

EO Files (February 2008)

## **THINGS WE DO, PEOPLE WE MEET – REFLECTIONS IN BRIEF**

### **Sweden Study Tour (2) -- Equality is a mainstream concept**

In addition to its ease of access, we were also struck by the strong impression that in Sweden the spirit of equality is a deep-rooted mainstream concept.

Through observations, which were confirmed by our Swedish friends, we noted that the Swedish people hardly ever question the importance of equal opportunities in society, or the need to build a barrier-free society, or objects to spending public money for the benefit of minority groups. In the minds of the average Swedish citizen, the need to provide equal opportunities goes without saying.

To the people of Sweden, equal opportunity is not a slogan, but a common value. There may be areas of implementation where improvements are still needed, but Swedish society as a whole respects the principle of equality. No debate or controversy has been provoked by the fact that the government designates large amounts of resources in ensuring equality.

In Sweden, the pursuit of equal opportunity does not focus on defining which kind of behaviour is against the law, but on ensuring that people in need get appropriate assistance and that there are measures in place that help promote inclusiveness. They think in terms of “*What else can we do to promote equal opportunity?*”

This is something Hong Kong would do well to learn from.