

SULF:s kongress 2024

Addressing late payment of new international employees

The demographic make-up of the higher education workforce has become steadily more international in Sweden, with an increasing shift towards overseas recruitment to fill employment places. For example, at Lund University, around 57% of researchers and 47% of PhD students are non-Swedish.

Nevertheless, among the many barriers faced by new employees arguably the most immediate is the issue of late payment. Many international recruits face long delays in receiving their first pay package, with this period routinely extending to many months, particularly for those relocating from non-EU/EEA countries. This situation appears to affect all new international employees, however it presents a particular burden in our sector for PhDs and those moving from lower income countries. These delays risk unexpectedly forcing new employees into debt and place huge barriers on their ability to comfortably relocate, house and support themselves. They also present a serious risk to the psychological wellbeing of new employees. Attempts to address this delay appear to be entirely ad-hoc and dependent upon the discretion of employers and administration staff, with common short-term solutions, i.e. borrowing money off university departments being demeaning and unacceptable. Moreover, this current situation constitutes an affront to the basic labour right of all employees to be paid and paid on time for their labour. We contend that this situation is widespread and has to date remained unaddressed because new international employees are generally non-union members and often unaware of their rights or how to access support.

This issue is partially the result of legal barriers that restrict payment of wages to non-Swedish bank accounts, but also the result of a failure on the part of employers to take adequate steps upon recruiting an overseas employee to avoid a delay in payment. While these legal barriers should be reviewed, scope exists within the existing rules to reduce if not fully eliminate the problem. While a *personnummer* can generally only be acquired once a new employee is resident and registered in Sweden (upon the fulfilment of certain requirements) a *samordningsnummer* can be applied for by the employer prior to them relocating and this can be used for initial payments to an overseas account.

SULF/Lund therefore proposes that:

- SULF works to ensure that future collective bargaining agreements stipulate a requirement for employers to request a *samordningsnummer*, and ensure it is issued, for all newly recruited international employees.
- SULF works to reach an agreement by which all new international employees receive a standardised introduction on how to apply for a *personnummer* and set up a bank account in Sweden during onboarding.
- SULF lobbies the government to explore possible reforms to the current legislation to prevent this problem from emerging in the future.

SULF/Lund hemställer därför:

- SULF arbetar för att säkerställa att framtida kollektivavtal stipulerar ett krav på att arbetsgivare ska ansöka om ett *samordningsnummer* och säkerställa att det utfärdas för alla nyrekryterade internationella medarbetare.
- SULF arbetar för att nå en kollektivavtalslösning genom vilken alla nya internationella medarbetare får en standardiserad introduktion om hur man ansöker om ett *personnummer* och öppnar ett bankkonto i Sverige.
- SULF verkar för att regeringen utreder möjliga reformer av nuvarande lagstiftning för att förhindra att problemet med sena löneutbetalningar till internationella medarbetare uppstår i framtiden.