

## **Nordic headlines 3 February 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Somalis should be put to work**

Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder is demanding that the country's Somali immigrants, of whom 90 per cent of women and 80 per cent of men are unemployed, be given a chance to show what they can do. Haarder has challenged the country's ten largest municipalities to address the problem by encouraging elderly care homes and kindergartens to give more immigrants a chance, instead of pacifying them with social benefits. "Local authorities need to ease education requirements for immigrants, and especially Somalis, and give them a chance," says Haarder. "The Danish system just isn't good enough at utilising the resources that immigrants have." A recent report revealed that Somalis in Denmark are often alienated and mistrusted, causing many to leave and relocate to England.

(News Ex-Press, 2 February 2004)

#### **Kofi Annan should mind his own business**

A call by UN General Secretary Kofi Annan yesterday for Europe to open up its borders for more refugees, finds no resonance with the Danish government and supporting parties. Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder says that he "agrees in principle" with the General Secretary, but says that there are still far too many groundless applications for asylum. "As Annan points out himself, they put a strain on the asylum system throughout Europe. This is not about the persecuted, who naturally should be given asylum. But there are too many others mixed in, that have no right for asylum," he says. To the right of government, the anti-immigration Danish People's Party lends less credence to Annan. "It is not Kofi Annan's job to interfere with Danish immigration policy. This is Denmark's sovereign decision," says immigration spokesman Peter Skaarup, adding that the UN has a duty to aid refugees throughout the world, and that the organisation has failed in this duty.

(News Ex-Press, January 30 2004)

### **Norwegian press**

#### **Tougher rules cut asylum claims**

A stream of would-be refugees from eastern European countries has all but dried up after Norwegian immigration authorities invoked tougher entry rules. Lawyers specialising in helping refugees, however, are crying foul. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) launched its so-called "48-hour rule" as of 1 January. It calls for the evaluation of all asylum seekers from countries that Norway deems "safe" (such as Bulgaria, Poland and Ukraine) to be handled within 48 hours. If the asylum application is rejected, the applicant is immediately sent home. Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg is pleased with

the development and is considering expanding it to apply to other countries as well. "We may invoke these rules on a general basis if we think we can defend its costs," she said. Immigration lawyers are worried, claiming the expedited rules threaten asylum seekers' legal rights. They also undoubtedly are concerned that demand for their services will decline. The Norwegian asylum seekers' advocacy group NOAS also is worried, fearing the expedited immigration rules will traumatise refugees coming from areas where there is civil unrest.

(Aftenposten, 2 February 2004)

#### **Four more weeks in custody for Krekar**

An Oslo city court ruled Monday that terrorist suspect Mullah Krekar must spend at least another four weeks in police custody, while prosecutors continue to gather evidence against him. The court was sufficiently convinced that Krekar might try to flee, influence witnesses or tamper with evidence if released. Krekar is charged in connection with the executions of Kurdish soldiers in a secret prison camp in northern Iraq, along with suicide bombings. His defence attorney, Brynjar Meling, said he would appeal the custody ruling immediately.

(Aftenposten, 2 February 2004)

#### **Foreign students monitored by police**

Several hundred foreign students at Norwegian universities are being monitored by the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST). The PST claims they must have intelligence on students that gain knowledge that could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction. In Bergen alone over 500 foreign students are registered by the PST. The lists pertain to students from nations outside of the Schengen area and North America. Students from countries run by totalitarian regimes or from nations that had not ratified treaties against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are of special interest. The dean at Oslo University would not reveal whether he had given the names of students to the PST, saying he assessed the approach as demanding confidentiality. Education director Mette Torrissen at Bergen University said that such lists were unwelcome but that they took care not to submit more than the minimum information necessary. The head of PST Hordaland, Steinar Karlsen, confirmed that they sought information on students whose subjects could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction. "It can, of course, be interesting, to have a dialogue with a student that has these areas of study," Karlsen told Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK). The head of the Norwegian Bar Association's commission for asylum and immigrant law, Arild Humlen said that information should not be forthcoming unless there were concrete reasons to suspect an individual. "This contributes to a collective suspicion being rendered against a group and that is unfortunate, and also conflicts with international agreements," Humlen said.

(Aftenposten, 30 January 2004)

#### **Muslim woman wins headscarf case**

The Norwegian furniture store 'A-møbler' that fired a Muslim woman because she refused to take off her traditional headscarf has overturned its decision, and she

got her job back. 25-year-old Ambreen Pervez will soon be back at work at the furniture store, wearing her traditional hijab. The decision maybe considered a timely one due to current movements in Europe. The furniture store case was resolved in a meeting with Anniken Aaseth, the administrating director of 'A-møbler'. It was Aaseth who informed the Muslim woman that if she did not remove her headscarf which covers the woman's hair and throat, she no longer have a job. The store stated that the headscarf breached the store's clothes code which, among other things, prohibits the use of hats and other headgear. Pervez filed a complaint with the Gender Equality Ombudsman, and it concluded that 'A-møbler' could not prohibit employees to wear headgear unless it is a danger for life and health. "It is very nice that the case has been resolved, and that 'A-møbler' accepts our decision," said Ombudsman Kristin Mile. However, the Gender Equality Ombudsman claims that there is still a question whether or not use of hijab is oppressing to women. "That is maybe something the Muslim environment has to discuss, but to forbid the use of the headgear is something completely different," Mile explained to the paper. "That means that we would shut women out of the work life and it would then be twice as oppressing." (Aftenposten, 30 January 2004, p. 4)

### **Refuses to follow advice from the Council of Europe**

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommends in a new report that the Norwegian authorities address the situation of persons living in Norway who cannot be returned to their countries of origin, and through the establishment of procedures, legalises the situation of persons who are in Norway without legal status. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg will not follow the advice from the Council of Europe and its Commission. "Most of those who can't be forced back can return voluntarily. I have no intentions of giving amnesty to this group", says Solberg. Solberg is referring to the fact that Norway is merely doing what all other countries are doing in these matters. (Aftenposten, 29 January 2004, p. 4)

### **New report: The Progress Party stigmatises immigrants**

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has publicised a new report on Norway, in which the Progress Party is being accused of exploitation immigrants in the public and political debate. The debate concerning forced marriages and forced female circumcsions is mentioned as particularly problematic. Moreover, certain politicians have been applying problems of serious concern on a small minority of the immigrant population, which results in the stigmatisation of certain minority communities as a whole. Neither the party nor any of its members are mentioned by name in the report, but the Commission's Norwegian member, Professor Gudrun Holgersen confirms that the critique addresses members of the Progress Party. The Party's leader, Carl I. Hagen gives the report no credibility. Especially since the report partly reflects views of organisations like 'Anti-Racist Centre' and 'SOS Racism', Hagen finds it "totally uninteresting what the Commission's conclusions are".

(Aftenposten, 28 January 2004, p. 3)

### **Norwegian NGOs step up their work in the Sudan**

The prospect of an imminent peace agreement between the two sides in the Sudan conflict has led the three main Norwegian relief organisations to prepare for stepping up their engagement in the war-torn country. The Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is beginning an extensive mine-clearing program. As a first step, the NPA is starting the training of 500 local mine clearing workers. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is starting a refugee repatriation program for internally displaced people. The NRC will also contribute expertise in establishing a new and efficient administration in the region. The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is stepping up its programmes, stressing reconciliation and a strengthening of the local church's role in the process towards peace.

(NRK, 28 January 2004)

### **Swedish press**

#### **Conservatives threatens to stop the governments asylum proposal**

*Op-ed by Fredrik Reinfeldt, Leader of Conservative Party, Kristina Axén Olin, Per Westerberg, Sven Tolgfors, Conservative Party*

The Conservative Party makes certain demands to support the government's proposal to stop asylum seekers possibility for a new asylum application after once being rejected. The Conservative Party demands that the government abolishes the Aliens Appeals Board and replace it with trial in administrative court. Additionally, the Conservatives thinks that the proposal must be more clearly linked with wider possibilities to influx of labour from countries outside EU.

(Dagens Nyheter, 1 February, 2004, p. 4)

#### **Released prisoners are granted asylum in Sweden**

Among the prisoners Israel released yesterday were two Sudanese who has been granted political asylum in Sweden. They both arrived with flight to Stockholm around lunchtime. A third Sudanese asylum application was approved during the day by the Swedish authorities. Deputy Director-General Ruben Ahlin at the Migration Board pointed out that both the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO) and UNHCR have established that none of the three men has any connections with terrorism. They were arrested in Israel because their papers were not in order.

