided by the office to clubs, leaders and active members. She is also responsible for the ongoing finances. Monica says that she loves sports and club activities and has worked for a long time within the sports sphere, but previously did so primarily with individual sports, including fencing and cycling.

Monica says that it was terrific fun and very educational to undergo the training included in RFSL's LGBT certification. "It's an all-round education really, and was an eye-opener for me," she says. All employees at the office took part but the initiative targeted a total of 20 key

figures in different parts and functions within the federation. “It is important for the local union to have knowledge and education in these matters,” she adds.

Monica explains that the checklist drawn up for inclusive communication functions as an important support in the daily work. It includes tips on how to formulate so as to avoid stereotypes and to communicate in a more norm-critical manner both in images and text. “Following the training, SAFF has developed a gender policy which describes the possibility to participate in the sport based on how you identify yourself. It should permeate our entire operation, from our employees in the office to all of the thousands of members and players of our game.”

The office is in modern premises in an open office landscape in “Idrottens hus” together with over 30 other sports. “What’s particularly exciting now is that it is spreading through the office environment; SAFF’s work has had a ripple effect throughout the sports movement,” Monica concludes.

The Swedish American Football Federation’s tips for starting up inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective in the workplace.

- Training and knowledge are a prerequisite.
- Link the diversity work to your operational planning.
- Do not be afraid to accept support from other organisations such as RFSL.

Tips for anyone in a workplace which seems to lack initiatives to bring about an inclusive work environment from an LGBT perspective.

- Speak with your immediate manager, contact the management team or perhaps someone in HR and ask the question, “what are we doing to work towards an inclusive work environment from an LGBT perspective?”





Petter Stordalen,  
Ann Ekengren

# Nordic Choice Hotels

**OWNER** Petter Stordalen

**HR MANAGER SWEDEN, FINLAND** Ann Ekengren

**UNIONEN REPRESENTATIVE** Marie Gehlin

In 2016, Nordic Choice Hotels received Unionen's LGBT award and the jury's reasoning was as follows:

At Nordic Choice Hotels, the work environment is characterised by openness and inclusion. There is an express ambition in the workplace to see opportunities rather than obstacles in connection with recruitment.

At Nordic Choice Hotels, employees can be themselves. In the operation, everyone has equal opportunities to contribute suggestions

and ideas, and there is room and respect for the experiences of all employees at the coffee table, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Nordic Choice Hotels takes an active position on LGBT rights by, for example, sponsoring the Pride festivals in Stockholm and Oslo. This sends an important signal to employees and customers alike that the company is standing up for the equal value and rights of all people.

Nordic Choice Hotels is one of the largest hotel groups in the Nordics. Their vision and values are summarised by the phrase “With courage, energy and enthusiasm, we will create a better world”. The ambition is that these values permeate the entire organisation. Based on this, they have made the decision to use an alternative statement of revenue and expenses; employing the ‘triple bottom line’, where they not only measure financial results but from all three ‘bottom lines’: People, Planet and Profit. People, Planet and Profit are based on values and all of them involve a sustainability approach.

Consequently, Nordic Choice Hotels raises diversity issues and the right for everyone to be themselves; “We literally represent diversity, and we love it.”

Nordic Choice consists of three hotel chains: Comfort, Clarion and Quality Hotels. The chains have slightly different orientations; all because they wish for their guests to find a hotel experience based on their needs, wishes and wallet.

Nordic Choice Hotels have around 13,000 employees with a total

of 177 nationalities, where over 30% are from countries outside of the Nordics. The group has a total of 190 hotels in six countries with 32,600 rooms and a turnover exceeding SEK 11 billion. Also included in the group are 23 independent hotels.

**“As a company, we must get involved and make a change, which means it is also important to work in a workplace which is inclusive for everyone, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.” Petter Stordalen**

When Petter describes himself and Nordic Choice Hotels, he says, “I am the man who has gone from being Norway’s best strawberry seller to now running 190 hotels in six Nordic countries. Apart from the fact that I love hotels, I use my hotels to make the world a little better together with my staff. We will always be more than just a bed and a breakfast.”

“For me it’s simple. As a company, we must get involved and make a change, which means it is also important to work in a workplace which is inclusive for everyone, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. We must utilise the power found in people and use all possible means to fight against a society in which we are splitting people and groups apart. Furthermore, from my experience, good and inclusive work environments also deliver the best results.”

“The manager’s role is to establish a culture in the company in which the staff are content, laugh a lot and are respected for who they are. A smart manager is also a person who understands that the development of a company is achieved through the development of their employees.”

“What I can do, and actually do, is to lift people up, for example through good initiatives, but also by sending a clear message that in Nordic Choice Hotels, everyone shall be included. Everyone must feel that they have the best workplace in the world and each individual, regardless of their background, must feel that they are involved in building the company and the activities they work with.”

Petter underlines that it is important as the manager of a company to listen to one’s employees. “Use their drive, commitment, ideas and inclination to make serious changes. Because if there is something that is clear, it is that when a person feels well and feels included, the workplace will develop, and with it, the activities carried out by the company.”

“The fact that it is employees who have nominated the company for the award means that this award is one of those which I value highest of all. This award is a clear sign that the staff are content and feel that we have a good and inclusive workplace.” Petter goes on to say: “We are in an industry which is all about people. The fact that we won this award and that we have for seven years running been named Sweden’s best hotel chain, is down to our proficiency in building a corporate culture where people feel well, feel that they can be themselves and the person they truly are, and that they are able and encouraged to be heard.”

Petter then explains, “we chose to become a Pride Partner based on two factors. Firstly, that the values we stand for in the company are in line with those manifested by Pride. Secondly, that our staff are strongly committed to these issues. It is this which creates the powerful force which makes participating in Pride a given.”

**“We don’t actually work with LGBT issues here; it’s a non-issue for us. We don’t discriminate; diversity is just a given for us.”  
Ann Ekengren**

Ann works as HR Manager. Her work involves her having an overarching role in areas concerning labour law, work environment and emergency preparedness. She is also responsible for Nordic Choice Hotels’ manager training, manager support, recruitment, employee branding and the work with cultural issues.

“Culture is feelings to us. How does it feel?” says Ann. “To be able provide the guest with a service based on their various needs and uphold our values, to create a better world, we work with people and Culture Management. Much of it is about supporting employees and managers in taking responsibility and having straight and clear communication.”

