DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN SWEDEN AND FRANCE : A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

Anne Françoise Bender, CNAM, LISE UMR CNRS 5262
292 rue Saint Martin, 75003 Paris
anne-francoise.bender@cnam.fr

Marie José Scotto, IPAG Lab, IPAG Business School
4 Boulevard Carabacel 06000 Nice
m.scotto@ipag.fr, 0033 4 93 13 39 05

Margareta Hult, Linneaus University
Box 451 SE- 351 06 Vaxjo (Suede)
Margareta.Hult@Lnu.se

Abstract :

The differences between France and Sweden are important regarding the implementation of gender equal employment practices. In both countries however, diversity Management has been recently imported under the influence of Anglo-Saxon practices. This paper investigates how diversity management is put in place in two utility companies, one in each country. After studying which HRM practices it includes and the factors that influence them, we will discuss the relationships between equal employment and diversity management in both countries.
The first part of this paper will explore the national contexts and their influences on diversity management, applied to gender, age and ethnicity. We will then compare the development of diversity policies in two companies in France and Sweden. EAU DE PARIS has been considered one of the most diversity oriented company in France. The Swedish group VATTENFAL is a leading actor in the energy sector of the Nordic countries, whose diversity policy is part of a global sustainable development programme. National contingencies account for differences in policies' arrays and paces. However, Diversity management converges in both companies towards Equal employment human resource practices oriented by strategic business goals. We also discuss the relevance of the Anglo-Saxon debate between Diversity and Equal employment in the two countries.

Key words: diversity management, equal employment practices, corporate social responsibility, France, Sweden,

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Introduction

Why compare France and Sweden on Diversity management grounds? Jones, Pringle and Shepherd (2000) argue about the interest of understanding the "local responses" to what they have labelled as a "US–derived model". Indeed, the concept of Diversity management originated in the USA and was then applied in other Anglo-Saxon countries, Canada and the UK, before reaching Continental Europe. Authors studying international Diversity management practices (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2009) stress the importance of national political and legal contexts, likely to account for various diversity management models. This variety can be found within Europe itself given the specific national histories and cultural dynamics of countries. In this framework, contingency factors which are particularly likely to influence managerial practices are indeed legal and historical aspects. The dynamics at meso-levels must also be taken into consideration, such as the influence of Shareholders' expectations – regarding Corporate Social Responsibility -, of Business Circles and Trade-Unions.

As we will see in this communication, Sweden and France show many differences when it comes to cultural, legal[1] and political values[2]. We should then expect contrasts in the way companies deal with equality and diversity issues. Although Equality is a concept relished by the French, France has been slow at adopting both Equal employment policies and Diversity management practices (Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer, 2010). Sweden is a pioneer country – see under - regarding gender equality as well as civil rights and Diversity management has received there a quicker and generalised acceptance by firms. A few French companies have been, however, developing equality and diversity programs since the beginning of the century, paving the way for their emerging generalisation in the CAC 40 companies.

Our research aims at contributing to the debate on Equality and DM in Europe (Greene, Kirton and Wrench, 2005), by investigating the contingency factors which influence firms' practices. Do the same factors exert influence with comparable strength, in both countries, on managerial choices? We will also wonder whether French-style diversity management differs from its Swedish counterpart – in line with institutional contexts – and to what extent the current debate around DM and Equal employment practices in the UK (Kirton and Greene, 2004) is relevant in these two countries (Stringfellow, 2008).

We base our reflection on two qualitative, in-depth studies of Diversity Management practices carried out in a Swedish and a French utility companies, operating respectively in Energy production and Water distribution. We also analysed contexts and actors of these policies, at macro, meso and micro-level, based on documentation and personal observations of the development of these policies over the last ten years.

The first part of our presentation will describe Swedish and French institutional contexts regarding three dimensions of Diversity management: Gender, Age and Ethnical origin. The

[1] The importance of the role of the state differs to a large extend according to the classification of Esping –Andersen (1990)

[2] On the 5 basics dimensions of G. Hofstede (1991) the two countries come out totaly opposite.

second part will focus on the diversity management practices of two companies. In the third part, we will discuss the main contingency factors showing influences on these firms' practices. We will more specifically wonder whether, beyond local – cultural, legal and conjonctural – contingencies, we can observe similarities in the way these two companies implement diversity management. The discussion will come back to the factors accounting for Equal employment practices and DM in both countries.

1. The impact of institutional contexts on diversity management

The past decade has seen the rapid development of Managing diversity's concerns in European organizations. The changing workforce demography has influenced countries, at macro level, and organizations, at micro level, to take issues of equality and diversity seriously.