(Svenska Dagbladet & Dagens Nyheter, 30 January, 2004, p. 18 & 15)

#### **Socialists and Conservatives join forces for tougher asylum policy**

The Swedish Conservative Party consider to back up the government in order to limit the right for asylum seekers to appeal a second time after their application has been rejected. Until a couple of years ago the Social Democratic Party and the Conservative Party co-operated over the immigration policy, until the

Conservatives turned against a more liberal view. The government has therefore not had majority for many of its more restrictive proposals. It has now gone two years since the Parliament decided to go against the government's line aimed at closing down the Aliens Appeals Board and replace it with court proceedings, but nothing has happened. The Conservatives are now keeping an internal dialogue whether the party will support the government's proposal to reject a second application.

(Dagens Nyheter, 30 January, 2004, p. 13)

## **Nordic Headlines 4 February 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Immigrant 3-year olds to be forced to say Danish words**

Minister of Education Ulla Tørnæs will make Danish lessons obligatory for immigrant children down to the age of three. As it is now, children are obliged to start school at the age of seven. "This initiative should be seen as an early start, where we can significantly improve the bilingual children's ability to follow lessons and become integrated when they are in school," says Tørnæs, who will put forward legislation in parliament.

(News Ex-Press, 4 February 2004)

#### **Quotas of minority students at secondary schools**

Future students at the country's upper secondary gymnasium schools will be divided up on ethnic criteria. Both Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and parties behind a secondary school cross-party settlement agree with the proposal that has been put forward by school principals. So-called 'ghetto schools', where the number of ethnic minority students surpasses the Danes, are the issue, the PM says. "We are talking about a real problem, and we need to find a solution. One solution is quotas," he says.

(News Ex-Press, 4 February 2004)

### **Norwegian press**

#### **Scores flee forced marriages**

Norwegian authorities last year arranged new identities and other assistance for nearly 60 youth with immigrant backgrounds. All feared they would be forced to enter into arranged marriages. One local agency that offers assistance (SEIF – 'Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger') said pleas for help have tripled during the last five years. The number of crisis cases skyrocketed after a young woman in Sweden was killed by her father in 2002, after she pursued a romantic relationship of her choice. A third of those seeking help in Norway are under age 18. Even though many are equipped with new legal identities, new addresses and a portable alarm that summons police if they feel threatened, most say they will not feel secure until they are also allowed to change the number that everyone resident in Norway is issued by the government. Many of those seeking help are escorted by teachers in whom they have confided at local public schools. Not all are girls who fear their fathers will force them to marry cousins or others handpicked by the parents. Several boys also have sought help, fearing for their lives if they refuse to accept the wife chosen by their parents.

(Aftenposten, 4 January 2004)

## **Swedish press**

### **Persson's transitional rules upset**

The government is criticised for change of opinion over the proposition for transitional rules for influx of labour coming from the new EU-countries. The proposition recommend that citizens from the new member states must have working permit for at least two years to be allowed to work in Sweden. The proposition is criticised by most political parties as they think everybody should have the same opportunity to work in Sweden. According to Mikael Odenberg, Conservative Party (M) could Sweden however be forced to take this step of action to avoid misuse of the welfare system in the future.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 5 February, 2004, p.9)

### **Fp turnaround of asylum policy is criticised**

The Liberal Party (Fp) is ready to support the government's proposition to remove the possibility for asylum-seekers to re-apply after their application has been rejected. Fp additionally wants to substitute the Aliens Appeal Board with administrative courts. This turnaround in Fp asylum policy has been criticised by the other parties.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 5 February, 2004, p. 9)

### **MP's support homosexual Iranians**

More Social Democratic MP's is now criticising the government and the Aliens Appeal Board for mistreating homosexual refugees from Iran. 17-year old asylum-seeker Behroz Kiani is risking deportation to Iran despite being openly homosexual. His chances to stay in Sweden have increased with publicity in the newspapers. The government's line will signal that people are not equally treated according to the law, says Sofia Larsen, member of the Centre Party (C) Those who are lucky to have their case publicised are more likely to be granted asylum, those unlucky are not. Barbro Homberg, Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy point out that it is the Migration Board and the Aliens Appeal Board that take the final decision and each case are judged on the situation in the asylum-seekers home country.

(Dagens Nyheter, 5 February, 2004, p. 6)

### **Immigration girls have the worst eating habits**

Most 15-year old girls who are over-weight comes from families with low income and the girl is born in another country or her parents are, shows a study of 4,000 15-year olds from 44 schools around Stockholm. 11 percent of the girls and 15 percent of the boys were over-weighted. Families with bad social and economic conditions have the most irregular food habits and worst are girls from non-Swedish background. One third of them hardly ever eats breakfast and they eat less fruit and vegetables as their Swedish girlfriends do. Swedish boys in contrast eat less fruit and vegetables than boys from non-Swedish background do.

(Dagens Nyheter, 5 February, 2004, p.9)

### **Persson rejects Fp-ultimatum in the asylum issue**

Prime Minister Göran Persson rejects the demand from the Liberal Party (Fp) to substitute the Aliens Appeal Board and to stop the possibility for asylum-seekers to re-

appeal. The only result of this maneuver from the Liberal Party could be that they would be accused for having become xenophobic.  
(Dagens Nyheter, 5 February, 2004, p. 10)

### **Threat of death sentence after deportation**

Seventeen year-old Iranian Behroz Kiani is homosexual. If he is forced to return to his home country he could face persecution and a death sentence. Despite this threat, both the Migration Board and the Aliens Appeal Board have rejected his asylum application. The Swedish authorities consider there being no risk to deport Kiani as the Iranian authorities have no knowledge of his homosexuality. Swedish Amnesty fears that homosexuals in Iran are still being secretly executed.

(Dagens Nyheter, 4 February 2004, p. 6)

### **The government changes opinion regarding influx of labour from the EU**

Sweden now wants to introduce an exception to the rule which intends to prevent people from new EU member states to freely move to Sweden. Sweden has changed its direction, from wanting more openness to a much more restricted attitude. The government wishes to continue to demand working permits from citizens from the new EU countries. Additionally, the employment needs to be durable and the salary high enough to live on says Barbro Holmberg, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy. As to begin with, the new rules will be sufficient for a two-year period and thereafter a possibility for extension for a further three-year period.

(Dagens Nyheter & Svenska Dagbladet, 4 February 2004, pp. 10 & 6)

### **Liberal Party back up asylum proposition**

The Liberal Party will back up the proposition from the government to change the asylum process. The proposition will remove the possibility to re-appeal after the Aliens Appeal Board has rejected the asylum application.

(Dagens Nyheter & Svenska Dagbladet, 4 February 2004, pp. 10 & 8)

## **Nordic Headlines 11 February 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Haarder targets Imams**

A new proposal by Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder will stifle the teachings of Imams who preach Islamic fundamentalism in this country. During Friday prayer sessions, Imams will be monitored so they do not preach anti-democratic values and attitudes. In addition, Imams who request permanent residency in Denmark will in future be required to speak Danish if they are to be given the authority to perform Muslim marriages. Haarder rejected accusations that he is very close to breaching the laws protecting freedom of religion. "This proposal includes all the demands we can make, within reason, without encroaching Muslims' religious rights," he said. However, leading Imam, Fatih Alev, was less than enthusiastic about the new proposal. "This government just seems to want to keep irritating Muslims. I believe they are making a big mistake," he said.

(News Ex-Press, 11 February 2004)

#### **Immigrant statistics**

New National Statistics Bureau figures show that immigrants and their descendants currently constitute 8.2 per cent of the population – 442,036, a slight rise of 1,212 over the past three months. Turkey tops the immigration charts, followed by Germany, Iraq and Bosnia Herzegovina. Over the past ten years, the number of immigrants from Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon has remained constant, while immigration from Iraq and Somalia has risen dramatically.

