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

Gender Dynamics across Reception and Integration in Sweden

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I. Introduction

This report is about gender dynamics in the governance of the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden, with a particular focus on the region of Scania. It builds on work done in the previous GLIMER work packages about housing and accommodation (WP3), language training and education (WP4) and labour market integration (WP5) together with additional new empirical material about gender policy and third sector initiatives targeting gender dynamics. The additional material consists of policy documents applied on national and local levels, and interviews with personnel working in projects for female newcomers.

The Swedish welfare state model is an important context for understanding issues of gender equality in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The Swedish welfare state is based on an understanding of equality in terms of rights and contributions through labour market participation. This means that it relies on a dual-earner family model, a model introduced in the 1970s through a number of policy tools encouraging this way of life, including individual taxation (which replaced family taxation) and the introduction of public and affordable childcare (which was previously done by women in the home), together with the embracement of ideologies of gender equality (*jämlikhet*) and gender equality of opportunities (*jämställdhet*). Over time, these interventions have contributed to a change of the mind-set of the people. In a comparative study on care, work and welfare, Sweden was depicted as a country with a small family and a big state, meaning that the state takes on a comparatively large proportion of care work, since both women and men are expected to enter the labour market (Daly and Rake 2003). Sweden has an outspoken policy about gender equality of opportunity aiming at women's and men's equal power to shape society and their lives; lately, the government has even branded itself as a feminist government. Sweden has repeatedly been top ranked in the Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality 2017). It is probably no exaggeration to say that, when it comes to gender equality and gender equality policy, in international comparison, Sweden is an extreme example. The response to gender dynamics in the reception and integration of refugees and other migrants in Sweden must be understood against this backdrop.

In the following, we first present the data this report is based on. Next we introduce gender equality policy as this plays out on the national level, this includes both a section about the historical development of gender equality policy and sections about gender dynamics in the reception of and labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Following on this, and building on the previous GLIMER work packages, we discuss gender dynamics in housing and accommodation, Swedish language training and labour market integration. We then present three examples of local initiatives aiming at the integration of refugee and other immigrant women. The report is finalised with a conclusive discussion.

2. Research Methodology and Data Collection

This report relies on fieldwork, interviews, statistics, documents and secondary data such as published and unpublished reports. It draws on empirical material from the previous three GLIMER-reports on housing (WP3), language training and education (WP4) and labour market integration (WP5) in Sweden along with analysis of policy documents and three case studies based on participant observation and interviews of third sector initiatives



targeting unemployed female newcomers in Malmö that we have carried out for this report. The initiatives are Women's Power, International Women's Association Malmö and Yalla Trappan.

In total, this material includes 66 semi-structured interviews, a number of participant observations and field trips, and a workshop. 34 of the interviewed were civil servants and case workers and represent the national level such as the Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*) and the Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*), the regional level such as the association Sweden's Municipalities and Regions (*Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, SKR*), Association of Municipalities Scania (*Kommunförbundet Skåne, KfSK*), the Scania County Administrative Board (*Länsstyrelsen Skåne*) and the local level such as various units within the Municipality of Eslöv and the City of Malmö (*Malmö Stad*), Malmö University's service for New Academics (*Nya akademiker, NYAK*), and different civil society organizations that work with issues related to migration, housing, language training, and labour market integration. Another 22 interviewees were newly arrived refugees from Malmö and Eslöv; some of the interviews were conducted with an interpreter.

The researchers carried out participant observation in relevant events such as network meetings for case workers in Scania, a job fair for refugees taking place in Malmö, field visits to the Arrival Accommodation for asylum seekers in Malmö and various forms of accommodations for refugees in Eslöv and Malmö, and a field visit to International Women's Association Malmö. Moreover, for the report on housing, the researchers organised an Urban Living Lab together with people from different civil society organisations.

3. Gender in a National Policy Perspective

This section is focused on gender dimensions of the reception and integration refugees in a national policy perspective. It first outlines the development of gender equality policy, as this has developed from the 1970s and onwards. This development constitutes an important background to gender-sensitive approaches to the reception and integration of refugees. We then relate to gender dimensions of the refugee reception, considering gender mainstreaming in both the Migration Agency as an organisational body and in the reception *per se*. Next, we consider the debate of parental leave as a refugee women's trap, slowing labour market integration. This debate is to be mirrored in the historical section about the more general understanding of parental leave as an obstacle for labour market integration. We then consider women's participation in the labour force, with a particular focus on refugees' participation, and also various forms of gender-based violence in a migration perspective.

3.1 Setting the scene: the historical development of Swedish gender equality policy

Equality (*jämlikhet*) between women and men, or rather equality of opportunity (*jämställdhet*), has been on the political agenda of the national government since the 1970s. Originally it was limited to labour market participation, but is today an ideology that spans across several policy fields. It is expected to permeate all policy, and the government even proclaim itself as a feminist government.



Due to a growing concern about the disadvantaged position of women in society, in 1972 prime minister Olof Palme summoned a delegation with the instruction to support increased equality of opportunity between men and women. The prime minister contextualised this need in the following way (SOU 1978:38, p. 27):

First, and foremost, this is about strengthening women's right to work. Labour market policy and other interventions, as well as a renovation of working life conditions hereby comes to the forefront. Youth and adult education must contribute to a labour division based in equality of opportunity, between men and women, and in the labour market and at home. Such a division of labour involves great demands on child care, other services in the residential areas, and an enlarged space for community in society. Household working women's need of community outside of the home and in society, and of various forms of services, demands attention.

In 1979 a law prohibiting discrimination between men and women in situations of employment and promotion was implemented. It also stipulated that it is not allowed to apply inferior employment conditions or to divide labour tasks in a disadvantaged way due to gender (see government bill, Prop. 1978/79:175, and act, SFS 1979:1118). Already before it was implemented, the law was amended making it mandatory for all employers to actively support the development towards gender inequality on the labour market (see government bill, Prop. 1979/80:56). In conjunction with this, the government authority Equality Ombudsman (*Jämställdhetsombudsmannen, JämO*) was established to monitor and support the development of gender equality in the labour market.

During the 1980s the understanding of equality of opportunity was broadened beyond women's labour market integration to involve other areas, including education, labour market and family policy. In 1985 the government instructed a special investigator to map the current representation of women in government decision making bodies and propose measures of how to increase this share (see inquiry instructions, Dir. 1985:43). The inquiry work met a broad and deep resistance. In the inquiry report, *Every second for the ladies (Varannan damernas, SOU 1987:19)*, this resistance is not only considered, but also identified as one of several obstacles for gender equality goal attainment. The government bill set the directions for the equality of opportunity politics for the 1990s; it stipulated that the overarching political goal is that men and women should have the same rights, obligations and opportunities within all spheres of life, and meant that men and women should bear equal responsibility for child rearing as well as household income and political participation in society (see government bill, Prop. 1987/88:105).

After ten years with the gender equality act, but also in response to the new directions of the equality politics, in 1988 the government commissioned an evaluation of equal opportunity (see instructions, Dir. 1988:33). Two government bills came out of this commission. In response to the new directions of the gender equality politics of 1990s, the first bill (Prop. 1990/91:113) broadened the scope of the policy field, paying attention to salary differences between women and men (with implications for parental leave), men's violence against women, direct and indirect discrimination, and women's and men's representation within government bodies. In the view of this report, it is of particular interest that this is when violence against women became part of the national policy of equality of opportunity. The bill proposed a new act for equal opportunity, the Equality of Opportunity Act (*Jämställdhetslag*), which from 1992 replaced the existing (see act, SFS 1991:433). The new act was more extensive and set focus on women's economy, women's condition in working life, men's parental leave, education and equality of opportunity, women's representation, and violence against women.



The second government bill, *Equality Policy: Shared power – shared responsibility* (Jämställdhetspolitiken: Delad makt – delat ansvar, Prop. 1993/94:147) was presented in February 1994. This bill introduced specified policy goals and also gender mainstreaming as a strategy to reach these. The existing policy goal, that men and women shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives, remained, and six sub-goals were added (p. 15–18). Gender mainstreaming meant that these goals were not to be considered as discrete issues, but rather as a perspective to be applied within all policy fields (p. 77).

Further to the aim of strengthening equal opportunity between men and women, in this same government bill, the government introduced the so-called ‘daddy month’ (*pappamånad*), which refers to a revision of the regulations of the parental leave (see government bill, Prop. 1993/94:147). The parental leave is part of the national parental insurance (*föräldraförsäkringen*), designed to enable the combination of family and working life, not only for women, but for both men and women. In international perspective it is comparatively extensive as regards the number of days and the level of allowance (though this varies over time, which we will not go into here). However, and as pointed out in the government bill, while men and women formally have equal opportunity to enter the labour market and to draw paid parental leave, this was not happening. And since the unbalanced draw of parental leave between men and women is understood as a driving force behind gender inequality, it was regarded a problem in need of political intervention. It is against this background, that it was decided that out of the twelve months of insurance-based paid parental leave, one month shall be earmarked for the father and mother respectively. The remaining ten months could be divided as decided by the parents. The reference to this amendment as the ‘daddy month’, is significant to how it was perceived in the public debate. While the ‘mommy month’ was not debated at all, the ‘daddy month’ was, to a large extent, perceived as state paternalism. In fact, the minister of social affairs who implemented the change, Bengt Westerberg, is still much associated with the ‘daddy month’. This regulation was extended in 2002 and 2016, and it is now three months of the parental leave that are ear marked for the mother and father respectively.

Moreover, in line with that violence against women became part of the equality policy, in the 1990s a Commission of violence against women (*Kvinnovåldskommissionen*) was appointed. The report pointed to the need of systematic knowledge to build up relevant interventions in the field (see commission report, SOU 1995:60), and it proposed that a National council for violence against women should be established (*Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid*) (see government bill Prop. 1997/98:55). This was implemented over a period of three years and then evaluated by the Inquiry of the interventions against violence against women (*Utredningen om kvinnofridsuppdragen*). Their work emphasised the relevance of stopping violence against women as a goal of the equality of opportunity policy (see commission report, SOU 2004:121). In effect, as this policy was reviewed in the following year by the Equal opportunity policy commission (*Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen*), this was taken into account (see commission report, SOU 2005:66). In the government bill, it is argued that there is, in part due to changed dynamics of political governance, and in part due to changed societal conditions, a need of a new structure of policy goals. The bill proposed a new overarching equality policy goal, namely: that men and women shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. The subgoals remained similar in their content, but were reduced to four and gender mainstreaming remained as a strategy of implementation (see Prop. 2005/06:155).

In 2009 the Equality of Opportunity Act was, together with some other related acts, replaced by the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567). At the same time the Equality Ombudsman (along with Ombudsman against Ethnic



Discrimination, Disability Ombudsman and Ombudsman against sexual orientation) was replaced by the Discrimination Ombudsman (*Diskrimineringsombudsmannen*). The content of the regulations remained much the same, except that two grounds of discrimination were added, namely age and transgender identities (see government bill, Prop. 2007/08:95).

