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Governance and the Local Integration
of Migrants and Europe's Refugees

Integration into the Labour Market and Skills Training in Sweden

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I. Introduction

Sweden ratified the UN convention of refugees in 1954; the right of asylum was fully implemented in the new Foreigner Act of 1954 (SFS 1954:193). The new act enabled permanent residency (*bosättningsstillstånd*) and the equal status of foreigners on the labour market was emphasised in the preparatory work (see government bill, Prop. 1953:41). For a long time, refugee immigration was limited and dominated by resettled refugees. From the 1970s the number of asylum seekers began to increase, but more significantly so from the second half of the 1980s and the first orderly refugee reception system was established in the early 1980s. From the year 2000 and forward, Sweden has given international protection to around 20,000 to 30,000 refugees every year. 2013 and onward, as the conflict in Syria continued and persons from other neighbouring countries fled towards Europe, the number of asylum applications in Sweden increased dramatically. In 2015, a total of around 163,000 persons applied for asylum in Sweden, whereof around 51 000 came from Syria. This has affected the situation dramatically, and many now question the ability to integrate those who arrive. As a result, in November 2015, the government announced a change in the asylum and family migration regulations, and a new three-year temporary law came into force into in 2016. After the new law, the number of asylum application dropped to 29,000 in 2016, and continues to remain at approximately the same level up until today.

The greatest change in the temporary law is the type of residency permit that asylum seekers are granted. Before the law change, the large majority of asylum seekers received permanent residency upon recognition. With the new law, resettled refugees are the only category who receives a permanent residency. Those who are recognized as refugees according to the 1951 convention receives a residency permit of 3 years, and those who are given status of subsidiary protection are given a 13-month residency permit. The third category of protection, humanitarian protection, was abandoned altogether. Another major change was the limited possibilities to family reunification. Before the law change, family reunification was possible for all beneficiaries of international protection without any requirements. The new temporary law meant that family reunification only became possible for those who have a refugee status if the application is made within three months after recognition. Otherwise, economic and housing requirements needed to be met for beneficiaries of international protections to be reunited with the family. However, when the temporary law was extended for two years in 20 July 2019, persons granted subsidiary protection regained the right to family reunification.

The reception of asylum seekers is under the responsibility of the state, and, after residence permit has been granted, the reception and integration of refugees and their families is the responsibility of the municipality of settlement. After residency permit has been granted, the reception system makes no distinction between different categories of refugees or family members, instead they are all categorised as 'new arrivals' (*nyanlända*). This category is stipulated by law (SFS 2017:584, § 1–3). Not only are interventions designed for new arrivals, but much of statistics and reports are also focussed on this group. In effect, this report is more focused on labour market integration for new arrivals than refugees *per se*, that would be a more limited group. Importantly, and as this report shows, asylum seekers are excluded from these interventions. While asylum seekers (under certain circumstances) are allowed to enter employments, there are basically no measures to support labour market integration of asylum seekers.

Although the refugee crisis led to changes in asylum- and family migration policies, integration policies have largely remained the same. However, some political parties have changed their political positions and are now advocating tougher integration policies with civic integration and income requirements for residence permits and citizenship



(Emilsson, 2020). Sweden is often singled out as having the most inclusive integration policy for migrants in general and refugees and their families in particular (Huddleston *et al.*, 2015; Wolffhardt *et al.*, 2019), and the 'refugee crisis' has not changed much so far. Still, the employment gap between native born and foreign born is among the largest among all OECD countries (OECD, 2019), and the situation for refugees is particularly difficult (Luik *et al.*, 2018). Persistent high unemployment rates among the refugee group and their reunited families have prompted the government to invest significantly in labour market integration, reorganize its flagship Introduction Program for refugees, and experiment with new policy solutions.

1.1 Disposition

This report deals with the labour market integration of newly arrived refugees in Sweden, with a particular focus on the region of Scania and the city of Malmö. Below, as part of this introduction, we first describe our research methodology and data collection and then give an overview of the research literature on labour integration for refugees in Sweden. The second part provides an important backdrop to local integration policies by describing state policies. Here, we focus on policies for newly arrived refugees and their reunited families. Compared to most other countries, Sweden has a long history of introduction programs tailored for the refugee group. Those programs have had a similar focus over time but changed when it comes to the ambitions and governance. We also describe state policies for legal access to the labour market, current policies for validation and gender issues, as well as the multi-level governance of the introduction program. Part three focuses on the local integration policy in Malmö. We show how the city has tried to mainstream integration policies while at the same time cater to the needs of the refugee group. The division of labour and cooperation between the local offices of the Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) and the city of Malmö is at the centre of much of the local work for refugees. The report ends with a conclusion and by highlighting some policy learnings from the Swedish experiences.

1.2 Methodology and data collection

This report relies on statistics, interviews and secondary data such as published and unpublished reports. We have carried out qualitative interviews with altogether 12 civil servants and case workers from the region of Scania and the city of Malmö, who in different ways focus their work on migration, employment and education. The various interviewees represent the Public Employment Service's local office in Malmö (*Arbetsförmedlingen*), the association Sweden's Municipalities and Regions (*Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, SKR*), Association of Municipalities Scania (*Kommunförbundet Skåne, KfSK*), the Municipality of Malmö (*Malmö Stad*), including its various units related to pre-school, adult education, employment and migration, Malmö University's service for New Academics (*Nya akademiker, NYAK*), and different civil society organizations that work with issues related to migration and labour market integration.

The interviews were carried out on the basis of an interview guide aimed at exploring the Glimer research questions related to labour market integration. The interviews, which lasted between 1 and 1 ½ hours, were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

For this report, we have also participated in relevant events during the winter of 2019, including one network meeting for case workers in Scania taking place in Eslöv, and one job fair for refugees taking place in Malmö. This report also draws on other qualitative interviews on migration and employment carried out in Malmö in 2012 for the Unite Europe project.



Data on participants in the introduction program, their activities in the program, and the outcomes on the national level has been collected from the Public Employment Service. They regularly report to the government about the content and results of the program. Statistics Sweden also have a mission from the government to follow up the results with the help of register data. However, these kinds of regular follow-ups are not to be considered as evaluations of effects. Some of this data is on display in this report. Local and regional data is harder to come by. Local and regional data is available for aggregate data on the refugee population and their reunited families, but cannot be broken down by time in the country, country of birth, age or other categories. Gender and education level, however, are available for local and regional comparisons.

1.3 An overview of labour market integration for refugees

Research on the labour market integration of refugees in Sweden find similar results (see, for example Åslund, Forslund, & Liljeberg, 2017; Joyce, 2017; Bevelander & Irastorza, 2014). There are stable patterns over time, implying that business cycles, number of refugees, and policies have little effects on mid- and long-term labour market integration for the refugee group. It takes a long time to find a first job, which often is in the private service sector. The employment rate increases over time, but never reaches the level of the natives.

The following two figures (1 & 2) show the labour market integration for the refugee group and their reunited families, which is the target group for policy interventions, i.e. the introduction program. They illustrate what the research has shown. Independent of the time of arrival, refugee cohorts are integrating in the labour market at a similar pace. Some cohorts have a faster integration in the short term and then converge over time. Men have an employment rate of about 50 per cent after five years in the country, which increases to about 60 per cent after ten years. Women have a slower integration process. About 30 per cent have a job after five years and 50 per cent after 10 years. Eventually, women tend to catch up and reach the same employment level after 15 years. For a more detailed figure on recent arrivals see Figure 6.

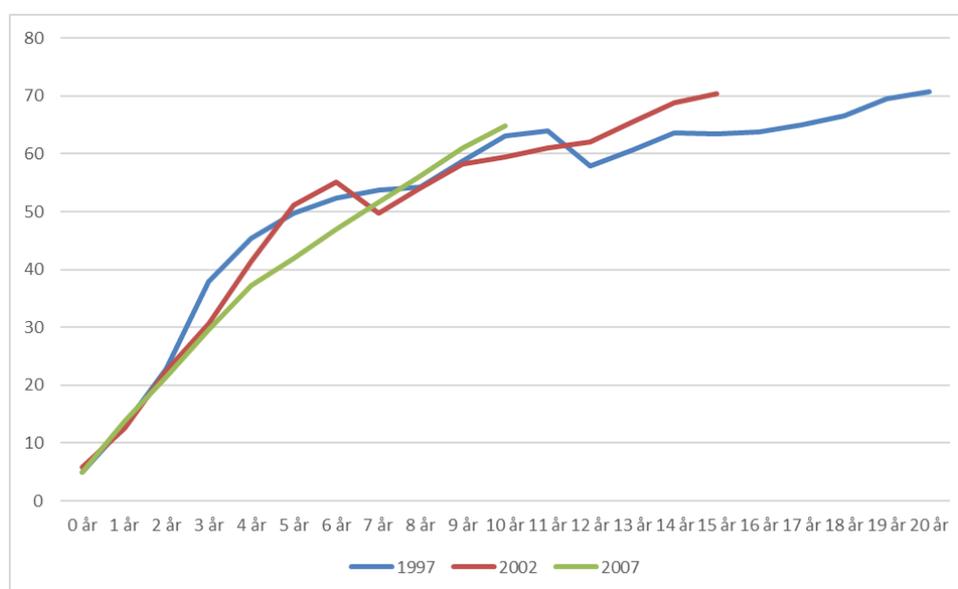


Figure 1: Employment rate for refugee men, 20-64 years, for 1997, 2002 and 2007 cohorts over time



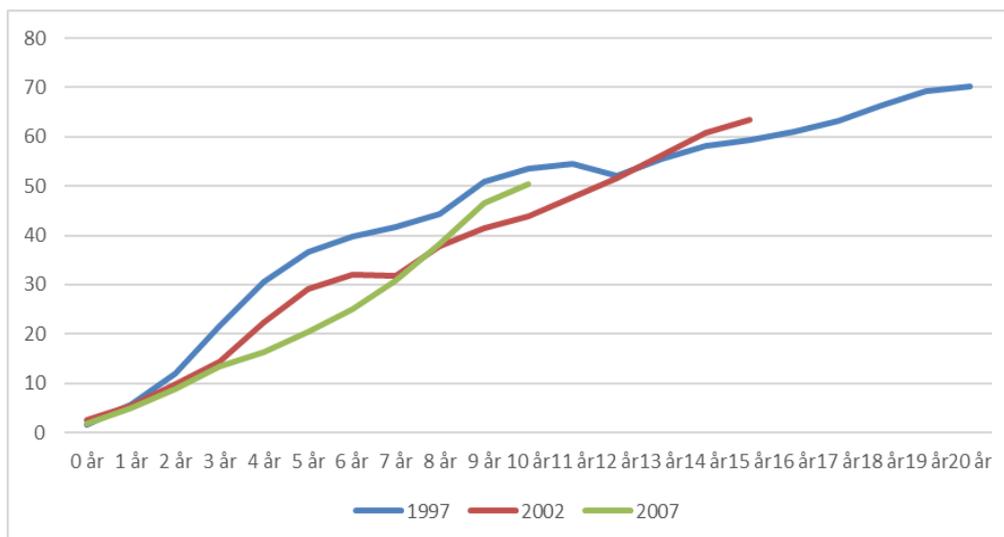


Figure 2: Employment rate for refugee women, 20-64 years, for 1997, 2002 and 2007 cohorts over time

It is clear that refugees and their reunited families, i.e. new arrivals, experience more difficulties than other migrants do in the Swedish labour market. Luik and colleagues (2018) have compared the labour market integration of refugee to natives and other migrant groups. Firstly, they show that refugees have worse labour market integration compared to other migrant categories, even after controlling for other factors such as human capital, demographics and contextual factors. Secondly, they show that educational level and educational type are important factors (also see Dahlstedt and Bevelander, 2010). To have at least a three year post-secondary education is essential for migrants' employment success. Bevelander (2011) shows that younger and better educated have a higher probability of being employed. Having children affects the probability of being employed positively for males and negatively for females. Further, living in Stockholm enhances the chance of being employed for immigrants.

However, a higher education level than upper secondary education (*gymnasieutbildning*) does not on average improve migrants' employment. More importantly, differences in education background and type explain a very small part of the employment gap between the natives and migrants. The results illustrate the difficulties for refugees and subsequent family migrants to utilize their educations on the Swedish labour market. It can be a sign of low quality of the educations they bring with them, or degrading, including problems of transferability of foreign educations. For the group of migrants that have most or all of their education in Sweden, returns of their human capital is higher. The results confirm earlier studies. The effect of formal education on immigrants' employment and earnings has proven to be positive, especially if it to some part is carried out in Sweden (Nordin, 2007). However, differences in formal education cannot explain most of the difference in the employment rate of native and foreign-born (Eriksson, 2010). Szulkin and colleagues (2013) find that the admission reason to Sweden is the most important explanatory factor for the large employment gap in Sweden compared with other countries. Thus, the employment gap between natives and foreign born is not explained by systematic differences in education, age, family status or from where one has immigrated. Bevelander and Pendakur (2014) also stress the importance of admission. After controlling for a set of personal and immigrant intake characteristics as well as contextual factors, they show that family reunion immigrants have a faster employment integration than refugees, which in turn have faster employment integration than resettled refugees.