(News Ex-Press, 11 February 2004, jp2)

#### **Immigration restrictions create cash bonus for state**

The economy is reaping the rewards of the Government's strict immigration policies. According to new calculations from the economic institute DREAM, the state is currently saving at least DKK 4.3 billion annually compared to before the controversial restrictions were introduced, when the number of asylum seekers arriving here was three times the present rate. The report also states that there will be 135,000 less refugees and immigrants from non-Western countries in Denmark in 2040 than there would have been if restrictions had not been introduced. Minister of Labour, Claus Hjort Frederiksen expressed surprise at the actual amount of money being saved. "It's extremely satisfactory to see that the Government's policies have been so effective. Now we've got to use all our resources in getting those immigrants residing here into a job. It's integral for the future health of the economy that they are transformed from passive to active citizens," said Frederiksen.

(News Ex-press, 9 February 2004)

### **The corporate sector does too little for integration**

More than 90 per cent of the small and middle-sized companies do too little to employ immigrants and with that promote integration in the Danish society. 84 per cent of them do not even have any plans in that regard. On top of that more than half do not have any immigrants employed. This is the outcome of a comprehensive research undertaken by the biggest private business association, Trade, IT, Industry and Service (HTS) in Denmark. Companies have to take integration of immigrants seriously otherwise they risk not having the necessary work force in the future, warn Danish Employers Confederation ('Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening') and HTS.

(DR online news, 9 February 2004)

### **New Danes participate eagerly in politics**

According to a scientific study by Professor from Aarhus University, Lise Tøgeby, it goes surprisingly well with the participation in Danish politics of ethnical groups from countries outside of the Nordics, Europe and North America. The ethnical groups almost have the representation they should in relation to their share of the voters. And in Denmark their participation in elections is higher than in the other countries that have given immigrants the right to vote.

(DR online news, 8 February 2004)

### **Want to refuse the weak refugees**

The government wants to violate the principle of receiving those quota refugees in greatest need of protection. The Integration Minister, Bertel Haarder is ready to change the Danish practice and consider whether refugees have an education and speak foreign languages. "The weakest refugees have no chance of getting a job and contacts in Denmark. Even if it only concerns 500 a year they weigh heavily in the municipalities," he says. "It cannot be true that Canada takes the strong and Denmark the weak ones. If we do not get a more equal distribution we will not only look at needs but also at whether they'll make it here," Bertel Haarder says. The Social Democratic speaker on integration issues, Anne-Marie Meldgaard, calls the line of thinking "not very sympathetic".

(DR online news, 6 February 2004)

## **Finnish press**

### **Refugees are fleeing from Finland**

Hundreds of asylum seekers disappeared from Finnish refugee centres last year. Many of them left when they got a negative decision on their application to stay. The majority of them travelled to Sweden, Norway or Germany in an attempt to delay their deportation to their countries of origin. "It is a part of every-day life at a refugee centre that people disappear. Sometimes they leave even before the decision in their case comes," says an official at the refugee centre in Oravais. At that centre, contact was lost to 45 asylum seekers last year, almost twice as many as the previous year. "There is a clear trend here. We are going to see more of this in the future, when the stream of asylum-seekers from eastern

Europe increases," says the official. Asylum-seekers from eastern Europe do not have much of a chance to get a permission to stay.  
(Hufvudstadsbladet, 5 February 2004, front page)

## **Norwegian press**

### **Fingerprint register foils criminal asylum seekers**

Police have released statistics indicating an overly high number of asylum seekers are involved in crimes, based on cases using the criminal fingerprint register. About 11 per cent of the people entered in the criminal register in January were already registered in the alien register containing the fingerprints of asylum seekers to Norway, Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK) reports. The criminal register contains fingerprints of those suspected, charged or convicted of crimes. The statistics, released by the National Bureau of Crime Investigation ('Kripos'), pertain to cases where police have fingerprints linking the perpetrator to the crime. Kripos chief Arne Huuse is satisfied with the legal change that allowed police to check the asylum registry when solving crimes. Of the 1,039 new entries in the criminal register in January 113 were asylum seekers. Nine of the 113 had given a different identity when being fingerprinted for the criminal register than the one they used for their asylum application.  
(Aftenposten, 11 February 2004)

### **Asylum seeker also waits for Oscar**

Nikola Jankovic is a 12-year-old boy from Kosovo waiting to be granted asylum in Norway. At the same time, he is the star of the German short film "Die Rote Jacke" - The Red Jacket - which has been nominated for an Academy Award. Nikola spends his days in an introductory class at Farsund Elementary School. Since his application for asylum is still pending, he was unable to accept an invitation from the film team at Hamburger Filmwerkstätten to attend the Oscar award ceremony. The Red Jacket, directed by Florian Baxmeyer as an examination film at the University of Hamburg, is a 20-minute tale of a garment that is given to charity after its young owner dies in an accident. The jacket arrives in an aid package to Kosovo, where Nikola's character gets it. Later he is wounded, saved by a UN soldier and evacuated to the German address in the jacket. Last year the film won the Honorary Foreign Film Award at the student film Oscars, the Student Academy Awards, in the USA. "I have seen the film on tape - it was a lot of fun. It has won one Oscar, now it can win another!" Nikola said. Nikola was chosen when Baxmeyer and his staff visited a refugee center in Hamburg and young Jankovic proved he could do the job. Now, after 13 months in Norway, his Norwegian is nearly fluent, and he hopes to stay. The Jankovic family lived for three and half years in a refugee camp in Germany before returning to Kosovo. But for a family with a Serb Christian father and a Romany mother, life proved too hard, and they chose to seek asylum in Norway. "We are very happy after getting to know Norway and Norwegians. It seems as though

the people we meet understand our problem and we hope we can live here," said father Drako Jankovic.

(Aftenposten, 11 February 2004)

### **Norway to limit guest workers**

Norway's non-socialist coalition government has reversed its position on guest workers, falling in line with opposition parties that want such immigration limited when a host of new countries join EU 1 May. The date is officially Labour Day over most of Europe, but labourers will not get any warmer welcome in Norway. PM Kjell Magne Bondevik said it will demand a transition period before open immigration is allowed for all new residents of the EU. As a member of the European Economic Area, Norway is obligated to allow members of the EU plus those in the EEA free access to the local job market. But Norway is worried it now will attract large numbers of job-seekers from eastern European countries that now are about to join the EU. Bondevik's government wants to demand that would-be guest workers from the EU first must obtain formal working permission in Norway. In order to get that, applicants must have proof of full-time work at pay that would support a family. Part-time work will not be enough to qualify applicants for working permission. The full-time work, moreover, must adhere to pay and working conditions that are common in Norway. This would prevent Norwegian employers from taking advantage of guest workers accustomed to lower pay and poorer working conditions back home. Other EU countries are also demanding a transition period.

(Aftenposten, 10 February 2004)

### **Norway announces phase-in period**

Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik confirmed that Norway will most likely introduce a phase-in period for immigrant workers when the European Union is expanded 1 May. Bondevik made the announcement of the phase-in period of immigrant workers during his meeting in Brussels. The Norwegian government had initially planned to give citizens in the new EU countries free access to Norway from day one, but after a number a countries now have announced interim arrangements, the Norwegian government has also changed its stand in the issue. Swedish PM Göran Persson stated last week that Sweden most likely would introduce phase-in period. Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg said that Norway would also consider it. Bondevik stated Thursday that there was a need to establish a similar practice in Norway as neighboring countries. "Our intention was to open the borders for citizens of the new membership countries, but we have now seen that some of our neighboring countries, Sweden being the latest, have announced that they will have a phase-in period," Bondevik said at his meeting with the European Commission President Romano Prodi in Brussels.

