

JAK International Newsletter (www.jak.se/int)



This is the first number of JAK Medlemsbank (JAK Members Bank) international newsletter. We are a cooperative bank, founded in Sweden 1965, which is operating an interest-free savings and loan system since 1970 and obtained the Bank Licence in 1997. We have had international friends and contacts since the beginning but we don't have the goal to expand our activities abroad. Instead we would like to spread our ideas over the World and help people in other countries to create their own interest-free projects. It is in this purpose that we start this international newsletter.

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Content

1. What is JAK? JAK Schools.

Every issue of the newsletter will start with the chapter called "What is JAK". In this chapter we will explain different aspects of our cooperative bank. In this issue we will write about our JAK Schools (JAK Skolor).

JAK Schools

In JAK Medlemsbank (JAK Members Bank) we believe in the dialogue and education.

We use our resources to open space dialogues for all our members instead of focusing in marketing.

The education starts at a local level, with our basic courses all around Sweden, where members – and not members – are introduced in how the cooperative is working and why we defend an interest free economy. Then, for those members who had already participated in a basic course, we offer the possibility to attend one of our JAK Schools, which holds during a weekend. We have two big JAK Schools per year (around 70 participants) and three or four small JAK Schools (around 20 participants). The big JAK Schools takes place near Skövde and the participants can visit JAK head office and the staff. The small JAK Schools takes place in different municipalities in Sweden, making it easier to people from all around the country to come. Anyhow, in all JAK Schools, members are invited by JAK, who pays the costs for travel, accommodation and courses.

JAK Schools are a forum where all members can meet, learn of each other and have serious discussions about economy. We in JAK believe that these serious discussions about economy are not very frequent in our society. Lots of people think that economy is something difficult and that it's better to leave it to "experts" but we don't think so. We think that economy is an important aspect of our everyday lives, both in an individual and in a community level and to leave economy to "experts" make us somehow vulnerable. In JAK Schools we focus in the idea that everybody has the knowledge of (and should) talking about economy. We are sure that training ourselves in these discussions, which focus mostly (but not only) in our interest-free economic alternative, we become better prepared citizens, ready to participate in private or public debates where we can stand for and explain to others the basics and the purpose of our cooperative bank.

All JAK members are welcome to our JAK Schools . Priority is for those who had never participated the School before. In practice we have both new and veteran members in every JAK School. We believe this is a very good mix, where experienced and "new eyes" can meet each other.

2. Interest-free group in Couchsurfing.

www.couchsurfing.com is a website and a non profit organization where members share their homes with other members. That is: when you are travelling, instead of sleeping in a hotel or hostel you can sleep in other people's homes. And when you are at home you can host travellers who are visiting your city or village. In couchsurfing there is all kind of groups. There is, for example, a Leonard Cohen group, so if I like Leonard Cohen I can be member and try to visit other Leonard Cohen fans in my travels. And now there is also an Interest-free group which we have created thinking in all of us who dream about an interest-free economy. Let's say that I am travelling to Copenhagen and there is a member in the Interest-free group who lives there and want to host me. Then I can sleep at his/her place and we can meet each other and talk about JAK Denmark and JAK Sweden in a much better way than by e-mail.

This is the presentation of the Interest-free group in couchsurfing:

“We don’t like to earn money as the result of a passive ownership but instead as the result of active working.

We start this group in Sweden, inspired by example of JAK Medlemsbank (JAK Members Bank) (www.jak.se) , which is a cooperative of more than 35.000 members who lend money to each other without using any kind of interest. It is beautiful.

In JAK, those who borrow money do not pay interest to those who save money. However, they have to pay the administration costs of the loan.

In Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Holland, ...there are people who dislikes the use of interest in economy and they are working in different interest-free alternatives. We open this group for all of them, for all of us; let’s enrich our travels meeting people who share our ideals. Let’s learn of each other!”

3. JAK School in English, 7-9 August 2009, Malmö, Sweden

As we have written before, JAK Schools plays an important role in JAK and that’s why we have the idea that a JAK School in English would be a good way to arrange an international meeting.

We are planning a JAK School in English in the summer 2009, between the 7th and the 9th of August in Malmö, south of Sweden. It will be the first JAK School in English and we want to make it a meeting point between JAK members who are working in the international spreading of our ideas and people from abroad who have created (or would like to create) other interest-free projects.