This policy development can be regarded as rather progressive. However, while it indeed has had impact on society, its impact is not so progressive as the policy itself. In response to dissatisfaction with the continued prevalence of inequality between men and women, including unbalanced responsibility for home and care work and women's lower salaries for the same work, in 2014 the government issued instructions for the evaluation of the goals of the policy (see instructions, Dir. 2014:55). At the same time, another commission was evaluating government interventions to stop men's violence against women. This commission was also instructed to propose a national strategy for how to reach this goal as part of the equal opportunity policy (see instructions, Dir. 2014:25). The government integrated the reports from these separate commissions (see commission reports, SOU 2014:71; SOU 2015:55; SOU 2015:86), and submitted the proposal Power, goal and authority – A feminist policy for a future of equality (see Skr. 2016/17:10) to the parliament in November 2016. The proposal presents the direction of equality of opportunity policy, how it can be pursued, a system for evaluation, and a ten-year strategy to prevent and counteract men's violence against women. The goals of the strategy include (1) an extended and effective preventive work against violence, (2) improved detection of violence and improved protection and support to abused women and children, (3) more effective violence control, and (4) improved knowledge and interventions. Moreover, in effect of this, two goals were added to the previous four, and a new governmental agency was established, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (*Jämställdhetsmyndigheten*). While the overarching goal of the gender policy has remained the same since 2005, namely that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives, the specified goals currently read as follows below¹. It is the task, among others, of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency to monitor the goals of the equality of opportunity policy.

- 1) Gender equal division of power and influence. Women and men are to have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
- 2) Economic gender equality. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions as regards paid work, which give economic independence throughout life.
- 3) Gender equal education. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education, study options and personal development.
- 4) Gender equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. Women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.
- 5) Gender equal health. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same conditions

¹ For the English translation, see the Swedish Gender Equality Agency webpage:
<https://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se/en/about-gender-equality/swedens-gender-equality-policy>



for good health and be offered care on equal terms.

- 6) Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity.

Currently there is an open commission inquiry about equal life incomes across the life span (Dir. 2020:22). It is instructed to analyse the economic (in)equality between women and men from various perspectives and propose interventions that can increase equality. In the view of this report, it is of particular interest that this shall be done with a focus on the position of foreign and Swedish born women and men.

3.2 Refugee reception and gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming (*jämställdhetsintegrering*) is, as described previously, a government strategy for achieving gender equality. It means, among other things, that a gender equality perspective is included in all stages of decision-making. It is dual in its focus; it is focused on the operation of state agencies and the output its measures. Here, the operation of the agency involves fe-/male representation among the employed, but also how gender-aware the organisation is in, for instance, carrier promotion of women and men. Gender in the output regards how gender aware the organisation is in its tasks, for instance in the management of the asylum applications.

Moreover, while gender mainstreaming is implemented, it is rather limited to presenting statistics by gender. Gender analyses remains absent. The Swedish National Audit Office (*Riksrevisionen*) has evaluated gender mainstreaming in integration policy. They conclude that although integration has been a high priority, and knowledge of major gender differences has been known for a long time, policy documents lack a sufficient gender mainstreaming perspective (Riksrevisionen, 2018). The government has taken greater account of gender in its descriptions, identified challenges and ambitions, but there are few explanations and analysis about the large gender differences for refugees and other immigrant groups when it comes to integration outcomes. This has, as we point to below, been highlighted by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Swedish Women's Lobby has suggested measures to improve this.

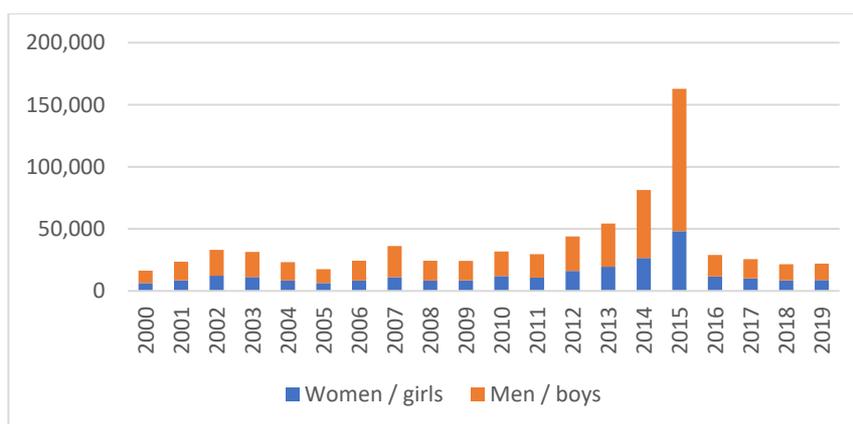
Below we first present gender statistics on asylum applications, persons granted international protection, and on participants in the introduction program. Importantly, these statistics include distinct but sometimes overlapping groups of individuals (not all asylum applicants are granted international protection, and international protection is also granted to persons who arrive along the resettlement pathway, and, not all persons granted international protection participate in the introduction program, and besides persons granted international protection, their family members can participate in the integration program). Second, we discuss the critique the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have lifted against these reports and their lack of gender analysis. Third, we discuss gender mainstreaming within the Swedish Migration Agency, i.e. statistics about personnel working with the agency.



3.2.1 Women and men asylum seekers and refugees in the reception system

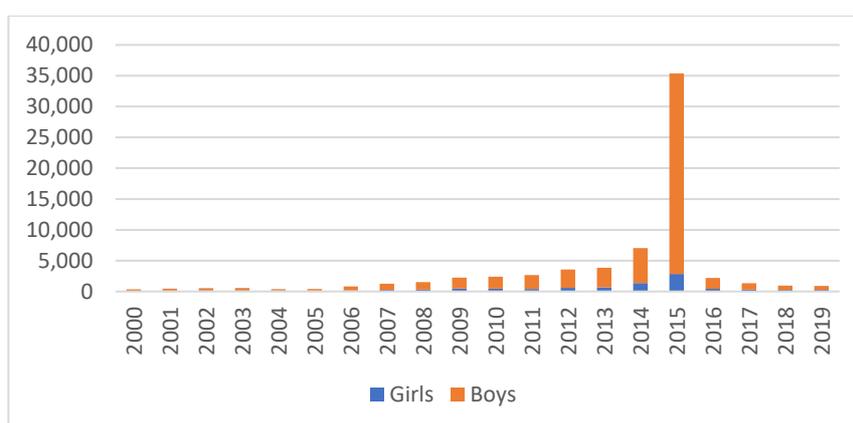
Over the last 20 years, almost two thirds of all asylum seekers have been men/boys. The share of women ranges between 30 per cent to 40 per cent each year. Since 2016, the share of women has been somewhat higher, about 40 per cent (see Table 1). This could be an effect of the temporary law that introduced limitations on family reunification in 2016.

Table 1: Asylum applications in Sweden 2000–2019, men and women



The overrepresentation of males is higher among asylum applications registered by unaccompanied minors (see Table 2). In this category, less than 15 per cent of the asylum applications have been made by girls over the last 20-year period. During the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 only eight per cent of the applicants were girls.

Table 2: Asylum applications as an unaccompanied minor in Sweden 2000–2019, boys and girls

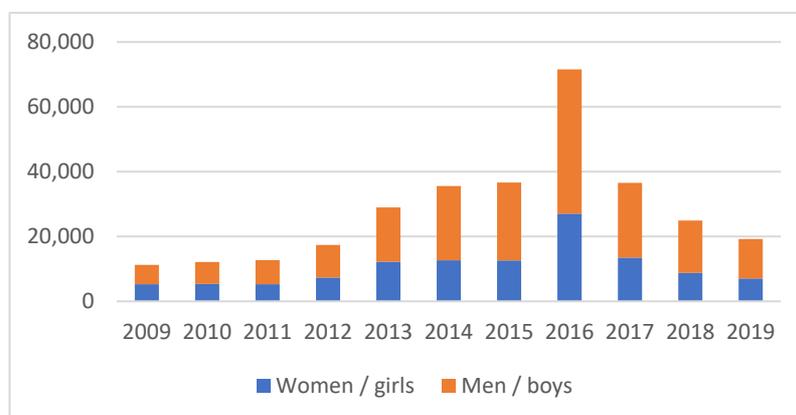


In the period 2009–2019, 38 per cent of those granted international protection were women. This includes persons granted international protection along both the asylum and resettlement pathways. In the early 2010s, the share of



women was about 45 per cent. During the last years, since 2014, their share dropped to about 35 per cent (see Table 3). A large majority of those granted international protection are, thus, men.

Table 3: Persons granted international protection in Sweden 2009–2019, men and women



In the period 2014–2018, more men than women participated in the introduction program (Table 4). Importantly, in addition to persons granted international protection, participants in the introduction program also include reunited family members. Independent of protection status, all persons granted asylum and their reunited family members receive the same offer to participate in the introduction program. The larger share of men in the introduction program reflects the fact that men is in majority among those granted international protection. Since the late 2018, women participants are in a majority, which is due to family reunion to the previous large refugee cohorts in 2015–2016.

Table 4: Participants in the introduction program December 2010 to January 2020

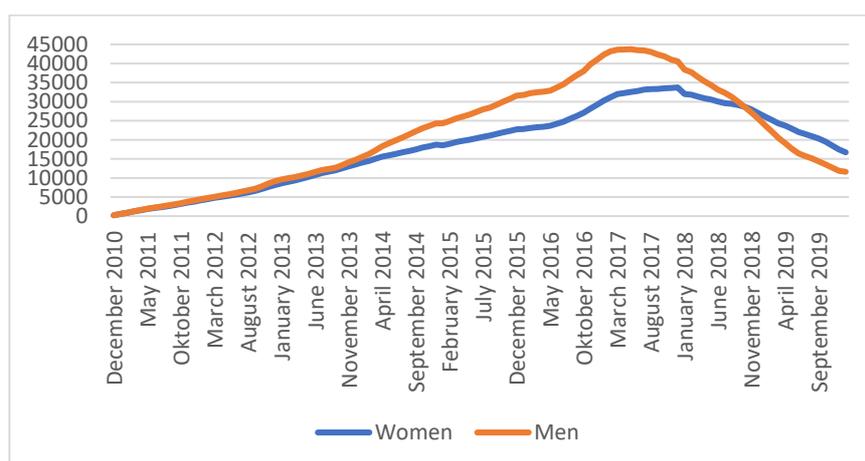


Table 5 shows how many of the participants that, on average each year, are working, are in regular education, and are in language education as part of their introduction program. In 2016, about 47 per cent of the participants were, on average, enrolled in language training. These numbers have dropped in later years, and nowadays more women than men are studying language. The numbers in regular education are similar for men and women, and tend to increase over time. The increase is probably an effect of the so-called education duty. The largest difference between men and women is the share of participants that work during the program. Men work three times as often, compared to women. The big drop of the share of persons who are working as part of the program, is probably due to cuts in labour market programs, especially the so called ‘extra jobs’, together with the restructuring of the Employment Service that started in 2019.