Diversity management (DM) originated in the US in the 90's, when management scholars and consultants suggested that it gives business competitive advantage to companies. At that time, Equal employment opportunities (EEO) and affirmative action (AA) programmes which had been in place since the 70's were criticized as promoting reverse discrimination at work. In order to keep equality and inclusion of minority groups at work on companies' agenda, these scholars advocated a broader, less bureaucratic view of managing "minorities" and linked diversity of the workforce to the "business case" (Johnson and Packer, 1987). Thomas and Ely (1996) especially highlighted that tackling diversity in the organization is not "managing by numbers" but implies a learning process encouraged by the acceptation of differences. DM evolved towards a new management model aimed at making this heterogeneous workforce as – or more - effective and productive as the previous homogeneous one (Omanovic, 2009). Meanwhile, the anti-discrimination legal framework remained unchanged in the US, still promoting Equal Employment Practices.

DM then progressively influenced European managerial practices, being promoted by the European Commission as a way to fight work discrimination as well as by multinationals' shareholders in their Corporate Social Responsibility expectations[3]. Although their legislations already prohibited discrimination at work, European countries were in various states of awareness regarding Equal employment practices. In the UK, DM could sometimes be seen, like in the US, as a way to alleviate Equal employment requirements on firms (Greene and Kirton, 2004). As many authors state (Pringle, 2001, Omanovic, 2009, Stringfellow, 2008), the concept of DM may thus have different meanings even across European countries.

We specify that, in this communication, we consider DM and Equal employment practices (EEO) as very close, although differences in philopsophy but mostly rhetoric, exist, because :

- France discovered EEO – and started to implement it - through the diversity discourse (see Bender et al, 2010), which makes the boundary between EEO and DM particularly blur in this country (see Stringfellow, 2008, Bender and Pigeyre, 2010).

[3] See the EC website in this respect : http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/managing_diversity_atwork_en.pdf)

– Sweden, following the European Commission Directive, implements stronger Equal Employment practices on ethnic grounds – reinforcement of legislation - through the same concept of Diversity.

It thus appears to us that, in Continental Europe at least, the US debate opposing Diversity management and legally enforced EEO-AA is less pertinent, as EEO-AA legislation is still does not totally enforced in Europe – and has come with DM and not after DM as in the USA and the UK.

1.1 *Equality and Diversity in Sweden*

1.1.1. Gender equality: a leading country

Sweden has a more than 200 years long tradition of promoting equality between women and men. Already in 1845, women got the same right to inheritance as men. The full right to vote was granted to Swedish women in 1919 and practiced for the first time in the elections of 1921, when five women were elected into the parliament. As far back as 1945, it was decided that government officials were entitled to equal pay, whether male or female. As early as 1974 the shared parental leave was introduced (Kalonaityte, Prasad, Tedros, 2010). The reforms introduced during the 60´s and 70´s have focused on an even division of labour and responsibility regarding family affairs. The state also takes a part of the responsibility by obliging all local authorities to provide public childcare so that parents can go to work.

The act on equality between men and women at work was introduced in 1980 and the office of Jämställdhetsombudsman (JO), Ombudsman for Equal opportunities, was established in 1986. The objective was to enforce equal rights for men and women, mainly in working life. Apart from preventing discrimination, this act also required employers to take active measures to promote equality at work, in wages particularly. It was decided that wages transparency was needed, which meant that all information was made official when it comes to equal treatment at work (Lofström, 1999).

Sweden has one of the highest rates of working women in Europe, 80% in 2005. However, the segregation in the labour market is not broken. Women are overrepresented in the traditionally female working roles and in the public sector. They earned 92% of the men's salaries in 2006 (Statistics Sweden, 2006), compared to France, where it was 81 % in 2005.

1.1.2. Ethnic origin

Sweden was a country of emigration during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Since then, Sweden has had quite a few immigrants. However, this is in no comparison to France, who had a colonial immigration for centuries (Blanc-Noel, 2009). During the Second World War, Sweden had an influx of Nordic refugees, being a neutral country. The immigration pattern changed in the 1970´s when the immigrants came from war zones from all over the world. Asylum seekers are a large majority of people seeking refuge in Sweden today (Kalonaityte, Prasad, Tedros, 2010). During the 1990, nearly 500 000 people came to Sweden and today around 20% of the Swedish population were not born in Sweden or have parents, who were not born in Sweden. Half of these are of Nordic origin (Blanc-Noel, 2009).

The first legislation regarding immigration in Sweden has been issued in 1914. It was assumed that the immigrants would be assimilated, being mostly from other Nordic countries.