There is also convincing empirical evidence of the existence of discrimination in the labour market (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007, 2008; Rooth, 2010). It is, however, not clear if the refugee group is more effected by discrimination compared to other migrant groups.

2. The Policy Context and the National 'Policy Story'

In the post-war era the national economy was booming and the country suffered from labour shortage. In effect, the borders were basically open, meaning that spontaneous immigration was welcome and applications for residence and work permits could be done in the country and decisions were often communicated within days. Following on an economic down turn from the mid-1960s, this open-door policy was critiqued and the system was gradually changed starting in 1967. First, in 1967, it was decided that work permits should be issued before entering the country (SOU 1982:49, see also Calleman & Herzfeld Olsson 2015, p. 10–14). From 1968 entirely new principles for immigration was laid down by the government (see government bill, Prop. 1968:142) that implied that immigration should be controlled and integration generous. It is these principles that have paved the way for the Swedish integration regime, generally depict as a generous and welcoming one (e.g. Borevi, 2014).

The first coherent immigrant policy in Sweden was decided by parliament in 1975 (Prop. 1975:26). It had three goals: equality, freedom of choice and partnership. The equality goal implied that migrants should have the same living standards as the native population. Therefore, migrants with residence permits were equipped with (almost) the same rights as Swedish citizens and were included in the welfare state.

In the next section we describe how the introduction program for new arrivals developed into the institution it is today. Then we describe the current Swedish context on the national level, including the introduction program, other integration measures, and the legal framework for access to the labour market.

2.1 The development of introduction programs for newly arrived refugees and their families

When immigration changed character from labour immigration to more humanitarian immigration during the 1980s, the municipalities were given overall responsibility for integration measures (Prop. 1983/84:144). Humanitarian immigrants were judged to have a particularly high need for support, and the municipalities were considered to be able to meet this need better than the Employment Service which was previously responsible. The state reimbursed the municipalities for the reception costs. Just a few years after the municipalities took over the integration measures, reform work was started to improve efficiency and strengthen the labour market orientation in the program.

2.1.2 A new remuneration system to give municipalities incentives to improve labour market integration

The state's remuneration system for the municipalities was changed in 1991 when the municipalities instead of being reimbursed for actual costs instead received a fixed compensation for each newcomer they received (Prop. 1989/90:105, SFS 1990:927). The idea of the reform was to increase the municipalities' incentive to conduct a more efficient introduction, since the municipalities had to retain all the remuneration, even if the newly arrived got a job and did not cost anything for the municipality. The approach was also expected to be more individualized and coordinated through a new requirement for the municipalities to draw up individual introduction plans to receive state compensation. The plans should include, among other things, a mapping of education and work experience, as well as the individual's need for language training, labour market preparatory measures, supplementary education,



rehabilitation and work.

2.1.3 The integration policy replaces the immigrant policy

The government bill *From immigrant policy to integration policy* (Prop. 1997/98:16) laid the foundation for the policy that still applies today. The integration policy made a sharp distinction between the general policy that would be adapted to the population's diversity and special measures that only applied to the newly arrived. The most important special measure was the municipal introductory programs, which would normally last for two to three years, and aimed to provide the individual with the conditions to become economically self-sufficient and socially integrated. According to the bill, the introduction program should include language training, labour market preparatory activities and civic orientation. The program should be designed in consultation with the individual and documented in an introduction plan. A new authority, the Swedish Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*), was set up to develop and follow up the efforts. The integration policy did not entail any major changes to the policy for new arrivals, but did mean a clear institutionalization of the introduction programs through clearer regulations and follow-ups.

Despite the efforts, labour market integration was still considered too slow. In a literature review from 2008, it was concluded that the consensus at that time was that the labour market integration is too slow, that few complete their language training and that there are shortcomings in the content of the introduction program (Emilsson, 2008). Based on a review of reports, evaluations and government documents up to and including 2008, it was further found that the deficiencies in the introduction programs were considered to be:

- Weak connection to the labour market in the introductory programs
- Lack of cooperation between public institutions
- Lack of parallel activities in the introduction program
- That few complete the language training
- Weak financial incentives to participate in the program and work
- Poor utilization of the individual's competences
- Lack of follow-ups and evaluations
- That the introduction program has lock-in effects
- A lack of health perspective
- Too little focus on gender equality
- High thresholds to enter the labour market

The 2010 reform of the introduction program for newcomers aimed to rectify many of these identified shortcomings. But as the review below will show, it is roughly the same areas that still are considered problems today, 10 years after the reform. However, some new problematic areas have been added, such as access to housing.

2.1.4 2010 introduction reform: the state takes over responsibility for new arrivals

On 1 December 2010, the overall responsibility for the introduction programs for new arrivals was transferred from the municipalities to the Public Employment Service (Prop. 2009/10:60). This meant a centralisation and stricter state control over local integration measures (Emilsson, 2015). The purpose was once again to facilitate and speed up these groups' labour market integration.



The reform meant a reorganisation of the introduction program, rather than a change in policy ideology or goals. The main goal of the new introduction program (in Swedish: *Etableringsprogrammet*) was, as in the previous forms of introduction programs, to help the newcomer to establish themselves on the labour market and become part of society. The efforts were primarily aimed at acquiring and developing country-specific human capital. This includes, for example, access to language training, information about Swedish society through civic orientation and work experience from the Swedish labour market. Utilisation of existing human capital is to be achieved through the supplementation and validation of education and work experience from the home country. The lack of social networks should be compensated by the Public Employment Service through mediation of contacts with potential employers, for example by organizing recruitment meetings and arranging internships and subsidized jobs.

Hence, the content of, or the target group for, the introduction program did not change significantly. The target group includes adults aged 20–64 years who are granted a residence permit as a refugee or other forms of international protection, and their relatives who apply for a residence permit within six years. It is from now on this group is jointly named ‘new arrivals’. Young people over eighteen years without legal guardians in Sweden are also included. Although the state took over the overall responsibility and coordination of the work through the Public Employment Service’s local offices, the municipalities retained large parts of the implementation, for example language training and the new civic orientation course. Municipalities also have general responsibility for children’s daycare and school, housing, social services, etc.

Most importantly, the reform meant that the introduction program now all aimed at improving labour market integration through better matching and stronger economic incentives. Matching between the newcomer's competences and place of residence should be improved through early talks between the Public Employment Service and the newly arrived before a decision about place of residence. A clear limit of a maximum of 24 months program was also considered important in order to give a clear signal to the newcomers not to waste their time. A full-time participation requirement was also introduced. A new Introduction Allowance paid to individual participants in the program replaced the previous municipal allowance. The previous municipal allowance was criticized for differing between municipalities and that for being too similar to the ordinary means-tested social assistance. The disadvantage of a benefit similar to social assistance is that it is based on household income, which for households with no or low incomes gives little or no incentive to participate in integration measures or work.

The new introduction benefit is individual and designed to increase the financial incentives to both participate in the program and to work. Because the remuneration is individual, a household can double its income if both partners participate in the program, which was mainly intended to get more women to participate. With the new benefit, it is also possible to work side by side with the program without losing all benefits, which would provide stronger incentives to quickly gain a foothold in the labour market. Another new measure that tried to use economic incentives to speed up labour market integration was the introduction coaches or guides. Participants chose private or non-profit guides through a freedom of choice system, as a complement to the efforts of the public employment services and municipalities. The guides were then paid according to how well they managed to get new arrivals into regular education or employment.

2.1.5 Recent reforms of the 2010 introduction program

The organisation and main features of the 2010 reform has remained up until today, although some minor and some more substantial changes have taken place.



One of the largest changes is the abolishment of the introduction guides, the experiment with non-public organisations as facilitators for labour market integration. On 20 February 2015, the Public Employment Service stopped offering the service because it was not considered to be of sufficiently high quality. Follow-ups showed that the guides provided social support and that the new arrivals themselves were satisfied with the service, but that efforts to facilitate entry to the labour market were lacking (Riksrevisionen, 2014). The Public Employment Service's own follow-up showed that there were only 991 payments for successful matching to education or work, of which only 84 were for unsubsidized work. This can be compared with the 21 763 new arrivals who had been enrolled in the introduction programs during this period. In addition, the employment agency's follow-up showed that persons with introduction guides did not fare better than those without. The freedom of choice system, where the newcomers themselves choose their guide from a list of available providers, was also questioned because of the newcomers' limited ability to make informed choices (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2013).

There have also been some regulatory changes with the intention to make it easier for the Public Employment Service to steer and guide participants according to the agency's will. As of 1 February 2014, participants in the introduction program must fill in activity reports regularly to show what they have done to get out of unemployment (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015). The idea is that the activity report should serve as a tool for monitoring job search activities. However, requirements like these are of little use if they are badly implemented. In an evaluation of the activity reports, the Inspection for the unemployment insurance (*Inspektionen för arbetslöshetsförsäkringen, IAF*) showed that the Public Employment Service's handling is flawed and that there are more reports that are handled incorrectly than correctly (Inspektionen för arbetslöshetsförsäkringen, 2016). In many cases where participants did not live up to the requirements, the Public Employment Service did not notify the Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*) who is paying out the introduction allowance. The Inspection for the unemployment insurance therefore concluded that the sanctions that are part of the regulations run the risk of having no corrective effect as long as the deficiencies persist in the handling of activity reports. As of August 2015, new possibilities for sanctions for participants were introduced (Prop. 2013/14:104). The Public Employment Service can since then exclude participants from the introduction program and stop the allowance for those who, without acceptable reasons, reject a suggested employment.

The biggest change to the program occurred on 1 January 2018, when a new regulatory framework for the introduction program came into force (Prop. 2016/17:175). In short, the organisation remained, but the regulations changed so that new arrivals are now managed in a way similar to unemployed in general. Some of the new features are:

- A larger part of the regulations is defined through ordinances rather than laws.
- Refugees will be assigned to a labour market program, i.e. the Introduction Program.
- The individual introduction plan is replaced with an individual action plan.
- A proportionate system of sanctions for non-compliance is introduced, which includes, among other things, warnings and termination.
- The handling of economic compensation is transferred from the Public Employment Service to the Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*).

So, what does this mean? The fact that regulations now to a greater extent are decided by ordinances rather than law, means a harmonization with the general labour market policy. When the 2010 introduction plan was launched, it was emphasized that it was based on a law that would ensure uniformity. Now, the importance of creating better



conditions for increased flexibility and efficiency in the introduction assignment is emphasized instead. According to the government (Prop. 2016/17:175, p. 32), regulating by law was a “deviation from how the government normally regulate labour market policies”, which are mainly regulated by ordinances. The choice of regulatory instrument is important, since laws are difficult to change compared to ordinances that can be changed by the government without parliamentary support. The change from an individual introduction plan to an individual action plan, new sanctions and administration of economic compensation also means harmonisation with the general labour market policy for unemployed.

2.1.6 Other measures to improve labour market integration for new arrivals

Within the labour market policy, a number of new initiatives for newly arrived refugees have been launched. On 1 May 2018, a new employment subsidy - introductory job - was introduced (Prop. 2017/18:1), and replaced the old ‘step-in jobs’. The introductory job subsidizes 80 per cent of the salary up to SEK 20 000 a month. In addition to the salary subsidy, the employer also receives supervisor support. The subsidy is designed so that it can be combined with education.

The Delegation for young and new arrivals to work (*Delegationen för unga och nyanlända till arbete, DUA*), has since February 2017 been tasked with promoting collaboration between the Public Employment Service and the municipalities to get new arrivals into work (SOU 2018:12). The objective is to achieve a deeper cooperation on the local and regional level. A pot of money of about SEK 50 million yearly supports the agreements. Other measures include the SEK 910 million investment in green jobs for new arrivals between 2018–2020 (Näringsdepartementet, 2018a) and internships for new arrivals in state agencies during 2019 and 2020 (Finansdepartementet, 2018).

The government has also given the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tillväxtverket*) several tasks to work with newly arrived. The largest one is the so-called ‘Simple Jobs’ that are intended to ‘expand successful initiatives to create easier paths for jobs in private businesses’ (Näringsdepartementet, 2018b). Agency is expected to spend SEK 50 million during 2018, and for 2019 and 2020 SEK 60 million annually. The ‘Job Leap’ is internships for new arrivals with higher education in primarily engineering, natural sciences, architecture or economics (SEK 15 million per year during the period 2019–2021) (Näringsdepartementet, 2018c). 12.5 million is set aside in 2019 and 2020 to strengthen the integration perspective in the regional skills supply work (Näringsdepartementet, 2018d). Finally, the Agency has received two assignments concerning newly arrived women. SEK 10 million is allocated annually between 2018–2021 to improve networks and contacts in the labour market for foreign-born women (Näringsdepartementet, 2018e) and during the same period, SEK 15 million is allocated annually to promote entrepreneurship among foreign-born women. The target group for the latter assignment was changed in September 2018 to also include newly arrived men (Näringsdepartementet, 2018f).