Table 5: Main activities in the introduction program 2016–2020 (per cent of the participants)

	Work		Regular education		Language education	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2016	5.0%	14.9%	6.2%	6.6%	46.3%	47.8%
2017	5.4%	17.2%	6.7%	7.5%	43.2%	43.9%
2018	7.5%	19.4%	7.8%	8.4%	40.8%	36.2%
2019	3.5%	9.2%	9.8%	8.7%	40.7%	36.4%

Source: Public Employment Service

3.2.2 (Lack of) gender analysis in the asylum and reception process

Sweden has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Swedish government reports regularly to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) about its work towards the aim of the convention. The last report was submitted in 2014 (Regeringskansliet 2014). In its conclusive response to this report from Sweden, the CEDAW singled out asylum-seeking and refugee women as one requested area of particular betterment in Sweden (CEDAW 2016). The committee encourages Sweden to consider the principle of non-refoulement and also to take a gender-sensitive approach in receiving the current refugee inflows and in considering asylum claims. This involves, among other things, the differences between women and men registering asylum applications and being granted international protection in Sweden, as described above. The Swedish Women’s Lobby has suggested a number of measures that can be taken in response to this, including considering the unequal access to international refuge that women and men access and how Sweden can ensure that more women and girls refugees can come to Sweden, considering consequences of the implementation of temporary residence permits and limitations of family reunification in a gender perspective, not least since more women than men arrive to Sweden as reunited family member (Swedish Women’s Lobby, 2016). In the view of this, it is surprising that gender as a dimension of access to asylum and international protection is not more discussed, for instance in the ongoing review of the reception systems.

In the commission report (SOU 2018:22) gender is primarily approached as statistical categories of women and men. It points to, for instance, that the share of participants that leave the Introduction Program is relatively low



over the period 2013–2017. For women it has not reached more than 20 percent on average, while for men it has increased from 35 to 41 percent in that same period (SOU 2018:22, p. 185). The report also points to some gender justice and equality aspects, namely that if a participant of the Introduction Program is referred to a full-time activity, there is a risk that parents of small children cannot fully participate, which will strike harder on women than on men.

As demanded by the national regulations, the commission reflects upon consequences for gender equality (SOU 2018:22, p. 449–450). It estimates that the propositions made will have positive impact on gender equality. It argues, for instance, that the proposed mandatory initial stay at arrival centers and evaluation of whether the person can arrange housing on his/her own during the asylum process, will lead to better housing for asylum seekers, which is expected to have positive impact on women's possibility to participate in activities during the asylum process. While it is unclear what this analysis is based on, but the wishes of the commission (there is no evidence that stays in accommodation centres increase integration, rather the contrary), at least in its wordings it does regard gender dimensions.

Of relevance for this report is that the commission report argues that the mandatory stay in arrival centres will improve the detection of men's violence against women and children in families, and honour-related violence. Moreover, as it is proposed that the municipalities are to be responsible for some of accommodation centres for asylum seekers, this will enable the municipal social services to, at an early stage, identify 'various forms of problems related to patriarchal structures and honour cultures. This in turn will have positive impact on the equality between women and men', it is argued.

3.2.3 Gender mainstreaming of the Swedish Migration Agency

Part of the gender mainstreaming strategy is also to apply gender mainstreaming in governmental bodies, including the Migration Agency. The government require that the Migration Agency implement a gender mainstreaming strategy in their operations. In its yearly report for 2019, the Migration Agency writes that gender mainstreaming in 2019 has been integrated in the broader work for equal treatment. It means, according to the Agency, that they continue to work on integrating an equality perspective into their steering, monitoring and method development. More and more of their activities and case decisions are analysed according to gender to map eventual patterns of gender differences in quality and outcomes (Migrationsverket, 2020).

The Migration Agency also reports that they are educating their staff to be better able to identify women in vulnerable situations during the asylum process. Together with the Red Cross, training courses were provided for staff in the reception centres to improve their ability to detect women who are been exposed to gender-based violence. Hundreds of employees have participated in these courses. A web-course is also in development for this purpose. In addition, the Migration Agency has developed staff training to prevent violence and discrimination in the detention centres. They have also organized internal seminars to raise awareness of female genital mutilation. They acknowledge, however, that it is difficult to answer to whether the efforts so far have had any results.



3.3 Labour market integration and gender mainstreaming

Being a feminist government², the government is concerned about the weak labour market integration among refugee and other migrant women. This concern is not solely based on an ideology of gender equality, but also the fact that many parts of the Swedish social security schemes, such as unemployment allowance, sickness allowance, parental allowance, retirement pension, etc. are based on previous taxed incomes. This is also why the life income across the whole life span, as is the focus of the open government commission mentioned above, is so relevant for equality. If you have no employment history, you will only receive a small basic benefit, often too small to live on. In addition, due to the system of individual taxation (as opposed to family taxation), most families need two salaries to make ends meet. Hence, the dual-earner norm is not only by choice, but a norm in more than one sense.

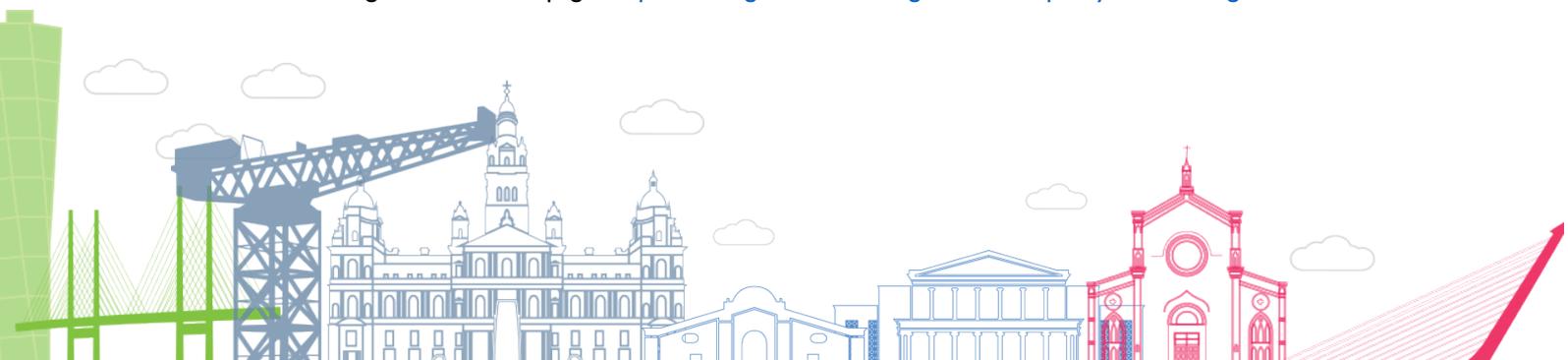
It is in view of this that we in this section consider government policies geared towards increased labour force participation among foreign born women, and also how parental leave has been part of this governance structure. Importantly, these policies are not particularly geared towards women who arrived as refugees, but have a broader scope.

3.3.1 Labour force participation

In the political debate, this is discussed as a matter of labour market integration among foreign-born women, especially new arrivals from non-EU countries. Labour market statistics single out country of birth and length of residency, but typically not kind of residency permit. The gap in labour market integration between men and women from non-EU countries has been a political concern for a long time, and the gap is growing. Among those granted residence permit in 2014, 53 per cent of the men and 28 per cent of the women were unemployed after three years in Sweden (SBC, Statistikdatabasen).

In response to the concern about foreign-born women's weak labour market integration, especially women who had arrived as refugees or due to family reunification, the government launched a new introduction program in 2010 that, in part, was tailored to improve the labour market integration of refugee women (see Righard, Emilsson & Jensen 2019 for a full description of the 2010 introduction program). Especially the new individual Introduction Allowance was designed with women in mind. The previous municipal allowance was criticized 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.

² For more on this, see government webpage: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/a-feminist-government/>



However, recent reports confirm that more women than men leave the labour force after completion of the introduction program (Riksdagen, 2018). There are several explanations to the lower employment rate for newly arrived women (SOU 2012:69): Newly arrived women often have less 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 have been judged to be dubious. Before it was possible to take out parental leave with parental allowance for children below the age of 7 years, also when born before arrival to Sweden, and a home-care childcare allowance (*vårdnadsbidrag*) for children aged one to three years. These allowances made it (economically) profitable to stay at home with children, also compared to working. The parental leave, as discussed in more detail below, was associated with slow and weak labour market integration, and as more women than men drew parental leave, it was framed as 'women's trap' and parental leave for children born before settlement in Sweden was reduced. This change came along with a number of other amendments aiming at speeding up the labour market integration for women who had arrived to Sweden as refugees or family members (see government bill Prop. 2013/14:104).

Svenberg (2018) has studied how the content and layout of the labour market policy regulations affect the opportunities for foreign-born women with little or no educational background and with limited experience of wage labour in Sweden to take part in labour market measures. One result is that these target groups are not explicitly mentioned in the regulations. Categories of gender, educational background and country of birth are used in the regulations, but not a combination of categories. Based on the overall results, the author thinks that a possible explanation for the underrepresentation of foreign-born women with short or no educational background in labour market policy measures is that the content and design of the regulations are permeated by a formal equality perspective. Targeted measures could therefore be needed for this group.

The Public Employment Service currently have a special assignment from the government to focus on foreign born women. This includes special investigations of their work and follow-ups of women's representation in their activities. In 2019, as a result of the government assignment, the Public Employment Service has focused on foreign-born women, and given special priority for them in labour market policy programs and other activities. A report investigated whether the prioritisation resulted in a redistribution of resources in favour of foreign-born women's participation (Frydebo & Kaufmann, 2020). The overall result, based on statistics, is that the Employment Service's priority of foreign-born women did not have a clear impact. One explanation is less resources and the internal organisational problems at the Public Employment Service in 2019, which reduced the decision-making capacity. Foreign-born women are over-represented in measures which are aimed at people who are far away from the labour market, for example preparatory- and orientation courses. Within more qualified labour market-related measures, such as labour market educations and subsidized employments schemes, the proportion of foreign-born women remain low. For those women who do participate in more qualified measures, fewer work 90 days after the intervention compared to native born and foreign-born men.

Another study of the gendered processes in the introduction program focussed on case workers and their work strategies (Larsson, 2019). The report shows that the case workers strategies are gender biased. They tend to ascribe traits to foreign-born women, such as 'hard-to-work with' or 'unmotivated'. Often these women are compared to men who are considered more 'driven' and 'on'. These perceptions affect how the employment services relate to women and men in meetings and contacts. Foreign-born women are to a greater extent assigned



to activities aimed at meeting the activity requirements, rather than the aim of employment. Men are more often matched to job vacancies or referred to labour market-related activities. Furthermore, the report shows that the work strategies that employment agencies develop to simplify their work and save time tend to affect women with a short education and little work experience negatively. Among other things, this is expressed in the form of inadequate competence mapping and that men are given priority when participants are matched with vacancies. Pregnant women are also not enrolled as job seekers to the same extent as other individuals.

The table below shows participants in two of the labour market measures that are considered as qualified, close to the labour market, and with good chances to find a job.

Table 6: Foreign born (FB) and Sweden-born (NB women's and men's participation in activities at the Public Employment Service, Labour market educations and New-start jobs (subsidised employment)

	Year	Total number	FB Women	FB Men	NB Women	NB Men
Labour market education	2017	8813	19%	43%	11%	27%
	2018	8044	14%	52%	8%	26%
	2019	5824	13%	57%	7%	23%
New-start jobs	2017	34605	21%	48%	11%	20%
	2018	42657	22%	57%	7%	15%
	2019	31772	24%	59%	5%	12%

From Frydebo & Kaufmann, 2020

A similar follow up, in which they only looked at those in the introduction program and not all persons enrolled at the Employment Service, by Andersson Joonas (2020), confirms previous studies. It shows that a large part of the new arrivals participate in preparatory activities during the program period. A relatively small proportion take part in labour market related activities such as labour market education and subsidized employment. Furthermore, there are major differences between men and women: women participate in preparatory efforts for a longer period, while men to a greater extent take part in labour market related activities. Women also to a greater extent interrupt the program due to parental leave. Andersson Joonas concludes that the fact that women do not participate in activities to the same extent as men, and that they on average seem to spend longer time in the introduction program, mainly due to parental leave, is probably a factor behind the slower labour market integration among women.