In the mid 70´s, with the influx of immigrants from all over the world, the Swedish government presented a new bill on immigration with three objectives (Kalonaityte, Prasad, Tedros, 2010) :

1. To establish equality between Swedes and the migrant population
2. To provide freedom of cultural choice
3. Cooperation and solidarity between immigrants and Swedes was desired

The idea was to have freedom of choice of religion, language and culture. Already in 1986 an Ombudsman against ethnical discrimination was established, but has now been replaced by the Equality Ombudsman from 2009. The immigration policy has been followed by educational programmes in the Swedish language as well as general cultural knowledge. In 2007 the MIPEX Index[4] has placed Sweden as number one out of 28 countries for the integration of the non-European immigrants, where France was placed as number 11 (number 15 today). Since 2000 there are five minority groups in Sweden, which have been recognised by the state as having the right to their own culture and language. This means that they have the right to have all the official documents printed in their own language. These are: The Sami's, the Finnish-Swedes, the Tornedals, the Romanies and the Jews ((Coulet, 2009)). A new ministry for immigration and equality was formed in 2006. Its policy is explained in the document labelled: "Sweden, the future and the diversity, from a policy of immigration to a policy of integration". Diversity should be the starting point to form all types of policies in all sectors of the Swedish society with a particular objective to fight against racism and ethnical discrimination.

Sweden is therefore characterised by a policy heavily oriented towards the reception and integration, but not assimilation of the immigrants. In spite of this, the economic situation for the immigrants in Sweden does not differ very much from the situation in other European countries. Their unemployment rate was even higher that in France, 26%, as compared to 23% in 2008 (MIPEX), when the general unemployment rate was between 8-9% during this period. Like in most other countries the immigrants are found in many unskilled jobs. As an example, it has been found that 44% of all the taxi drivers in Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden, have university degrees (Kalonaityte, Prasad, Tedros, 2010).

1.1.3. The Age Dimension

In Sweden the official retirement age is 65 years of age. Employees are entitled to apply for earlier retirement and be paid less. This can be done from the age of 62. Employees also have the right to continue working until they are 67 years old. The choice is the employee's and the employer has to comply with this decision. Even after the age of 67 years of age employees could go on working, providing that the employer agrees to this. (SCB, Konsultakademin i Norden,2012). Compared to other European countries, only Norway and Denmark have a higher retirement age, at 67 years of age. The reform of the pensions in Sweden took place in the 1980´s and was a broad agreement between the then social democratic government and the opposition parties.

The age at which people in Sweden take their pension has thus increased since the 1990´s. In the very beginning of the 21st century these figures were 62,7 for men and 61,9 for women in 2007. This has increased to become 63,5 for men and 62,6 for women (Konsultakademin i Norden - SCB, 2009). The employment rate in Sweden increased between 2005 and 2011

[4] MIPEX measures integration policies in all European Union Member States.

from 65,1% to 65,7%,. Compared to other European countries this is a high figure. In France the employment rate has increased by 0,4% from 2005 to 2011, from 56,7 to 57,1 % of the total population taking part in the working force (Ekonomifakta, Svenskt Näringsliv, 2012). From 2006 to 2011 the employment rate for 55-64 years olds have increased in Swedish companies from 69,8 to 72,5 %, ie 2,7% and for the 65-74 years olds from 10,1 to 11,8, ie 1,7% (Ekonomifakta, Svenskt Näringsliv, 2012).

1.1.4. DM in the Swedish Business world.

The act from 1980 on equal opportunities between men and women at work obliged the companies to establish a plan on how to create a greater equality between men and women within the company. Such a plan had to be established every third year and should contain concrete actions to be taken to increase the equality between the sexes within the company. The introduction of the JO, (Jämställdhets Ombudsman), Ombudsman for equal opportunities, in 1986, made it possible to carry out inspections into the companies, to control the existence of such a plan for equal opportunities and to check that the actions had been carried out. The companies could already then be fined if they had no plan, or had not carried out actions according to the plan. The Trade Unions were from the beginning very active, on central, as well as local level, to make sure that these equality plans were established an carried out. Locally, in companies, the trade union representatives, in most cases, worked very closely with the HR departments to establish and carry out these equality plans.

In January 2009, the new Discrimination Act replaced all previous laws on discrimination. It includes gender, ethnic background, religion, disabilities and sexual orientation as well as age and transgender identity. A new Ombudsman, the "equality Ombudsman", was also appointed and the holder of this position is now responsible for all types of discrimination, gender discrimination included. Also, according to the new law against discrimination, from 2009, all companies with more than 25 employees still have to create a plan for equal opportunities in their company every third year. This should also describe the measures they will take to increase equality in the company, as well as a plan to equalise salaries and wages between men and women.

Still, the " Diversity Ombudsman" (DO) Office can carry out inspections and fine companies, that do not confine with the law. However, the law does not enforce companies to establish a plan against discrimination. This has one exception. Companies, and institutions, delivering teaching, have to work out a plan against discrimination. The plan should contain measures to prevent discrimination, that the company, or institution will carry out during the following year. A non–profit organisation such as Prevent (Arbetsmiljö i samverkan, Svenskt Näringsliv, LO, PTK)[5] is working closely with the organisations and provides health and safety knowledge and training.