Ann explains that part of the work has involved developing Culture Club, a training programme which is intended for all employees and managers. Over the course of the training, the participants are able to

practice straight and clear communication in a concrete way and can give and receive feedback. “Culture Club got under way two years ago. Since then, we have toured Sweden with the training concept. A run-off race is now under way, and Nordic Choice Hotels has also trained cultural ambassadors who can take over and conduct the training locally,” she explains.

Ann explains that matters of diversity and inclusion are found in everything from leadership training to the recruitment process. “An open and inclusive work climate promotes contentment and job satisfaction, which are important ingredients for working with courage, energy and enthusiasm. We don’t really work with LGBT issues here; it’s a non-issue for us. We don’t discriminate; diversity is just a given for us.”

“We take a firm stance and are active Pride partners, among other things. This has meant that certain customers perhaps do not want to stay in our hotels,” says Ann. “An important condition for our culture of diversity and inclusion is that our owner, Petter Stordalen, clearly stands up for the equal value of everyone, the right to be oneself and the idea that we should reflect society,” she continues. It’s great, we’re really living according to our ethic that with courage, energy and enthusiasm, we can create a better world.”

“One factor which enables Nordic Choice Hotels to be so clear in these matters, in both its internal and external communication, is that we are not listed on the stock exchange; it allows us freedom,” Ann

explains. “We also have a flat organisation. We trust our employees; it’s okay to make mistakes. We don’t judge. These are important conditions for our corporate culture and in order for the company to develop and innovate.”

## **“The company encourages everyone to contribute thoughts and ideas.” Marie Gehlin**

Marie has worked in the company for 18 years. She provides training in the loyalty programme, as well as the associated strategies, for employees at all hotels. She also has first line contact with all hotels and customer services and works with Ambassador programmes and internal soliciting campaigns. Marie is also the chair of the Unionen Club.

“The Club is new. It has only existed for around one and a half years,” Marie explains. “Despite the Club being new here, we have already developed a close and good collaboration with the employer. We collaborate on everything from the appointment of managers, organisational changes and salary reviews to different surveys.”

“In our sector, focus is on the guest and their various needs,” says Marie. “This perhaps increases our understanding for everyone’s differences and that it is okay to be different. The right to be yourself at work is an important matter for the local union club.”

Marie believes that among other things, it is the corporate culture at Nordic Choice Hotels which creates openness to differences. “It is also

important that our manager, Petter Stordalen, is clear in his commitment to matters of diversity and inclusion,” says Marie. “The company encourages all employees to contribute thoughts and ideas. If something inappropriate occurs, the company takes action.” Marie is also in favour of the whistleblowing function introduced by the company. It enables employees, guests and collaboration partners alike to report incidences of suspected violations of the company’s ethical guidelines.

## **Nordic Choice Hotels’ tips for successful inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective**

- Having the courage to stand up for the equal rights of everyone.
- Taking into account the inclusion perspective in introduction, recruitment, leadership training, etc.
- Following up on activities.
- Speaking up and taking responsibility when something occurs.





Top row: Kay Rönn, Sylvia  
Hansson, Ammi Johansson  
Bottom row: Anders Warg,  
Frida Telleborn

## Sensus Västra Sverige

**REGIONAL MANAGER** Kay Rönn

**HR OFFICER** Anders Warg

**UNIONEN REPRESENTATIVES** Frida Telleborn,  
Ammi Johansson and Sylvia Hansson

In 2015, Sensus Västra Sverige received Unionen's LGBT award and the jury's reasoning was as follows:

*Sensus Västra Sverige conducts rights-based work in accordance with a strict plan in order to promote an LGBT-friendly workplace. The work is intended to influence attitudes, behaviour and daily routines in the direction of inclusion and norm awareness.*

*For years, Sensus Västra Sverige has stood up for the equal value and rights of everyone, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, both from a staff policy and business viewpoint. Sensus Västra Sverige has thereby championed the positive development with regard to LGBT rights in working life. It is a development which in 2015 has benefited many LGBT people besides those working or whom have worked in this workplace.*

Sensus is an adult education association which works with education and culture. Sensus works together with member organisations, collaboration partners and participants. They highlight relationships, rights, sustainability and life issues. Everything Sensus does is in pursuit of adult education. Sensus was contacted both by individuals and organisations interested in working together with them.

Sensus believes that by increasing the participation of each employee, the business will develop. The business must also be permeated by an inclusive approach, both internally and externally. In this way, Sensus will continue to create added value. The brand is strengthened and trust is built.

Sensus has some 30 member organisations, of which the Church of Sweden is the largest. The member organisations cover the entire spectrum, from the Church of Sweden's major organisation to very small member organisations. Sensus strives for active engagement in society and in the member organisations. Their business idea is that they should provide opportunities for development and learning in

human encounters and through cultural experiences. Sensus works with adult education. Sensus sees adult education as a method, a goal and an approach. Sensus is also known for its advocacy of the role of adult education in society.

Sensus Västra Sverige is one of Sensus' six regions and constitutes 25% of Sensus' total business volume in Sweden. Sensus Västra Sverige comprises seven offices: Göteborg, Borås, Uddevalla, Skövde, Bengtsfors, Karlstad and Halmstad. There are some 75 employees working for Sensus Västra Sverige. The employees directly involved in the concrete education and cultural activities are the business developers and education coordinators. These employees are also those that are greatest in number.

## **“We must also have the courage to address difficult issues, both internally and externally.” Kay Rönn**

Kay Rönn is the regional manager for Sensus Västra Sverige and has worked there since 1998. For a long time, Sensus has worked with extensive education initiatives in norm criticism and LGBT matters. “We needed knowledge in order to be up-to-date. For us, the big immersion process was the regular leadership training. Everyone can apply to the courses; both non-profit leaders and all other personnel.”

But it is not enough simply to train, as Kay sees it. In order for work with inclusion from a norm-critical perspective to be successful, it

must be on several levels. “It is important to work with big and small alike,” Kay explains. “The formulation of our policy, the jargon we use in the break room, the images we use on our website and how we proceed in recruitment – all of this plays a role in how successful the work with our values is.”

“The manager’s role is to stimulate and enthuse their employees,” Kay continues. “It is important to have committed and driven employees who wish to make a change. As a manager, you need to utilise this. We work in quite an unconventional manner here. For example, all leadership seminars, regional gatherings and staff days are planned by the employees, not the managers.”

Kay also places the LGBT work in a global perspective. “There are forces today which are blind to and limit LGBT persons’ rights. From this perspective, it is even more important for us to act as a resource in increasing other people’s knowledge.”

