

Norwegian report from the study visit in Le Puy, March 6-7, 2008

1. Copec and Mission Locale - similarities and differences:

We recognised several things during the meeting with Copec. We have an organisation similar to Copec in Norway but nothing like Mission Locale that is an organisation particularly concerned with the age group under 26, or young adults. In Norway we have an “Ombud” for equality (or antidiscrimination, this concerns all groups that are likely to be discriminated: women, ethnic minorities, disabled persons etc). As far as we understand, Copec has branches in all departments while in Norway there is only one “Ombud” but he/she has a national responsibility, so although the aims are the same, the antidiscrimination work is organised in a different way. But France is also a much larger country than Norway which probably explains the need to have a Copec in every department. The main areas where discrimination takes place would be the same in Norway as in France: Accommodation, employment and leisure.

We noticed that the age of 26 seems to be an important age limit in France, the target group of Greta is above adults above the age of 26. In Norway everyone over 18 is considered to be an adult and we make no distinction between young adults and the adults above the age of 26.

2. The system for language training for immigrants/refugees - similarities and differences:

We recognise the system for language training and the way that it is linked to the permit to stay in the country since we have a similar system in our country. In Norway immigrants/refugees are obliged to have a minimum of 300 hours of language training to have a permit to stay in the country. They are offered to pass an exam after the end of the training but this is not obligatory to have to permit to stay. There are two exams or diplomas: There is one for people with no academic background. If they want to continue with higher education, they need a higher level of language skills (B2). To us it was surprising that the maximum hours of free language training offered in France is 400 hours and that the level required is A1.1. This is a very low level and in Norway it is not considered to be sufficient to participate in society and to be an active citizen. But we also understand that many of those coming to France come from the former French colonies, i.e. the North African countries, and that they have at least oral skills in French. But we still think that 400 hours are too little to acquire written language skills.

We were also surprised that the immigrants/refugees were all together in the same classroom irrespective of their level of language skills and with one teacher only. It must be difficult or impossible to initiate conversations between the learners in order for them to train their oral language skills and it must be difficult for the teacher as well.

3. The recruitment procedures in the Casino group - difference:

It was very interesting to learn about the recruitment procedures used in the Casino group. We were surprised that Casino do not interfere in the selection process but let Mission Locale in co-operation with NEP choose candidates for vacant jobs and that they do not look at the CVs beforehand but that everything is based on practical exercises in job performance – simulations of job tasks, also on management level. If we have understood this correctly, this is a measure in order to give equal opportunities to groups of adults who would otherwise have problems to get a job or problems even to get to the job interview. They get the possibility to prove themselves by doing the job tasks – simulation – and by this to prove themselves instead of being rejected because they have poor CVs, belongs to groups that often have problems on the job market etc.

We think that this way of recruiting new employees and managers is very good and it shows a high degree of social responsibility and also that it would be transferable to other sectors and other

countries. It could probably also work to recruit specifically immigrants to manager jobs if this is the aim. As far as we know, we have nothing similar in Norway. We are not quite sure if we understood the rest of the procedure, but there seems to be a following-up interview to assess the candidates' motivation. We also understood that the selection and recruitment procedure was intended for vacant jobs in Casino supermarkets not only in one area or regions, but in several. But we did not quite understand if the candidates that are accepted are obliged to take the job there are offered.

4) Rules and regulations concerning statistics - difference:

The laws and regulations as to the use of statistics in France such different from what we are used to in Norway. As far as we understood it is forbidden to make statistics that give details on identified groups of ethnic minorities and there can only be statistics on immigrants in general, as an entity. The reason why there are restrictions on statistics is probably the fear of stigmatising certain groups and of creating and strengthening prejudices. For example: Would Casino be able to tell whether the recruitment based on simulations is a success compared to recruiting more employees from minority groups – if this was the aim of this particular recruitment procedure? Would it be possible to assess that one particular group of immigrants have more problems on the job market than another group?

40 % of complaints about discrimination concerns ethnic minorities, according to Copec (is this on a national level?). Learning this, we wonder how is it possible to implement measures against groups among ethnic minorities if they do not know exactly which groups are the most vulnerable ones. We understand the idea that all citizens are French citizens regardless of their origin and we very much like this idea. But in real life it seldom works like this and we know that the French as the Norwegians and everybody else have prejudices and even more towards some groups than others. So we wonder how and if it is possible to recognise which groups are the most vulnerable ones in France and how appropriate measures can be implemented and carried out.

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