2.2 Legal framework for access to the labour market for asylum-seekers and refugees

The goal of the Swedish integration policy are equal rights, and efforts have been made to remove obstacles to enter the labour market for asylum seekers and new arrivals, i.e. persons granted international protection and their family. Asylum seekers have been encouraged to find employment and there are few formal barriers for refugees to enter employment.



2.2.1 Asylum seekers

Most asylum seekers do have a right to work. In practice, an asylum seeker must have proof of being exempted from the obligation to have a work permit. An exempt is given if a person provides identity papers or in some other way helps to prove their identity. Also, the asylum application is to be considered in Sweden. Thus, Dublin-cases are not allowed to work. According to statistics provided by the Migration Agency (2015) a few years ago, few asylum seekers do work in the regular labour market. During 2014, only 447 people were registered as having employment, a decrease of about six per cent compared to 2013 when 478 people had an employment. The latest numbers are from 2016, when 1 271 asylum seekers were registered as employed (Calleman 2017).

If an application for asylum has been refused and a deportation or refusal-of-entry order has entered into force, asylum seekers may be able to apply for a work permit under certain circumstances without leaving Sweden (Calleman, 2015). This is a possibility made possible in 2010 when the labour migration law was introduced (Prop. 2007/08:147). In order to receive a work permit as a labour migrant, the following conditions must be met:

- The Migration Agency must receive an application within 14 days after the decision concerning the application for asylum entered into force
- The person must have a valid passport, and have had a work-permit exemption during the asylum process.
- The person must have been working for four months for the same employer prior to the date that the Migration Agency received the application for a work permit
- The employer must offer the opportunity to continue working for another 12 months
- The terms of employment must be at least on the same level as Swedish collective agreements or that is customary in the occupation or industry. The terms of employment include insurance coverage as well as salary. The requirements also apply to the previous four months.
- The applicant must be offered a monthly pre-tax salary of at least SEK 13 000:-. The requirements also apply to the previous four months.

Only a few of the rejected asylum seekers use the opportunity to apply for a work permit. In 2014, there were about 620 work permit requests from previous asylum seekers, which is an increase compared to 2013 when the number in this category was around 430 (Migrationsverket, 2015). The numbers have increased in recent years and in 2018 2700 former asylum seekers applied for, and 1300 received a work permit.

2.2.2 Refugees and their families

There are very few formal distinctions between the rights of citizens and non-citizens in the Swedish labour market regulations. EU-citizens and third country nationals can apply for all jobs in the private and public sector, save for a few per cent of public employments, such as police officers, professional soldiers, judges and national politicians. The major practical obstacles for immigrants in the labour market are found in regulated professions, where you need a license or authorization to work.

All refugees with a temporary or permanent residence permit have access to, and are encouraged to enrol in an introduction program at the Public Employment Service, and have access to general services on the same terms as citizens. Asylum seekers do not have access to any formal labour market integration measures. They do, however, access to some language training and civic orientation outside the formal system organised by study associations,



folk high schools and NGOs. Such initiatives are increasingly supported by the state since 2016 (SFS 2015:521).

2.3 Assessment of foreign education and validation of prior learning

Skills recognition in Sweden is referred to as `validation´ and is described as a process of a structured assessment, valuing, documentation, and recognition of knowledge and competences that an individual has gained, irrespective of how they have been acquired.¹

The national structure for validation has undergone many changes and the government are currently considering a proposal for a new policy in this field (SOU 2019:69). For a brief time, 2013–2016, there were a national structure in place, with the Swedish Council for Higher Education (*Universitets- och högskolerådet, UHR*) responsible for assessing all kinds of foreign credentials: secondary diplomas, postsecondary vocational educations, and academic degrees. While this sounded good on paper, it became unclear for municipalities who to turn to since the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) still had a mission to support, promote and follow up validation in adult education. The dual promotion assignments contributed to confusion about who was actually responsible for this area (Ds 2016:24, p. 65–66).

Today, opportunities for validation or assessment of real competence are included in the regulations for adult education and post-secondary education. Validation is decentralized and carried out by a number of different providers within the educational system and in working life. A number of industries have developed national industry models for the validation of professional skills against working life requirements.

The National Delegation for Validation (*Valideringsdelegationen*) describe four kinds of validations (SOU 2019:69, p. 413–420):

Professional industry validation. Validation of professional skills depends on the industry model, of which there are 24 in Sweden covering 61 professions. Because professional validations are largely made for jobseekers with experience in shortage occupations, few newcomers get their skills validated according to the professional industry models (Statskontoret, 2013). Among the foreign born, 1 418 jobseekers had their skills validated in 2011 and 2012, including 242 who had arrived within the past three years (and only ten who were covered by introduction programs). The most common occupations were in construction, transportation, health and social services, and restaurants and catering.

Municipal adult education. People with qualifications corresponding to compulsory school or upper secondary education can also have their prior learning validated in Sweden’s well-developed system of municipal adult education. All adults over the age of 20 with a residence permit for one year or more have the right to participate in free adult education. Validation in adult education is a process that contains one or more steps of mapping and assessment and ends with an overall documentation of the student’s knowledge and skills. Several of the larger municipalities offer orientation courses with validation in particular professional specializations, such as in health care, baking, or tiling.

¹ Read more about validation in Sweden here: <http://www.valideringsdelegation.se/in-english/national-strategy-validation/>



Assessment of foreign higher educations. The Swedish Council for Higher Education (*Universitets- och högskolerådet, UHR*) evaluates foreign qualifications in order to provide support for people looking for work in Sweden, people who wish to continue studying, or for employers who wish to employ someone with foreign qualifications. In 2019, the Swedish Council for Higher Education received over 25 000 applications for assessment of foreign qualifications, of which 12 000 was for upper secondary education (*gymnasiet*), 3 000 for post-secondary vocational education (*eftergymnasial yrkesutbildning*), and 11 000 for higher education.² Reports show that validation of higher educations do improve labour market integration (Universitets- och högskolerådet, 2012, 2015). In addition to validation, many universities and other higher education institutions organize supplementary courses for people with academic degrees to get them ready for the Swedish labour market. Currently, there are supplementary courses for doctors, dentists, nurses, teachers, lawyers, pharmacists, midwives, biomedical analysts, economists, physiotherapists, engineers, architects, psychologists, social workers and system scientists.

Regulated professions. Some professions require official authorization or registration to work in Sweden - such as doctors, real estate agents, and electricians. Foreign nationals have to apply for the right to practice the profession from the agency responsible, for instance, the Board of Health and Welfare for nurses or the Electrical Safety Board for electricians. In health care, for example, National Board of Health and Welfare offer the knowledge tests for the 21 regulated professions

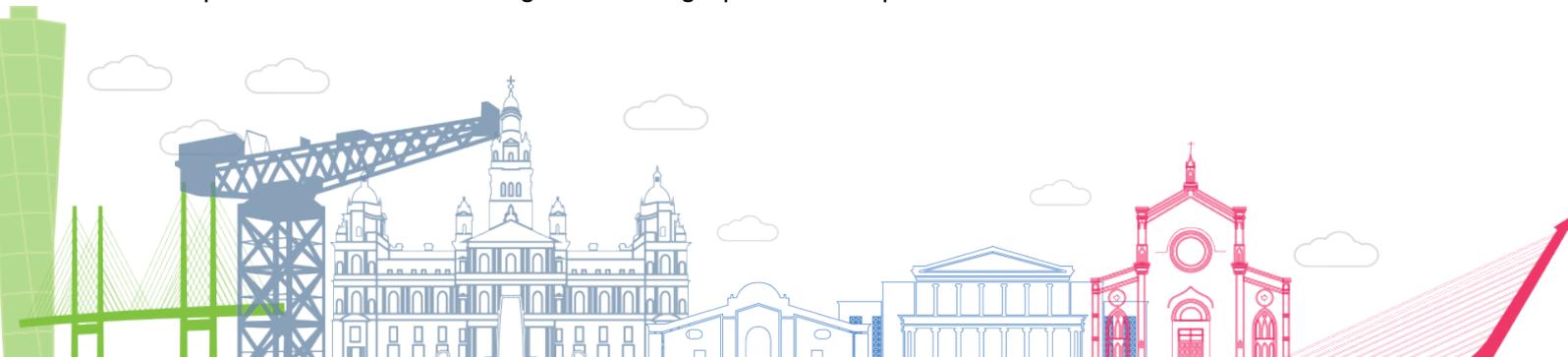
In addition, the Public Employment Service offers less comprehensive validations in-house, such as merit portfolios, placement tests, and vocational orientation that are classified as employment preparation training. Many of these are in the male-dominated industries of transportation or industry, but also in health care.

2.4 Gender

The issue of labour market integration for foreign-born women, especially new arrivals from non-EU countries, has been high up on the political agenda for almost a decade. Over the years, the difference in labour market integration between non-EU foreign born men and women has gradually become larger. This is clearly visible for persons granted international protection and their families. For those granted a residence permit in 2014, 53 per cent of the men and 28 per cent on the women had employment after three years in Sweden (SCB, Statistikdatabasen). Recent reports also confirm that more women than men leave the labour force after completion of the introduction plan (Riksrevisionen, 2018).

On 13 October 2011, the government appointed a special investigator with the task of proposing measures to improve labour market integration for newly arrived foreign-born women (Dir. 2011:88). A commission report was handed to the government in October 2012 (SOU 2012:69). The report finds several explanations to the lower employment rate for newly arrived women: Newly arrived women often have shorter education than men, and are offered less comprehensive and relevant support compared to newly arrived men. Women register later with the Public Employment Service and language training courses. Finally, the financial incentives to work are also contradictory. Both the possibilities of taking out parental leave with parental allowance for children below the age of 7 years, also when born before arrival to Sweden, and the home-care childcare allowance (*vårdnadsbidrag*) for children aged one to three years, were making it profitable to stay at home with children, also when compared with working.

² See <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/recognition-of-foreign-qualifications/reports-and-statistics/>



In the following years, several new policy measures and funds were designated to improve labour market integration for this target group. Changes in the parental leave allowance meant that immigrants no longer get parental leave retroactively and the home-care childcare allowance was repealed in 2016. The Public Employment Service and other state agencies has received targeted directions and funds from the government to improve labour market integration for foreign-born women. The Growth Agency (*Tillväxtverket*) has a mission during 2018–2021 to improve networks and contacts on the labour market (Näringsdepartementet, 2018, N2018/01430/KSR). The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*) has been assigned the task to do outreach and motivational efforts aimed at foreign-born women to encourage pathways to studies within, for example, folk high schools or municipal adult education (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2019). The Swedish National Audit Office (*Riksrevisionen*) has investigated if the government successfully mainstream gender issues in the integration policy (Riksrevisionen, 2018b)

2.5 Participants in the introduction program

When the 2010 introduction program was launched, approximately 8 250 adults were expected to be enrolled in the program each year, which means that the program was expected to comprise a total of 16 000 people. As Figure 3 shows, the number of participants has been much higher with a peak of over 75 000 persons in 2017. The numbers are now declining since the large numbers of refugees during 2015 and 2016 have finished their 24-month program.

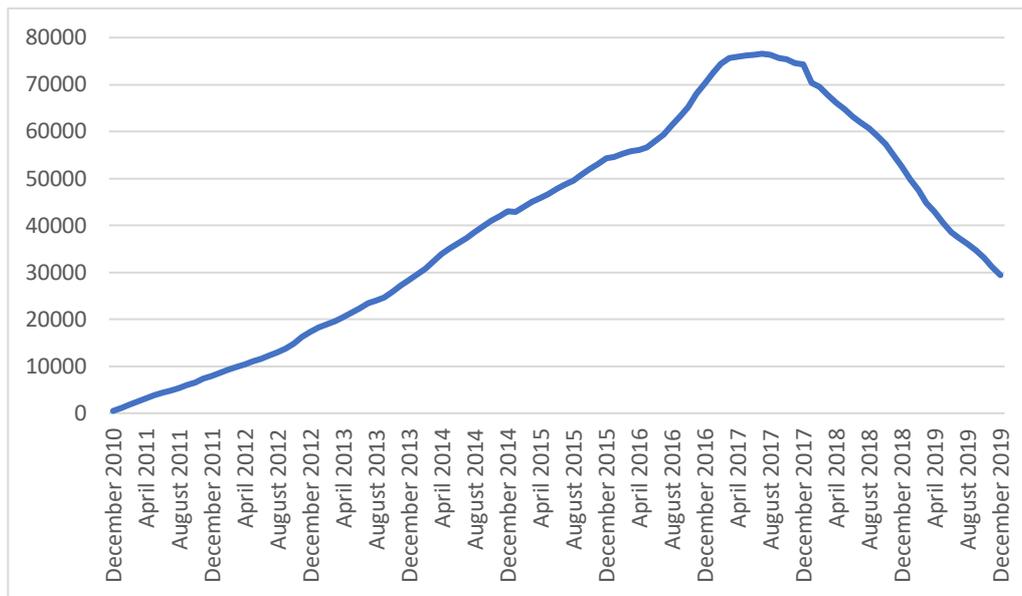


Figure 3: Participants in the introduction program, Sweden

The time series for participants on the local level only goes back to 2016. In Malmö they had at most about 2750 participants in 2017 and at the end of 2019 down to about 1100 (Figure 4).