“The Pride festival has been a good catalyst for the work with LGBT issues,” asserts Kay. When Sensus chose to be active in West Pride, some collaboration partners had opinions on this. “In such cases, as a manager I have to stand by our values,” says Kay. “Our entire operation is based on the equal value of all people, and in such situations I must not back down where there is friction.” The collaboration partner chose to end the collaboration with Sensus following the move.

“We must also have the courage to address difficult issues, both internally and externally. It is important to allocate time to speak about

these matters. It is in discussions regarding the equal rights of everyone that we step up in order to truly become ambassadors for this issue wherever we are,” says Kay.

In order to get started with inclusion work within an organisation, Kay recommends that the organisation review its values. “It shouldn’t be a top-down process; the values shouldn’t be formulated by the managers. If the values are to work like a living organism, the management needs to establish them, but the work on these values must proceed from the employees,” Kay continues. “It is important in the process of change to allow ourselves to trust in our employees.”

## **“Diversity has been a watchword at Sensus for many, many years.” Anders Warg**

Anders Warg is Head of Department and in charge of HR matters at Sensus Västra Sverige. He has worked at Sensus since 1985. He explains that many employees have worked at Sensus for a long time, and goes on to say that “diversity has been a watchword at Sensus for many, many years.”

Anders explains that it is important to employ an organisational perspective in the work with LGBT issues. “It is important to document issues and establish structures in the workplace.” As an example of this, he mentions that “Sensus has introduced a third pronoun into its recruitment tools and employee surveys.”

Anders says that in order to support the work towards an inclusive workplace culture, Sensus has an inclusion policy which has been in place since 2009. The policy is association-wide and covers the national association as well as all regions. The policy consists of three parts: a policy part, an action plan and a terminology guide. The inclusion policy is revised annually and is discussed with all new employees during their induction. The inclusion policy also contains goals and measures, such as:

## Goal

Each and every employee must be able to be themselves at work

## Measures

- Employees must be able to choose their expression (e.g., clothing) in accordance with their needs and not be forced into a norm.
- Support in the coming out process at work (may for example be a matter of sexual orientation, alcohol problems, disability, being sentenced for a crime, etc).
- All employees must decide how they are addressed: he, she or they (Swedish: “hen”; gender-neutral pronoun).

“All workplaces need a theoretical base,” continues Anders, “What do we mean by LGBT issues?” Knowledge is an important prerequisite for work with these issues.” He also believes that change should take place

on several levels in parallel; from individual employees' ways of treating one another to the wording of regulatory documents and recruitment procedures.

## **“People don't apply to us unless they share our values.” Frida Telleborn**

Frida Telleborn is chair of the union club. Ammi Johansson is vice chair and Sylvia Hansson is the senior safety representative at Sensus' office in Göteborg.

They explain that Sensus has worked a great deal with skills development; training in human rights and discrimination is conducted on a regular basis, as well as other training courses with an LGBT theme. At the office in Göteborg, to begin with, an employee with in-depth expertise in these matters was providing the training. They are no longer part of the organisation, but the skills development has continued. Managers and the regional board have also received training in norm criticism and a rights-based working method. Sylvia says, “Sensus is an organisation that works with learning, which makes it a learning organisation.”

They also explain how in various ways Sensus works towards being an inclusive workplace based on an LGBT perspective. Among other things, they have removed the gender-segregated bathrooms and introduced gender-neutral ones. The union club has also influenced

the national association to change the heteronormative “paternal leave” in its payroll accounting system, PBM, to the more correct “10 days at the birth of a child”. The inclusion policy comes up several times during the discussion. The document provides a direction and goals for all Sensus activities but also contains concrete measures for increased inclusion.

As early as 2010, Sensus introduced a third pronoun in its internal documents and surveys, which initially sparked a lot of discussion. Sylvia goes on to say that “Society and our vocabulary is changing constantly, and we must be bold and keep up. We need to learn more. Knowledge is needed to change values and action a shift from something old to something new.”

Ammi feels that an important part of the development work is that everyone must be accepting of one another. We must take the time to speak with one another about values and, for example, ask the question, “how do you use the pronoun they (hen)”?

Frida says that Sensus is clear in communicating that they work based on the ethic of the equal value of all people. This is clearly visible both on the Sensus website and in all material produced by Sensus. “People don’t apply to us unless they share our values. While Sensus has come a long way in these matters, there are still difficult issues which we need to work with. We are not done here.”



## **Sensus' tips for successful inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective**

- Have the courage to stand up where there is friction.
- Involve personnel and the union.
- Obtain knowledge.
- Work on more levels.
- Allocate time to discussion.



Johnny Nilsen,  
Sara Hammarberg,  
Lars Englund

## Ving Sverige AB

**CEO VING SVERIGE** Johnny Nilsen

**HR BUSINESS PARTNER** Sara Hammarberg

**UNIONEN REPRESENTATIVE** Lars Englund

In 2014, Ving Sverige AB received Unionen's LGBT award and the jury's reasoning was as follows:

*Ving Sverige AB has by both word and action shown that it is a workplace which is characterised by openness and diversity.*

*Policies and documents also mean something in everyday life, where both employees and customers feel security in the company practising what it preaches. The workplace is characterised by an open LGBT dialogue and a good collaboration with the local Unionen Club.*

*The company sees it as an asset and a success factor that the employees reflect diversity in society, irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity.*

Ving is one of Sweden's leading tour operators and offers travel to more than 400 destinations in over 50 countries. Their business concept is that they produce and sell holidays which give the customers the best weeks of the year. Ving organises charter trips and flexible package tours with regular flights and also sells individual flight tickets and overnight hotel stays for those who wish to organise their own travel.

Together with Globetrotter, Ving is part of Ving Sverige AB, with around 200 employees and some 700,000 travellers annually. Ving Sverige AB is also part of the Nordic travel group Thomas Cook Northern Europe and, together with their sister companies in Finland, Norway and Denmark, they have shared functions in IT, purchasing and finance. All of them are part of Thomas Cook Group plc, listed on the London Stock Exchange with some 20 million travellers annually.

Ving's vision is to become the world's most loved travel company, and by this token, they wish to take care of their employees. They say that their assets are firmly rooted in their employees and that they should therefore be offered a workplace which they love to go to. Ving is a company which is driven by its values and these values must permeate everything they do: Put Our Heart Into It, Wear Their Flip-Flops and We're One Thomas Cook.

Ving has implemented major investments in diversity and equality in order to create a modern corporate culture with an open work environment along with clear codes of conduct and values. Their commitment to diversity is also clear from the external communication with advertising campaigns with content which breaks social norms.