(Nettavisen, 6 February 2004)

### **Progress party wants to ban headscarves**

The Norwegian Progress Party (Frp) proposes a ban of headscarves in school and claims that ban will have an integrating effect and prevent oppression. "We

actually believe that a ban against the use of headscarves in the nine-year school will be a good integrating effort," said Per Sandberg, spokesperson on integration questions. Frp is currently working on a bill to ban 'hijab' in the nine-year school. France was the first country to suggest banning, and the bill will most likely be accepted in Paris shortly. However, in France the ban includes all kinds of religious symbols including crosses and the David star. The bill from the Frp will only involve the Muslim headscarves. Sandberg denies that this is discrimination. "There is nothing in the Koran, nothing in Islam, which says that girls have to dress in this way to symbolize their religion," Sandberg stated. Torbjørn Røe Isaksen in the Conservatives' youth organisation ('Unge Høyre') said the suggestion is "completely hopeless." "There are still some of us who think religious freedom is important in Norway". "Per Sandberg is apparently not apart of the group. I can't say how hopeless I think the suggestion is. Frp is even so plainly racist that they are making a bill which only affects the people who wear Muslim headscarves and not the people who for example wear other religious symbols", said Røe Isaksen. (Nettavisen, 6 February 2004)

### **No plans to ban hijab in Norwegian schools**

Education Minister Kristin Clemet said during question time in parliament on Wednesday that she had no plans to ban the hijab - the head scarf worn by Muslim women that has recently become increasingly associated with Islamism. The Progress Party's parliamentary group agreed Wednesday to propose banning the hijab and the burka from elementary schools. Progress Party (Frp) deputy leader Siv Jensen told newspaper Dagbladet that the party would raise a debate along the lines of the current discussion in France, forbidding religious symbols from schools, and also hoped to strengthen the ability of employers to enforce dress codes. Jensen said the proposal aimed to integrate and believes the hijab represses women. "I don't think this will be a big problem in Norway. That some disagree, I think is more for political reasons. Many have claimed that these are political symbols in the Islamist movement. One labels a group of people, in this case young girls," Jensen said. Jensen said Frp had not considered religious symbols such as the crucifix, turban or calotte because they did not consider the hijab a religious symbol, but a political one. Clemet said that the government had no reason to see the hijab as an obstacle to education or integration in schools. "It is typically Norwegian clothing that has caused more problems in Norwegian schools, from the feedback I have had," Clemet told the Parliament on Wednesday. Clemet emphasised the hijab's religious significance rather than the Frp's political argument. "The shawl or hijab can be regarded as an article of clothing or a religious symbol. It has not been customary to regulate either of these in Norwegian schools," the education minister said. (Aftenposten, 5 February 2004)

### **Teacher told to drop Star of David**

A municipally employed teacher in Kristiansand has been prevented from wearing a Star of David around his neck. Kristiansand Adult Education Center,

where the man works, ruled that the Jewish symbol could be deemed a provocation towards the many Muslim students at the school, Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK) reports. Teacher Inge Telhaug said he feels this is a violation of his freedom of speech. "I can't accept this. It is a small star, 16 millimeters (0.6 inches) that I have around my neck, usually under a T-shirt. I see it as my right to wear it," Telhaug told NRK. Telhaug teaches immigrants Norwegian language and culture at the education center. Telhaug is not Jewish. "I see it as the oldest religious symbol we have in our culture, because without Judaism there would be no Christianity," Telhaug. The principal of the school, Kjell Gislefoss, feels that the Star of David can also be interpreted as a political symbol for the state of Israel, and is afraid the star can provoke and offend students, for example immigrants from the Palestinian territories. "The Star of David would be a symbol for one side in what is perhaps the world's most inflamed conflict at the moment. Many have a traumatic past that they have escaped and then we feel that if they are going to learn Norwegian then they can't sit an at the same time be reminded of the things they have traveled from," Gislefoss said. Telhaug has hired a lawyer and refuses to give in. The head of the Education Association in Kristiansand, Heidi Hauge Uldal, called the school's decision "unacceptable". Uldal said her group did not want to go the way of France and forbid all religious symbols in schools, a topic that is currently becoming relevant in Norway as well. (Aftenposten, 5 February 2004)

## **Swedish press**

### **Liberal Party against ban of veils**

The Liberal Party is against a ban of veils in Swedish schools. According to MP Erik Ullenhag, a ban would be the first step towards destroying the image of the Liberal Party as a refugee friendly and tolerant party. (Dagens Nyheter, 10 February 2004, p. 8)

### **Practical experience as part of integration**

39 asylum seekers are working as interns in the municipality of Sollentuna. The municipality is the first in the country to sign an agreement with the Migration Board for asylum-seekers to get a meaningful occupation during the asylum process.

(Dagens Nyheter, 10 February 2004, p. 6)

### **Liberals ready to stop asylum proposal**

*Op-ed by Lars Leijonborg, leader of the Liberal Party & Erik Ullenhag, Liberal MP*

The Liberal Party is in favour of changing today's asylum process, which is considered leading to an unnecessarily long assessment time and suffering for asylum-seekers. The Liberal Party wants more consideration for the children's situation and also that Sweden should open up for more influx of labour. To shorten the asylum process, the proposal is to substitute Aliens Appeal Board

with administrative courts. If the government disagrees with the proposal, the Liberal Party will not support the government's policy in parliament.  
(Dagens Nyheter, 10 February 2004, p. 4)

### **Number of reported hate crimes has increased**

Political violence and so-called hate crimes are on the increase in Sweden. The Swedish State Security has observed an increase in all these categories of crimes with one exception, anti-Semitic crimes, which do not seem to have increased, in spite of recent claims that anti-Semitism is on the rise in Sweden.  
(Svenska Dagbladet, 10 February 2004, p. 11)

### **Prison for blackmail in an asylum case**

A 21 year old Libyan who was hired as language analyst when a fellow-countryman was seeking asylum in Sweden has been sentenced to six months in prison for attempt to blackmail. The man demanded 5,000 dollars from his fellow countryman for not reporting him to the Libyan Secret Police.  
(Dagens Nyheter, 9 February 2004, p. 5)

### **Polish couple is deported despite EU entry**

The Polish couple Byrcz is being deported from Sweden only two and a half months before Poland enters the EU. The Swedish authorities do not take into consideration that the couple has already worked in Sweden for three years. Their working permit has expired and therefore they are to be deported. The government wants citizens from the new EU countries except Cyprus and Malta to have working permits and the permit must be applied for in the home country. This will affect 10,000 people already working in Sweden. They have temporary permits and can therefore be forced to go back home to renew their working permit.

(Dagens Nyheter & Svenska Dagbladet, 9 February 2004, pp. 5 & 6)

### **12 per cent seek asylum in more than one country**

One year on with 'Eurodac' system which register fingerprints shows that circa twelve percent of the asylum-seekers arriving to Sweden have earlier applied for asylum in another European country.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 9 February 2004, p. 8)

### **Persson's EU policy is criticised**

Visiting Sweden, Estonian Prime Minister Juhan Parts expressed irritation over Sweden breaking its promise to allow free movement for labour from the new EU countries. "There is no need to be afraid of the Estonians, they like to live and work at home", said PM Parts. Swedish PM Göran Persson said he is not afraid of the Estonians, but claimed there is a problem today when consulting companies are used for recruiting in the construction sector. Foreign workers are usually given bad conditions and salaries. "We need to change the rules not in order to discriminate against anyone, but in order to adapt to the situation. We have the right to a transition time. We should use it," said Persson.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 7 February 2004, p. 15)

### **Olofsson is criticising the Prime Minister**

Maud Olofsson, leader of the Centre Party is accusing the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the government of bringing Sweden closer to Danish immigration policy and xenophobia. Olofsson reminded the government that two months ago, Sweden promised the new EU countries that there would be no new restrictions to live and work in Sweden. Now the Prime Minister has changed his opinion and wants transition rules for labour immigration from the new EU countries.

(Dagens Nyheter, 7 February 2004, p. 9)

### **New Director of the Migration Board came to Sweden as refugee**

The government has appointed Janna Valik as new Director General of the Swedish Migration Board. She arrived to Sweden as political refugee from former Czechoslovakia in 1968.

(Dagens Nyheter & Svenska Dagbladet, 6 February 2004, pp. 9 & 8)

### **Persson wants support from the parliament for transitional rules**

Transitional rules for labour from the new EU countries could exist during a one or two year period. Prime Minister Göran Persson demand support from the parliament to introduce the rules. He has no opinion on how many from the new EU countries will arrive to Sweden and misuse the welfare system.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 6 February 2004, p. 8)

### **Rather stricter rules than transition rules**

Transition rules in connection with EU expansion will not solve any problems. An alternative to transition rules should be stricter rules to stop employers from exploiting labour from the new EU countries. But transition rules could temporarily become necessary, according to Wanja Lunby-Wedin, Head of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 6 February 2004, p. 7)

## **Nordic Headlines 17 February 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Bunyang and Bjarne smile again**

The Ministry of Integration has overruled a decision by the Danish Immigration Service. Despite living on unemployment benefits the metal worker is allowed to keep his Thai wife because he can document access to "post-salary benefit". The post salary benefit has to be big enough to satisfy the requirements to "spouse maintenance".