One measure for the group with no or low formal educational background in the introduction program is the "educational duty" that was introduced in 2018. The education duty means that people in the introduction program who have a short education and therefore are estimated not able to being matched to work during the program, should take part in regular adult education, Swedish for immigrants and civic orientation. A follow-up concluded several obstacles to implement the educational duty (Frydebo, Andersson & Forsberg, 2020). This included, among other things, that there often is a lack of appropriate educations for the target group, that there are limited resources at the municipalities to work with the 'duty' and that the Employment Service's internal conditions and



staff changes affected the work negatively in 2019. 2,640 persons who have been deemed to be covered by the 'duty' started regular education in 2019. This can be compared to the 14,000 participants were considered as target group at the end of 2019. There are no differences in the turnover to education between men and women who are subject to educational duty. In terms of numbers, more women have started regular education. For both men and women, only about 10 per cent of those who are included in the educational duty were actually studying formal adult education in 2019, and about 40 per cent were studying language education.

3.3.2 Parental leave among refugee women

In 2011, the year after the introduction program reform, a special government commission was appointed to propose interventions for an increased labour market participation among newly arrived foreign born women and family member immigrants (Dir. 2011:88). An important aspect here, was the use and division of the parental insurance. The two commission reports that followed (SOU 2012:9; SOU 2012:69) show that refugee women and men are as eager to find an employment as native borns, but they seem to have higher thresholds to pass, including labour market discrimination.

Importantly, parental leave among immigrant mothers is identified as having negative impact on labour market integration. One of the commissioned reports maps the parental leave draw during the four first years among all parents who immigrated to Sweden from countries outside of Europe in 2006 (SOU 2012:9). This includes 6 700 women who were eligible to parental leave for children who had immigrated together with them or were born in Sweden after arrival. For instance, every third woman (or 730 persons) born outside of Europe and who immigrated in 2006 together with children under the age of 8 years, and who do give birth to more children after arrival to Sweden, draw a minimum of 200 days during the first year. The children were at an average age of 3.2 years in the beginning of 2006. It is estimated that the draw of parental leave, delay labour market integration with about one year for about 40 percent of the women who arrive together with children under the age of 8. The mapping also shows, which is unexpected, that many women in this group, also those who give birth to a child after arrival, do not draw any parental leave at all. In conclusion, it is argued that parental leave delay labour market integration for a big group of newly arrived mothers, and that it, especially for the women on social assistance, can become trap. This problematisation, later (in 2017) led to a decision to limit the eligibility to draw parental leave for children (under 8 years) who immigrated together with the mother (see government bill Prop. 2016/17:154).

Moreover, the final report identifies women with no or very short schooling background as in particularly vulnerable. In addition, the activities the Swedish Employment Service can refer Introduction Program participants to, are inadequate for this group. Hence the commission proposes special courses on Folk High Schools (non-formal education schools) (SOU 2012:69), which were introduced in 2014. This was also a way to engage civil society in the reception of refugees.

3.3.3 Labour market outcomes

Figures 7 and 8 show labour market integration for the refugee group and their reunited families, who are the target groups for the introduction program. They illustrate that 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.

Figure 7: Employment rate for refugee men, 20-64 years, for 1997, 2002 and 2007 cohorts over time

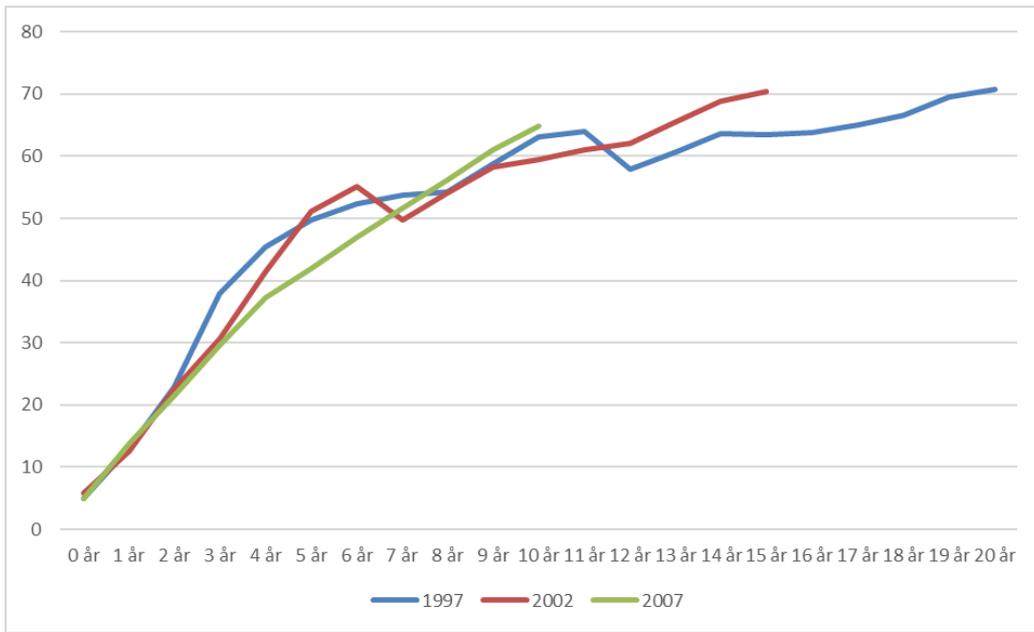
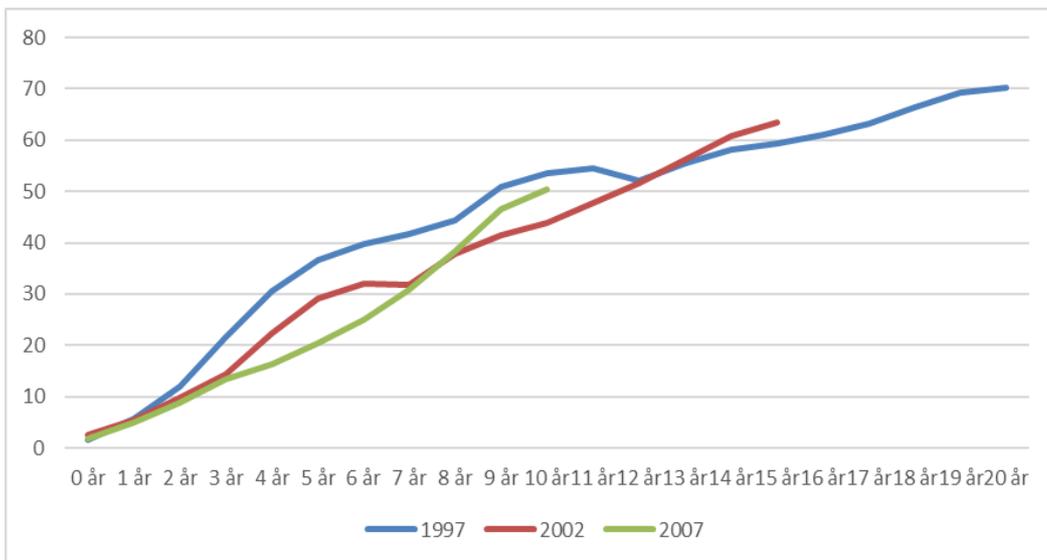
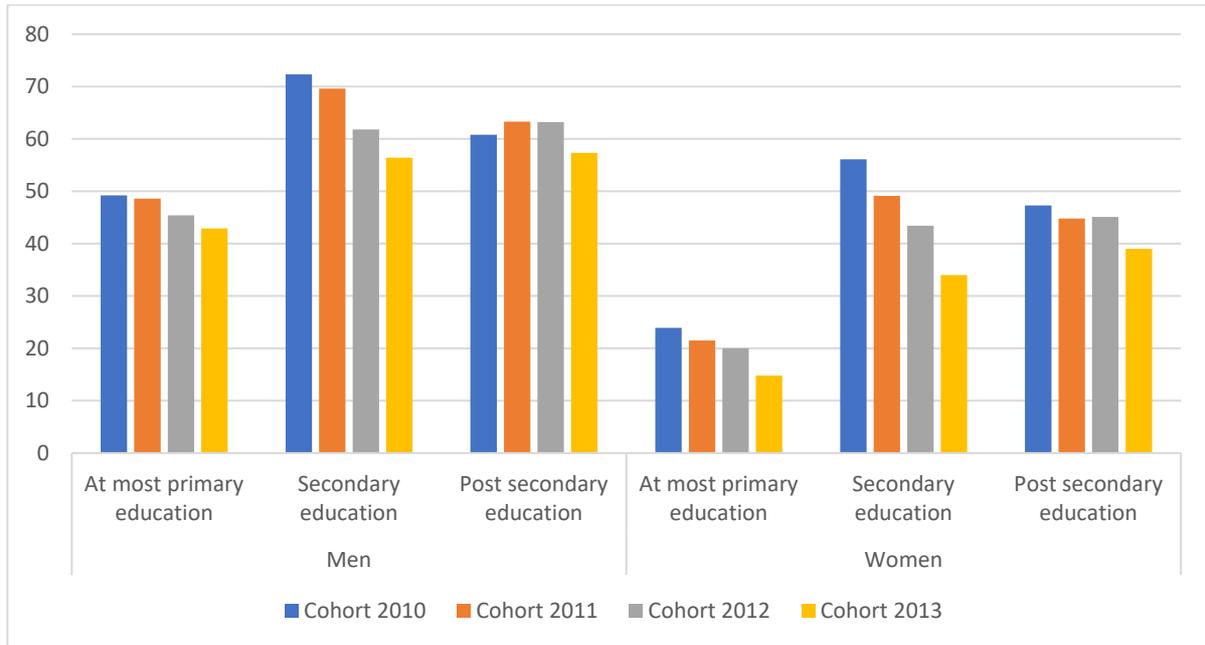


Figure 8: Employment rate for refugee women, 20-64 years, for 1997, 2002 and 2007 cohorts over time.



Gender and educational background are important factors for having employment. Figure 9 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 9: Employment rate for new arrivals in 2016, after education, gender and year of settlement (2010–2013), 20–64 years of age.



3.4 Sexual and gender-based violence in a migration perspective

As part of the equality policy, there is a governmental attention to sexual and gender-based violence within the foreign born population (it is not possible to delimit it to refugees or other displaced persons), including debates about and responses to cultural understandings about gender violence, honour related violence, and trafficking. In response to the aim of this report, we shall here consider honour related violence and trafficking.

3.4.1 Honour related violence

In Sweden, the murder of two young women in 1998 and 1999 by family members aroused a lot of debate on honour killings and honour related violence, which Sweden was among the first countries to draw attention to as a serious problem in need of solutions. The former Swedish NGO Kvinnoforum has contributed to the term and definition of honour-related violence as a tool for understanding when and why culture, and in particular notions of 'honour', play a predominant role in certain forms of violence (Kvinnoforum, 2005), and has thereby played a



role in making honour related violence a new policy area in European countries. Honour related violence includes different forms of violence, where 'honour' is used as a rationale for those involved. Honour related violence is generally a collective matter, often a family matter, and involves issues related to the identity and continuation of the family, revolving around the conduct of the family's youngsters. This form of violence often occurs in situations of transformation – such as migration – that involve loss of status and the integrity of the family (Jensen *et al.*, 2006, p. 44). Honour related violence seems mainly to involve the young 'second generation' who is often born and raised in Sweden. A survey carried out with staff in shelters in the region of Scania in Sweden and the region of Zealand in Denmark, shows that they identify young women, thus the 'second generation' as victims of honour related violence (Schmidt *et al.*, 2009, p. 167).