## **“It is important to us to be a reflection of society.” Johnny Nilsen**

Johnny is the CEO of Ving Sverige. He began working at Ving some 33 years ago, then as a tour guide, and has worked there ever since. Johnny begins by saying, somewhat humbly, “It is not thanks to me that we won Unionen’s LGBT prize, but I am very proud to manage a workplace with openness and trust, where the employees feel that they can be themselves.”

He says that one of the explanations for the open work climate at Ving is that they have a high level of information. “Communication is important. Explaining things and giving personnel the mandate to make their own decisions fosters self-confidence.” He also feels that as a manager, it is important to believe in the staff and provide them with both responsibility and mandate. “Everyone must be able to pull the strings of everyday life, and it must be okay to make mistakes.”

Johnny believes that another explanation for the open and inclusive working climate is that Ving has a flat organisation and that they have

developed a close collaboration with the union. “There must be open paths to management.”

“Close collaboration with the union is sometimes perceived in international contexts as a little strange,” Johnny explains. “They have not always developed the union’s tradition of collaboration in the same way we have.”

In order to guarantee our customer promise, to retain a high quality and service and be reliable, it is important that our employees share our values. Ving has therefore chosen to involve HR in all decision-making bodies so that the company’s values become a common thread throughout the entire operation. Johnny says that they have a large overseas organisation consisting of young people working for a year and a half on average. As the sector is very personnel-intensive and they work close to the customer, it is important to set the corporate culture in place quickly, Johnny asserts. “For the management, it is important to establish the playing field and stand for our values.”

Ving has a tradition of measuring both what the customers think about a number of different issues and not least what the employees think. “We are constantly measuring things; gauging attitudes, satisfaction, expectations and commitment, and we act on these measurements,” he explains.

Johnny says that it is also important to reflect society in external contexts. Ving has made a conscious choice to have content in its advertising campaigns which breaks the norm – among other things,

by including homosexual couples in its advertisements. Sometimes they receive negative reactions to these campaigns, but Johnny believes that it is important to actually stand up for one's values; that Ving is a tour operator for everyone. "This is not really anything remarkable. We believe in and stand for what we do."

## **"We truly see diversity as something positive that enriches." Sara Hammarberg**

"The HR function is very close to our core of operations and to our managers," says Sara. HR is also present in all decision-making bodies, which means the perspective can permeate the operation as a whole – it is in the management control system. "Our values are the foundation or base of all of our activities," Sara asserts. "In the service industry, attitudes are very important," she continues.

"We have understood that our employees are our most important asset for achieving success." Apart from developing and establishing policies and codes of conduct, a major employee survey is conducted annually. "It addresses areas such as leadership, engagement, diversity, structure, openness and how Ving practices what it preaches. It is important that we gain an overview of the situation, to then make rectifications where necessary. We strive for constant improvement, all to create an open and inclusive corporate culture," Sara explains. The results of the employee survey are broken down by department and the

managers develop action plans together with employees based on their results. Everything is followed up successively.

But it is not only the employee survey which forms the basis of any measures. “If a manager exhibits behaviour which is not in line with our values, we take action.” “We have discussions and the manager will work together with their team to develop measures and set goals to change the behaviour. Questions such as ‘what works well?’, ‘what is not working?’ and ‘how can we change this?’ are discussed.”

“It is important for the entire operation that our employees have the courage to be themselves and to make decisions,” says Sara. “We have a process mindset when we work, and sometimes we work with Lean principles and constant improvements.” Being able to give and receive feedback is an important ingredient in the work with constant improvements. “We work based on a consideration perspective. We act in our daily lives and a strong leadership is thus important.”

The diversity perspective and Ving’s values also permeate the recruitment process. Both in interviews and in personality tests, it is important that these values are visible. “This is to find out whether this is really an employee for us, but also because those who apply to us must be able to feel that this is something for them. We truly see diversity as something positive which enriches, both internally and externally,” Sara concludes.

## **“We have a close collaboration with the management. We actually work at the same company.” Lars Englund**

Lars explains that he has worked at Ving for almost 30 years. Today, he works with union matters 50% of his working day. He has also been club chair in Unionen for the past 8 years.

Lars says that Ving’s workforce reflects the diversity in society. “We are allowed to be different. It’s integral to our workplace.” He feels that there is an open and accepting corporate culture at Ving. “It is okay to make mistakes, start over and make it right.” This corporate culture also makes the company attractive as an employer. Lars exemplifies his reasoning by providing an anecdote from a recruitment case concerning a jobseeker who was not really qualified for the position they applied for. The jobseeker received feedback on what they were lacking. The following year, the same person applied for a similar position again, and was a much better match.

Many employees have worked for a long time at the company and there is a sort of informal tone in their contact with management. The union club at Ving has developed a close collaboration with the management. “It’s quite easy being an elected representative here,” says Lars. “Where the union club and management have different ideas about something, collaboration between us is so developed that we continue our dialogue until we have come to an agreement on the individual matter.”



One of the explanations for the culture which is so integral to Ving, and for the fact that its diversity and LGBT work has been so successful, could be the close collaboration between the union club and management. All of this is not really so strange or difficult, according to Lars: “We have a close collaboration with the management. After all, we work at the same company.”

## **Ving's tips for successful inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective**

- As a manager, you must have your ear to the ground.
- Be socially responsible and believe “truly” that diversity is important.
- Stand for your values, even in challenging situations.
- Measure – act – follow up.
- Have an understanding that the company is a reflection of society – that the company can only exist as long as people choose us.



Eva Kristensson,  
Petter Hjort

# Sodexo Sweden

- CEO FOR SWEDEN AND MANAGER OF THE NORDICS** Azita Shariati
- COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR SODEXO NORDEN** Eva Kristensson
- HR DIRECTOR FOR SWEDEN, IN CHARGE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE NORDICS** Irene Adenborg
- UNIONEN REPRESENTATIVE** Petter Hjort

In 2013, Sodexo received Unionen's LGBT award and the jury's reasoning was as follows:

*For its work with actively and consciously striving towards a working climate in which homosexual, bisexual and transgender persons can be themselves at work.*

*LGBT issues in the workplace are a prioritised area for Sodexo and is based on respect for the sexual orientation and gender identity of every individual. An open, LGBT-friendly dialogue is a given at the company.*

Sodexo is one of the world's leading service companies and has the vision to improve people's quality of life. It began as a small catering company in France in the mid-60s and is today the world's 19th largest employer with 425,000 employees. The company exists in 80 countries and provides service to 75 million people every day.

