

SWEDEN

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Institutional and Policy Framework for Admission and Employment

The most important actors on the national level when it comes to policymaking in the fields of migration and integration are several Government ministries and the Migration Board. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for different areas of migration and asylum policies. The Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality is responsible for policy areas concerning citizenship, discrimination issues, integration, urban development and national minorities. The Migration Board enforces policies on visa, asylum, residence permits, citizenship and return migration.

There are possibilities for both highly and low-skilled migrants to come to Sweden for work through legal channels, but the system has been fairly regulated and not very flexible until recently. Before 2008, an employer who had the intent of hiring a third-country national had to report the vacant position to the County Labour Board. A third-country national could get a work permit if the Migration Board that consults the National Labour Board and the trade union in question, decided that there was a need. The National Labour Board conducted a labour market test to make sure that there was a need for foreign labour. The employer also had to guarantee that the foreign worker was paid properly, had accommodation, and was covered by insurance, as well as that other terms of employment were fair and in line with the collective agreement. The Migration Board and the County Labour boards have the main responsibility for matching supply and demand in the labour market (Johnsson, 2008).

However, the system for admission of migrant workers became more flexible in 2008 and is now employer-driven to the extent that it is the employer and not the

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authorities that takes a decision on recruiting foreign labour. Access to permanent residency was also facilitated, as a temporary permit can be upgraded to a permanent one after four years of residence. The employer still has to guarantee that the rules of the Swedish labour market are followed. Citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland have priority in access to jobs. Foreign students and asylum-seekers whose application has been rejected have the possibility of seeking a work permit in Sweden (Government of Sweden, 2007/08). Migrants that find a job have the right to change their permit, industry and job after less than a year. All migrants that have a residence permit have the right to work, including family members.

Family members can apply for a residence permit in their own right after three years. They also have the same rights as their sponsor to education, healthcare and housing. As the new policies on labour migration were made more flexible in 2008, gender concerns were brought into the analysis since the former labour market regime tended to exclude occupations traditionally employing women (OSCE, 2009). The new government also introduced a tax-reduction on domestic work. The tax reduction is 50 per cent of the labour cost up to an amount of 50,000 SEK (Government of Sweden, 2008/09). This may have effects on the regularization of employment of some migrant workers.

Institutional and Policy Framework for Integration

The Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality is responsible for policy areas concerning citizenship, discrimination issues, integration, urban development and national minorities. The regional level has been strengthened when it comes to migration and integration issues since the Integration Board was closed in 2007. The Integration Board supervised the development of integration issues and some of these responsibilities were moved to the County Administrative Boards. They have the operative responsibility now when it comes to negotiations with municipalities on the settlement of refugees.

The municipalities have had the operative responsibility for the introduction of newly arrived migrants in Sweden since the 1980s and they have been compensated financially by the state. The introduction programmes include language education, information about Swedish society and labour market training. In practice the municipalities have to arrange introduction programmes for some categories of newly arrived immigrants (migrants with a residence permit on refugee or humanitarian grounds). Other migrants are not entitled to enter an introduction programme, but in some municipalities all migrants are welcome. All migrants are entitled to Swedish language courses.

The employment agencies have the responsibility of disseminating information about the Swedish labour market and to cooperate with the municipalities in the introduction programmes. The level of cooperation with the employment agencies varies to a great extent depending on the municipality. Non-profit organizations play a somewhat limited role (Emilsson, 2008).

The introduction programmes have frequently been a target of different forms of critique. It has been argued in different reports and evaluations that the programmes

lack, among other elements, effective measures to prepare migrants to enter the labour market and that the cooperation between different authorities should be better. Education programmes in the Swedish language have been criticized for not being efficient enough, and that too many migrants drop out or achieve results that are poor (Emilsson, 2008).

The number of students enrolled in Swedish language for migrants courses (SFI) has increased during the last years. Today 84,300 persons are enrolled in these programmes. In the year 2008/09 only 63 per cent of students had managed to pass at least one course. About one fourth had dropped out. In general, a student spends 450 hours to pass an SFI but there is a great variance between students depending on education and other background variables (Skolverket, 2010).