3.4.2 Trafficking

In Sweden, crime offence of human trafficking was introduced in 2002 to cover transnational trafficking for sexual exploitation. Subsequent amendments of the penal code in 2004 and 2010 criminalised other forms of exploitation such as forced labour, removal of organs and involvement of armed conflict (GRETA, 2014, p. 12).

The first evaluation of this crime offence was carried out in 2014 by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the Secretariat of the council of European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings. The evaluation pointed to several gaps in the Swedish investigation service of cases of trafficking, and requested a strengthening of both training of judges and other professionals, and of the criminal law provision (GRETA, 2014). The evaluation described the situation of trafficking in Sweden as primarily a country of destination of victims of trafficking. According to statistical information provided by the Swedish authorities at the time of the report, a majority of cases dealt with sexual exploitation and work exploitation of migrants from EU countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria.

Since 2013, the Migration Agency has strengthened its attention to human trafficking, by establishing a human trafficking officer in each of the agency's departments and by including a cross-departmental working group. Furthermore, a government commission report on human trafficking emphasises that the Swedish policy in 2015 decided to sharpen their efforts against trafficking due to the wave of refugees that entered Sweden that year because of risk of trafficking among vulnerable refugees, particularly unaccompanied minors (SOU 2016:70). A police report and survey on human trafficking from 2015 and 2016 (Polismyndigheten, 2017), points to the amount of rejected asylum seekers who after their rejection have disappeared underground, with the risk of leading very difficult lives vulnerable to different forms of exploitation in the shape of violence, theft, fraud, drugs, abuse of work or sex (*ibid.*, p. 26). The report informs that in the 24 cases of reported trafficking in the region of South Sweden in 2016, 12 cases – half – were reported by the Migration Agency, and may be related to migration. The numbers from Scania show significant changes from 2015 to 2016, in particular an almost doubling of reports of sexual trafficking among persons from 18 years old, and almost a doubling of forced work among persons from 18 years old, and an increase of 1/3 in cases of hustling (*ibid.*, p. 82). In 2018, a majority of cases were related to buying sexual services, the majority of cases involved buyers born in Sweden, but also from 11 other countries, and exploited women born in different countries such as Romania, Nigeria, Ukraine, The Dominican Republic, Thailand, Hungary and Afghanistan (Polismyndigheten, 2018). Other predominant forms of trafficking in 2018 involved hustling, forced labour and begging.



4. Gender Dimensions in a Local Perspective

In this section we consider the governance of gender equality in the local reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. As the reception of asylum seekers is primarily managed by the Swedish Migration Agency as described above, here the focus on gender dynamics in the reception of asylum seekers is delimited to focus on Early Interventions for Asylum Seekers (*Tidiga insatser för asylsökande, TIA*), managed by the County Administrative Board. The part on gender dynamics in the reception of refugees is focused on the City of Malmö. In effect, the part on asylum seekers is focussing on a regional organisational body, while the part on refugees with residence permit is focussed on the municipality of Malmö.

4.1 Gender equality in the reception of asylum seekers in Scania

Early Interventions for Asylum Seekers (*Tidiga insatser för asylsökande, TIA*) is a measure for the integration of asylum seekers. It is state-funded, funds are allocated by the County Administrative Board to local initiatives, often NGO:s. In Scania, the annual budget of approximately 13,500,000 SEK to be distributed through open call for these TIA means. The evaluation of proposals do consider the dimension of 'equality'. When they are to formulate call for applications, they sometimes receive support from the Country Administrative Board expert on gender mainstreaming. In the evaluations of the implemented projects, it is, to the experience of the County Administrative Board, projects with a focus on needs and social conditions of the entire family – including men, women and children, and activities for all family members that have the most positive outcome in terms of gender equality. For instance, if there are no activities for children, it might be difficult for women to participate. Furthermore, another evaluation criterium is 'diversity' in terms of types of activities. Among the 50 activities that received funding in 2017, only 4 was aimed at women and one aimed at LGBTQI-persons (Länsstyrelsen, 2018). In 2018, among the 36 activities that received funding, 4 were aimed at women (Länsstyrelsen, 2019). Among 43 activities that received funding in 2018, 4 were aimed at women and one at LGBTQI-persons; besides from that the numbers of participants based on gender show that 2 activities are more or less exclusively represented by women and other 2 activities are more or less exclusively represented by men (Länsstyrelsen, 2020). There is a general high participation of women in these activities.

4.2 Gender equality in the reception of refugees in Malmö

The City of Malmö has a policy on equality mainstreaming (*jämställdhetsintegrering*) aimed at all women and men. Just like the national approach, the main focus of the City of Malmö is labour market performance. The main visions of the 2011–2020 development plan of equality integration of the City of Malmö, include 'to make Malmö a city with equal businesses for all women and men, boys and girls notwithstanding background and belonging' and 'that all work places are free from gender discriminating structures' (Malmö Stadskontor, 2011). As it occurs, equality integration in the City of Malmö involves gender equality mainly targeting the labour market and serves as a quality assurance for citizens and work places to guarantee equal treatment. The City of Malmö has a work team that specializes in equality integration, and has outgoing activities of informing work places and businesses about the issue. The City of Malmö also supports local projects and associations on equality integration.



Several managing departments (*förvaltningar*) at the City of Malmö work with equality integration, but they all tend to work with the issue on a general basis, and do not target specific groups such as asylum seekers or newcomers. Furthermore, they tend to maintain a family-oriented focus, in line with the general regional approach. For instance, the Pre-School Department (*förskoleförvaltningen*) has projects aimed at newly arrived migrants within the context of open pre-schools that offers Swedish for foreigners and supervision for parents (see description in this report). Moreover, the civic training course at the Integration Centre (*Integrationscenter*) for newly arrived migrants may cover topics such as gender equality, as the course focuses on subjects such as democracy, family, individual rights and obligations.

Besides from that, there is a certain attention to other aspects of gender equality such as honour-related violence and forced marriages, which target mainly young people who are often born and raised in Sweden, the ‘second generation’. The City of Malmö has resource teams that work with honour-related violence and forced marriages³. Furthermore, several crisis centres in Malmö target young persons in such situations (Malmö Stad, 2017).

The following sections disseminate results from previous reports on displaced migrants’ gendered experiences of integration in Sweden, focusing on housing and accommodation, language training and education, and labour market integration.

5. Housing and Accommodation

As described in the report on accommodation, regeneration and exclusion in Sweden (Righard & Öberg, 2019), there exists a gendered categorization of the organized housing for refugees. This gendered aspect includes topics such as organization of refugees according to gender and family, family reunification, and LGBTQI issues.

5.1 Gendered forms of housing organisation of refugees

A main distinction of newly arrived refugees is between single and family households. Single households are in most cases men, among those arriving in 2015–2017 there were almost no single women. As one civil servant from the accommodation for newly arrived, at the Municipality of Eslöv expresses it: ‘In principle no women among new arrivals comes alone’. Among those who arrived in 2016, about 60 per cent were single men, whereas 35 per cent were families; for 2018 it was estimated that about 60 per cent were families and 40 per cent were single (mostly men). The general practice has been to allocate so-called corridor housing for single men, i.e. housing consisting of one-room apartments, sometimes furnished with fridge and freezers, and with shared kitchen and toilet facilities. This reflects a clear gender division.

³ See the City of Malmö website: <https://malmo.se/plattformmalmo>.



5.2 Family reunification and risks of overcrowding, female homelessness and lost fatherhood

According to the national dispersal scheme, the municipality is only responsible for arranging housing for the person that is assigned by the Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*) to the municipality. When single men seek and apply for family reunification with their spouse and sometimes children, this situation is not regulated in the settlement law (*bosättningslagen*), and is consequently seen as a case of a self-settled newcomer. In many municipalities, this means that the individual is expected to arrange for the housing her-/himself. Some municipalities may have more resources to assist in providing bigger apartments for families, as one civil servant from the accommodation unit of newly arrived in Eslöv states:

And then comes the family. And then we may consider whether the apartment or the accommodation is too big or too small; and it's often too small. And then, in the first place, it is the responsibility of the man. He brings his family and he is the one who is responsible for an accommodation here. But we don't want overcrowding. We want that our citizens to be doing well. And also, we don't want the landlords to come and ask: 'what are you doing? How many do you place in your apartments?' For there are reasons to evict that. So, rationally we should have gotten a bigger accommodation for him.

But in the many cases where the municipalities are not involved in providing an accommodation for the reunited family, the situation often has negative consequences for the entire family, and particularly for the unified spouse, i.e. most commonly women (and children). The family often ends up living in a very small space, e.g. a family with children shares one room, which becomes a situation of overcrowding. As a housing officer from the County Administrative Board of Scania (*Länsstyrelsen Skåne*) says:

We simply need to raise the perspective of gender. And there are many municipalities that have responded that women are experienced as more exposed to inadequate housing solutions that sometimes lead to different problems and the families... caused by, among other things, overcrowding.

A well-known and unfortunate situation is that a man cannot find a place to his family, and chooses to stay in the corridor housing where he cannot bring his family. This may consequently lead to acute homelessness for women. Research shows that since the withdrawal of direct state intervention in the housing market, new groups of low- and very-low income families have difficulties to gain access to affordable housing (Samzelius, *forthcoming*). Housing exclusion, also for asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees, should be analysed within a structural context of social processes that include international migration, ethnic housing segregation, and emerging gendered and racialized aspects of poverty in Sweden (Nodfeldt & Olsson 2006 in Samzelius, *forthcoming*). Newly arrived refugees are overrepresented among people in risk of becoming homeless in Sweden (Samzelius, 2017). Moreover, the statistics show an increase in the number of homeless migrant women and a decrease in numbers of migrant men since 2017 (Righard & Öberg, 2018, p. 25); women are thus particularly in risk of homelessness. Particular gender-specific experiences shape women's efforts to find stable housing (Samzelius, *forthcoming*); in Sweden, the existence of a 'male norm' in housing organization of refugees is an obstacle to female refugees and others who do not live up to this norm.



Men suffer from other vulnerabilities in cases of family reunification. A civil servant from the accommodation of newly arrived in Eslöv summarises a case where a man was denied family reunification because his accommodation was not big enough, and because of the risk of overcrowding:

The Swedish Migration Agency has unreasonable demands. A man was really disappointed, sad, he sat and wept in front of me there at the corridor housing. He lives in a half-room apartment that we have allocated him to; he lives through us. And then he applied for his wife and two children. Then yesterday he got a rejection because he lives in such a tiny place.

Another man obtained family reunification for his wife, who gave birth to their son in Sweden. The couple divorced and the man is not allowed to have his child with him in the accommodation where he lives, and shares both apartment, kitchen and toilet facilities with about 60 people. He has tried in vain to obtain an apartment of his own to be together with his son, and lost shared custody of his son, whom he at the time of the interview had not seen for a year.