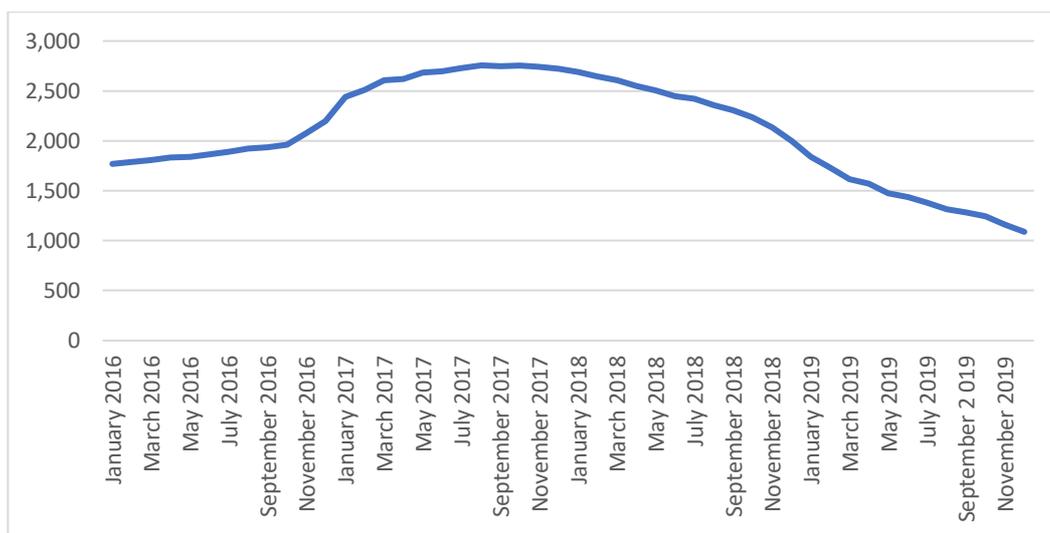


Figure 4: Participants in the introduction program, Malmö

In May 2019, a majority of the participants in Sweden as well as in Malmö had up to primary education (Figure 5). Since 2016 there has been a trend towards more participants with shorter educational background. Participants in Malmö have, on average a slightly longer educational background compared to the national average.

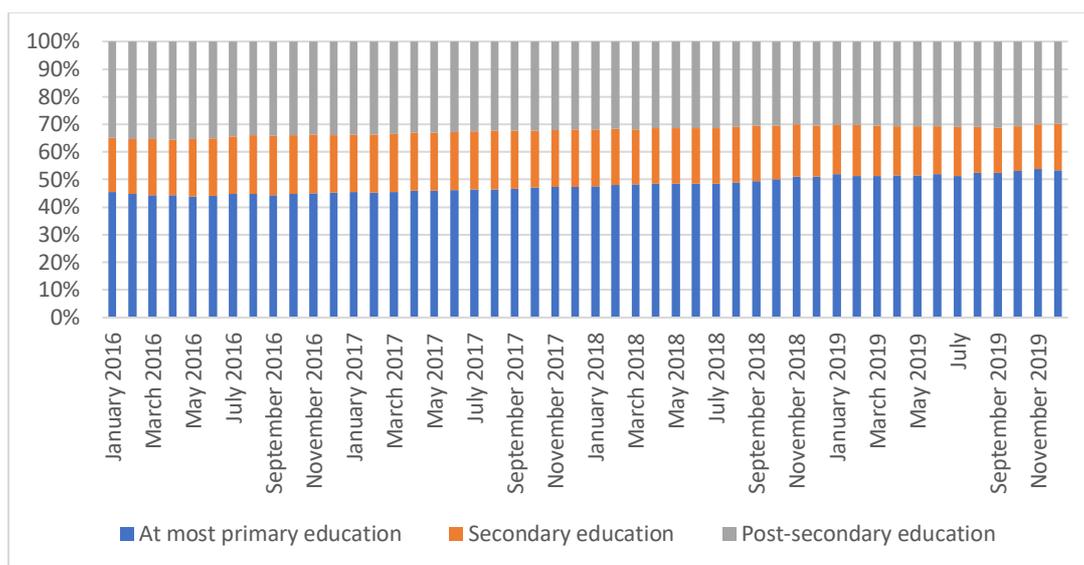


Figure 5: Educational level among participants in introduction programs, Malmö

Statistics on labour market integration show that educational level and gender are important factors for having employment. Figure 6 shows the employment rate in 2016 for those who were settled in a municipality in 2010 to 2013, i.e. had been in Sweden for three to six years. Men with secondary education perform best and over 70 per cent were employed after seven years in the country. Especially women with up to primary education have a very low employment rate, about 20 per cent after five to seven years in the country.



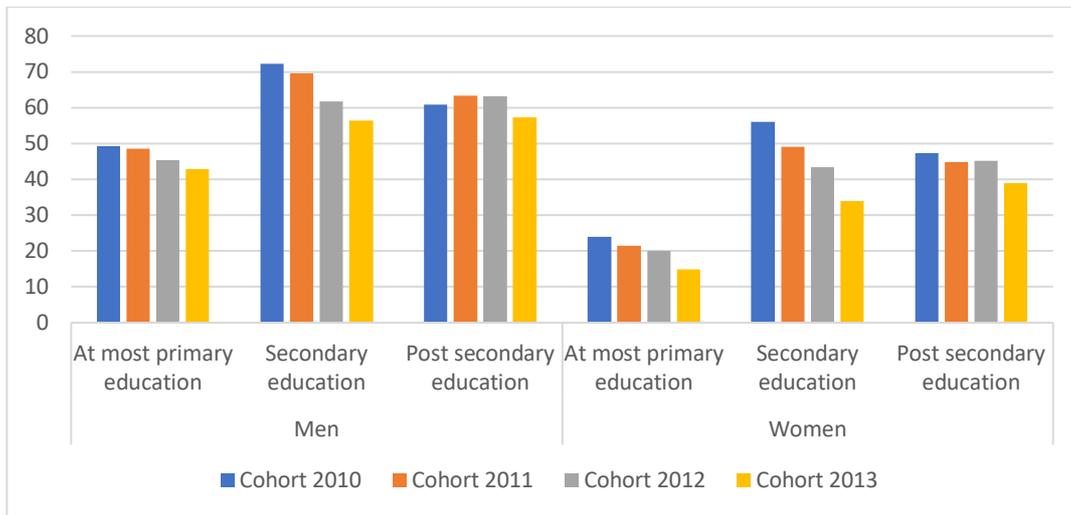


Figure 6: Employment rate for new arrivals in 2016, after education, gender and year of settlement (2010–2013), 20–64 years of age

3. Labour Market Integration in a Regional and Local Perspective

In this section we focus on the local level. First we describe the multi-level governance structure of the introduction program. Secondly we analyse how the labour market integration policies are organised on the local level, what the different stakeholders are doing, and what they say about the opportunities for refugees on the local labour market.

3.1 The multi-level governance of integration policy

The public sector in Sweden has three levels of governing institutions: national, regional and local. The central government is exercising power on all three levels, which gives a relatively complex structure on the local level. There are also regional municipalities which are responsible for health care and transportation in its region, and regional state Country Administrative Boards. The city of Malmö, which is a local municipality, therefore shares power and responsibilities with national and regional institutions on the local level.

Efforts to integrate refugees in the labour market is concentrated to the introduction program, which has a complex multi-level governance structure (see Figure 7). Since 1 December 2010 it is the Public Employment Service that is responsible for the coordination of these programs, but they work closely with the municipalities, the Migration Agency, the National Board for Social Insurances and other organizations. The content of the introduction program, and the responsibilities for the national and local authorities, are laid down in the Government Bill Introduction of newly arrived immigrants into the labour market (Prop. 2009/10:60) and additional ordinances. Each year the central government also gives appropriation directions to central government authorities. As a general rule, the activities contained in the introduction plan should correspond to a full-time program and contain, at minimum, Swedish for immigrants (*Svenska för invandare, SFI*, see wp4 report for more about this education), civic orientation and employment preparation activities. Since Swedish for immigrants is not a full-time activity, it must be combined with other activities, such as other studies of labour market measures. A new Bill (Prop. 2016/17:175) brought



about some administrative changes for the Public Employment Service, but did not change the governance structure.

The municipalities are obliged to secure the provision of Swedish for immigrants' education and civic orientation. The municipalities receive funding from the state for these activities. In addition to the authorities involved in the obligatory activities in the individual introduction plan, there are responsibilities for the settlement (Swedish Migration Agency), civic registration (Tax Agency), payment of introduction benefit (Social Insurance Agency) and regional coordination (County Administrative Boards). In addition, these measures are also coordinated on the local level.

Regional and local agreements have been made to meet the requirements of full-time parallel activities for refugees. The Public Employment Service is chairman of one such forum (*Lokal överenskommelse, LÖK*), working with a local agreement where the different involved actors commits to carry out activities for the target group. There is also a regional agreement (*Regional överenskommelse, RÖK*) which aims at coordinating the municipalities' resources and activities. While the local agreement is more hands-on, the regional is more strategic.

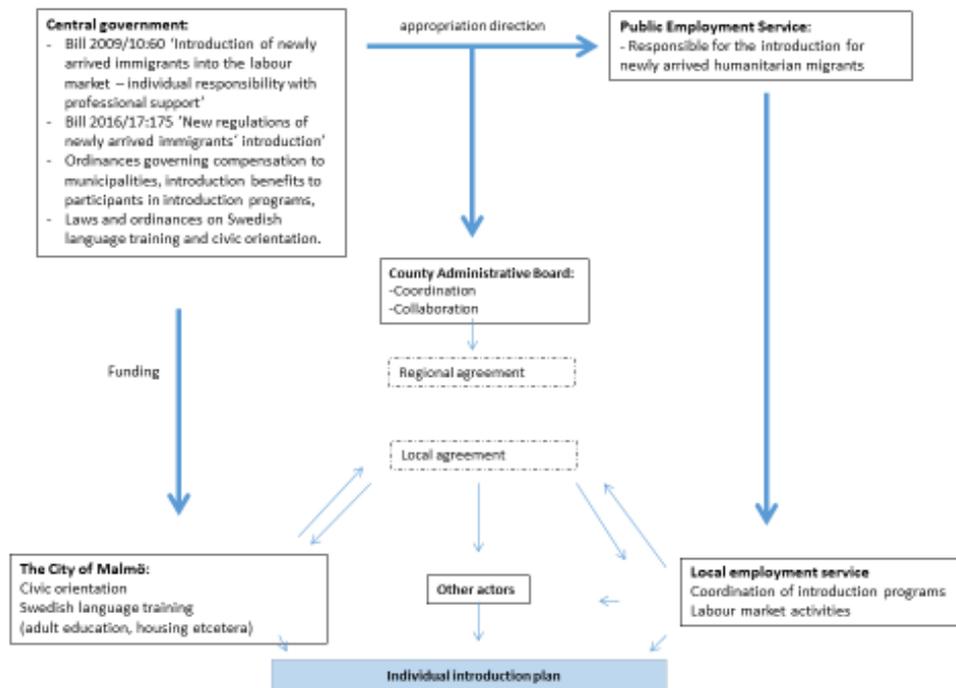


Figure 7: The multi-level governance of introduction programs

3.2 Labour market profile in Sweden, Scania and Malmö

Of the 1.3 million inhabitants in the region of Scania, 21 per cent are born abroad. The largest groups are from the Nordic countries, former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. 36 per cent of foreign-born people have lived in Sweden for over 20 years and 28 per cent have lived in Sweden for less than five years. Persons born in Sweden and whose



parents are both born abroad, amount to approximately 85,440 persons or 6 per cent of the population (Region Skåne, 2019). In Malmö in 2018, 34 per cent of those living in the city were born abroad – the largest groups being those born in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Denmark (Malmö stad, 2019).

The region of Scania has the lowest employment rate of all 22 regions in Sweden. In 2018, the employment rate in Scania was 76.7 per cent, compared to national average of 80.1 per cent. The women's employment rate in Scania in 2018 was 75.1 per cent and men's 78.3 per cent, which can be compared to the national averages of 78.5 and 81.7 per cent, respectively. The southwest area of Scania, where Malmö is situated, had an even lower employment rate of 75.3 per cent (Region Skåne, 2019). These differences in employment rates have been quite stable over the last 10 years.