Sodexo's Nordic operations have a turnover of SEK 7.5 billion and provide around 11,000 jobs. They develop integrated service solutions for companies, institutions and the public sector within areas such as cleaning, meals, aids, reception, security and facility management.

Sodexo's values are: service culture, team spirit and development. They believe in the equal value of everyone and that diversity and inclusion contribute to the company's profitability, people's well-being and public welfare. Dow Jones Sustainability Index has named Sodexo the industry's most sustainable company worldwide, thirteen years running.

**“It is a given to have a workplace which is inclusive from an LGBT perspective. It is a competitive advantage for us.”  
Eva Kristensson**

Eva is the Communications Director and is responsible for the Sodexo brand. She has worked at Sodexo since 2009. Eva has previously worked as a manager in global companies and start-ups with strategic communication, PR and sustainability issues.

“My work is based on our values and ethical principles,” Eva explains. “Sodexo believes in the equal value of everyone and that diversity and inclusion contribute to the company’s profitability, people’s well-being and public welfare.”

By this, Eva means that it is important that their values are also visible in Sodexo’s communication. “We must be open, transparent and clear with regard to the equal value of everyone in all forums and channels; both in Almedalen and on the website or in recruitment contexts.”

Eva also believes that one of the success factors behind Sodexo’s work with diversity is that their CEO Azita Shariati so clearly stands for these principles and values. “It is important to practice as you preach. At the end of the day, our employees are also our brand. Everyone must be able to take their whole self with them to work and feel that they are part of the Sodexo family. People who feel good do good things,” Eva maintains. In this context, Eva explains that there are 134 different nationalities among their personnel.

Eva believes that Sodexo’s successes are based on their independent position, sustainable business model and capacity to constantly develop and engage employees across the world. “A person who works

for us must fulfil an expectation for someone else. In order to do so, you need to understand that we are all different and have different needs.”

## **“Diversity and inclusion are the cornerstone and are of course included in all work within our operation.” Irene Adenborg**

Irene has worked for the company since 2003. Before Irene began at Sodexo, she worked as HR Manager for the Ericsson Group.

Diversity issues, which include LGBT issues, are important for Sodexo, and the diversity work is becoming one of the strategies aimed at living up to the watchwords of service culture, team spirit, development and the equal value of everyone. “Diversity and inclusion are a cornerstone for Sodexo,” says Irene. Diversity issues are part of the systemic work environment efforts, and the role of the HR function includes creating a structure for this work.

Irene explains that Sodexo has zero tolerance for abusive treatment and harassment, and if something occurs in the workplaces, there are clear guidelines: “We address it, immediately. Among other things, there are procedures for how the preventative work is to be carried out and how investigations are conducted. At a workplace, situations may still arise that need to be handled, but when these situations arise, there are clear guidelines and procedures for addressing them. Part of the systematic diversity work is to continuously follow it up. We

set up goals and carry out activities. It is important that we also work based on our values during recruitment and staff redundancies,” Irene maintains.

Irene explains that in 2010, Sodexo created a women’s network based on the company’s desire to develop its work with equality. In 2010, Azita Shariati, CEO of Sodexo Sweden, introduced the goal that the company would have 50 per cent women in senior management positions in 2015. This goal was achieved.

“In 2014, we achieved the goal of an even gender distribution and therefore decided to transform the women’s network into a diversity network which includes all five dimensions – gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and disabilities.” Irene believes that there are advantages to integrating diversity issues in one and the same network.

Sodexo’s diversity network meets twice per year and has around 100 members. All employees can register for the meetings and the network has a steering committee which directs the diversity work within the network. Irene also explains that all union organisations are invited to the diversity network.

Sodexo’s large-scale employee survey, which is carried out every other year, includes the following statement: “I feel that Sodexo values diversity in the workplace (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental disabilities)”.

For the year 2016, the Swedish result was that 77 % agreed, with 71% for the Nordics.

This can be seen as confirmation that Sodexo's diversity work has had an impact on the organisation. Irene underlines that an inclusive workplace based on a diversity perspective is an important success factor which leads to increased profitability. A previous employee expressed the idea of being an inclusive workplace very clearly: "It's important to be able to bring all of yourself to work."

## **"The work for an LGBT-inclusive workplace is part of the systematic work environment efforts." Petter Hjort**

Petter is the chair of the Unionen Club and has worked at Sodexo for 15 years. Apart from his work as club chair, he works with supporting operations in waste management. It was an employee, who is also active in union activities, who nominated Sodexo for Unionen's LGBT award in 2013.

The club works proactively with all work environment issues and LGBT inclusion is a natural part of this work. They have no special forum working specifically with LGBT issues, but Petter explains that representatives of the Unionen Club are invited to the diversity network meetings and he sees the network as an opportunity to focus in a more concrete manner on all different types of diversity matters.

Petter believes that there have been no union cases at Sodexo linked to LGBT issues, but says at the same time that if a case arises, there are

clear internal procedures for how to handle this. Sodexo has zero tolerance for all types of abusive treatment and harassment, and if anything occurs, this is taken care of immediately and investigated.

Petter feels that one of the success factors for the work with diversity is that it is part of the work environment efforts and is administered by elected work environment and safety representatives who work systematically and proactively. The union representatives have regular meetings with Sodexo's CEO. "The work for an LGBT-inclusive workplace is part of the systematic work environment efforts."

"If you choose a service profession, you want to provide service to another person. This in itself makes you open and receptive to the differences between one individual and the next," Petter concludes.

## **Sodexo's tips for starting up inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective**

- Ask yourself the question: what needs do you have?
- Investigate what kind of "palette" or toolbox is available in the workplace to cover my needs?
- If anything is lacking, consult your manager, the HR function or your union regarding your viewpoints.
- Is it difficult to get hold of the people in charge? If the company has a whistleblower function, use it.





Marina Åman,  
Peter Tai Christensen

# Unionen

**MARINA ÅMAN** Unionen's second vice chair

**PETER TAI CHRISTENSEN** Diversity expert at Unionen

**“When all is said and done, it’s about being able to go to work without having a sick feeling in your stomach.” Marina Åman**

Marina is second vice chair for Unionen. Her work includes leading the daily activities in the association, together with the chair of the association Martin Linder and first vice chair Peter Hellberg. We are those who, together with others on the association board, are at the top of the decision-making chain. We are also speakers for the association and work with advocacy,” Marina explains. She says that she also receives

international assignments for Unionen, primarily in the global union federation UNI, and is on external boards. She names PTK – the council for negotiation and cooperation – and TCO – The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees – among others, in this context.