The programme and more details about the JAK School in English would be published in our webpage and in the next issue of this newsletter. But you can already send your application if you want to participate. Write us an e-mail to miguel.ganzo@jak.se with your name, contact details and the project in which you are involved in at your home country. We have limited places: 15 guests from abroad, 10 guests from Sweden.

JAK School in English is free (including accommodation and maintenance) but the travel should be fixed by the participants themselves.

4. JAKs friends: JAK Bank Italia

In every issue of the newsletter we will present one of JAK’s friends. Projects in other countries which share our ideals and practices. Not totally, because every project is unique, but at least partially. In this issue we will present a young project: JAK Bank Italia.

Article written by Franco Fratto, founding member in JAK Bank Italia and Communications Group’s coordinator:

“Ours is a little story that wants to become bigger.

Everything started the 18th of May 2008: I was watching "Report", an Italian television programme produced by RAI3 (the third public broadcasting corporation channel) where was presented the experience of a group of people who forty years ago founded a bank in Sweden, with the primary objective to provide its members with interest-free loans. In order to accomplish this, they put in place a special system to keep low operating costs, encourage savings and ensure that the final amount on deposits would exceed the initial capital.

I looked at my wife and said: "We absolutely need to do the same thing here!", then I took a piece of paper and asked her "What are they called again?", "Jak Bank..." she replied. As it turned out it wasn't a solitary thought, but one shared by many others around the country.

We initially made contact with each other as bloggers on the internet, then we decided it was time to give it a go and founded a cultural association on September 13th 2008 in Florence.

What are we trying to achieve? We are currently investigating how to establish a legal entity that will be the future "JAK Bank Italia". We have started building a network of relationships with different ethical financial organizations operating in Italy, and discovered how the " JAK method" is substantially different from all of them. We then become yet even more convinced by the urgency of generating such a similar reality in our Country.

Since its launch, our website (www.jakbankitalia.it) has generated much interest and a lot of curiosity. Many people have contacted us enquiring about how we operate. So far we have explained to everyone that we are undergoing a phase of study, as the Italian laws and cultural traditions differ from the Swedish ones; hence, we have assigned our internal resources to three different tasks: one group is taking care of all the administrative aspects of the project, another one is dealing with the feasibility case-study, and the third one is liaising with communication and the press.

What has certainly encouraged us more was to establish relations of mutual respect with the Swedish JAK Bank and get in contact with the people who work there. Thanks to them we are now launching an international workshop that should facilitate our understanding on how to initiate a "pilot project" in Italy by the end of 2009; or at least this is our purpose.

If all goes well, we will set up a cooperative, the only form of partnership (one head, one vote) allowed by our existing legislation system, mainly because we are convinced that setting up a "bank" would be a wrong choice, at least in our country. The Italian banking system is much more invasive and restrictive compared to the Swedish one and we would not like that the need to " stay on the market", would turn the future JAK Bank Italia in a company forced to make profit to endure. If this would be the case, we would have failed in our intention, but, more so, we would have disappointed those who are looking for us, those who believe that this ideal can improve our society and ultimately, ourselves.

During the coming months we would like to organise a National Conference in Turin entitled "JAK Bank Italia: builders of future. A comparison on ethical finance experiences ". This will be our first public exposure.

This event will be a test for our "small" association, as well as an important moment of dissemination on JAK's system methods and principles, those principles that have fascinated and convinced us to dedicate spare time and resources for it to become a reality in Italy.”

5. Unravelling debt: the economy, banking and the case of JAK.

In August 2008 Mark Burton published his dissertation Unravelling debt: the economy, banking and the case of JAK, which was written under his year at Schumacher College in Southwest England. Among other things Mark’s dissertation is a really good study of the JAK model. Mark Burton writes in his study: “The JAK Model can be part of a change towards a sustainable approach to money while also encouraging the necessary change in behaviour”.

6. Creating network

We are working in the international part of our webpage, www.jak.se/int, in order to make it more complete, with more information, links and material. In the meantime, if you are interested in more information in some specific language or about some specific country, you can call us (+46500464565) or send us an e-mail (miguel.ganzo@jak.se) and we will absolutely answer and also try to help you.

7. The newsletter

Our initial idea is to publish this international newsletter every two months. You can read it at www.jak.se/int or subscribe to it writing an e-mail to: miguel.ganzo@jak.se

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