(Politiken, 16 February 2004, p. 2)

#### **Massive moonlighting among immigrants**

Tax evasion, black money and welfare fraud flourish in the Danish immigrant community. According to a new report by researcher at Roskilde University, Shahamak Rezaei – work which has been supported by two government ministries – immigrants evade taxes on four times as many working hours as ethnic Danes. A combination of high unemployment, and easily exploitable Danish welfare schemes are the cause of the debacle, according to Rezaei: "The parking of resourceful people in public funds through the decades, is now backfiring," he says. While immigrants work an average of 22.5 hours a week without paying taxes, their average wage is DKK 43 an hour. Danes work 5.8 hours black at an average black wage of DKK 115 an hour. Minister of Labour, Claus Hjort Frederiksen admits that the attempt to integrate immigrants on the labour market over the years has been a disaster, and that the result has been two parallel societies. "We have failed to get these people into normal networks where they could get regular work" he says.

(News Ex-Press, 12 February 2004)

#### **Immigrants do not support welfare model**

According to the new report by researcher at Roskilde University, Shahamak Rezaei, immigrants have little faith in the Danish welfare system. Less than every third immigrant considers elderly care a public responsibility. Only every fifth immigrant considers income transfers, the attempt to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor through taxes, as worthy of support.

(News Ex-Press, 12 February 2004)

#### **Extra help to every second refugee**

More than half of the refugees receiving the new lower benefit – start assistance – pick up extra monies from the municipalities, an account from Statistics Denmark shows. Last year's extra assistance cost the municipalities DKK 122,7 million.

(Politiken, 12 February, p.15)

## **Norwegian press**

### **Conservatives say no to hijab ban**

Oslo Conservatives have stated their opinion loud and clear as they say no to the hijab ban proposed by the Progress Party. According to a press release, Oslo Conservatives' main board unanimously said no to a ban of hijab at their meeting Monday evening. The debate around hijab surfaced after the Progress party suggested that Muslim girls should not be allowed to wear their traditional headgear in the ten year school. Norwegian PM Kjell Magne Bondevik has also stated that he does not wish to ban the use of hijab in public school. A poll conducted about two weeks ago indicated that one of five Norwegians is negative to being serviced by a store employee wearing a hijab. The poll also established that men are more critical towards the Muslim headgear than women.

(Nettavisen, 17 February 2004)

## **Swedish press**

### **The Prime Minister exposed himself unnecessarily**

Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson has totally unnecessarily exposed himself to criticism both from the liberal parties and government partners. Moreover, his statements concerning "social tourism" have been welcomed by 'racist parties', such as the Swedish Democrats and the National Democrats. Sweden has during many years had a big portion of "goodwill" among the EU candidate countries. Now the question is how they will react when they are pointed out as "welfare tourists". Persson could have chosen a different strategy, for example the one of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Laila Freivalds who is worried that people might be abused when entering the Swedish labour market. If Persson had chosen such perspective, he might have reached his goal, which is to limit the stream of people from the candidate countries and, furthermore, avoided any connection with the National Democrats.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 17 February 2004, p. 13)

### **Sahlin meets religious representatives**

Representatives from a large number of religious organisations will meet Minister for Integration, Mona Sahlin on Monday. They will, among other things, discuss Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, divorces for Muslims and the meaning of the new Swedish law against child marriages and forced marriages. Sahlin also wish to know what the organisations are doing against so called honour related violence.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 17 February 2004, p. 13)

### **470 girls victims of honour related violence**

Between 2001 and 2003, more than 470 girls in the provinces West Götaland and Östergötland sought help after being victims of honour related violence. These are alarming numbers, and the hidden numbers are probably large as

well, says County Governor Björn Eriksson. It was last summer the County Councils were commissioned by the government to survey the problem of honour related violence and how to combat it. The county administration now presents several proposals on how to fight this problem. Staff within the Police, County Councils and social services will be trained in this topic. The County Councils also wants to produce a web page, targeting civil servants as well as the girls themselves. However, there will not be any protected accommodation in the actual regions, since the anonymity is more provided for in the big cities, the Eriksson says.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 17 February 2004, p. 10)

### **Criminals with children might be allowed to stay**

Serious criminals who have been sentenced to deportation might be allowed to stay if it is predicted that their children will suffer from their parents' absence. This is a government proposal of a new amendment to the Alien law. According to the Minister for Justice, Thomas Bodström the government wants to increase the possibilities for the Court to see to the interests of the children. Bodström says that it will probably not mean a decrease in the number of deported criminals being allowed to stay, since most of them do not have any contact with their children.

(Svenska Dagbladet 15 February 2004, p. 6 & Dagens Nyheter, p. 5)

### **Liberal Party is positive to ban of veils in schools**

Three members of the Liberal Party, all with non-immigrant background, wish to forbid veils in Swedish schools. One of them is the local government commissioner in Malmö, Iva Parizkova Rygggeståhl, who wants to protect the interest of the child and suggests a ban of veils for girls up to 15 years of age.

(Dagens Nyheter 15 February 2004, p. 8 & Svenska Dagbladet, p. 6)

### **Racist political parties are hopeful**

The racist political parties' National Democrats (ND) and Swedish Democrats (SD) hope for success in the next EU election. Both parties are building up a co-operation with other similar parties in Europe, such as the National Front in France and The Danish People's Party in Denmark.

(Dagens Nyheter, 15 February 2004, p. 8)

### **Disorder in the Liberal Party's Work Group on Islam**

At the Liberal Party's previous executive meeting, the majority was against ban of veils in schools, which should, according to some Liberals, show that the party is tolerant towards immigrants. But the Chairman of the Liberal Party's Working Group on Islam, Carl Rudbeck says that he sympathises with the French proposition to ban veils and believes one should also take into consideration to ban other religious symbols. Rudbeck himself is not a member of the Liberal Party.

(Dagens Nyheter, 13 February 2004, p. 9)

### **Rare but not prohibited wearing veil in the Parliament**

It is not prohibited to wear veil in the Swedish Parliament, but it has only happened once before. It is the Speaker who sees to that the MPs are properly dressed. Deputy Speaker, Per Westerberg has nothing against the use of veil in the Parliament, but he does not accept the use of burka out of security reason. (Dagens Nyheter, 13 February 2004, p. 9)

### **Social welfare even to new EU citizens**

The transitional rules for new EU citizens who wants to work in Sweden is not about the possibility to get social welfare, but rather about the possibility to come to Sweden and work, according to Prime Minister Göran Persson. Persson refers to the construction sector, where many foreigners are working under worse conditions and lower salaries than Swedes. (Svenska Dagbladet, 13 February 2004, p. 12)

### **Harsh criticism against speech of "social tourism"**

The transitional rules, which could be necessary for free movement of labour from the new EU member states will be limited, promised Minister for Foreign Affairs, Laila Freivalds in a debate in the Parliament. Conservative MP, Gunilla Carlsson, reminded of how more than 10,000 people from the Baltic States fled to Sweden, worked here and contributed to country's welfare. The more people work, the better welfare for the country, argued Carl B. Hamilton of the Liberal Party. The problem is rather that people get an unreasonable access to the EU social welfare system – not that they want to work here, said Hamilton. "Why not change the rules for everyone if we worry so much of misuse of the social welfare?", asked Agne Hansson of the Centre Party. Hansson expected an apology from the government, but was left unheard. (Svenska Dagbladet & Dagens Nyheter, 12 February 2004, pp. 10 & 14)

## **Nordic Headlines 20 February 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **Positive EU immigration statistics**

Constant media reports that Denmark is the worst country in the world at getting immigrants into the labour market are seemingly a myth, according to new figures from EU's statistical office, 'Eurostat'. According to the new figures, unemployment amongst immigrants from under-developed countries fell from 27 per cent to 13 per cent between 1995 and 2002, which translates into 45,000 more immigrants finding a job, statistics which put Denmark near the top of the EU charts, bettered only by Holland. "Finally we seem to be heading in the right direction," said the head of the Confederation of Danish Industries (DI), Henrik Bach Mortensen. "It's a significant reduction and shows that we have a labour market ready to accept immigrants." According to DI's own figures, the number of immigrants in the service and production sectors has doubled over the past five years. Minister of Labour, Claus Hjort Frederiksen also expressed his satisfaction at the EU figures, and said they proved that once immigrants are given a chance in a Danish company, it often ends in a permanent job.