The employment rate varies greatly with country of birth and, to a lesser extent, with gender. Of Scania's population aged 20–64 years with Sweden as the country of birth, 83.1 per cent of men and 82 per cent of women were employed. The corresponding value for the population born outside Europe was 51.8 and 44.8 per cent respectively.

Scania has a slightly higher proportion of unemployed people compared to the nation, 7.1 per cent, compared to the nation's 5.5 per cent. On average, the number of persons aged 16–64 years who were openly unemployed or employed in labour market measures amounted to 59,274 persons in 2018.

Scania has broadly the same industry structure as the nation, except that the proportion of employees in trade is somewhat higher and the proportion of employees in the manufacturing industry, public administration and defence, Information and communication as well as finance is a bit lower. The business structure differs greatly between the various sub-regions of Scania.

Malmö has an employment rate that is considerably lower than Sweden as a whole, about 6 per cent points lower (Figure 8). This is also reflected for the refugee group that also has a similar gap, with 6.4 per cent lower employment rate in Malmö compared to Sweden. The structural position of the refugee group in Malmö is, thus, similar to Sweden. The gap between native born and the refugee group is about 27 percentage points and this has been stable over the years.



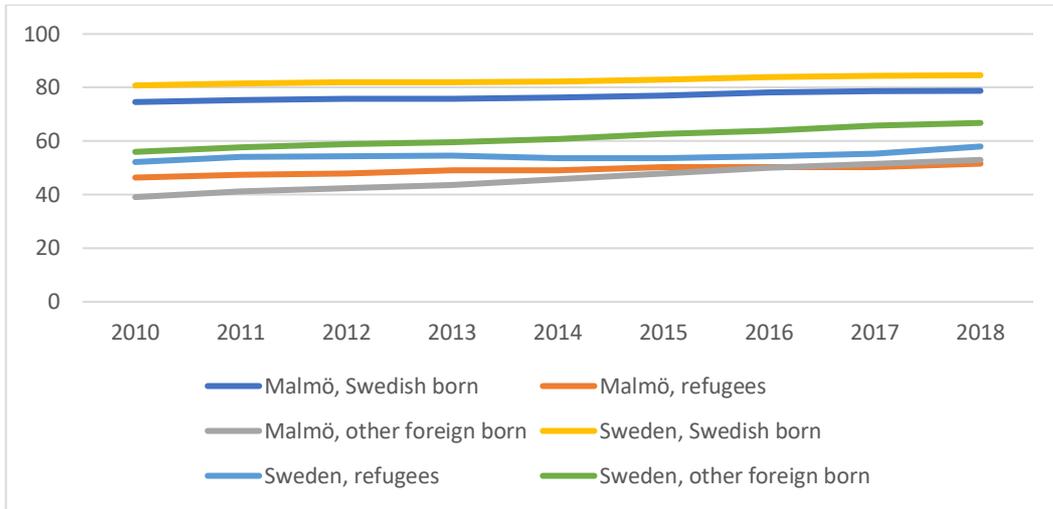


Figure 8: Employment rate in Malmö and Sweden, 2010-2018, 20-64 years³
 Source: Statistics Sweden

The employment differences between men and women in the refugee group is different in Malmö compared to Sweden as a whole (Figure 9). While in Sweden, men have more than 10 percentage points' higher employment rate than women. In Malmö, the differences are only a few percentage points. In other words, refugee women in Malmö has about the same employment rates as in Sweden, while the employment differences for men is almost 10 percentage points in 2018.

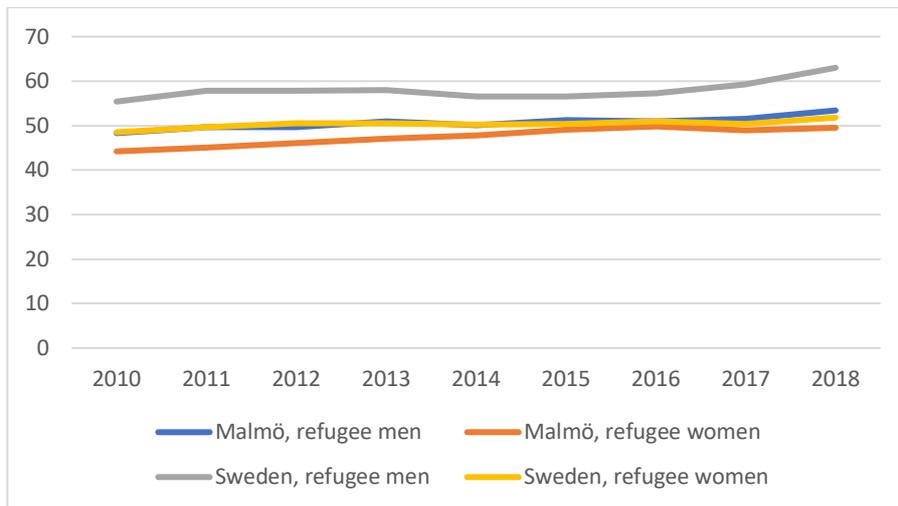


Figure 9: Employment rate in Malmö and Sweden for refugees, men and women, 20-64 years

³ Refugees in the figure refers to all persons living in Sweden that has received international protection and their reunited families.



3.3 Local integration policy in Malmö

Low employment rates for foreign born in Sweden, and particularly for the refugee group, have persisted since the economic crisis in the 90s. In Malmö, one in four jobs disappeared between 1990–1994 when much of what was left of the manufacturing industry was closed (Malmö stad, 2011). In the late 1980s the number of jobs in Malmö was 146,000. Only 118,000 was left in 1993 and it took until 1997 before the number of jobs in Malmö started to increase again. In 2010 the City of Malmö was back to about 150,000 jobs. At the same time as the number of jobs declined, the immigration of refugees and their relatives increased and has been large since then. The former Commissioner with responsibility for integration issues between 1998–2010, and later the Mayor of Malmö, Kent Andersson spoke about this transition in an interview (Broome, 2007).

Between 1990 and 1995 the employment rate in Malmö decreased from 78% to 60% in a short time, actually in a period of 3.5–4 years. ... When we did go out and check what really happened, we discovered that the Swedish-born population had an employment rate of 70%, which was pretty close to the national average of 73%, while foreign born was at 34%, awareness was increasing about "what is happening?", and we could also see that there were two reasons for this. One was that the labour migrants' jobs had disappeared, and the other is that the immigration to Malmö that began in 1985 began to have a major demographic impact, and was at its highest during the years that we lost the very most jobs.

To change the situation the city of Malmö chose a two-pillar strategy (Bevelander, 2009). The first pillar was to stimulate economic growth by several large infrastructure projects, such as the bridge to Copenhagen (2000), the establishment of Malmö University (1998), the development in the docklands (2001–), and the City Tunnel (2010). These large-scale infrastructural projects were also an important part of the strategy to develop attractiveness and change the negative discourse about Malmö (Möllerström Veselinka, 2011; Dannestam, 2009).

The second pillar was to improve welfare and increase the human capital amongst the population. Investments in infrastructure and a new image of Malmö have been accompanied by major welfare initiatives. Earlier state-led programs, such as Blommanpengarna (1995–1999), URBAN (1995–1999), and the Metropolitan Development Initiative (1999–2003), focused on geographical 'immigrant dense' areas in Malmö with 'persistent social challenges'. These programs were initiated by the state to combat segregation and social polarization in the wake of the immigration of new arrivals to the large housing estates of the metropolitan suburbs (Andersson, 2010). As Andersson (2006) and Bunar (2011) point out, the programs were, in fact, very much an integration policy. Later, more mainstreamed welfare programs were launched, such as Welfare For All (*Välfärd för alla*) in 2004 and the Commission For A Socially Sustainable Malmö (*Kommissionen för ett socialt hållbart Malmö*) in 2010. Notably is that both programs were initiated locally. Despite being generic welfare programs, both strategies do acknowledge that the employment situation for foreign born is the main challenge. The overarching integration issues have included the employment situation for foreign born and the ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, and the fact that the ethnic and socio-economic gaps coincide and make clear imprints in the city's geography (Malmö, 1999). The Welfare For All (2004) and the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö (2010) programs signal a new approach to improve integration that is still in place today. Instead of concentrating on vulnerable neighbourhoods and separate projects in the districts, the integration work was intended to apply to the entire population, all districts and all administrations. The message was that it is not foreign-born or certain neighbourhoods that are



problems, but general phenomenon in the city: that the social and economic inequalities are too large and the economic growth too weak to provide jobs for everyone.

In addition to the broader welfare programs, Malmö adopted an official integration policy in 1999, in which integration is understood as participation in society and as mutual understanding between people with different backgrounds (Malmö, 1999). The policy was to be complemented with measurable indicators for integration that were supposed to be followed up yearly. However, the policy never had an impact in the city administration according to our informants in the city of Malmö. After the 2010 election a new political and administrative organisation meant that the Committee for integration and employment were replaced by a Committee for employment and adult education. This was, accordingly to the political secretary at the Commissioners unit, the final and logical step in the integration mainstreaming strategy. The new political leadership also decided to fold the entire project on integration indicators and the action plan on integration. From now on, Malmö chose not to have any integration policy. Everything should be mainstreamed from now on. But a mainstreaming strategy is not without problems. An official at the City office said at an interview in 2012 that integration issues are more invisible now when employment is in focus. On the one hand, integration is visible because it is supposed to be everyone's responsibility, all departments and all operations should work with integration, but somehow it becomes easy to not do it then. And it has become difficult for civil servants to initiate new integration measures that are not related to employment. The policy on mainstreaming can therefore in reality mean a narrowing of integration policy to employment.

It is clear. Things that one refers to as "integration projects", they cannot be supported anymore unless there is a particular focus on work, you could say. (Interview with civil servant in 2012)
It has gone from the idea of integration as a separate thing, to mainstreaming in different areas. And concentrate it on just work. It's about work and schools, nothing special just for migrants. That's how we try to work now. (Interview, political secretary at the Commissioners unit 2012)

Local integration policies in Sweden are very much influenced by state policies, and there is limited discretion for local governments to diverge from the national ideas (Emilsson, 2015). The city of Malmö cannot control the inflow of migrants and they are obliged to provide a specific set of integration policy measures. Integration policy in Malmö and Sweden has relied on a strong tradition of universal welfare policy, which has been supplemented with special treatment of newly arrived immigrants. Malmö has in large followed the same development of integration policies as other local governments. Beginning in 1965 (when the free teaching of Swedish for immigrants was introduced) tasks and funds was transferred from the state to local governments to manage integration policy. In the 1980s, this was consolidated when municipalities became responsible for the introduction and integration of refugees and their families. During the second half of the 1980s, the introduction of newly arrived in Malmö consisted of three hours language training per day. Only after completing the course were refugees referred to the Public Employment Service to find a job. During the 1990s the language training was complimented with civics and other activities. In the late 1990s there were nine different introduction programs in Malmö, ranging from university-oriented ones to programs for those who lack basic education from their homelands (Bevelander, 1997). Today the introduction programs are run by the Public Employment Service, and are much more institutionalised and ambitious.



3.4 The role of the local labour market and local authorities

As we described in the previous section, the mainstreaming approach followed its logical conclusion in the early 2010s when the political position for employment, adult education and integration was abolished. Today, there is no politician or committee specifically responsible for integration as this perspective should permeate all committees. There is one small exception. Since 2019, the City Office (*stadskontoret*) and the municipal council (*kommunstyrelsen*) have the task of coordinating issues on migration and refugees. However, due to mainstreaming of integration policies, it is difficult to know what the city is doing for integration and how much resources they spend on the issue. There is no earmarked money for employment and integration, which makes it difficult to follow up the results. It is only the expenses for language training that have a specific budget post (see Righard, Emilsson & Öberg 2019 for more on this).

3.4.1 A clear division of labour has become more diffuse

Labour market policies are primarily a state responsibility. Persons who want to participate in the labour market and who are actively seeking employment, regardless of the source of income, should be assisted by the Public Employment Service. The state, through the Public Employment Service, are also given a specific responsibility to organise introduction programs for newly arrived refugees and their families. From this perspective, municipalities have no obligation or directive from the state to take part in any labour market activation policies, and especially not for the group of new arrivals.

However, most municipalities organize their own labour market programs to complement the Public Employment Service. The number of municipalities organizing activation programs has gradually increased since the 1990s and today almost all municipalities have their own programs. In a survey in 2015, it was found that 273 of the country's 290 municipalities organized labour market programs (Vikman & Westerberg, 2017). A total of at least 83,000 persons participated in the programs, which can be regarded as a high figure given that 360,000 persons participated in the Public Employment Service's program for different groups of job applicants at the same time.