When it comes to the participation of Trade Unions in the antidiscrimination issues, particularly on the local level, many companies have witnessed a not so strong engagement as when dealing with equal opportunities and equal wages. It seems more difficult nowadays to make priorities between the different tasks, measurements and actions. The company plan on equal opportunities and equal salaries is, in most cases, a part of the CSR –report and published in the annual report from the company, together with other relevant information. This information is transparent and publicly available for anybody to read and therefore, also

[5] It is a body consisting of employers (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise), Blue- and white collar workers unions (LO and PTK), with the aim to collaborate on issues to create a better working environment.

important as a marketing tool. What is at stake is to attract competent employees interested in working in an environment described in these documents.

1.2. Equality and Diversity in France

The debate on diversity is recent in France (first apparition 2004) and was first associated with ethnic diversity. Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer (2010) highlighted the historical and sociological context of the French debate. Since the Revolution in 1789, France has developed a model of formal equality stated in the French Declaration of Human and Citizen Rights (but, at that time, excluding women). It is now questioned by the concept of diversity, bringing acknowledgment of the reality of discriminatory practices. In employment matters, while the issue of gender equality had been on the legal agenda since the 80's as in Sweden, it was very modestly implemented due to almost no institutional control of its reality, neither by governments nor by unions. Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer (2010) show how ethnic diversity has come forward in the public debate only in recent years, as a result of an increasing awareness of shortcomings linked to the French model of integration of immigrants and their descendants. In France, the concept of diversity is not at all the result of a criticism of "affirmative action" or Equal Employment practices as it can be analysed in Anglo-saxon countries and even Sweden (Omanovic, 2009) since these EEO practices hardly existed. On the opposite, it can be said that it has brought public awareness of the limits of the French model of formal equality of rights and the strong assimilationist philosophy of this model.

Diversity discourse was adopted by French government and managerial elites starting in 2004 to promote anti-discriminatory employment practices. At the same time, under European's legislative influence, the French government developed a stronger legal and regulatory framework on discriminations with the creation of the HALDE[6] in 2004 – which became the "Défenseur des droits "or civil rights ombudsman. Many legislative measures, along with the development of "testing" studies as a procedure to evaluate the degree of discriminatory practices in firms and some public debates, have contributed to progressively make discriminatory practices more visible and legitimate in French public opinion.

1.2.1. *The Gender dimension in France*

Regarding gender, the political, legal and institutional framework has greatly improved over the last 40 years. This framework backed by the EU actions, helped women to gain access to the employment market (51.1% of the labor force in 2008). Despite the fact that the principle of Equality between men and women was written in the 1946 French Constitution, France has been slow to adapt the European law to the role of women in politics. The law of June 2000 stated that men and women should have the same opportunities to access political functions. The political parties had to present the same number of men and women as candidates on national polls. Thanks to this much controversed law, female participation in the French Parliament rose from 12.8% in 2002 to 18.2% in 2007, reaching the 58th position in the world, far behind such countries as Sweden (47.3% of women MP) or Finland (42%). Despite a variety of legal measures (from 1972), and the development of family friendly policies through working hours reduction – the working week of 35 hours for everybody-, women still face horizontal employment segregation problems and vertical discrimination such as the glass ceiling (Laufer, 2004), and unequal pay discrimination[7], in addition to the difficult

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7 There is a remaining 11% pay gap between men and women, especially for women in management positions (19%).

balance between work and family life (Scotto, 2008). In January 2011, the French law established a quota of women (up to 40% in 2017) on corporate boards; however, on the other side of the professional ladder, women have to cope more than men with part-time and less qualified jobs and the unemployment rate is higher for women.

1.2.2. *The Age dimension*

Age might be the main discriminating factor in France (Guillemard, 2007). The situation is however progressively changing: in the years 2000, the awareness of the limitations in pensions funding but also the pressure resulting from European policies have prompted the idea that legislation should counter discrimination against ageing workers (Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer, 2010). We should expect the development of a different logic now among companies, supported by the expanding set of European[8] and French legislative frameworks, which are to keep senior workers employed enabling the consideration of a new business case in relation with the age dimension of diversity.

Beyond banning age discrimination through inclusion of 'age' into the 'equality of right' legislation in 2001, French law ((2006) now supports a positive action approach for ageing workers, in coherence with EU legislation (Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer, 2010). Companies with over 300 workers had to sign a collective agreement or present a plan with goals regarding the proportion of ageing workforce to be achieved within three years. Failing to do so before January 1st, 2010, would result in a penalty amounting to 1% of the total wage bill. As of today however, companies devised plans but most of them are empty shells and do not commit to recruit ageing workers.