(News Ex-Press, 19 February 2004)

#### **Social Democrats will continue with immigration co-operation**

If the Social Democrats regain power at the next election, they intend to formulate integration policy in conjunction with the Liberal Party and the Conservatives, and not with their centre-left colleagues. In response to the recent controversy surrounding the party's immigration disagreement with former, and prospective, coalition partners, the Social Liberals, the Social Democrats' spokesperson on immigration, Anne-Marie Meldgaard, said that co-operation with the Liberal Party and the Conservatives would continue into the next elective period. "I find it difficult to imagine that we could agree with the Social Liberals, or even the Socialist People's Party or the Unity List, because we have a totally different view of how to limit immigration," she said. She was backed by the party's parliamentary group chairman, Pia Gjellerup, who said the party's ambition is to maintain current immigration policy, backed by a 'broad majority.'

(News Ex-Press, 18 February 2004)

#### **Government targets opposition disagreement**

Social Democrat leader Mogens Lykketoft said that he could not accommodate Social Liberal demands to ease immigration restrictions, if the two centre-left parties form a coalition government after the next election. Lykketoft was responding to reports that the Social Democrats and prospective coalition partners, the Social Liberals, are in disagreement about future immigration policy, but have agreed to put the matter on hold until 2006. The Government and the Danish People's Party are now demanding straight answers about the two parties' intentions if they regained power. Lykketoft said that his party had no reason to breach its agreement with the government on family reunification

legislation, which he said "...provides young immigrants with the opportunity of choosing their own spouse, instead of letting their parents or grandparents decide." The Social Liberals have declared themselves against the 24-year age limit for family reunification, which is three years more than the EU limit. Social Liberal leader Marianne Jelved tried to deflect criticism by claiming that it was not decisive for the two centre-left parties to agree on a joint immigration policy before the next election.

(News Ex-Press, 17 February 2004)

### **Opposition parties agree to disagree**

The ongoing disagreement on immigration policy, which has caused a rift between opposition bedfellows, the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals, has been put on ice until 2006 – after the next election. The two parties, although still in disagreement about the future immigration policy of a possible centre-left government, have agreed to bury the hatchet in an effort to solidify support against the Liberal/Conservative coalition. The Social Liberals have demanded that many of the immigration restrictions imposed by the current government be removed as soon as possible under a new administration. However, the restrictions were passed with the help of Social Democratic votes in parliament, creating a policy division which leaves the two centre-left parties open to attack during an election campaign. The Social Democrats now hope they have pre-empted the threat of attack by calling time out with the Social Liberals.

(News Ex-Press, 16 February 2004)

### **DF's ghetto plan**

The Danish People's Party is demanding a drastic intervention to stop the explosive growth of ghettos throughout the country, by proposing that many foreigners in public-housing projects be forcibly moved to other areas and that Danes should have first refusal on council owned apartments. In addition, the party is proposing that local authorities should be forced to formulate 'integration plans' for foreigners, who will have their residency permits annulled if they don't accept forced removal. "A certain number of immigrants residing in areas which can be termed ghettos will be forced to accept that they have to relocate," says DF's parliamentary group chairman, Kristian Thulesen Dahl. "We do not support the deportation or forced detention of ethnic minorities, but if they aren't prepared to move and let themselves be integrated, it's quite reasonable to ask the question: What are you doing here in the first place, instead of staying in your own country or emigrating somewhere with closer ties to your own culture?. We have now reached a point where we have to employ drastic methods, because if we don't, it will be too late in a few years." Minister of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, Bertel Haarder immediately rejected the controversial proposal, saying that the problem can be solved without using heavy-handed methods.

(News Ex-Press, 16 February 2004)

## **Norwegian press**

### **More refugees granted asylum in 2003**

Around 600 asylum-seekers were granted Refugee Convention asylum in 2003, more than ever before. In addition to this, 2,800 received complementary status, while 700 were allowed permission to stay on humanitarian grounds. Also, Norway gave protection to 1,145 resettlement cases in 2003. "Following recommendations from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as well as others, UDI has developed new asylum determination procedures. The statistics of 2003 make it clear that those refugees that Norway are accepting really are in need of protection," said UDI Director Trygve G. Nordby. Asylum was granted to asylum-seekers from 35 countries, the majority of them from Russia (Chechnya), Iran and Afghanistan (...) In 2003, 50 individuals were granted asylum on the grounds of gender based persecution. Most of them came from Iran, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. These women are fleeing from forced marriages, honour-related violence and rape. A few homosexual women and men were granted asylum because of fear for persecution based on their sexual orientation. (UDI Press Release, 19 February 2004)

### **Fewer seek asylum in Norway**

The number of refugees seeking asylum in Norway declined 11 per cent from 2002 to 2003. Norway's Directorate of Immigration (UDI) expects the trend to continue and is planning to shut down reception centres. UDI director Trygve G. Nordby said that the Directorate anticipates the number of asylum seekers coming to Norway to drop by about 10,000 in 2004. "The decline will lead to several asylum centers being shut down, perhaps up to a third of the centers," Nordby said. Nordby said that the UDI was preparing to discuss this with local authorities because they had found that shutting down asylum centers often led to "stronger protests and resistance from local authorities than establishing new centers". (Aftenposten, 19 February 2004)

### **Conviction nearly impossible in Norway**

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg believes the various legal battles around mullah Krekar confuse the Norwegian people. She is of the opinion that it is nearly impossible to convict people in Krekar's situation in Norway, but she remains set on expelling him from the country. "First and foremost, the Krekar case is very confusing for people. A number of Norwegian organizations have the naive belief that it is easy to prosecute people in Norway. It is nearly impossible to prosecute someone for something done in another country and when it is not part of a legal action in another country," Solberg said. Solberg admits that the political situation in Northern Iraq and the lack of Iraqi authorities and regulations make it difficult for a normal legal process for Krekar, or deportation, but she foresees an eventual trial before a local or international tribunal. Immigration authorities have revoked Krekar's refugee and

residency status. He has also had his passport and travel documents confiscated. His lawyers have promised to fight his expulsion at every level of the legal system, a lengthy process.

(Aftenposten, 19 February 2004)

### **Krekar may sue Økokrim**

Mulla Krekar's lawyers expect that recent charges will be dropped after his release on Tuesday. In this case they are ready to sue the Norwegian Economic Crime Unit ('Økokrim') for compensation. Authorities confirmed that new information gave them insufficient grounds to hold Krekar in custody. Krekar had been remanded in custody for six weeks before the Crime Unit agreed that new information had weakened their case against the controversial mullah, who has previously been the leader of the Kurdish guerilla group Ansar al-Islam in Northern Iraq. Meanwhile, Norwegian immigration authorities have ruled that Krekar should lose his residency status. His lawyers argue that recent developments should also affect that ruling. "This shows that it is clearly very dangerous for Krekar if he is sent to North Iraq now," lawyer Arvid Sjoedin said.

(Aftenposten, 18 February 2004)

### **More asylum seekers turned away**

Nearly 4,000 persons were denied asylum in Norway and returned to their home countries in 2003. In addition, 2,248 persons were transported back to another country within the Schengen region without their application being considered. In the first two weeks of January, more asylum seekers were transported out of Norway than new ones arriving. Less than 1 out of every 10 asylum seeker who arrived in Norway in January carried a valid passport or travel document. The new Police Aliens Division will now concentrate on making an identification of the asylum seekers as soon as possible, in order to be able to weed out bogus asylum seekers as early as possible.

(NRK, 17 February 2004)

### **More Norwegian economic aid for Sudan**

Norway is ready to increase its economic aid to Sudan as soon as a peace treaty has been signed in the war torn country. Minister of International Development, Hilde Frafjord Johnson is ready to grant at least another NOK 300 million with focus on repatriation of Sudanese refugees from neighbouring countries, clearing of mines and strengthening the civil administration in the Southern Sudan.