In Malmö, the municipality's involvement in labour market policies is justified by their goal to support unemployed recipients of social allowance to become self-sufficient. As long as persons receive municipal social allowance, they belong to the target group. The municipality therefore does not consider asylum seekers a target group for interventions. However, as one civil servant explains: *'It's not black and white. We would like to do measures if the state pays. But we still do provide services. We have asylum-seeking children who attend school. That responsibility still exists.'* At some point, our informant did not remember exactly when or where, it was decided that asylum seekers are not our area of responsibility. What Malmö is doing is political advocacy work and lobbying to the government to stop asylum seekers to freely choose where to reside during the asylum process (see wp3 report for more on this issue).

In addition, newly arrived refugees and their family are also not considered a target group for municipal labour market programs: *'In essence, it is the employment office that is responsible. Then after two years, they switch to the job and development guarantee.'* The Job and development guarantee (*Jobb och utvecklingsgarantin*) is another state program at the Public Employment Service that includes many new arrivals in addition to other unemployed. Since the economic benefit during this program is dependent on previous income, and most new arrivals enter the



guarantee program without former employment, a majority are in need of municipal social allowance. In this way they become targets for municipal interventions.

The main target group for municipal labour market interventions, are persons on social welfare, where the large majority is born outside Sweden. Since April 2019, they also work with persons in the introduction program if they receive social welfare. The director at the Employment Administration explains:

We do not work with asylum seekers. Because that is not the municipality's responsibility. We work with new arrivals in the introduction program if they have complementary economic support from the city of Malmö. It is actually the Public Employment Service's job to support them, but we have noticed that the result is not good enough. That is why we made a change in April where we said that we will supplement their efforts. We are better staffed than the Public Employment Service is right now. Right now there is almost systemic collapse at the Public Employment Service. Their case worker has too many clients to deal with and we have a greater staff density so we can maintain coaching and support and guidance in a better way, to help them find jobs, start educations, do internships, organise shorter educations, and preparation for job interviews. Plus the purely social work.

In November 2019 there were 3500 clients enrolled at the employment administration (*arbetsmarknadsavdelningen*) in Malmö, and among them a couple of hundreds were also in the state introduction program. About 500–600 were studying Swedish for immigrants courses.

Civil servants in the city of Malmö say that do not have any special programs or activities for new arrivals. They do, however, adapt their work to suit the needs of the new arrivals group. Central to this is the coordination of language education and labour market preparatory activities. The measures are not based on that they are newly arrived but linked to insufficient linguistic ability. In addition to 15 hours of language education per week, they try to supplement with activities focusing on labour market integration. It could be to solve different social problems, but also about informing about the Swedish labour market, internships and do shorter supplementary educations in parallel with learning the language.

Municipal labour market policy is a supplement to state policies, and their involvement is, according to our informants, only due to shortcomings of state policies. From a municipal perspective, they need to move people from being a welfare recipient to being a worker. And since only a small proportion of those who leave the introduction program, are supporting themselves and tend to continue to study at Swedish for immigrants, the municipality feel that they need to step in. In the words of the director at the Employment Administration:

One must go back to what our mission is, and that is to reduce the social welfare allowance. We want as many of our residents as possible, to support themselves as early as possible. And then we must be able to offer support. But we should not replace, but be able to supplement the Public Employment Service.

A first step is to get refugees to re-enroll at the Public Employment Service, and get people to participate in society's normal service. *'It is very much about pushing them in on the right track'*, one civil servant said.



3.4.2 The introduction program

All persons who are granted a residence permit are called to a group meeting at the Public Employment Service where they get information about the introduction program. Interpreters are present to make sure they have information about what they are signing up for. The next step is to develop an individual plan. Today most clients do this digitally, but participants in introduction programs get a personal physical meeting. During the meeting, or several meetings, an introduction plan is decided. Everyone is normally assigned to a Swedish for Immigrants course and a Civic Orientation course, which makes up for about half the time in the plan. Other activities should be based on what the individuals need to gain employment.

It is not easy for the Public Employment Service to live up to the requirement to organise full time activities during the entire 24-month introduction program. The section leader of the Public Employment Service explains:

I don't think anyone has a full-time activity all the time. All 24 months. It really should be full time activities, but it's impossible. First, maybe Swedish for immigrants kicks in and before you know which group you end up in, morning or afternoon, it is difficult to plan other activities.' 'It is a lot of juggling at first. And then you follow up. You're done with the civic orientation? How is the language training going? What is the next step? Should you have an internship, or should you validate your skills because you were a mason in your home country? Can and do you want to work as a mason? It is a shortage occupation with high demand. How do we do that?

The Public Employment Service in Malmö feels privileged compared to other smaller municipalities. The section leader describes their ability to offer a broader range of local labour market activities:

Nationally, there are about 20 different kinds of measures to support the way to employment. These should be available to everyone across the country, but they can be locally connected. In Malmö we have everything because we are Malmö, a big city. We have the access to many measures. The fast tracks, which are used to validate competence for higher skilled. We have it easier because many of the activities are in our vicinity and the participants do not have to travel and be away from their home to validate their skills. All activities are available for us.

However, for the individual the choice of activities could still be limited. The section leader at the Public Employment Service explains:

Although we have a 'smorgasbord' to choose from, not all activities are right for everyone. Some activities require certain skills or so. Even though we have a lot, not everyone can use everything. Then it may be necessary that the activities come in a certain order. A good case worker makes sure that the right activity comes at the right time. Otherwise, there is a risk that the activity comes too early and the individual cannot make good use of it. The Swedish language skills may be too low and then that activity may be wasted. It is important that the plan is in line with the individual's development of the language, and what the person's goals are.

The Public Employment Service in Malmö has, since the summer 2019 chosen to have a special unit that only works with the introduction program. Altogether there are 14 employed at this unit. It is a drastic cut compared to the 40–45 employed just a few years ago.



At the time of the interview, about 1200 persons were enrolled in the introduction program. Slightly less than half of them has a secondary education while the rest at most has a primary education.

A recurrent problem in the Introduction Program has been to find suitable activities for the lower skilled. In 2018, the government decided on an 'educational duty' for those lacking a secondary education. Lower skilled now has to accept to study primary and secondary adult education to keep their economic benefits. In Malmö, and in most other municipalities, this has been hard to implement in practice. In order to enrol in formal adult education, you need to be eligible and have the necessary language skills. The section leader of the Public Employment Service tells:

We have had some problems in Malmö to get the 'education duty' started. And it is related to the fact that ... The Public Employment Service has the responsibility for the reform but we cannot carry out the duty ourselves because the duty means that you have to study basic education or higher, and formal education is owned by the municipalities and their adult education. And there is a built-in system error. In order to enter basic education, you must complete certain parts of the language training. In practice, you cannot be admitted to basic education until you have completed Swedish for immigrants. And if you are low-skilled, it takes a long time to finish those courses.

To solve this problem, new orientation courses have been developed by the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) that will start in 2020. From 2020, all lower skilled refugees in the introduction program will be 'forced' to enter those orientation courses.

Another major difficulty is getting migrants to fit into the regular educational programs. Especially those migrants with the lowest degree of education get lost in the system. Several interviewees speak about the need to develop adult teaching and vocational training to fit the group of migrants, who have a greater need for support. Therefore, the municipal's general unit for 'adult education' has plans to include the 'weakest' migrants by offering more holistic solutions that target newcomers' ability to accommodate to a Swedish way of life by entailing efforts to teach e.g. digitalization and other everyday issues. Other initiatives that may facilitate migrants' educational and work life is a new law that combines primary school with vocational education as e.g. an electrician, a vocational education that is stripped of superfluous disciplines, as a civil servant from the Malmö's unit for adult education (*Kommunal Vuxenutbildning*) says:

You may not need English or Social Sciences to work as an electrician. Yet, you may need Swedish and Math. So now we have done an educational package that goes across, so we remove what they do not need; you study what you must have. And the advantage is that it becomes a faster trip, you don't read a lot of unnecessary stuff, you read what you must have. The disadvantage is that you don't get any university eligibility. But then, what you read is what you want to work with, and you get points for everything you read.

In Malmö there are also opportunities to refer refugees to activities specialised to improve physical and psychological health. The Avanti project has a long history in Malmö, but under different names and funders. They treat refugees with post-traumatic stress disorder and similar symptoms, while at the same time organising language



training and other activities. The Red Cross is a partner, as well as the Public Employment Service and the Region Scania. In the Avanti project, language is combined with treatment of psychological diagnosis. There are staff who can treat refugees with mental illness linked to trauma and flight. There are also staff from the Public Employment Service and labour market secretaries from the city of Malmö in the same location. The City of Malmö also contributes with a health educator who works with mindfulness and health promotion efforts. This way you can study language training in the morning and have other activities in the afternoon in a safe environment. In addition to Avanti, there is also a large ESF-project (i.e. funded by the *European Social Fund*) called Health Promotion Introduction (*Hälsofrämjande etablering*), which is located in Malmö and in seven other municipalities.

3.4.3 The city of Malmö's organisation of labour market policies

The municipal Employment Unit (*Arbetsmarknadsavdelningen*), one of several units in the Employment and Social Welfare Department (*Arbetsmarknads- och Socialförvaltningen*), is responsible for the implementation of Malmö's labour market policies. The unit has about 280 employees. There are three main sections at the Employment Unit, focusing on different target groups, one for persons over 30 years of age, one for youths, and one for students in Swedish for immigrants education, the Swedish for Immigrants section (*Svenska för invandrare-sektionen*, SFI-sektion).

The Swedish for Immigrants section has about 18 employees and works with individuals who participate in language education and are in need of social assistance. Because some of their employees works in the language education schools, they meet and help other students as well, but they only enrol persons in need of municipal social assistance. The idea is to coach Swedish for immigrant students towards employment or education so they can support themselves economically. In addition to coaching, they can offer guidance, internships for language development, language cafes, and training courses. For the participants who are unable to enter the open labour market, they can offer protected employment within the city of Malmö. They also work with regular recruitment towards employers, mostly for low-qualified jobs.

New arrivals are eligible to attend the introduction program organised by the Public Employment Service for a maximum of 24 months. It is supposed to include language education, civic orientation, and labour market preparatory activities. The state relies on local municipalities to organize language education and civic orientation while the state, through the Public Employment Service, is responsible for labour market training activities and economic benefits during the program. Local municipalities should therefore formally not be involved in any labour market activities or have any economic responsibility during these 24 months. When the introduction program started in 2010, most municipalities, including Malmö, also did have a hand-off approach towards participants in introduction programs in those areas of integration. However, developments over time have led to an increasing involvement from the city of Malmö for these target groups also when it comes to labour market activities and social assistance. There are two main reasons for the increasing local level involvement in these areas. Firstly, the state introduction benefit was supposed to cover the economic needs during the introduction program period. But the level of compensation has remained the same for 10 years while costs have risen, especially for housing. Many households therefore need to complement the state benefit with municipal social assistance. As the city of Malmö focus their labour market policies on persons with social assistance, more and more participants in the introduction program are candidates for municipal labour market activities. In May 2019, the city took an official decision to also work with persons in the introduction program as long as they are in need of social allowance as a complement to



the introduction benefit. Secondly, the Public Employment Service is undergoing a crisis. A reduced budget and reorganisations have depleted the organisation of resources and manpower.

The only substantial municipal involvement for refugees is in the Avanti project mentioned above. Even though the city of Malmö has made a decision to also work with participants who do formally participate in an introduction program, they only form a small minority of the participants of the municipal labour market services. New arrivals are normally not part of municipal activities until the introduction program ends, and when most of them are enrolled in the Job and Development Guarantee (*Jobb och utvecklingsgarantin*), another program at the Public Employment Service. At this point about 30 per cent of the participants in Scania, and a little less in Malmö, have found employment. Because few former participants are eligible for work related benefits, the state compensation in the Job and Development Guarantee is too low to live on, they need to supplement with social assistance, and it gives the city of Malmö an incentive to get involved alongside the Public Employment Service. A civil servant from the Employment Unit in Malmö explain:

You cannot live on the activity support from the Guarantee. It is too low, just under [SEK] 3 000 a month and then you have to have supplementary support from us. So, if you do not have a job or a student loan after two years, you will automatically end up with social allowance. And then they are enrolled in the city's labour market department. When they are enrolled, we work more closely with the persons and make a plan. We don't make a plan within the 24-month period, but after we do.

In addition to motivational work and counselling, the city of Malmö also initiates shorter labour market educations to match unemployed with employers. They build shorter training programs, often in cooperation with the Public Employment Services and the municipal adult education, in professions where there is a high demand among employers. The director at the Employment Unit exemplifies:

We have employers on one side that need people in a hotel, cleaning for example. And then we find out what it takes to be a hotel cleaner and then we build an education for them together with the Public Employment Service. We recruit and try to coach them all the way to the job. It's a lot about simpler jobs. And it's about local shortage educations.

The educations are often for jobs in the hospitality industry, but they also have an education for railroad maintenance. For the more advanced educations, participants have been in Sweden for a few years and know the language.