Marina explains that the position of second vice chair is varied and stimulating. “The best thing about my job is the close collaboration with the elected representatives; people who are enthusiastic about something,” says Marina. “It gives me energy and the feeling that what I do actually makes a difference.”

Marina emphasises that Unionen’s work for an inclusive work environment irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is very important. “It is very simple and self-evident to me to have fundamental principles regarding the equal value of everyone. I don’t really understand – what does it matter who you are in love with and live with or how you choose to dress?”

According to Marina, it is a work environment issue that everyone should be able to be themselves at work. “If I am to be able to reach my full potential at work, what does it matter if I turn up in a skirt or trousers, or whether or not I wear make-up?” Marina wonders.

Marina is one of the individuals who has been active in the work with LGBT issues in the association and also feels that it is essential to the work that senior management takes responsibility for these matters in both word and action. Since 2011, Unionen has given its LGBT award to an employer which has been exemplary in their work to

establish inclusion irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. “We do this in order to highlight good examples and share insight into the fact that many employers are doing good things,” Marina says. “It is also a way of drawing attention to and creating awareness around LGBT persons’ everyday lives.”

Unionen also actively takes part in Pride festivals in different parts of the country, Marina explains. “It is important that Unionen’s work is not restricted to the one week of the year when Stockholm Pride takes place. The other 51 are just as important.” Marina then provides an anecdote from when she visited Pride in Stockholm with her son. “We were at Pride and I bumped into Alfie who is the chair of FPES, the Swedish Association for Transgender Persons. I was a little unsure at first how my son would react, but my son’s only reaction was to tell Alfie how nice his dress was.”

Marina says that Unionen has produced various support materials for elected representatives and members, including a checklist for how you can contribute to an inclusive work environment irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. She goes on to say that Unionen also needs to back the elected representatives, “We need to support them so that they have the courage to speak out if they perceive the work climate to be poor or if someone is being mistreated in the workplace.”

Marina then clarifies the role of leaders in the work towards an inclusive work environment. “The manager’s role is to lead by example;

it is only once the management truly takes responsibility for the issue that endeavours to establish an inclusive work environment achieve success.” It is important for companies to have a clear policy which clarifies that abusive treatment and various forms of harassment will not be accepted, but this alone is insufficient. In order for the work to permeate the entire organisation, management must be proactive and clear on the matter.”

Work with LGBT issues has seen a great deal of development in recent years. With new knowledge, understanding for LGBT persons’ everyday lives increases, but this knowledge also entails new terminology to understand and relate to, Marina explains. “We shouldn’t make it more complicated than what it is – it shouldn’t be the case that fear of saying the wrong thing becomes an obstacle and slows down endeavours to improve the work environment. It’s not about being politically correct. This is basically a work environment issue,” she emphasises.

“When all is said and done, it’s about being able to go to work without having a sick feeling in your stomach,” Marina concludes.

**“We are one another’s work environment and are all responsible for contributing to a work environment which is inclusive, irrespective of orientation, gender identity and gender expression” Peter Tai Christensen**

Peter works as a diversity expert at Unionen's association office. His work involves formulating and establishing Unionen's policy for a working life characterised by equality and inclusion and generating new knowledge regarding success factors and areas of improvement where equality and diversity are concerned, from the members' perspective. LGBT issues are an integrated part of the association's work for equal rights and opportunities.

In order to draw attention to and show appreciation for employers who have been exemplary in their work to promote a workplace which is inclusive, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, Unionen has presented an LGBT award since 2011.

"A union association awarding employers is perhaps not the first thing you expect," Peter explains, "but Unionen considers it important not only to highlight problems but also to present solutions and emphasise opportunities in the inclusion work."

"The fact that it is an employee who has nominated their employer has made the award all the more special for the winner," says Peter.

Just as in all processes of change and development, clear signals from senior management regarding their position and the express support of managers are keys to success. The same applies to the work with creating an inclusive work climate, Peter explains. "The managers set the standard. They set the bar for desirable and viable behaviour in the workplace."

"As an individual employee, you have no obligation to come out in

your workplace, but you must always feel that it is a real possibility for you. It is therefore important for everyone in the workplace, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, to ask themselves the question, ‘would it be easy here to say that I am a LGBT person?’ If this is not clearly the case, the level of ambition in the inclusion work must be increased,” says Peter. “If the employer lays the foundations for an inclusive work environment irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, this can immediately have a positive effect on satisfaction and productivity,” he adds.

Peter explains that Unionen welcomes the changes to the Discrimination Act which took effect from 1 January 2017. Among other things, they mean that an employer is responsible for working with active measures based on all grounds of discrimination. “The employer must investigate potential risks of discrimination and obstacles to the equal rights and opportunities of individuals in the organisation in order to obtain knowledge with regard to the situation in the workplace, to then analyse the causes and take action.” Peter goes on to say that, “in order to investigate risks and obstacles, we need knowledge on the different grounds of discrimination. Without basic knowledge, we run the risk of asking the wrong questions, which in turn can mean an inadequate analysis of the situation. The quality of the answer is only as good as the question.”

Peter says that it is understandable if managers sometimes feel uncertainty over or have insufficient knowledge about LGBT issues.

He continues, “if as a manager you feel uncertain, you have a responsibility to challenge yourself – you need to work on these areas so that you feel more secure in them.” In this context, Peter emphasises that it is also important for an individual employee who identifies themselves as an LGBT person not to need to take on the role of educator of their own boss. The manager can gain this knowledge by other means. “As a manager, you do not need to be an expert on all LGBT identities; it is more about needing to work on becoming more unprejudiced,” he says.

Peter emphasises that the HR function also plays an important role in the work to create an inclusive workplace. “It is the HR function that formalises what senior management wants. They need to offer basic knowledge to managers and employees and offer more targeted professional development for managers,” he explains. “They can often be proactive in these issues. As the link between senior management and the managers in the organisation, they play an important role and they should also offer support to the managers.”

“It is good that many managers have developed policies and codes of conduct for the workplace with the support of the HR function,” says Peter. “These should be seen as the floor and not the ceiling of the inclusion work.”

“We are one another’s work environment and are all responsible for contributing to a work environment which is inclusive, irrespective of orientation, gender identity and gender expression.”

The union also plays a key role in all diversity work. Peter emphasises that the work for equal rights and opportunities should be carried out in collaboration between the employer and the union. “At the same time, it is always ultimately the employer’s responsibility to lay the foundations for active and systematic work on diversity and to ensure that the work to create an inclusive work environment is prioritised,” Peter underlines.