Active Labour Market Measures

In March 2010, a new reform was launched in order to speed up the labour market integration of new migrants (Government of Sweden, 2009). A general guideline for this policy change is to increase the incentives to work and to take part in different measures to make the individual more employable. The main components of this new policy are that the Public Employment Service, and not the municipalities, will have the responsibility for coordinating the measures for getting migrants into employment. This means that according to the law every newly arrived person gets his or her own plan on how to get established in the labour market. The activities of the plan are Swedish language courses, a societal orientation programme and measures for labour market insertion. The reform will come into effect in December 2010 and includes refugees, other persons in need of protection and their relatives.

Persons that are part of these programmes will have the same compensation regardless of their place of residence, and will also get the support of a coach. The results of the Joon & Nekbys (2009) evaluation of this new system's pilot projects concluded that comparatively more persons got a real job after these activities, but that the time they spent before getting a job was not shortened. More persons partook in different forms of labour market education and the time spent before a person partook in such a programme was decreased.

There exists also a programme of subsidized employment for newly arrived immigrants that is connected to their participation in Swedish language courses. This employment can last a maximum of 24 months and the compensation to the employer is 75 per cent.

Measures are also taken to increase the possibility for migrants to get their skills recognized and complement them with different forms of higher education in order for the individual to be able to practice his or her old profession in Sweden. Different measures have been undertaken during the past ten years to increase the possibilities for migrants to validate their home country educations but research (Dahlstedt, 2009) shows that it is not only the formal procedures that are decisive. Employers differentiate between different kinds of education and if a person is educated in Sweden he or she is more likely to get a job. Furthermore, when it comes to foreign education, it is easier for a person who has a vocational education to get employed. New measures are also

being taken in order to make it possible for newly arrived immigrants to move to municipalities where the job opportunities are frequent.

Qualitative sources suggest that refugees have very different experiences related to the labour market and the institutions that are responsible for reception and integration depending on their age and gender, type of education, placement in Sweden, time of arrival, and other factors (Frykman, 2009; Rönqvist, 2009; Wikström, 2009). Interviews in the abovementioned studies show that the refugees are grateful for the opportunity of starting a new life in Sweden. However, they are also somewhat critical towards the tendency of authorities and institutions to make decisions and policies without recognizing the perspectives and needs of the refugees in question.

These studies suggest that different actors in the area of reception and integration of refugees need to be more sensitive to migrants at the receiving end in order to make the measures more efficient and to increase the role of the individual in the integration process.

Discrimination in Employment

In 1994, Sweden introduced its first law (Law 1994: 134) against ethnic discrimination in working life. This law was tightened in 1999 and it decrees that employers take active measures against discrimination leading to an increased awareness among them on the importance of the issue. In 2009, one law (Law 2008: 567) against discrimination replaced the seven laws that prohibited different forms of discrimination and there will from now on be a single ombudsman against discrimination. This law aims to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and possibilities regardless of gender, transgender identity, ethnicity, religion or belief, ability, sexual orientation or age.

The new legislation and the demands for active measures against discrimination have put some pressure on organizations to reassess their personnel policies and how their recruitment processes works. Now it is common for organizations, especially in the public sector, to have policies and plans that cover the issue of diversity and integration and on how these issues can be promoted. These policies often state that the organization in question should aim to increase the number of migrants on different levels and that the organization has to combat discrimination and harassment. What effects these policy changes will bring remains to be seen and so far evidence suggests that the awareness is growing slowly and in an incremental way (Rönqvist, 2008).

Despite these measures, there is some evidence that leaders in labour organizations generally consider discrimination issues to be of minor importance (see for example Fackförbundet ST, 2006). Furthermore, the legislation does not really combat more indirect forms of labour discrimination such as network-based recruitment (Höglund, 2008).

In a study of employment integration of adopted children of Swedish parents, Rooth (2001) found adopted adults who looked “non-Swedish” had lower probabilities of obtaining employment than those who looked “Swedish”. Strong indicators of ethnic discrimination for migrant residents from the Middle East, in the hiring process and earning scale in Sweden are also established through various studies using field experiments such as correspondence tests (Bursell, 2007; Arai & Skogman Thoursie, 2007; Carlsson & Rooth,

2006; Carlsson & Rooth 2008; Arai, Bursell & Nekby, 2008). With respect to the ILO scale of discrimination, Carlsson & Rooth (2006) indicate a net discrimination of 29.4 per cent against applicants with Arabic-sounding names. Carlsson & Rooth (2008) find for example a lower statistical margin for discrimination at 23 per cent of total discrimination based on uncertainty towards the value of immigrants' foreign qualifications.

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