The volume for these vocational educations is still small. They started with 80–90 participants, and during 2019 they reached 175–180. The plan for 2020 is to recruit 300–350 persons. Similar programs, where they combine language training and education, exists in the regular education system in secondary education and adult education. What the employment administration can add is that they are cooperating with employers directly. Regular education cannot involve third parties in the recruitment of participants since there an admission procedure where everyone has the right to apply.

The Employment Unit does not work with employments that require academic education, instead this is the focus of the Region Scania which, among other areas, have measures within computing. The Employment Unit has



educations in construction, transport, warehouses, printers, train repairs, childcare, kitchen assistants. Most courses are six months to a year and are secondary level educations. The courses do not require high education, but participants must be able to communicate in Swedish.

3.4.4 Local cooperation

There is an institutionalised collaboration structure on the local as well as on the regional level. Since many local, regional and state actors are involved in the refugee reception and introduction program collaboration is key on the local level, but also for regional cooperation between local municipalities.

The Regional Agreement (*Regional Överenskommelse, RÖK*) deals with overarching and strategic questions. It is signed by the County Administrative Board (a state agency in the regional level), the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Migration Agency, the Civil Society Network, the Public Employment Service, Region Scania, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, Malmö University, and local government representatives from the four corners of Scania. In the 2016–2019 agreement (RÖK, 2016) five areas were singled out as priorities: Housing and refugee reception, Work and labour supply, Health, Local collaboration, and increased cooperation with civil society.

The Local Agreement (*Lokal överenskommelse, LÖK*) is more focused on solving practical issues on the local level. The Public Employment Service is chairman of the agreement, which also includes the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Migration Agency, Region Scania, and many different departments from the city of Malmö. The latest agreement is from 2014 (LÖK, 2014), and says that the aim of the agreement is to clarify the tasks, responsibilities, roles and routines between the signing partners. It specifically states that the agreement only applies for persons eligible for introduction programs. In the words of the director of the employment unit in Malmö the local agreement is about *'very practical questions. It can be about when individuals get stuck between the different organizations, to bridge those issues'*.

On the regional level they meet a maximum of four times a year, whereas there are more frequent meetings on the local level. To complicate things further, there is also an agreement between the Public Employment Service and the city of Malmö within the program Delegation for youths and newly arrived to employment (*Delegationen för unga och nyanlända till arbete, DUA*), which is a state initiative to promote state and municipal collaboration and the development of new forms of cooperation with the aim of streamlining the establishment of young people and migrant newcomers in working life.

Both representatives from the municipality and the Public Employment Service say that the local collaboration is good. All our informants in different municipal administrations and state agencies did praise the local cooperation, both the infrastructure they had built up together in the local and regional agreements as well as the attitudes and willingness to work together.

It has developed a culture of collaboration. I think there is a basic attitude that no authority can do everything by themselves. A chain must be created between different actors to solve complex social problems.



The problem between actors on the local level is not lack of will to cooperate. The municipality clearly points out problems within the Public Employment Service that has affected the local work for integration negatively. The director at the Employment Administration explains:

It doesn't quite click. It clicked better before the big changes at the Public Employment Service. Now we have noticed, because they are understaffed, we have to put a lot of effort into finding cooperation. Of course, some case workers are very pragmatic and think 'the more help I get, the better it is', and understand that we share common clients. Others think we are a squeak in the machinery.

One of his colleagues at the same administration explains further:

We have a very good working relationship with the Employment Service. That's important to say. And we have good formal agreements. But the Employment Service is undergoing a big transition and it has ... many things have changed... Especially because many case workers have left. There are no people left. And that means that everyday cooperation becomes more difficult. There is no one to cooperate with.

The private sector is largely absent from these kinds of collaborations and agreements. Nevertheless, employers and employer organisations are a resource in many of the activities the Public Employment Service can offer. The section leader at the Public Employment Service explains:

In our case, it is about employers receiving newcomers for internships, language training, or validation of skills to get experience, networks and references.

There are many different forms of subsidised employment schemes to encourage employers to take the chance on someone without country-specific skills and experiences. The employers who regularly turn to the Public Employment Service to recruit new arrivals look for workers to do simple jobs in restaurants and retail that do not require formal education, where it is fine with limited communicative Swedish language skills.

Also civil society organisations were an absent collaborator for a long time. However, during the last couple of years, their presence in the work for refugees has increased. Folk high schools and study associations were involved a lot during and in the aftermath of 2015, coping with the demand for language education and training. This need no longer exist, but folk high schools still organise study motivation courses who are used in the second half of the introduction program. There are also quite a lot of efforts where different associations in Malmö start up courses or activities for a few weeks where the participants in introduction programs participate, from cycling school to 'getting to know Malmö', to swimming training. There is an umbrella organisation, Network, activity and participation (*Nätverk, aktivitet, deltagande, NAD*), who coordinates civil society organisations and they are part of the Local Agreement. They collaborate with the Public Employment Service as part of migrants' introduction program or development guarantee plan. Network, activity and participation introduces migrants to a wide scope of associations and help them discover how associations may serve as a guideline for their lives and plans for the future, and more concretely benefit their possibilities to find a job. In some cases, Network, activity and participation has matched individuals with jobs in associations.



Cooperation with non-profit organisations is a political priority in the city of Malmö. Non-profit public partnership (*Idéburet offentligt partnerskap, IOP*) is a model of collaboration between the public and the non-profit sector that has grown in importance since the model was developed in 2010. A Non-profit public partnership is allowed in areas where no market exists. Public authorities are in these cases not obliged to procure the activities conducted by external parties. Currently Malmö have five Non-profit public partnerships with organisations that carry out services for the Employment Unit, including the female social economy organisation Yallatrappan, the Red Cross and local football clubs. They offer services where Malmö can remit their clients, and the organisations are remunerated for their services. Malmö has clearly prioritised NGOs over private companies, and they currently do not procure any services from the private sector.

It is not uncommon with difficulties when reforms are implemented on the local level. For the introduction program, the Public Employment Service has struggled to find suitable activities to make it a full-time program, and especially to find activities for new arrivals with short educational background. These problems were previously mostly due to administrative rules and difficulties to coordinate efforts on the local level between actors with different roles and responsibilities. Economic resources were previously not a big problem. As mentioned, at the time of our interviews, much had changed. Political instability on the national level led to big cuts in the Public Employment Service' budget. Staff cuts and reorganisations almost led to a standstill in the introduction program. The remaining case workers each had to deal with hundreds of clients, which prolonged enrolment in activities for the participants. This, in turn, effected service providers who did not get the expected number of participants in their educations. Problems with implementation were, at the time of the interviews, not foremost local factors or problems with horizontal coordination but due to a lack of support from the national level. The section leader at the Public Employment Service tells:

We have had a steel bath here at the Public Employment Service this year, where we have lost almost 30 per cent of our employees. ... I can say that we have too few resources locally. But we have got a new budget and have actually been able to reinstate some staff in October. [...] We have program funds left for the group in introduction programs. But I have had too few employees so they do not have time to work with the clients and use the funds effectively. This, in turn, means that we have not been able to use the external service suppliers. They are not getting enough customers and some have gone bankrupt. It becomes a moment 22, a downward spiral. If we have too few resources to work on a case, then we cannot identify customers and place them in good activities and then we do not use all the budget. If I had more staff, we would have been able to use the budget associated with the assignment. So the resources for this target group are a little tight.

3.4.5 The long road to find a job

It takes a long time for most refugees to get employment. After the 24-month introduction program, about one in three can support themselves through work or study loans. The jobs they find are often less qualified. The section leader at the Public Employment Service describes the situation:

Those who do have a secondary education also have a long way to go if they want to pursue further studies or find a qualified job. They cannot enter higher education with a foreign secondary education. They must finish the language training and also read other courses



corresponding to basic qualifications. And if they want to find a qualified job you often need Swedish language and to validate the education, and it takes time. The ones who do find employment quickly do work in lower skilled jobs. [...] 'Most people get a job where no specific skills are required. In restaurants and the private service sector. Take MacDonal'd's for example. In jobs like that, it is more about the will to it than your qualifications. The challenge is that the program is 24 months, and we have a goal that 35 per cent should find a job or enter an education you finance yourself within this time period. In Malmö we are at just under 30 per cent in October, slightly lower than the national average. If you have a professional identity it takes a while before you get into that kind of job. Some may have vocational skills, e.g. crafts profession, where you can validate your skills and work as a mason, carpenter or chef within 24 months. But in general, it is unqualified jobs. For the others, it takes time to validate skills, learn the language, and gain employment.

Thus, the road to employment is long for both lower and higher skilled. In the city of Malmö, they do not work a lot with persons who have higher skills. They are the ones that benefit from the Introduction program, according to one civil servant in Malmö: *'The Public Employment Service has much better tools for them, fast tracks for academics and other activities.'* The Public Employment Service can offer fast track programs for refugees who have experience or training in a profession where there is a shortage of workers. The programs include a combination of, among other things, validation, internships, language training and tailor-made supplementary education, and are offered for about 40, mostly academic, professions. In Malmö, for example, the Public Employment Service is paying Malmö University to organise fast tracks for teachers, preschool teachers, and social workers. Even though the programs are called 'fast tracks', the road to employment is long and demanding. A student counsellor at the project New Academics (*Nya akademiker, NYAK*) at the Malmö University describes the process:

There are many who have worked as a teacher for 20-30 years in their home countries. But they have no teacher training, because in many countries you have a subject exam and then you teach. Here we have requirement of a pedagogical exam as well, and you must have a teacher's ID. For them, it is also about learning Swedish and English, and then they will enter the university and acquire teaching credentials. So, for many it is a very long journey, and many have problems of keeping up the motivation. Then there is also a huge difference if you are 25 or 45 when you arrive.

All of our informants in the city of Malmö agrees that there are plenty of jobs. In their perspective, the problem is that few unemployed on social assistance have the 'right skills'. They experience a mis-match between the unemployed and the needs on the labour market, and many of the clients are not prepared to participate in the education offered. *'We have an example when we looked to recruit persons to be train repairers. To find 15–20 persons who is right, you need a sample of 100–200 people. And that is the problem today.'*

For the clients, the main problem is language skills, lack of motivation and self-perception, according to one informant at the Employment Unit. Therefore, they spend a lot of effort on coaching and counselling to get people to understand *'what the road to employment look like'*.



Language is an obstacle. Many have weak language skills. Many have been here for a long time and depending on their educational background they may not have the opportunity to study. But otherwise, sometimes those who have been unemployed for a long time has lost their motivation. They have lost their spark. And they may have lost their confidence. They don't believe in themselves. But I feel that when employers come in, then the language doesn't have to mean that much. It's more about matching someone who is interested, with that employer.

Racism is not a big obstacle, according to most of our informants. Civil servants in Malmö say that employers are quite positive to recruit their clients. What the employers want to know is, according to one civil servant in the employment administration: *'Do I get the right skills without having to spend too much time and effort.'* *'And when we declare that we who do all the work, and that they are allowed to select the participants, they usually are very positive.'* The same informant compares to his former work in construction, where he experienced racism out at the workplaces. He compares with today, today he *'does not experience it at all. On the contrary, employers really only look at skills and competences'*, he says.

Several of the interviewed local stakeholders emphasize that ethnic diversity is a natural condition in Malmö due to the high percentage of migrant residents. This diversity is represented by the many different nationalities among employees at various workplaces. The director at the Employment Administration points out that the traditional concept of racism may be outdated in Malmö because of the multiculturalism of the city, yet that name and skin colour still play a role when migrants apply for jobs:

At the same time, I believe that the individual still meets it [racism] when sh/e enters, applies for a job, so name and appearance still play a role. We get different indicators for that. In those circumstances, we use internship as a tool. To get the employer to know the person and get a real image of the person instead of saying no at the door because of a name.

Other interviewees argue that direct racism may not be the case, but point to more subtle forms of racism related to an uneasiness of facing otherness. The multicultural environment in Malmö also indicates that the city is marked by segregation and homogeneity, which means that people do not mix with one another, and may feel uncomfortable by being faced with otherness of migrants. The project leader at New Academics (*Nya akademiker, NYAK*) at Malmö University indicates that this may affect migrants' chances for getting a job:

I think that the difficulty for an intern, that you don't hire, may have to do with being easier to employ somebody like yourself instead of taking a wildcard that you don't understand, and who may have a different culture.

The project leader points out that the job interview situation in itself may involve cultural misunderstandings that may have unintendedly bad consequences for migrants:

I think that we also need to think about how we can have a dialogue with those who work with recruitment, so they get an understanding of the persons we meet, that they are not used to answer these types of questions. That doesn't indicate that they cannot answer them, but for instance they don't speak their mother tongue, so that may imply that their tone of voice... perhaps they sound angry at the wrong place, or laugh at the wrong place. Do you understand what I mean? There may be so much that makes the interview not turn out perfect, if you



compare them to somebody who is born in Sweden, who knows all the codes, who knows exactly how to move and laugh at the right place...