(Vaart Land, 17 February 2004)

### **Swedish press**

#### **Chechens are allowed to stay for a limited time period**

Eight Chechens have been granted permission to stay by the government, most of them for a time period of two years. The Swedish Migration Board believes that the decision means that more Chechens will come to Sweden. Minister for

Migration and Asylum Policy, Barbro Holmberg does not think it is possible to send back Chechens right now. However, the conflict in Chechnya will not go on forever, she says, and that is why the Chechens only got temporary permissions to stay. This is seen as a foreign policy issue, since concerns Sweden's relations to Russia. Until now, relatively few Chechens have sought asylum in Sweden. Of the 1,214 asylum seekers last year, only 121 were from Chechnya. In Norway, the circumstances have been the other way around – 90 per cent have been Chechens. Now, Norway is considering tightening their generous policy. (Dagens Nyheter, 20 February 2004, p. 6, & Svenska Dagbladet, p. 8)

### **Harder to marry outside the EU border**

The Aliens Appeal Board will restrict the possibility to bring a spouse who is a citizen in a country outside the EU to Sweden. The Board is basing its decision on a preliminary decision from The Court of Justice of the European Communities, which says that the right of mobility does not include a spouse from a third country. Firstly, the spouse needs a residence permit in one of the EU countries. Johan Malkan, responsible for EU questions at the Aliens Appeal Board, says that the new practice does not constitute a tightening of EU's immigration policy. (Svenska Dagbladet, 20 February, 2004, p. 14.)

### **Easier for immigrants to get a job**

The longer an immigrant lives in Sweden, the better are the chances of being able to compete with a native Swede on the labour market. This is the conclusion of a report from the National Board of Health and Welfare. Those who recently came to Sweden are in the worst situation, but those who have been living in Sweden more than 20 years have reached the income level of the average native Swede.

(Dagens Nyheter, 20 February 2004, p. 5)

### **The government harshly criticised for its migration policy**

The government lacks a majority in the Parliament for many of its controversial propositions regarding migration policy. There is a majority against the proposed transitional rules on job related immigration from the new EU states. Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Barbro Holmberg believes the transitional rules are necessary, otherwise the conditions at the labour market will become unfair. Anxiety on the labour market and economical constraints will result in increased xenophobia, according to Holmberg. The Moderate Party criticised the government for having failed in its integration and migration policy. Additionally, the proposition concerning responsibility for transportation was being criticised for forcing refugees into the hands of smugglers.

(Svenska Dagbladet & Dagens Nyheter, 19 February, 2004, pp. 14 & 11)

### **Immigrants feel disadvantaged**

Immigrants in Stockholm feel that they are discriminated in Stockholm, but they are nevertheless more satisfied with living in the region than the average Stockholm resident. The biggest problem of the region is the lack of integration, Regional Planning Director, Sven-Inge Nylund says. Some 700 people have

been interviewed on this issue. The survey indicates that the most integrated group is the Finnish speaking one, followed by the Persian speaking group. (Dagens Nyheter, 18 February 2004, p. 8)

**“Segregation will be permanent” – researchers support immigration stop**

Segregation is on the way to become permanent and we must dare to discuss the actual problems, says researcher Aje Carlbom – who has lived three years in Rosengård, an urban district in Malmö with many immigrants. Carlbom supports the proposed immigration stop in Malmö, which will be discussed in Parliament today. “It is a good proposal. This is to show respect and solidarity towards the immigrants who are trying to live in Malmö. It is morally correct to discuss the problems immigrants face as a result of Swedish racism, but this hides a lot of problems, which are due to immigration. This is an economic problem, because the Swedish society of today is a service society, where it is necessary to have a good education and be able to speak Swedish”, Carlbom says.

(Dagens Nyheter, 18 February 2004, p. 10)

**1,500 youths victims of honour related crimes**

Swedish police is currently dealing with 10 cases of honour related murder. New information from the County Administrative Boards shows that some 1,500 youths were victims of honour related crimes last year. However, the quality of the reports varies. Some boards have written two pages, some 50, and some institutions have not even answered the questionnaires. The hidden numbers are also high, since many victims choose not to seek help from any institution. Violence is a part of the every day life for many women, and in strong patriarchal structures women’s sexuality need to be controlled, since the woman’s behaviour influences the honour of the family. These patriarchal structures are common in the Middle East, North Africa, and some parts of Asia and Latin America, but they are not related to specific religions.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 18 February 2004, p. 6)

## **Nordic Headlines 25 February 2004**

### **Danish press**

#### **EU countries follow Denmark's immigration line**

German journalist Jesper von Altenbockum, who in 2000 wrote in the Frankfurter Allgemeine that Danes were 'xenophobic,' and the Danish Government was a copy of Jörg Haider's right-wing Frihedsparti in Austria, has now revised his opinion. As news editor of the same paper, he now writes that '...countries such as Holland have introduced even tougher measures than even Jörg Haider. I don't believe that Denmark, and Danes, are more, or less, xenophobic than most other European countries, which have all been forced to introduce strict restrictions to stem the flow of immigrants and refugees.'

(News Ex-Press, 24 February 2004)

#### **UNHCR welcomes Danish donation**

The UN Refugee Agency UNHCR welcomes the decision by the Danish Government to donate DKK 8 million to support UNHCR activities in Chad. This assistance will significantly contribute to help our office meet the big humanitarian challenges in Chad, a country facing one of the world's worst humanitarian emergencies... Denmark will hopefully inspire others to follow suit.

(UNHCR Stockholm Press Release, 23 February 2004)

#### **Couples flee to Sweden**

More than 1,000 couples, including Pakistanis, Turks, and stateless Palestinians, have fled to Sweden since the Danish government introduced strict immigration restrictions nearly two years ago, which restricted residency claims by foreigners claiming family reunification. The influx of foreigners from Denmark has put the social authorities in Malmø under severe pressure.

(News Ex-Press, 23 February 2004)

#### **Asylum seekers working illegally**

Many asylum seekers, who officially are not allowed to work in Denmark, are currently baking pizzas, cleaning, or washing up for low, 'black' wages. According to a spokesman for the Department of Tax and Customs, recent unannounced swoops on restaurants and bars revealed at least one asylum seeker working in each of the 15-20 businesses raided every night. Although the Danish Red Cross, which runs virtually all asylum centres in Denmark, officially denies that asylum-seekers earn money illegally, sources at the centres have revealed to Politiken that they are fully aware that many asylum-seekers have jobs, but the Red Cross chooses to turn a blind-eye to the problem. All opposition parties, the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (LO), and the European Council for Refugees and People in Exile (ECRE) are now all demanding that asylum seekers waiting for their residency applications to be processed should be allowed to work legally in this country, in line with the majority of EU nations.

(News Ex-Press, 23 February 2004)

### **Demanding work for asylum seekers**

A unified opposition, union and ECRE believe it is unacceptable that asylum-seekers in Denmark are denied permission to work. The government refuses.

(Politiken, 23 February 2004, p. 2)

### **Harsher punishment for hiding refugees**

In the latest governmental proposal to tighten the Aliens Act, the present fine for hiding refugees is to double and people, who on several occasions assist rejected asylum seekers to stay in the country, are to go to prison. "If they won't listen to the government and the parliament, I hope these well-meaning people will listen to Danish Refugee Council, Red Cross and UNHCR, who all advise people not to hide refugees," says Minister of Refugees and Integration, Bertel Haarder.

(Politiken, 19 February 2004, p. 4)

### **Aliens Act accused of undermining freedom of religion**

With the governmental plans to control religious missionaries' education before residency is permitted, it meddles with issues that until now have been the sole responsibility of the religious societies the religious umbrella organisation, Danish Missionary Council says. This is, according to the Secretary General, Ole Jørgensen, "a basic principle that the state is not to control whether a religious missionary is qualified enough. This bears resemblance to the time of absolute monarchy."

(Politiken, 19 February 2004, p. 4)

### **The government tightens its hold on missionaries**

A law proposal poses stricter demands on imams and is to prevent foreigners from sending their children on re-educational trips. Minister of Integration and Refugees, Bertel Haarder expects support from the Danish Folk Party and the Social Democrats. To obtain residency in Denmark, imams are in the new proposal to prove a relevant educational background as well as the ability to maintain themselves. Children, who return from lengthy stays in their parents' homelands, are now as 15 year olds to have their residency evaluated according to the principle of aggregate ties. The government will also deprive refugees of their residency if they go for holidays in their homelands and introduce regulations for family reunification. It will become impossible to get a foreign spouse to Denmark if the applicant in Denmark has been convicted of violence towards a spouse/partner during the last ten years.