5.3 LGBTQI: lack of housing and protection

A frequently mentioned issue among the interviewees regarding accommodation is the arrival of newly arrived refugees identifying as LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex). In 2017, approximately 10–15 out of 250 single men, or 4–6 per cent, identified with these categories. The men are mostly between 25–35 years, and in different steps in their trans-processes. One major issue is the lack of communication from the authorities about people belonging to these categories. Upon refugees' arrival, a medical's report is done, but the reporting is often inadequate and may not contain information about the gender and sexuality of the newly arrived; probably because the doctor is not informed of that during the consultation. In many ways there seems to be a lack of information about physical and psychological health issues among the newly arrived. Also, the Migration Agency seems to not communicate properly about the arrival of LGBTQI persons to the municipalities responsible for the accommodation for newly arrived after assignment:

I don't want to say that it is the fault of the Swedish Migration Agency, but we got a case to manage, a person, the report said his name was Ahmed. It's a man. Then suddenly comes a ... trans-person. A trans-person. Then I contact my boss directly, it doesn't work to place this person here [in this accommodation for men]. He dresses like a woman, and it doesn't work.

What does not work is to place LGBTQI persons e.g. in corridor housing consisting of a homogenous group of 40 (presumable) heterosexual men. As the civil servant from the accommodation for newly arrived at the City of Malmö explains: 'Joint shower, joint toilet and things like that, they can't live here. We also check if this person dresses like a woman and so. So you can see directly, no...you can't place a trans-person with 40 men, it's not ok'. An IOP Manager from Refugees Welcome Housing further explains the situation:



There is not so much possibility for trans-persons to get an accommodation that is appropriate for that situation. You may go through a gender transformation ... but if your legal gender continues to be the one you are born with, then you end up living with people who identify themselves with their biological sex/gender. And that can be really problematic. It is difficult with everyday stuff such as hygiene, the shared shower, it gets really problematic. But also the possibility of bringing home guests or maybe partners, that people become exposed to threats and harassment.

The Swedish Migration Agency, as it seems, stimulates and encourages especially young persons during the asylum process to discuss and develop their sexual identity as part of a coming-out process. However, the agency does not offer any protection for them. Several civil servants mention that this gender aspect has not been properly raised by the authorities. The only institutions that have knowledge about the issue and work seriously with it are NGOs such as Refugees Welcome Housing and Swedish Queer Initiative. They report that LGBTQI persons' mobility and housing are strongly restrained as they risk experiencing threats from others, particularly other migrants. Consequently, there are places that LGBTQI persons avoid to live such as Sege Park in Malmö, or they avoid to pass certain places such as Rosengård. As an IOP Manager from Refugees Welcome Housing tells:

Many of those I have met at Swedish Queer Initiative they omit staying around Rosengård ... several experience as they walk from the bus, that they receive harassment and threats or just... Some verbally, others have experienced physical harassment.

Such cases reflect geographical dimensions of violence related to gender (Listerborn, 2015), where certain urban spaces such as those predominated by the heterosexual migrant majority constitute spaces of exclusion, making threats and violence part of the everyday surroundings that restrict the space and mobility of LGBTQI persons. There is, obviously, a lack of housing solutions for newly arrived LGBTQI persons. At least, intergender persons need separate shower and toilet. The situation also gets critical as it is not possible for newly arrived to refuse an accommodation offer, and usually no alternative accommodation is offered. Consequently, this may lead to structural homelessness or vulnerable housing alternatives that entail risks of exploitation.

6. Language Training and Education

This section draws on results from the GLIMER report on language education and training (see Righard, Emilsson & Öberg 2019). In Sweden, Swedish language education for newcomers, Swedish for immigrants (*Svenska för invandrare, SFI*), is provided for all residents who do not have basic knowledge of Swedish language. This means that asylum seekers do not have access, but also that the group is diverse. While, in many cases, the groups are dominated by newly arrived in the introduction program, basically all residing in Sweden without basic knowledge in Swedish, have the right to participate. This means that the results we present here are not limited to refugees.



6.1 Gender inequalities in language education

Statistics show that women since 1997 have been more numerous than men in attending Swedish for immigrants (*Svenska för invandrare, SFI*), but that there seems to be a gender balance since 2016 (Righard *et al.*, 2019, p. 16). The explanation is likely that men predominate among the newly arrived refugees in 2015 and 2016. Statistics indicate educational inequalities between men and women. Female new arrivals from 2015 and onwards generally have a shorter educational background than men who arrived in the same period. Consequently, more women than men are referred to the language introduction programmes within the study associations, or study SFI pathway I, which takes up till 4–5 years before they can proceed to enter other educational programs (ibid.:28). Furthermore, an interviewed director of a folk high school in Malmö associated several problems of exclusion related to pathway I: ‘Study level I is a huge problem. It is the level I-students who end up alienated and excluded from society. It’s a huge challenge since the group is large in Malmö, about one third of all students; therefore it’s the most important group’. Some interviewee says that there is a tendency that women disappear from SFI because they get pregnant. Within the municipality, some recent projects are aimed at recapturing women to the SFI through the project. SFI has no separate classes for men and women. In the interviews related to the report on language education and training for asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden (Righard *et al.*, 2019), gender-related issues were almost never mentioned spontaneously among interviewees. The researchers had to ask specifically about the topic, and even then, the interviewees had hard times reflecting on the issue. Few saw gender as a relevant factor at the language classes. The interviewees were more concerned with health and age-related issues.

6.2 Women are better students but have other obligations

One interviewee said that among those with no or short education, women seem more eager to study and learn than men. Women are generally better students, they complete their studies more often, and proceed with educations, although into traditional female professions such as nurses and child carers. Men are described as less eager students, who prefer working over studying.

Despite being good students, one interviewee expressed that the women are disadvantaged as they do not appear to have the same possibilities to study at home as their men; they are motivated for studying but do not have the adequate home conditions, as they are responsible for the household, for cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. Men do not seem to have the same constraints for studying at home, yet they prefer to work out of their homes. Several interviewees emphasise that what they see among the students at SFI, is that women, not men, are in charge of the home, and by that they assume a traditional female gender role. One interviewee, however, points out that this image is changing, and the relationship between men and women appears to be more equal today.

7. Labour Market Integration

This section draws on results from the report on labour market integration (see Righard, Emilsson & Jensen 2020). Among the civil servants interviewed for the report, the topic of gender was something that they talked about in different ways during the interviews. Both as an issue of lacking strategic focus, as gendered forms of un/employment and training, and as cultural barriers for employment and training.



7.1 Lacking strategies for working with gender

The introduction program has been considered to have too little focus on gender equality (ibid.). This was also reflected in the interviews with civil servants from different regional, municipal and civil society organizations, who explained that there are no explicit strategies addressing gender issues among newly arrived. The Association of Municipalities in Scania (*Kommunförbundet Skåne, KfSK*) has a certain attention to gender issues related to integration, which they have taken up in their strategic fora, and also disseminates knowledge and experiences to personnel in the municipalities of Scania. But they do not have any overall strategy on gender equality and integration that ensures gender mainstreaming. Civil servants from one of the strategic departments in the City of Malmö also have some focus on disseminating knowledge about integration and gender equality for companies that have a demand on this topic. Still, they also point to the lack of any strategic plan for women and men in the establishment plan, which in their opinion would have facilitated their work. Because of the significant differences in labour market participation between men and women, they wish to work more strategically with gender equality.

Overall, instead of general strategic measures to combat the exclusion of women from the labour market, the different interviewees point to individual initiatives, gender projects of NGOs, or units within the municipal administration of schooling and education.

7.2 Gender differences in employment and training

Several interviewees talked about the ways that gender inform differences in education and employment. The education and employment paths of newly arrived men and women are traditionally gendered; men tend to choose technical work as e.g. train repairers, whereas women choose care work as baby-sitters, nurses, etc. The director of the municipal department working with labour market integration, to some extent also with newly arrived, claims that women are more oriented towards studying, while men are more oriented towards working. Furthermore, he continues, women tend to decline the development guarantee (*utvecklingsgarantin*), the labour market integration measure that precedes the introduction program, and choose not to work. He explains this as related to inherent gender patterns:

In many cases you want to keep what you are used to, namely that the woman has responsibility over the family. It may be that you resonate that 'Now, I have children and cannot work simultaneously'. That you think that it will come later. And then, for us it is about making a picture where having a job and small children can be combined.

This however, requires a lot of individual supervision. According to section director of the Public Employment Service, they make supervision with groups of women, where they raise different issues related to the women, e.g. cultural barriers towards working. In her opinion, the low employment rate among newly arrived women from non-EU countries is a lot about resistance towards work that is engrained in different cultural and traditional norms:

Traditionally it's the woman who stays at home and takes care of the children. Now this has been reduced. But it may be that you still get children when you arrive here, and then is it also



a tradition that the woman stays at home most of the time. And the fathers are not at home to the extent that one could perhaps wish. And that also makes the introduction period longer for women, who step out of the plan for some time.

As the quote above reflects, 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.

As mentioned, case workers working with women in the introduction programme for newly arrived, often perceive the women as unmotivated and hard-to-work with, which may reflect certain presumptions and prejudices about this group of women (Larsson, 2019). At the same time, women have higher thresholds to pass to enter the labour market.

A business developer from the Region of Scania (*Region Skåne*) mentions that a main purpose of the regional politics and practices on gender equality in general is to break with gender norms related to, e.g. prevalent notions about gender specific activities (such as nursing, cooking and sewing as particular female job and craftsman as a particular male job). He, however, emphasises that some of the projects supported by the Region of Scania aiming at integrating newcomers to the labour market, somewhat go against the organisation's very same idea about gender equality, as the projects tend to target exclusively female newcomers to get them into traditional female jobs such as sewing.

People who are far away from the labour market get a chance to enter [the labour market]. Yet, I do feel that this is not entirely unproblematic, because it involves a certain stigmatisation of a target group, that 'female newcomers, they can sew, they can cook'. And that goes a bit against the work that we do to include people to the labour market. But here, we say that, "no this is what they can do". But that's my personal opinion.

At the same time, the interviewed business developer adds that one cannot ignore the worth the activity has for the involved participants, even though this creates a contrast between projects where the development of competence is directed respectively at an individual and at a regional level:

It sticks out compared to the other work we do, as it becomes very specific as we support a



concrete activity... In fact, I think that it has a concrete real effect for those who come, that they can get out of their marginalisation, so it can have an absolutely positive effect that isn't visible today. But such as concretely targeted effort can be seen as, well not directly opposed to, but then contra the other strategies we do. It's clear that one may wonder why this?

7.3 New initiatives with family centres

Many interviewees speak about the risk of women on parental leave getting lost in the system. This has led the Association of Municipalities in Scania to work with family centres (*familjecentraler*) and to target e.g. open preschool for children (aged 0–6 years) as an arena for integrating women on parental leave through courses in Swedish language offered by, among others, the municipal adult education (*KomVux*). The logic behind this is, that if parents do not send the children to the open preschools, they stay at home. As a civil servant from the municipal adult education in the City of Malmö explains about the many women who leave SFI because of parental leave:

On the road we lost quite a lot of women, and why did we do that? It appears that we haven't succeeded as well as we should in getting the children to the preschool, as the children didn't attend preschool, the women didn't attend the programs. And then the preschool department needed to participate, and how could we facilitate ... because if the children don't go to preschool, then the parents don't come, often the woman, sometimes the man, to the program, so it affects the women directly. But it indirectly affects the children, because if they don't attend preschool, they don't get the possibility of learning Swedish.