3.4.6 Gender aspects

Many of the interviewees speak about the challenge of unemployed migrant women. Only about half as many newly arrived women as men are employed. There is a clear underrepresentation of women in both the Job and development guarantee that often follows on the introduction program, which implies that women reject the efforts of the Public Employment Service, and in jobs and education. The Public Employment Service is working with methods such as guiding groups aimed specifically at migrant women in the introduction program.

But in spite of the significant difference in employment between migrant men and women, the region of Scania says that they do not work strategically with the issue. Civil servants from the Malmö City Office add that there is no strategic labour political program for gender issues, as it has been pointed out – to their wonder – that there is no need for this.

Instead of overall strategic measures to combat the exclusion of women from the labour market, the different interviewees point to individual initiatives, gender projects of NGO's, or units within the municipal administration of schooling and education. The director at the Employment Administration explains tells that his staff use themselves in motivating individual efforts while interacting with migrant women:

The staff often uses themselves as a role model. They say “I have a 5-year old at home, and here I am”. The staff is from all corners of the world and they are the best role models to prove that it is doable to make a career and have a parallel job life together with your family life.

Certain units within the City of Malmö have a focus on gender aspects, such as SFI which has language lessons for persons on parent leave that offer baby-sitting while the parent learn Swedish. Another effort is the open pre-school, which in the autumn of 2019 started a project “Early in Life.” Via family mentors who represent different nationalities, the project reaches out to migrant parents with young children to make them attend open-preschool and participate in playful activities and socialize with other parents and children. The open-preschool also offers Swedish language lessons and consultations for parents. For the coordinator of this project, this initiative may indirectly combat marginalization of women due to many child births and parental leaves:

So, they end up marginalized, they don't proceed with their Swedish, they don't proceed with their education, and they don't come closer to work life either. So, there is a risk of marginalization, in a way, for many women. And there we see open pre-school may be an arena where they may proceed and develop and move on.

Many people we met think that the problem of female labour market participation is about attitudes and expectations. There are clear orders from the Public Employment Service central office to especially support women during the introduction program. Their local office in Malmö have prioritized female participation and follow up their services from a gender perspective, but still see many obstacles.



The director explains:

Many of my case workers say it is tough to work with women, that it takes a lot of motivation and guidance to get ahead. And even if you offer activities, there is some resistance. And I think it's not about people not wanting to, but there are barriers. 'You can meet a little resistance of different kinds. It can be anything from not being allowed to work, linked to culture or fear, or that you have never done anything like it before.

A civil servant in the city administration has similar experiences:

It's about what ideas you have about yourself, what opportunities you have. To how to distinguish between women and men, what is perceived as possible to do or not. If you are going to work or be at home with the family. What role you have towards the children. A lot of our work is about pushing the limits of the individual's prejudices about themselves. Conceptions of what is possible and not. There are big differences in female employment depending on where you come from. It is a great challenge for us to paint a picture, that in Sweden everyone who is able contributes.

4. Conclusive Discussion

In conjunction with the closing of borders for labour immigration towards the end of the 1960s, it was decided that Sweden should maintain a generous migration policy towards refugees and migrant policy towards all foreigners residing in the country. This generous immigration policy towards refugees and their families was, for instance, visible in a comparative perspective in the early 1990s and again in 2015 as asylum migration peaked in Europe. Moreover, policy has, at least on the discursive level, aimed at guaranteeing equal rights for non-citizens. In addition, since the 1980s Sweden has an introduction program with the aim of support and compensate for the loss of human capital that many who have been granted asylum, and their families, experience. Much of the measures and goals have remained the same over time. However, starting in November 2015 measures were taken to limit the number of asylum applications and 'new arrivals' in the country. These measures have, among other things, involved limitations of legal immigration pathways to Sweden and that temporary residence permits now to a large extent replace permanent permits. Quite obviously, temporary residence permits have, if they are withdrawn, far reaching impact on the integration of individuals. Yet, while in the country, persons with residence permits, temporary and permanent alike, have basically the same (formal) access to social protection and services as citizens, and they have extensive (formal) access to the labour market. In spite of its political goals of inclusion, and policy instruments for inclusion, not least of newly arrived refugees and their families, Sweden struggles with comparatively large inequality, including employment, gaps between foreign and Swedish born. In particular, persons born in a third country, including many of the refugees and their families, are lagging behind.

Asylum seekers were never part of these measures. As the first introduction program was established in the 1980s, the asylum seekers were referred to 'those who are waiting' (*väntarna*), which reflects that this period of time was considered an exemption. This understanding prevailed and, in effect, not many measures were taken for labour market integration. However, as this period of time became be extended towards the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, with obvious negative impacts on the individuals, it was decided that asylum seekers could be exempted from requirements of work permit and take on an employment. Since December 2010, asylum seekers have the



possibility of ‘changing track’, which means that if the asylum application is rejected, he or she can, if he or she can reach an employment, under certain circumstances change track from an application of asylum to an application of work permit. While this is (formally) possible, rather low numbers of persons do this.

The basic idea of the current introduction program (*Etableringsprogrammet*), that was implemented in 2010, is that the state is responsible for the labour market integration of refugees and their families, in Swedish administrative language referred to as ‘new arrivals’. The state funds and coordinates the introduction program, they implement employment subsidies, and fund collaborative platforms to stimulate horizontal coordination between actors on the local level. The idea has been to build up a multi-level governance infrastructure to improve the implementation of the introduction program. The current program is coordinated by the Public Employment Service, lasts for 24 months at the most, and is expected to include language education, civic orientation, and labour market training activities. Participants are eligible to introduction allowance when following their introduction plan. The state reimburses municipalities for the reception of refugees, including the organisation of language education and civic orientation, but the municipalities are not particularly involved in labour market activities for new arrivals as long as they are part of the introduction program.

There are strong elements of both vertical and horizontal coordination; agreements on the local and regional level try to ensure that the division of tasks between state, municipal and NGO actors runs smoothly. Up until a recent reform of in 2019, the program has been well funded by the state. Hence, on paper, everything seems to be set up for success. Nevertheless, and as already said, the results of the introduction program are disappointing. New arrivals, i.e. refugees and their families, are worse off than other immigrant groups despite the extra support that is provided. After the 24-month introduction program, about one third support themselves through work or full-time studies.

After ending the introduction program, the new arrivals are not eligible to the state introduction allowance. If they cannot support themselves, they can apply for social assistance by the municipal social welfare office. This is when municipalities get involved in labour market training programs.

In this GLIMER work package we have studied local labour market integration policies and measures in Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden. The region has one of the lowest employment rates in the country, so the conditions for labour market integration are not the best. The strategy in the city of Malmö has been to increase economic growth and implement area based and generic welfare programs. The city does not have any articulated local integration policy, rather the ambition is to mainstream integration policies into all of the municipal departments and activities. The city leaves most of the responsibilities for labour market integration of refugees to the Public Employment Service who are responsible for the introduction program, also on the local level.

At the end of 2019 about 1100 refugees were enrolled in the introduction program in Malmö. About half of the participants had at most a primary education and about 30 per cent an upper-secondary education. The Public Employment Service office is unable to find suitable labour market training activities for all participants. Lower skilled persons often need basic education before entering more qualified labour market trainings, and the rules and regulations of municipal adult education makes admission almost impossible for many new arrivals. And despite ambitions to provide services for women, men are, as a rule, overrepresented in labour market training activities. Still, the local Public Employment Service office in Malmö feels privileged compared to smaller municipalities, since they can offer most of the 20 alternative activities in their toolbox to support clients’ way to employment.



A recent problem at the local Public Employment Service office is the lack of funds to implement the introduction program, which is a result of political conflicts at the national level. This is a new and troubling development that has brought about many problems at the local level. Most local actors, including state agencies and the city of Malmö, praise the willingness to cooperate. The problems they do encounter are often due to rules and regulations governing their respective organisations. However, the crisis at the Public Employment Service has led to new policy developments at the local level, where the city of Malmö in 2019 decided to step in and offer employment services also to participants in the introduction program.

Nevertheless, the city of Malmö mostly focuses their labour market services on those refugees that leave the introduction program and still are in need of social welfare. From the perspective of civil servants in the Malmö administration, the lack of language skills and motivation, where the latter is seen as more prevalent among women, are the foremost obstacles for employment. Language straining and coaching activities are therefore the main activities, first in order to get unemployed to enter further education and then eventually find a job. For a smaller number of people, Malmö also organizes vocational programs for occupations in need of workers.

Most of the local labour market measures involve public sector organisations. Non-Governmental organisations are increasingly involved, either as organiser of activities in the introduction program or through partnerships with public organisations. Private actors are mostly seen as end-users as employers, and the city of Malmö do not at present have any procured private labour market services. Consequently, the lack of a local integration policy may have negative consequences for labour market integration. The mainstreaming strategy, which is a result of the lacking municipal integration policy, indicates that differences related to e.g. culture and ethnicity are ignored. This is reinforced by the general lacking focus on refugees as a special precarious group that may have very different experiences and conditions for having a work life. Some of the interviewed civil servants seem to raise this issue when pointing out the many “weak” persons, e.g. persons with low levels of education and missing skills to manoeuvre in a digitalized everyday life, who get lost in the system.

4.1 Policy strengths and possible improvements at the local level

It is obvious that the Public Employment Service needs to get back to full operational status. The previous problems were a lack of individually tailored activities for refugees, especially persons with short educational backgrounds, and problems with coordination between the local Public Employment Service offices and the municipalities. Today, however, lack of funds and long-term planning at the Public Employment Services are a more serious problem. A culture of cooperation has developed at the local level that is threatened by recent developments on the national political level.

Over the years, much efforts have been done to overcome collaboration problems between local state and municipal actors. However, there are still many regulatory obstacles that complicates the possibilities for flexible and innovative solutions on the local level. For example, the Public Employment Services has no access to adult education provided by the municipalities. To be enrolled in adult education, persons need to be eligible and this requires certain levels of education and language skills, which many refugees do not have. New kinds of collaborations with non-governmental organisations are growing in importance, but these collaborations are seldom related to labour market measures.



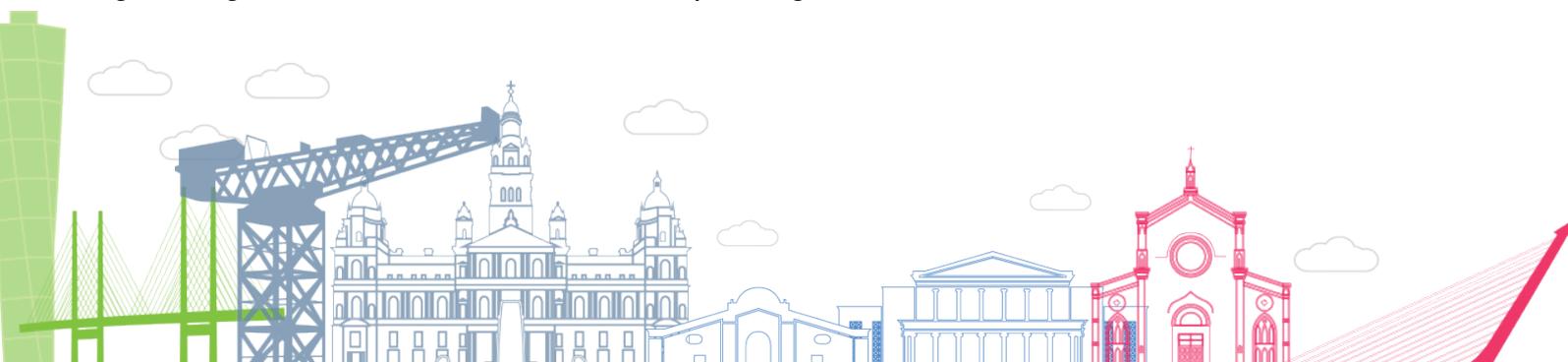
New initiatives in labour market policy for newly arrived refugees such as the new employment subsidy named 'introductory job' introduced in May 2018 and which may be combined with education seems to be a promising form of skills training and way into the labour market. The subsidy of 80 per cent of the salary and supervisor support furthermore makes this initiative an attractive option, not least for employers. However, and as pointed out in our GLIMER report on language training (work package 4), from the educational side this is viewed as an obstacle for Swedish language education, in principle among students with short or no educational background. Not least, since this will hinder them from doing their homework. Other new and promising measures are the mentioned 'green jobs' for newly arrived refugees, internships for new arrivals in state agencies and 'simple jobs' aimed at private businesses. While such new policy initiatives to expand and create easier pathways into jobs should be encouraged, the possible positive expected outcome should be considered in its relation to education and other labour market measures.

In our case, the mentioned Avanti project stands out as a particularly good example. The project treats refugees with post-traumatic stress disorders and similar symptoms and organises language training and other activities. The project is not only health promoting, it also encourages participation in society and work life, stimulating labour market participation among persons who otherwise would not be able to work. The combination of health promotion, skills training, collaboration and joined efforts of very different partners such as NGOs, the Public Employment Service and the Region Scania makes this project a good example of skills training and integration into the labour market.



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