1.2.3. The Ethno-racial Dimension

The issue of Ethno-racial diversity in France must be considered within a French legal approach which refuses to acknowledge the concept of "ethnic" or "racial" origin. France has a long tradition of immigration, European first (Poland, Russia and Italy then Spain and Portugal after WW2), then from the former colonies of North Africa and Sub Sahara's countries (Blanc-Noel, 2009). The French model of citizenship has been built on an assimilation assumption, contrary to other models based on allowing differences. It did not prevent widespread employment discrimination, as in other western countries, nor the progressive constitution of ethnic segregated areas in poorer suburbs. Non-European immigrants face more discrimination than their European counterparts (Weil 2005, Rea and Tripier 2008). French children of immigrants also suffer discrimination on the labor market especially people from North Africa and Africa, even those coming from French overseas territories (CEREQ, 2004 and 2006 ; Observatory of Discrimination, 2004, 2005, 2006).

The debate between integration and assimilation is still unsettled and takes a new dimension with the European context and its advocacy for cultural diversity. Cultural Diversity is a very new and controversial concept for a France whose model of "Universal Citizenship" opposes to multiculturalism. Most Anglo-Saxons countries have no reluctance in "counting" "ethnic" or religious categories whereas it is still illegal in France. On another aspect of cultural diversity, religion, it should be noted that, since the French revolution and the Republican governments, the county adopted a strong secularism : religious matters belong to the private sphere and must not interfere with the Republic laws. The recent debate on the "national

[8] EU targeted an employment rate of 50% of seniors workers in 2010

identity" unleashed controversies especially with members of the Muslim Community on the issue of wearing ostentatious religious signs in schools or in public services (Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer, 2010).

1.2.4. Diversity management and French companies

The first mention of "diversity" in France originates from business circles: The "Montaigne Institute", a think tank organization under the leadership of Claude Bébéar, former CEO of AXA insurance corporation, promoted the "Diversity Charter", a voluntary commitment initially made by a small number of firms. The purpose of this charter is *"to respect and promote the application of the principle of non-discrimination in all its forms and at all stages of human resource management, in particular recruitment, training and development, and promotion,* ***in order to reflect the diversity of the French society and in particular its cultural and ethnic diversity, at all qualification levels****"* (Bender, Klarsfeld and Laufer, 2010). The French government also was active in promoting anti-discriminatory employment practices, with the creation of a Diversity Label in 2008. The Label, delivered after an audit from AFNOR, the French certification agency is seen as an Award, meaning that the firm integrates diversity in its HR processes. French large companies are conscious of the necessary coupling of diversity and equal treatment. Indeed, they promote "pro-active" policies of diversity management, which also aim at equal opportunity (Bender and Pigeyre, 2010). These practices remain however limited to public listed large companies and depend solely on managerial initiative, with limited legal obligations since laws non-abiding remains so far largely unsanctioned[9].

As for trade unions, in the early 2000's, they were in the same state of ignorance regarding Equal employment practices and diversity as employers. Gender equality was not seen as an important issue and it is not the unions who have been active in the ten years in putting it on the agenda. Under pressure from the French government, they signed a national collective agreement with employers' associations in 2006, which was only a declaration of intention to better reflect national diversity in employment and to fight ethno-racial discriminatory practices. As of today, most unions agree with the need for inclusive, anti-discriminatory employment practices and do not see the Diversity concept in itself as controversial (Stringfellow, 2008) since they understand it in this anti-discrimination sense. They are however wary of employers' real motivations to engage in negotiations about these matters (i.e. they fear the risk of "empty shell" for communication purposes only).

To conclude on contexts, Sweden has a much stronger tradition and legally binding framework, actively implying unions, regarding Gender Equality than France. Sweden is also more opened to the notion of multi-culturalism. In both countries, the concept of Diversity Management arrived recently and was mostly promoted by business circles and governments. We will now study how two companies applied it in each country.

2. Exemples from Swedish and French Companies

2.1. Methodology

[9] To be fair, we should mention that a few law-suits of well-known firms for racial discrimination, occurring in the 2000's, are at the origin of these companies' publicised involvement in Equality and Diversity policies.

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Our exploratory study focuses on the development of Equality and Diversity policies in two companies, one in France and one Sweden. We used data from two cases studies. For France, the company is EAU DE PARIS which belongs to the production and distribution sector of drinking water. EAU de PARIS has been considered a pioneer and an example regarding its actions on Gender and Diversity Management. In Sweden, we contacted VATTENFALL Company, which operates in the electricity production and distribution sector. It was important for comparison purpose to choose a company operating in an industrial and technical "male" sector.

Regarding the EAU DE PARIS' case, we had access to primary and secondary data collected at EAU DE PARIS for a previous research (Scotto, 2008). 30 interviews conducted from January 2007 to July 2008 allow us an indepth and longitudinal view of the Diversity Management process which has been developed in that company. From the 30 interviews, 25 were employees or middle managers from the main departments of the company; 5 were top Managers, including CEO, Head of EAU DE PARIS HRM Department and Diversity Manager.