A civil servant working with development at the preschool department at the City of Malmö states that many women may become marginalized because of many childbirths and parental leaves, and sees the open preschool as an opportunity for getting on with their work life:

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 that open preschool may be an arena where they may proceed and develop, and move on.

The preschool department at the City of Malmö has since 2016 developed ideas about how to use open preschool as an arena for integration. In the autumn of 2019, the preschool department initiated a project 'Early in Life', as an attempt to use open-preschool as a platform that inspired and motivated newly arrived on parental leave to develop life plans while their children attend preschool. Via family mentors who represent different nationalities, the project reaches out to 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 offers Swedish language lessons and consultations for parents. The family mentors play a big role as they meet and connect with newly arrived from the same country of origin:



When our mentors have been here, then it is with joy, and it's this thing about identification, 'Oh, one more that I can talk Somali with'. The staff at the open preschool is very important, that's clear, but another thing is to be able to recognize oneself in a person, who can give support, and who can speak your mother-tongue. So, they are received well when they are out visiting [open preschools]. I think that a lot of it is about representation and identification, that 'aha, I see myself in you'. Then you find something, then you can build a relation, and maybe create confidence and trust. For they share the same experiences and background, in a way. So, I think it's important, and that's why we include family mentors with different native languages.

8. Third Sector Initiatives

Various NGOs have initiated projects that target immigrated women, including newly arrived women, and collaborate with the Public Employment Service and local institutions. The projects are often co-financed with funds from EU funds, primarily the European Social Fund (Arise, 2017, p. 13). Projects for unemployed female migrants often consist of training measures combined with practice aiming at upgrading the women's skills. Some training programs are directed toward a specific profession and combined with internships or subsidized employment. Experiences have shown that these packages shorten the distance to labour market integration. (ibid., p. 15).

In this section we present three initiatives targeted towards the integration of immigrated women, including newly arrived women. They are based in third sector and have their geographical location in Malmö.

8.1 Women's Power

Women's Power (*Kvinnokraft*) is a project coordinated by the Swedish Development Partner (*Individuell Människohjälp, IM*) in Sweden. IM was founded in 1938 in reaction to the oppression, persecutions and widespread violations of human rights at that time. IM's efforts is to counter various forms of oppression and excluding ideas, and instead emphasise the individual worth of every person⁴. IM is a member-based organisation with about 6,000 members; commitment and support of members and active volunteers is crucial for IM's activities. IM aims at contributing to developing democracy and civil society in Sweden, e.g. by creating democratic platforms and partnership relations. IM's primary mission is to fight poverty and exclusion and contribute to lasting change for individuals in particularly vulnerable situations. IM's conviction and work revolves around⁵:

Every individual has an inherent power to change their situation. With the right tools and circumstances, individuals can use this power to join with others to create change at both individual and societal level. By helping people to help themselves we are strengthening the scope of individuals to have their rights provided for and to take control of their own lives. IM works for change, which for us is about changing the structures that discriminate against and

⁴ See IM's webpage, link: <https://www.imsweden.org/en/about-im/history-of-im/>

⁵ See IM's webpage, link: <https://www.imsweden.org/en/about-im/>



exclude individuals and groups from sharing the same resources and having the same capability to be involved and have an influence as others.

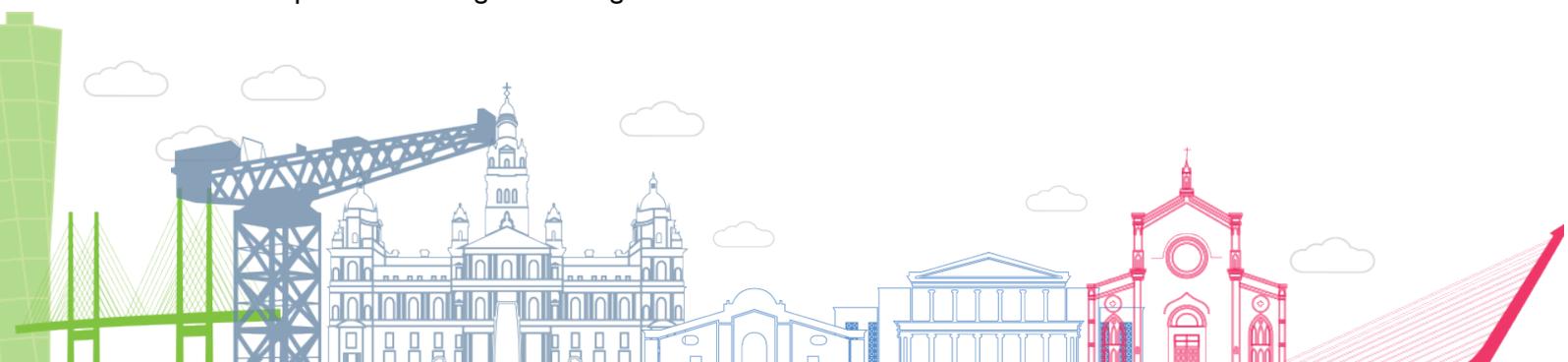
IM works with partners in sixteen countries in Southern Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Central America and parts of Europe, and has several projects on social inclusion, economic inclusion and civil society and civic space. In 2018, Women's Power (*Kvinnokraft*) started as a 3-year project localized in Malmö, and is run by IM in collaboration with IKANO Bank, Save the Children and the City of Malmö. The project aims at strengthening the power to act among women born outside of Sweden, and to enter the Swedish labour market. The project is localized in the residential area of Herrgården, where 80 per cent of the inhabitants are born outside of Sweden, have lower levels of educational training compared to the rest of Malmö, and where primarily the women are unemployed. Women's Power target women to make them approach the labour market, and to reduce their experiences of marginalization (*utanförskap*) from Swedish society. The project leader of Women's Power, describes the many forms of marginalization that the women experiences:

Marginalization is about, well in Sweden it is a lot related to work, it is the job that makes us insiders in a society; it's the norm in Swedish society. If you don't have an occupation, then you are not included, you are not included in a context. But there are more thresholds. It's not just that women need a work; I'm still not ready for inclusion. Because when I have a job, then I must have the language, I need to know the codes, and I'm not ready there yet, it's like there are more thresholds. Then, I must have a network, and furthermore, my kids should also go to a good school ... But I still feel marginalized, because majority society does not see me as one of them. Here is where racism enters, that it's the White norm that is the most important. So, there are a lot of things that we don't reflect upon, there are so many thresholds to enter this inclusion.

Since the beginning of 2018, altogether 16 women have participated in the program of Women's Power. The women are between 21 and 63 years old, and are from countries such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Somalia, and have very different levels of educational training. The most important conditions for participating are to be motivated to participate, to be able to understand Swedish, and to be willing to invest one's time and priorities. The women meet once a week from 10.00–12.00 AM. The program has altogether 13 thematic meetings in which the women train to write their CVs, make job letters and applications, are introduced to techniques in job interviewing, and are offered supervision, coaching, network, study visits and help with finding mentors in work and business life, e.g. from IKANO Bank. Our interviewee emphasizes the project's psycho-social dimension:

The psycho-social in the project; to have themes that revolve around myself. Because if my soul doesn't connect, then I'll never be able to write job letters and make CVs. If I know that my children don't have a space on open pre-school, then I'll never be able to apply for a job. And if I know that my husband is violent to me, then I'll not be able to do this. So, soul and brain must connect, otherwise we are lost.

Only women can participate in the Women's Power; men are invited to support the women. The project leader talks about the power women generate together:



Oh, it's wonderful to be here, I don't get disturbed, I'm allowed to say what I want to say, what I think, what I fantasize about my future, I can dig into myself. That's what happens in the group. And then, it has an effect when women influence other women; they strengthen one another.

Of the 16 women who until now has participated in Women's Power, 8 have managed to find an occupation. Most of them have started studying to become nurses and social-pedagogics at the municipal adult education (*KomVux*), others have found temporary jobs such as teachers assistants.

Reflecting on the question of what it means that Women's Power is only for women, the project leader explains:

Lots of initiatives are for children and men, only a few are for women. If we as a society can make a woman get a job, then it transforms the entire family. If you influence a man, then it only transforms his own situation, it doesn't transform the children or society. Research shows this. So, for me, it's about the effect women have on society, to be able to change [society]. So, the effort we do for women, applies to herself, to her family, and to the entire society.

8.2 International Women's Association Malmö

The International Women's Association Malmö (*Internationella Kvinnoföreningen Malmö, IKF Malmö*) was established in 1970 by a group of female migrant workers from former Yugoslavia together with women from Sweden working at the local factories, such as the steel factory and the chocolate factory. In the beginning, IKF Malmö was supported through personal sponsoring. Today, the women who take part in IKF Malmö are from 25 to 64 years old and represent about 14 different nationalities. The motivation for starting the association was to learn Swedish language, understand Swedish society and culture, and create relations between migrants and Swedes. The activities of IKF Malmö developed into continuing study groups (*studiecirklar*) to raise questions about identity, belonging, democracy and equality in the spirit of the power of cross-national sisterhood. The topics for such study circles are language skills, knowledge about Swedish society and human rights, handicraft (e.g. sewing), health and well-being, learning technology for everyday use of e.g. mobile phones and computers. Today, IKF Malmö has about 262 study groups for women born outside of Sweden, which are run together with the study association *Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan*. On a weekly basis, IKF Malmö has 23 study groups with 185 actively participating women; altogether there are 217 active members of IKF Malmö. IKF Malmö has two forms of membership: a basic annual membership which costs about 8 € and includes invitations to IKF Malmö events, and an active membership of 35 € which gives access to all activities of IKF Malmö, including to the city library that offers available computers for IKF Malmö members and access to the activity 'Live Malmö' (*Leva Malmö*) that makes excursions to museums and other 'tourist' attractions. IKF Malmö collaborates with about 20 different local and international organizations. In 2018, IKF Malmö was nominated the association of the year by the City of Malmö.

IKF Malmö currently drives national projects on: 'Business navigation in Sweden', 'Meeting point Lilith', 'Girl driven', 'Mother power', 'Carpe Sophia', 'Equal' and 'The Bon Voice method' (<https://www.ikf.se/t-en/nationella-projekt>). Three of the projects focus on integrating women into the labour market, e.g. by starting their own businesses. Other projects are related to participation in civil society, social networking, dialogue, and critical studies on the



concept of equality. Besides, IKF Malmö participates in four international projects on ‘Social Media Sisterhood’, ‘Get Me On Board’, ‘Approaches to Language Acquisition for Adult Students’, and ‘Social Integration of Migrants and Activation of Paths for Learning and Employability’⁶. The Public Employment Service is a collaborator and also finance some of these projects.

A major effort of IKF Malmö is to reach out to those women who stay at home and have very little motivation for entering the labour market. According to the IKF Malmö study leaders, a lot of the women who migrate to Sweden remain isolated in their new homes, without knowledge of Swedish culture and society, mostly because they do not overcome to engage in such issues because they are too traumatized from their experiences of fleeing their country of origin. The study leaders at IKF Malmö talk a lot about the expectations that Swedish society has to the women’s languages and working skills, but that there is little focus on the women’s emotional well-being, which is a condition for learning Swedish and finding a job. A course leader says:

The women who come here have migrated involuntarily. Nobody wishes to leave their country of origin... everybody has a sack on her bag, has lost confidence. It’s very important to have an understanding for phycological stress, and to give the women an opportunity to develop in their own pace.