“Elected union representatives often have important knowledge about risks and obstacles; they may know about the experiences of members who have not wanted to make an official complaint, and can function as a link between employees and HR,” he explains. “The workplaces should of course have a culture in which employees can speak with their managers, but as an elected representative you are entrusted with the important task of acting as a go-between when this doesn’t work.”

“Research has shown that matters of inclusion can have a positive impact on profitability,” Peter says. The much debated connection between profitability and diversity can, according to him, be summarised in two steps:

- Recruit the most competent staff regardless of gender, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, functional capacity, sexual orientation, age or socioeconomic background.
- Help employees reach their full potential through inclusive leadership. Promote equal rights and opportunities and avoid obstacles in order to create a work environment and a climate of collaboration



which provides all employees with optimal conditions for development and growth.

“More and more employers have realised that employees feel good at work and because of it if they are allowed to be themselves, which is a very gratifying development,” says Peter.

According to Peter, in order to get under way with inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective, knowledge is key. If knowledge on these matters is lacking, it must be acquired. “Invite lecturers to the company or send key persons to attend courses,” Peter advises. “The acquisition of knowledge is most effective when undertaken by both parties – there are synergistic effects to be gained from employers and employees having the same knowledge.

Major steps have been taken with regard to sexual orientation in professional life,” Peter asserts. “But with regard to gender identity and gender expression, much remains to be done. It is my hope that thanks to the changes in provisions regarding active measures, this work will quickly have an effect so that in just a few years we will have achieved a working life which features all the colours of the rainbow,” Peter concludes.

What are the key conditions for success in the work with creating an inclusive work environment?

The interviewed companies which received Unionen’s LGBT award mention a number of specific conditions necessary for succeeding in

the creation of an inclusive work environment regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

- Support from management.
  - Important that management is clear and has the courage to stand up to criticism.
- Knowledge
  - Successful inclusion work based on an LGBT perspective requires knowledge.
- Linking the diversity work with business planning and working with the issue on several levels.
  - Going over goals, procedures and checklists, as well as routines for introduction and recruitment – review of wording
  - Including diversity issues in training.
  - Workplace culture and matters of employee's behaviour towards one another.
- Systematic approach.
  - Measure – act – follow up.
  - Drawing up procedures so that you know how to act when something happens.
- Union collaboration.
  - Working together – provides synergistic effects.

Several companies also mention that they work with providing services to people, which means that they should have greater understanding for and the capacity to adapt to people's differences.

## Background

In Sweden, as in many other countries, ultimate responsibility for following international undertakings concerning human rights rests with the government. Human rights are universal and are based on the principle of the equal value of all people. Our Instrument of Government, which is one of our four constitutions, establishes that power should be exercised with respect for the equal value of all people and for the individual's freedom and dignity.

The Prohibition of Discrimination in Working Life on Grounds of Sexual Orientation Act was introduced in 1999. The Ombudsman against Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation (HomO) was formed in the same year and was tasked with counteracting homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. HomO also exercised supervision of compliance with the act. The EU decided on more regulations against discrimination in 2003. Consequently, as Sweden is a member of the EU, the legislation was updated to include several areas outside of working life, such as the purchase of goods and services or contact with social services.

Transsexualism is an issue of gender identity and discrimination against transsexual persons is considered gender discrimination. As this is not a matter of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, HomO did not handle these cases. A transsexual person who felt harassed or discriminated against in another way could report this to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (JämO).

It was not until 2009 that we saw the introduction of a law which prohibited discrimination on grounds of transgender identity or expression. At this time, Sweden gained a consolidated Discrimination Act with seven grounds for discrimination: gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. In connection with this, the operations of HomO and other discrimination ombudsmen were transferred to the Equality Ombudsman (DO), which was given responsibility for promoting equal rights and opportunities regardless of the grounds of discrimination and counteracting discrimination. DO also exercises supervision of compliance with the Discrimination Act.

The right to change legal gender was established in Sweden in 1972. Sterilisation was a requirement for transgender persons who underwent gender reassignment surgery until as late as 2013.

In order to achieve a cohesive strategy with long-term initiatives to promote equal rights and opportunities irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, the government adopted in 2014 A strategy for equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression 2014-2017. The strategy contained focus areas and also highlighted authorities that were considered strategically important and which were thus given targeted assignments.

In 2014, the investigation “Juridiskt kön och medicinsk könskorrigering” [Legal gender and gender reassignment surgery] was also pre-

sented, which proposed that the lower age limit for being given a new legal gender be lowered to 12 years. It also proposed the introduction of two new laws; one which regulates the change of legal gender and another which regulates genital surgery. No decision was forthcoming and investigation of the question of legal gender and gender reassignment continued. In 2016, the Inquiry concerning a Stronger Status and Improved Living Conditions for Trans People was appointed. Their final report was presented in late 2017.

In this report, the specially appointed investigator proposes a number of measures which are necessary in order to improve transgender persons' status and living conditions. One of these is that the government should consider the possibility of introducing a third legal gender. A third legal gender would mean the acknowledgement of non-binary persons; those who define themselves as neither woman nor man. The investigator's opinion is that it would be more practical to build official registers and statistics based on three legal genders, both for the individual and society as a whole.

Despite the fact that Sweden, in an international comparison, has come quite far in its work for equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, much still remains to be done, not least with regard to promoting equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender identity and gender expression.

## What does the Discrimination Act say?

Among other things, the Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination in working life and applies both in the workplace and within labour market policy activities.

Protection against discrimination in working life covers gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. A description of the seven grounds for discrimination can be found on the Equality Ombudsman's website: [www.do.se](http://www.do.se)

Prohibitions against discrimination apply in all situations connected to work, incidents in the workplace and even events outside of the workplace where there is a work connection. For example, the protection also applies to incidents occurring during a business trip or at a party organised by the employer.

Protection against discrimination in working life applies to employees, those applying for work or doing an internship, and for anyone who is hired or whose services are on loan in order to carry out work.

## What is the employer's responsibility?

In 2017, the provisions on active measures in the Discrimination Act were updated. The changes mean that the employer is responsible for working with active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities for all grounds for discrimination; gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other

belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. The act regulates how employees work with these issues and in which areas the work should be carried out.

All work with active measures should be conducted in collaboration with employees; normally the trade unions. Employers with 25 or more employees are also obligated to document all parts of their work on active measures. If you as an employer have between 10 and 24 employees, only the work with salary surveying and analysis needs to be documented.