The Swedish company case study is less documented. Three interviews with the Head of VATTENFALL Sweden HRM Department, in charge of Diversity Policy, took place in January 2012. The asymmetry of the information in our view has been somewhat attenuated by the fact that we used a similar guideline (translated in English) for the interviews and that we had access to the person in charge of the Diversity Management Process at VATTENFALL. The comparison was made easier as we had already an extended French case study as model.

We also used additional information from the EAU DE PARIS 2009 annual reports and VATTENFALL Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2009 and 2010 as documentation. But the interviews were the main sources of information to appraise and compare the two diversity management processes. Our methodology is based on case studies approach, focusing on a comprehensive and descriptive perspective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2004). In this comparison, we aimed at describing practices and dynamics of two contextualised processes, one in France and one in Sweden.

A common feature regarding these two companies is that both are part of the public sector but competing with private companies on their markets. VATTENFALL is operating in a deregulated Nordic electricity market where prices depend on supply and demand fluctuation. VATTENFALL is a 100% state owned company whose objective is to produce electricity from production to distribution. It's the first producer in the Nordic Countries and has diversified its activities towards air conditioning and urban heating systems. The market of drinking water in France shows as well a strong concentration with 3 main private actors: VEOLIA Eau, Lyonnaise[10] des Eaux, SAUR[11]. EAU DE PARIS is one of the few public companies operating on this market which has been largely open to private interests through a " transfer system ", meaning that the management of a public service (here the production and distribution of drinking water) has been shifted to a public company under contract. Nonetheless, it appears that a growing numbers of municipalities are reverting to regain control of their water production and distribution system as it is the case for the Municipality of Paris. The public operator EAU DE PARIS has won the tender against its two main

[10] A branch of the SUEZ Group

[11] A subsidiary of the BOUYGUES Group

competitors, SUEZ and VEOLIA. The two sectors Water and Electricity production can be considered as sensitive regarding environmental issues and must carefully manage their image. This explains maybe why, despite their differences in size (EAU DE PARIS is a small national company compared to VATTENFALL), both share a same concern regarding the implementation of a Diversity Management Process.

In France, EAU DE PARIS is considered as a leading company regarding Equality and Diversity issues from as far as 2001. The company has successfully obtained the various Diversity accreditations and Labels developed by the French Government. EAU DE PARIS actions on that ground are exceeding the legal requirements when a noticeable part of the French companies hardly comply with them. VATTENTALL as a Swedish Public Company, has initiated since 2002 a sustainable development process. The company has been ranked A+ for its compliance in global sustainable development policy, including economic, environmental and social actions, focusing on Gender Equality (Swedish Institute, 2009).

The following table presents a few figures such as management feminization rate, training and wages ratio.

	EAU DE PARIS	VATTENFALL SUEDE
Legal Status	EPIC (Public Industrial and Commercial Organisation)	AB (Limited)
Sector	Water	Electricity
Workforce	609	9571
Women	188	2477
Men	422	7094
Gender ratio (Women employed)	30.8	26
% of Women managers	37.4	41
Motivation Survey	yes	yes
% of the workforce involved in training programmes	52	69
Wage ratio between women and men managers	83	91
Wage ratio between women and men employees	90.5	90

Source : Sustainable Development Report EAU DE PARIS, (2009) et CSR Report VATTENFALL(2010)

These companies are operating in industrial and technical “male” sectors, hence the small percentages of women in the workforce: 30.6% for EAU DE PARIS and 26% for VATTENFALL. Both companies have been deliberately increasing their shares of women managers (see under). Consistently with French national figures, the gender gap in wages is bigger for women managers at EAU DE PARIS than for women employees, whose pay is ruled by 'civil service' type remuneration grades. In line with Swedish laws and enforcement processes described above, the gender gap is narrower at VATENFALL than at EAU DE PARIS for women managers.

2.2. *Diversity Management Process at Eau de Paris*

The DM Process at EAU DE PARIS can be analyzed through 6 major steps. Initially, back to year 2001, the nomination of a woman as CEO of the company[12] has coincided with the Trade Union representatives concerns for non-discrimination practices. An "Ethical Commission" has been created, leading to new state of awareness among the employees. There was no mention of diversity at that time, the concept being not used yet in France – nor formal "Equal Employment" -. The objective was to recruit and promote more women in traditionally "masculine" jobs. It was a voluntaristic operation consistent with the openly feminist determination of the CEO. This was thus an initiative from the top management, which received support from the trade unions and the main client of the company: the socialist-run municipality of Paris.

From Year 2004-2008, Evaluation and Career Development were the first HR processes to be questioned and impacted by this new orientation, as well as recruitment. One of the main actions was the creation of ethical management exams as part of the career development as well as extensive training sessions for the employees.

