

# The LUNDIAN

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## DIVERSITY AND UNEVEN SOCIAL RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

By Anna Haraldsson © 2000

On a gray December morning vice chairman of Lund University Student union (LUS) Marta Santander took time out of her busy schedule to see me for an interview in her office at AF. Sure enough is Marta a busy woman. Her phone keeps ringing and her desk is filled with papers and books, presumably work that needs to be gone through. Being the vice-chairman has taught me many things, Marta tells me, "but it does involve A LOT of work". Lund University Student union is an umbrella organization for 15 out of the 17 student unions at Lund University (the remaining two have chosen to stand on their own). It is a place of meeting for cooperation and discussions concerning various projects that the student unions run together. "Projects that have been run the last couple of years are among others action against sexual harassment, protests against cuts in the budget for arts subjects and the list of students rights". Marta's role as the vice-chairman is to work with and coordinate issues that deal with education at Lund University. Part of her job is also however to work with equality of opportunity between men and women at the University, as well as promoting multi-cultural diversity and working against uneven social recruitment of students to higher education.

This uneven social recruitment of students have become an issue in Lund lately, especially since a report named "Diversity in Higher Education" was released this past summer from the Ministry of Education. In the report some of the proposed actions to prevent this uneven recruitment is to start up introduction courses for new students, to create a "language workshop" encouraging and helping immigrant students to learn the Swedish language better, and to write "diversity plans" on how to attract more students with other than Swedish middle class academic background. LUS agrees with the report that introduction courses for new students can be a good idea but "there needs to be more specific, faculty oriented courses. Not just one for everybody regardless of what you want to study", Marta says.

In general however Marta (and the rest of LUS along with her) is critical towards the report. "It (the report) contains a lot of nice phrases and several general proposals but there are no tangible proposals as to what can be done. It doesn't feel as if there is any ties between the report and the groups of people it is supposed to help. /.../ Many of the proposals are not realistic, they lack concrete plans of action".

So what are LUS doing (and suggesting) to improve the report then? Do LUS themselves have any concrete

proposals as to what can be done? "Yes, we do", Marta said and told me that LUS has written a proposal which has been referred to the University for consideration. "One of our suggestions is to invite high school classes to our University, 'adopt' classes and let them join in university activities". This has been done at Kemicentrum with satisfying results, Marta added. LUS has also proposed that a one semester or one-year supplementary education should be made available to immigrants with a university degree from their home country. This to give them the specific competence they lack, which could be for example better knowledge of the Swedish language or computer skills needed for their particular education. Marta says though that so far LUS have not done anything more than written this counter proposal. They have however started to contact organizations outside the University like English International and Students with Immigrant Background (SMIB). They have also been offered representation in Lunds kommuns invandrarråd (the immigrant council in Lund's commune) and Marta hopes that this will lead to a better cooperation developing between the University and Lund's commune. "It is crazy the way Lunds commune want to separate everything that has to do with the University from the rest of the city, as if students were only a part of the university and not a part of the rest of Lund. What about the students that are immigrants, the students that are parents etc?"

Marta thinks that eventually Lund University will get more students with different backgrounds than most students have today (i.e. Swedish academic middle class), she emphasizes however that a lot has to be done. It is not just about getting people to start university, she says, "we have to make sure that they get a job after they finish their studies as well". I see getting a more diverse University however as at least a first step towards getting a more equal society.

*Note: Ms. Anna Haraldsson studies political science at Lund University and immigration and migration at Malmö Högskolan. Anna, an active volunteer at English International and an excellent researcher and write, is from Landskrona in southern Sweden.*

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## ONE STUDENT'S VICTORY...

Lund, December, 2000. The Administrative Court of Appeals (Kammarrätten) has ruled that the Social Services Council in Lund cannot make excessive demands on students when they seek social help. The Council requires that students seeking social help show that they are actively seeking jobs "daily". But the Court of Appeals ruled that the county cannot expect full-time students to look for work with the same intensity as other unemployed people, and struck down the Council's hard rules.

The victory went to a 20-year old female student who was actively seeking employment but had to apply for social help from Lund's Social Bureau. The decision also marked the first time that the Appeals Court has ruled in such a case. In most cases heard by county administrative procedures, the Social Council has won.

The principle task of the the Administrative courts, known in Sweden as *Kammarrätten*, is to settle disputes between individuals and the community, i.e., the State, local authorities, the Church, and other public institutions. This victory in the hands of an appeals court is in a step in the right direction for the rights of all students to a decent standard of living even if they can't find jobs.

(See also Ann Gäre, SDS 30/12/2000).

## UN PRESS RELEASE

The United Nations launched 28 November the **International Year of Volunteers 2001** in a bid to encourage more people to engage in volunteer service while increasing awareness of the organization's achievements and potential.

For more information please consult the following:

Best regards, Kim Garval

Officer-in-Charge

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## NUMBERS...NUMBERS

Lund. Preliminary statistics published by Statistics Sweden (SCB), the official government statistics agency, show the population of Lund climbed to slightly more than 99 thousand in the year 2000. The actual figures published was 99, 052, but these figures are preliminary. There were 979 births, during the year, which gave the city a surplus of 320 babies. The population increased by 740 persons during the entire year, and could pass the 100 thousand mark within two years. (SDS 30/12/00)

## ASYLGRUPPEN I SKÅNE

Malmö. Asylgruppen i Skåne är en religiöst och partipolitiskt obunden förening som arbetar med asylsökande och för deras rättigheter. Vi arbetar för en generös och human flyktingpolitik, en politik där varje människa får en värdig behandling och där rättssäkerhet även gäller asylsökande. En annan viktig del i vårt arbete är kampen mot rasism. För mer information:

Telefon: 073 - 659 05 73. Asylgruppen i Skåne, c/o Möllevångsgruppen, Bergsgatan 32, 214 24 MALMÖ [asylgruppen@hotmail.com](mailto:asylgruppen@hotmail.com)

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Mix Megapol	106,1	(Same as above)
Rix FM	106,7	(Same as above)
Radio Stella: Helsingborg	106,0	(Same as above)
Landskrona	104,5	(Same as above)
NRJ ("Energy")	105,2	(Same as above)
Vinyl	95,3	(60s Hits.)
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Malmö 91,1 Popular music

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## WELCOME TO THE MALMÖ INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT CONFERENCE WITH FOCUS ON AFRICA

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Kristina Larssen, Malmö Conference Center

Tel: 00 46 40 - 12 33 68

Fax: 00 46 40 - 611 17 69

## More Foreign Students

*Stockholm.* A government proposal, Advantage Sweden(SOU 2000:92), wants to recruit more foreign students to Swedish universities. To do so the proposal suggest making Swedish educations more attractive by offering more courses in English, opening positions for more foreign researchers and resources, marketing Swedish universities better to other institutions of higher education. Full report available from: Gunnel Stenqvist, 070 - 674 12 45.

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