The employer must investigate whether or not there are risks of discrimination in the company's activities, as well as other hindrances to employees' rights and opportunities. The employer shall then analyse the results and take all measures which are reasonable in light of what has emerged. Following this, the employer shall follow up and evaluate their work.

The Discrimination Act has highlighted five areas which the employer shall work with on an ongoing basis:

- Work situation.
- Provisions and practice with regard to salary and other terms and conditions of employment.
- Recruitment and promotion.
- Training and other professional development.
- Opportunities to combine work and parenting.

The employer is also responsible for:

- Promoting an even gender distribution, including management positions.
- Develop, follow up and evaluate guidelines and procedures for the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and reprisal.
- Perform a salary survey and analysis each year.

## What is discrimination?

Discrimination is about someone receiving unfair or abusive treatment.

The unfair or abusive treatment must be connected to one of the seven grounds for discrimination: gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age.

A comparable situation?

The law prohibits six different forms of discrimination.

Direct or indirect discrimination, lack of accessibility, harassment and sexual harassment are different forms of discrimination. Instruction to discriminate is also covered.

There is also a prohibition on reprisal. This means that a person who has reported discrimination or complained that their employer has violated the Discrimination Act is protected from punishment. The protection also applies when someone has participated in an investiga-



tion based on the Discrimination Act or has rejected or submitted to harassment or sexual harassment.

An explanation of the various forms of discrimination can be found on the Equality Ombudsman's website: [www.do.se](http://www.do.se)

## **How to contribute to an inclusive work environment – sexual orientation, gender identity and expression**

We are all one another's work environment. This means we have a shared responsibility to create a safe and inclusive workplace. Achieving this requires knowledge and awareness of the fact that all people are and have the right to be very different. An environment in which all employees feel included and can be themselves lays the foundations for satisfaction and an attractive workplace.

Here are some tips on how you can contribute to a more inclusive work environment.

- Say “everyone, regardless of gender” rather than “men and women”.
- Do not make light of the word “hen” [Swedish gender-neutral pronoun; they]. “Hen” is a pronoun and an important word for many people who identify themselves as neither a woman nor a man.
- Do not use disparaging language to speak about LGBT persons. If you are unsure whether or not a word is disparaging, choose a different one.

- Do not use LGBT persons as a general Q&A person. If you are curious, check first whether it is okay to ask. Do not answer questions that are so intimate that you would not wish to answer them yourself.
- It is often taken for granted that people are heterosexual, but in reality you cannot know what sexual orientation a person has unless the person in question has chosen to tell you. You should therefore use gender neutral words such as partner and cohabitee rather than girlfriend, boyfriend, wife or husband when you ask about colleagues' family situation.
- Regardless of your sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, you should ask yourself the question how easy it would be in your workplace to tell people that you are an LGBT person. If the answer is that it would not be seen as self-evident for someone to do so, you should speak with your colleagues and raise the question of how you can work together to lay the groundwork for openness at work.
- Ensure the toilets in the workplace are gender-neutral. If you have a changing room and there is a need for a private cubicle, arrange it!
- Do not laugh along with homophobic or transphobic jokes in the break room. Make it clear that you do not appreciate this humour, regardless of whether or not there is someone at the workplace who is (openly) homosexual or bisexual or has a transgender identity. Offensive jargon is always detrimental to the work environment.

- Sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression may never be grounds for treating someone poorly or alienating them. If you can see that this is happening, speak up. Offer the victimised person your support and inform your employer.

Are you an elected representative? This means that it is especially important for you to lead by example and contribute to an inclusive environment in the workplace.

Are you a manager? If you see or learn of employers behaving or expressing themselves inappropriately, it is important for you to take responsibility and make it clear that their conduct is unacceptable.

## References and further reading

The Equality Ombudsman's website: [www.do.se](http://www.do.se)

Ett intersektionellt perspektiv på jämställd regional tillväxt  
[An intersectional perspective on equality in regional growth]:

[www.regiondalarna.se](http://www.regiondalarna.se)

Mera mångfald – Unionens mångfaldsrapport 2017 [More diversity –  
Unionen's diversity report 2017]

Mobbad, trakasserad, diskriminerad – Så gör du när någon blir kränkt  
på arbetsplatsen – Unionen [Bullied, harassed, discriminated – What  
to do when you receive abusive treatment in the workplace – Unionen]

Prop. 2017/18:59, Ett utvidgat straffrättsligt skydd för transpersoner [Govt.  
Bill 2017/18:59, Expanded criminal protection for transgender persons]

Regeringens strategi – En strategi för lika rättigheter och möjligheter  
oavsett sexuell läggning, könsidentitet eller könsuttryck [The govern-  
ment's strategy – A strategy for equal rights and opportunities regard-  
less of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression]:

[www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se)

RFSL – The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and  
Transgender Rights – website: [www.rfsl.se](http://www.rfsl.se)

SOU 2014:91, Juridiskt kön och medicinsk könskorrigering [Legal  
gender and gender reassignment surgery]

SOU 2017:92, Stärkt ställning och bättre levnadsvillkor för transpersoner [Stronger Status and Improved Living Conditions for Trans People]

Så bidrar du till en inkluderande arbetsmiljö – Unionens checklistor [How to contribute to an inclusive work environment – Unionen's checklists]

Så gör du – HBTQ-kompetent jämställdhetsarbete [What to do – LGBT-competent equality work]: [www.jamstall.nu](http://www.jamstall.nu)

Så gör du – Jämställdhetsintegrering med ett intersektionellt perspektiv [What to do – Equality integration with an intersectional perspective]: [www.jamstall.nu](http://www.jamstall.nu)

Unionen's policy for a working life characterised by equality and inclusion

In this book, representatives for the Swedish American Football Federation, Nordic Choice Hotels, Sensus Västra Sverige, Ving Sverige AB and Sodexo Sverige speak in their own words about their work to create a working environment which is inclusive for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. They share their experiences and provide tips for how to work to create an inclusive work environment.

All five companies have won Unionen's LGBT award, which is given to draw attention to an employer who has been exemplary in their work to promote a workplace which is inclusive, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

The interviewed companies highlight a number of reasons for how they in particular have managed to create a work environment which is inclusive from an LGBT perspective. The common denominator, however, seems to be that it is important for management to be clear and stand up for the equal value and rights of all people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.





**IN THIS BOOK**, representatives for the Swedish American Football Federation, Nordic Choice Hotels, Sensus Västra Sverige, Ving Sverige AB and Sodexo Sverige speak in their own words about their work to create a working environment which is inclusive for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. They share their experiences and provide tips for how to work to create an inclusive work environment.

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