The third step of the Development of Diversity was the collective agreement Commitment. The company committed itself by signing various Diversity Charts and negotiating internal collective agreements regarding Gender Equality and Diversity. This commitment led to further development with the preparation for Label accreditations : EAU DE PARIS has been awarded in 2005 one of the first Gender Equality Label created by the French Government and enforced by AFNOR, the French Certification Organization.

Equality programs thus focused on Gender at the beginning but in 2007 the company targeted other aspects such as Sexual orientation, Ethnic Diversity, Disability and Age discrimination. For instance, paternity as well as maternity leaves are granted whatever the sexual orientation. As far as Ethnic Diversity is concerned, the objective is more about avoiding discrimination in recruitment and career development than implementing an open ethnic recruitment policy. EAU DE PARIS strongly states its will about avoiding any kind of discrimination on that ground. But no specific open action has been identified so far. Moreover, the lacks of official workforce ethnic statistics, a sensitive issue in France, prevents any quick evolution in that matter. Regarding Age, the Global Equality agreement signed by the employer and unions includes actions towards seniors workers. It is mainly aimed at keeping them employed and building on their experience to keep the company's Knowledge Capital.

The generalisation of the Diversity process started from 2008, when the company was awarded the Diversity Label, enforced by AFNOR. At the same time, EAU DE PARIS, as part of its evolution, had to integrate a new work force previously employed by its competitors in maintaining and managing the water distribution network. The effort towards building an inclusive company culture were also useful in this integration process. In its corporate communication, the company puts a stronger emphasis on its Diversity policy and its role in Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility.

2.3. Diversity management at VATTENFALL

VATTENFALL started from 1980 on a policy of Gender Equality comforted by the mandatory legal requirement of the Ombudsman in the 80s. From 2011, all statistics produced by the group (not only in Sweden but in all their European subsidiaries) as well as their Work

[12] The first ever nominated

and Health Reports had to be gendered. The current gender issue for the company is less the feminization of the workforce than ensuring equal career opportunity for women managers and recruiting high female potentials. The CSR report clearly states the goals of the Diversity Policy of the Company: "…*we strive for diversity in teams and units in regards to gender, age, background and experience, enabling employees from different units and different nationalities to work together ….offering advantages to women ….."* Vattenfall CSR Report (2010, p. 59).

Confronted with the prospect of massive retirement drain, the company has started focusing on Age Diversity from 1996 especially regarding recruitment process, far before it becomes a growing concern for the French companies. But now, the company is anticipating that 7% of its workforce might retire within the next five years. The strategic objective is to integrate young talented women as well as keeping and transferring knowledge. Hence, the company is developing relationships with future graduates and senior/junior tutoring programmes.

The opening to Ethnic Diversity is a new orientation for VATTENFALL and focuses on recruitment process. As quoted in the 2010 Vattenfall CSR Report (p.59), the purpose is to *"Offer advantages to women and people with an immigrant background in the recruitment process*". Ethnic statistics are considered as a useful tool in order to measure improvement and goals achievements. But according to the HR management, the development of such actions depends strongly on the positive orientation of managers and recruiters. The issue has been discussed in the company for the last five years and is still on the agenda. The prospect is to develop ethnic statistics data base which might be integrated in the future CSR reports. The question of Ethnic Diversity is explicitely addressed in a CSR perspective, in regards of the new emphasis put on immigrants integreation in the Swedish society.

The most recent development in VATTENFALL Diversity Management Policy (2011) targets the recruitment of young Disabled workers. The company is partner of the "Open Eyes Project" developed by the Labour Market Department of the City of Stockholm and aiming at promoting career paths for youths with disability in the private sector.

All these actions for VATTENFALL are included in a Global Responsibility Approach: the company has signed the Globalt Ansvar as well as the UN Global Compact.

2.3. Similarities and differences between companies

In our view, the main differences lie in the timing and targets of various policies.
Gender equality has been a concrete endeavor for VATENFALL since the 80's whereas EAU DE PARIS, although pioneer in that field, actively promoted it only starting 2001, following the change of CEO. Whereas EAU DE PARIS promotes gender mixity in masculine jobs, the feminization process at VATTENFALL is more focused on recruiting female young high flyers and integrating them through mentoring programs, associating Gender with Age Diversity, an urgent concern for the company.

Regarding age indeed, like most Swedish companies, VATTENFALL implemented Age Management Programs in the 1990's by keeping the ageing work force at work (Mykletun and Furunes, 2012). This became a government issue much later in France (2006). The main objective now is to encourage companies to keep the ageing workforce through incentives and penalties schemes. EAU DE PARIS, although exemplary again, discussed its Age

Management Agreement[13] with its Trade Unions Representatives only in 2007. As of today, in Sweden, (and at VATTENFALL), Age Management is more about attracting young talented people (young women, young persons from ethnic origin or young Disabled) in order to face the coming retirement wave and balance the large base's demographic pyramid of companies[14].