(Politiken, 18 February 2004, p. 5)

## **Finnish press**

### **Different policy in the Nordic countries**

*A commentary on the Dutch decision to forcibly return rejected cases*

There has been a different policy in the Nordic countries compared to mainland Europe as regards the treatment of foreigners who are illegally in the country. In

Finland the principle has been that rejected cases will be returned, if need be with the assistance of the police. In this country also, a few rejected cases disappear, and this phenomenon is growing, according to the Head of the Interior Ministry's Refugee and Asylum Unit Annikki Vanamo-Alho. Presumably they have left for some other Schengen country. However, there is hardly any large group of illegal immigrants hiding in Finland. The reason why the return has been effective is that there are so few asylum-seekers in the country. – In Holland, forced return has been seen as the ultimate resort when everything else has failed. And the Dutch police has calculated that a fourth of rejected cases actually stay in Holland. The rest do not necessarily return to their home countries, but go to some other EU country.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 21 February 2004, p. A11)

## **Norwegian press**

### **Fear of less legal protection for asylum seekers**

The State's expenses for lawyers working with asylum cases in Oslo and Akershus are nearly halved the last year. Reduction of payment per asylum seeker when it comes to legal aid, less arrivals and faster placement of asylum seekers to other municipalities are some of the reasons for this development. Furthermore, these numbers may also indicate how situation in the rest of the country is. The Norwegian Bar Association and Amnesty International fear that the legal protection of asylum seekers are about to decline after the government's new procedures came into force 1 January. Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Erna Solberg wish to expand the 48-hours rule for groundless applicants as from 1 January 2005. The Bar Association believes that it will be more difficult to guarantee the protection of new groups if this is being put into force. The Ministry has suggested to reduce the payment for individual cases and remove the right to free legal aid in the first instance. "The 48-hours rule is an ethical problem", says Arild Humlen of the Bar Association. "We cannot do our job properly – and these are tasks that the State has given us.

(Aftenposten, 22 & 23 February 2004, pp. 5 & 2)

### **21,000 are waiting in UDI cue**

Whilst the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has the fastest procedures for asylum cases in Europe, it literally takes years to process working permits or family reunifications. "These applications have become a stopper in the system, and I do what I can every day in order to solve this problem", says UDI Director General, Trygve G. Nordby. As of today, a total number of 21,00 cases are piling up at UDI, however, only 5,000 of them are being proceeded. Moreover, it may take up to a year before the rest is assessed. The time it takes to proceed an asylum application has decreased from 235 to 145 days in 2003. UDI claims to have success also when it comes to removing those with a final rejection from

the reception centres, Only 35 of the 180 persons who were rejected in January have refused to obey order and will therefore forcefully be removed very soon. (Aftenposten, 20 January 2004, p. 4)

## **Swedish press**

### **”Only Denmark has Danes”**

Our neighbouring country in the south teaches us what happens when the leading parties cannot resist xenophobia. The problem, according to the Danish government as well as the opposition parties, is not the high degree of unemployment and social marginalisation among immigrants, but simply that the immigrants are too many and do not want to live like ‘real Danes’. Many people want to date the Danish xenophobia to the 2001 election. But this is not true; Denmark has lived with xenophobic parties for several decades. All major parties are competing with each other to tighten the immigration rules. Last week’s tightening originated from the government coalition together with the Danish People’s Party. Soon, also the Social Democrats wanted to join the agreement. This is how normal and vote winning xenophobia is in Denmark. None of the leading parties dare to refrain from the trend of tightening, whose only aim is to show the new Danes that they are not any real Danes, and do not have a chance of becoming it either. (Dagens Nyheter, Editorial, 25 February 2004, p. 2.)

### **“The Prime Minister embellishes the integration policy”**

The United Nations Association in Sweden has today published a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination where they give another picture of Sweden’s integration policy than the government’s positive description. According to the chairman of the UN Association in Sweden, Aleksander Gabelic, the government fails on several points, for example regarding the high unemployment among immigrants, inferior language education, the inability of the police to handle hate related crimes, and the low proportion of policemen with foreign background. (Dagens Nyheter, Debate, 25 February 2004, p. 4.)

### **Man threatened to blow himself up at the Swedish Board of Migration**

A refugee from Bosnia, who is to be deported from Sweden, and his 15-year-old son barricaded themselves in the office of the Swedish Board of Migration in Flen. The staff was evacuated through a back door. After several hours of negotiations, the man, who did not carry any explosives, gave up and was peacefully arrested by the police.

### **Swedes not worried about “social tourism”**

The Swedish people do not share the government’s concerns regarding ‘social tourism’, a public opinion survey from the Swedish Institute for Public Opinion Research shows. Two thirds of the Swedes think that it would be good if the new EU-countries had free access to the EU labour market. Only 21 per cent believe

this is a negative thing. Young people are the ones most positive, whilst people over 65 are the most negative. The Swedish optimism is also confirmed by public opinion surveys conducted by the European Commission, which show the Swedes distinguish themselves by being relatively positive to the enlargement. (Dagens Nyheter, 24 February 2004, p. 8)

### **No child allowance if wearing veil**

A woman in Malmö was refused her child allowance because she was wearing a veil. The cashier did not think she resembled her ID-card. The woman had to take her veil off in order to get her child allowance, which made her feel insulted. (Svenska Dagbladet, 24 February 2004, p. 6.)

### **Visa tourists seek asylum**

According to the Swedish Board of Migration, 92% of those who sought asylum last year did not have a passport. More than 1100 defections from visas issued by Swedish authorities were registered last year. The hidden numbers are also very high, since many people seeking asylum exchange identity papers and discard travel documents. "We think that many more have come here with visas", the principal administrative officer of the Swedish Board of Migration Kenneth Flour says. The defections concerned primarily people from Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. (Dagens Nyheter, 23 February 2004, p. 5)

### **Workers as trade goods**

Danes move to Skåne in order to escape the tightened Danish rules regarding immigration of relatives. The couples come to Malmö, a city with serious housing shortage and high unemployment. Danish immigration policy is already a Swedish concern, and the Swedish Social Democrats are split; the immigrants are "enriching" our society, but they are only welcome if they renovate our houses for a third of the normal price. However, the social reality will not disappear; the new liberal free trade system has made the working human to trade goods. Who would have thought that we today again have to protect refugees from a neighboring country in war? (Dagens Nyheter, 23 February, Comment p. K2)

### **Fewer asylum-seekers are allowed to stay**

Most asylum-seekers do not have passports when entering Sweden, usually because they want to hide their identity. The Swedish Board of Migration says that fewer asylum-seekers than before have enough reasons to stay according to Swedish law. It is more often a journey away from poverty and unemployment than from oppression and persecution, the Board says. Only 15% of those who sought asylum last year were allowed to stay. But some, especially among refugee organizations, say that policy has been tightened; that it has become more difficult to get asylum for the same reasons as before. (Svenska Dagbladet, 23 February, 2004, p. 11)

### **"Fortress Sweden"**

What was first seen as an opportunity, is now seen as a threat. The EU enlargement is approaching, but the positive attitudes have now changed to xenophobia. The message to the people in the candidate countries is clear: stay away from the "Swedish welfare" and the "Swedish jobs". The provisional regulations will not stop migration, but the process will be hindered. Sweden has a tradition of free trade and openness towards the surrounding world, and the politicians must build on this. In addition, the flexibility on the labour market must increase – the jobs are not protected by regulations but by adjustments.

(Dagens Nyheter, 22 February 2004, editorial p. 2)

### **Prosecutor intervenes in debate about Islam**

There will be a preliminary investigation against the leader of the racist party Skånepartiet, who arranged a debate about Islam, where a document stating that Islam is a psychosocial disease was handed out. The preliminary investigation concerns agitation against an ethnic group.

(Dagens Nyheter, 22 February 2004, p. 7)

### **Refugee children are taken to Sweden for prostitution**

The police as well as the Swedish Migration Board state that this problem has increased over the last few years. Last year, between five and ten refugee children were taken away from refugee centres in the county of Västra Götaland in order to be used in prostitution. In several cases, compatriots have come to the centre to pick up girls of 16 to 17 years old. The girls say to the staff that they have found another accommodation, and are afraid of talking to the police. In 2002, 103 lone refugee children disappeared from refugee centres, and 20 of these were not to be found. The Swedish Board of Migration suspects trafficking in eleven cases. The majority of the children come from Iraq, Somalia, Serbia, Afghanistan, and the former Soviet Union. Last week, the Criminal Investigation Department advertised a new position that will handle trafficking with children only, in order to investigate the suspicion of crime.

(Svenska Dagbladet, 21 February 2004, p. 6)