Another difference lies in the emphasis publicly put on the Ethno-racial Diversity Policy, which is a more visible agenda at VATTEFALL with the project of "ethnic" statistics data base. So far, such openness might be difficult in the French context even for a pioneer company like EAU DE PARIS.

As a rule, at VATENFALL, the diversity policy appears more directly anchored in business needs of the company. It is focused on Skills, Gender, Diversity and internationalisation of the workforce. EAU DE PARIS's policy maintains a strong emphasis on an anti-discrimination philosophy, consistent with the company's culture implemented by the CEO, but evolving with a more open 'business case' rhetoric.

We would thus allege that the DM processes in both companies show convergences. Their first steps both targeted Equality practices between men and women at work. They later addressed other types of populations within the company according to legal agendas and business needs– ethno-racial origin, disabled, seniors and recently young recruits for VATTENFALL -. It has to be noticed that, for both, Diversity rhetoric goes along with Equal Employment HRM Practices through recruitment and non-discriminative promotional and pay practices. Eventually, the generalization of the Diversity policy is becoming part, in both companies though not at the same pace, of an affirmed CSR orientation.

3. Contingency factors and discussion of national models

The first factor contributing to equality and diversity practices at VATENFALL is the strong Swedish legal requirements, which gave the impulse to gender equality in the 80's, age management in the 90's and now ethno-racial diversity. They are all the more binding since the unions are also committed to their implementation. The company has thus no difficulty integrating the diversity discourse in existing HRM practices and social reporting.

The second factor is the company's strategy and workforce requirements: in the diversity framework, VATENFALL management set up programmes for recruiting young immigrants and disabled workers because they forecast massive retirements in their workforce. They also want to attract qualified women and keep them growing in the company to replace departing executives.

The third factor is the company's global social reputation for its various stakeholders, a longstanding preoccupation.

[13] Plan Seniors

[14] 19% of the workforce at Vattenfall will retire within the nest 10 years

In EAU DE PARIS, in the absence at that time – beginning 2000s – of strong legal requirements[15], the main factor at the origin gender equality practices was the CEO's commitment to Equality. The ethical reasons are thus predominant in this case, even if business objectives were alos present through the business relationship with the left-wing Municipality of Paris. The business case became more prominent following the recent integration of new employees – women, civil servants – but, although emphasized in the main companies' strategic statement, it is less predominant than the non-discrimination orientation.

The second factor is the legal requirements, especially regarding employment of disabled people. Gender equality legislation is also progressively becoming more binding and the Diversity label offer guidelines to companies who want to fight ethno-racial discrimination. It should be however reminded that, given relatively few legal cases on discrimination grounds -, not many companies go as far as EAU DE PARIS in their HRM policies and many seem to remain at the stage of a vague "rhetoric" on diversity, without really changing their recruitment and training practices, especially among SMEs (Opcalia, 2013).

To conclude, our research highlights the important part played by the legal requirements in Sweden, all the more since trade-unions – quite powerful in the country - have joint-responsibility for companies' compliance. In this context of Equal Employment binding legislation, the Diversity Management rhetoric is more business-oriented than in France. Like in Anglo-saxon countries, DM is a vehicle to meet strategic human resources objectives and CSR policies.

In France, "Diversity management" was initially targeted at fighting ethno-racial discrimination and sometimes used in this meaning only – cf the Diversity Charter -, as a way to avoid mentioning the ethno-racial origins (Klarsfeld, 2009). As EAU DE PARIS's example shows, it is increasingly used as a concept to promote Equal treatment at work -see the Diversity Label requirements -, which was not really promoted was before years 2000, and to fight discriminations regarding Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Disability, Sexual orientation.... In this acception, it is becoming part of corporate CSR policies as for Anglo-Saxon companies. Bearing in mind that EAU DE PARIS's militant approach on Equal employment practices is probably unique in France, we can observe that most companies DM discourse and emerging practices might not be sufficient to successfully combat discriminations, especially on ethno-racial grounds, in the absence of a stronger legally binding legal context. In this sense, quotas and penalties – as is the case for Disabled people employment and more recently for reducing gender pay equity - might be a "necessary evil".

Our research, albeit limited in scope, illustrates the fact that the French model of DM is backing up Equal Employment practices (Point and Singh, 2003), whose concrete implementation was lacking in the country, whereas the Swedish Model of DM, arriving in a country with longstanding implemented anti-discrimination legislation, seems more Business case oriented and closer, in this respect, to Anglo-Saxon countries.

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[15] Even though gender equality was put more clearly on the agenda by the left -wing French Government under EC pressure – cf « Genisson Law » in 2001.

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