It is particularly the issue of self-development that is the basis of IKF Malmö work. The course leaders often use words such as ‘self-esteem’ (*självkänsla*) and ‘empowerment’ to describe the aim of the courses they teach, and thereby inspire and motivate the members to proceed with getting an active life and involving themselves in Swedish society.

The values that IKF Malmö builds on are equality, particularly gender equality, women’s rights and reciprocal integration. IKF Malmö works to enhance the possibilities for becoming economically self-supporting and for getting societal influence. By identifying gender related social needs, formulating innovative solutions that are implemented in practice, IKF Malmö defines itself as gender driven social innovation (Glans, 2015, p. 10). IKF Malmö focuses particularly on the intersection of ethnic and gender stereotypes that prevail, e.g. in the myths about foreign born women who cannot and will not work (Glans, 2015, p. 12). In contrast, they state that discrimination as well as lack of adequate labour market initiatives that fit the needs of these women are a reason for their low participating in the labour market. IKF Malmö drives a program for reciprocal integration to increase the empowerment and influence of the women. The program teaches human rights, democracy, and the connection between health, equality and self-supportance (Glans, 2015, p. 25):

IKF endeavours to make visible, communicate, influence and change societal and political structures that hinders equality. From the core business, the projects, opinion- and influencing work the program touches initiatives at both individual, societal and structural levels.

⁶ See IFK Malmö webpage: <https://www.ikf.se/t-en/internationella-projekt>



IKF Malmö works with making women self-supporting by increasing their possibilities as entrepreneurs developing private businesses. For that purpose, IKF Malmö offers the participating women different kinds of network that the women may otherwise have difficulties accessing because of being born outside of Sweden. IKF Malmö also works with mentors to guide and inspire the women to make their own private businesses.

The study leaders at IKF Malmö do not think that there are enough local labour market initiatives for migrant women.

8.3 Yalla trappan

Another project for migrant (background) women is the association of *Yalla Trappan* (English: the Yalla Stairs) which started in Rosengård, a major migrant neighbourhood in the city of Malmö. Yalla Trappan was established in 2010, with inspiration from 'The Stairs Project' (2006–2010) in Rosengård, Malmö, which guided women born outside of Sweden to be ready to enter labour market. This project consisted of creating good conditions for entering the labour market through efforts that develop competences, engagement and participation in cooperative businesses. The aim was to build up new meeting and market places at Rosengård where social and pedagogical activities unite with work and entrepreneurship, e.g. through different businesses such as café, atelier for design and handicraft, training and services. Since 2010, Yalla Trappan is an association for both women and men, yet the working groups consists of women only. The project started with financial funding from European social fund, City of Malmö and the study association ABF Malmö and has evolved into a self-contained social enterprise.

Yalla Trappan is a labour market integrating social business and cooperative of women which creates work spaces by selling their services to companies and private persons. Yalla Trappan also collaborates with the public sector to increase the womens' potentials to enter the labour market. The overall purpose of Yalla Trappan is to create work and economic independence for women born outside Sweden who are remote from the labour market. Yalla Trappan consists of several business based on work from and driven by women born outside of Sweden. Yalla Trappan has 35 employees, and offers paid services such as food catering, a restaurant, an atelier, textile production, e.g. in partnership with stores such as IKEA and Hennes & Mauritz, cleaning services, conference facilities, guided tours in Rosengård and professional mentoring.

Besides from these activities, Yalla Trappan runs several projects such as 'Y-alla's path to work', 'Yalla's equal home', 'Step up', 'Yalla Sofielund', 'The Ambassadeurs of Yalla' and 'More Yalla'. The projects seek to inspire women to find their path to the labour market, and moreover to disseminate the mission, methods and good practices of Yalla Trappan to other parts of Sweden.

The project 'Yalla's Path to Work' is a collaboration between Yalla Trappan, the Public Employment Service and the City of Malmö. The aim of the project is to create increased employment and diminish marginalisation among women born outside of Sweden who are remotely positioned from the labour market. The aim and result of the project are to create individually designed action plans for the participants, and consequently participants with motivation to find a job. The project seeks to 'increase the participants' self-esteem through focusing on the unique



competences, qualities, knowledge and areas of development and possibilities of the individual'⁷. The method of the project revolves around working in cooperatives and is focused on 'learning by doing' and 'experience one's own learning' (ibid.). Through the project, the participants obtain knowledge about the labour market, about working culture, Swedish language skills directed at certain branches, and practical work experience in mass catering.

Yalla Trappan's partnership with IKEA is co-financed with the region of Scania and the private sector, in this case IKEA. In this project, Yalla Trappan collaborates with IKEA in Malmö – and the future plans are to involve IKEA in all Swedish cities – in offering consultations and services such as sewing curtains and other fabrics. The criteria for participating in this project is to be a female newcomer. The project is also part of Yalla's Way to Work, where the region of Scania supports the training of 45 women per year. A business developer from the region of Scania describes this as a strong cooperation: 'It's a strong cooperation because it's both a private actor, IKEA, and an idea-based actor, Yalla Trappan, and with public support'.

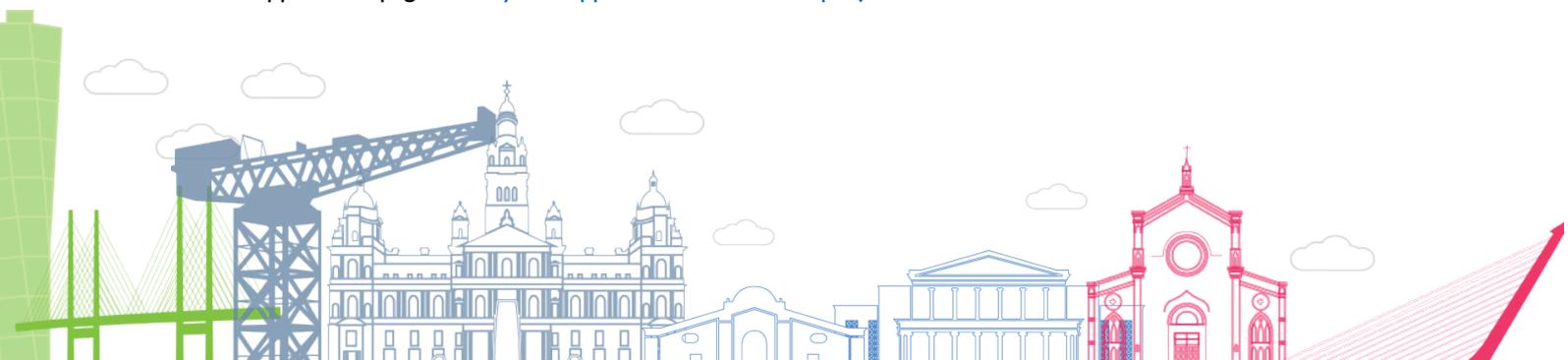
9. The Policy is Better than the Reality – A Conclusive Discussion

Gender equality is a prominent issue on the political agenda in Sweden; the Swedish government has even claimed itself a 'feminist government'. Equality (*jämlikhet*), or equality of opportunity (*jämställdhet*), became part of the political agenda in the 1970s. Due to the foundations of the Swedish welfare society, which relies on individual contributions of salaried work and tax payments, initially the focus tended to be on labour market participation, yet today it includes several other policy fields. Since 1994, gender mainstreaming, meaning that a gender equality perspective should be included in all stages of decision-making processes, has been the main strategy for achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is central to gender equality policy at both the national, regional and the municipal levels.

However, and as this report shows, in many cases gender is reduced to reporting statistics about women and men, while a gender analysis remains absent. This is not least the case in the field of the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover, the gender equality policy is general, and statistics typically do not report about specific ethnic groups or categories of immigrants, such as refugees. In the view of this report, this is a complicating matter, and we have not been able to limit the scope of the report to asylum seekers and refugees. Instead, while we sometimes refer to asylum seekers, in other instances we refer to refugees and their family, and yet in other instances to all foreign born in Sweden.

Another peculiarity of the Swedish system is that the reception of refugees in the asylum process and with a residence permit are more or less discrete systems. The reception of asylum seekers is administered, organised and financed by the national government, in particularity its organisational body the Swedish Migration Agency; the reception of refugees with a residence permit, in administrative vocabulary referred to 'newly arrived' during the first two years, is the joint responsibility of the municipalities and the national organisational government, but now the Public Employment Service that is responsible of the introduction program for newly arrived. The national government covers the cost during the first two years. In effect of this organisational logic, in this report we present

⁷ See Yalla Trappans webpage: www.yallatrappan.com/verksamhet/projekt/



results in relation to refugees in the asylum process and with residence permit separately. In this conclusive discussion we first present our results in relation to asylum seeking women and then to ‘newly arrived’ women.

9.1 Reception and integration of refugee women in the asylum process

This report presents statistics showing that more men than women apply for and are granted international protection in Sweden. While these figures are presented black on white, government reports typically leave this figures un-commented. It is against this backdrop, that the CEDAW (2016) has pointed to asylum seeking refugee women as an area of particular betterment in Sweden. Sweden is encouraged to consider the principle of non-refoulement so that no one is returned to countries where they would risk torture or any other inhumane or degrading treatment, and the reception of asylum seekers, from gender-sensitive perspectives. The Swedish reception system largely relies binary and male assumptions that shape the reception, particularly accommodation, and assessments of asylum applications, at the cost of women and LGBTQI-persons. The Swedish Women’s Lobby (2016), that is the Swedish CEDAW shadow group, suggests that the Swedish government should consider how to ensure that more girls and women can reach and apply for asylum in Sweden, as well as consequences of the temporary residence permits and limitations to family reunification, that were implemented in 2016, from a gender sensitive perspective. This critique is not responded to by the Swedish state, and it is our understanding that these issues to a large extent are excluded, maybe even silenced, in political debates. Hence, a major question for further inquiry that has emerged out of this work package, regards how this silence can be understood, not least against the backdrop of the government’s self-understanding of being feminist.

Measures supporting the local reception of asylum seekers, ‘Early Measures for Asylum Seekers’, are required to have a plan for gender sensitive approaches in order to get funding. Our interviews indicate that this in many cases implies that the projects have an approach to the family as a whole, that is, the project has something to offer to both women, men and children; the interviewees explain that this has proved to be the best way of reaching out to women, meaning that the risk they confront is that women otherwise do not show up at all.

9.2 Reception and integration of refugee women with residence permits

In the reception and integration of refugee women, gender is of greater concern in relation to labour market integration than housing and accommodation and Swedish language education and training. This can be understood in several ways. First of all, labour force participation is, at least discursively, at the core of the introduction and integration of newly arrivals – and, secondly, women who have arrived to Sweden as a refugee or as a family member to a refugee, have lower labour force participation. But it can also be understood against the backdrop of women labour force participation, as is shown in the historical section of this report, overall being a prominent issue of Sweden’s gender policy. This means that while it is expected that gender dimensions are integrated into labour market policy, it is less clear why they are not more visible as regards accommodation and Swedish language education.

This report presents statistics showing that the activities that women and men are assigned to during the introduction program are gendered: a larger share of women than men enter studies, and a larger share of men than women enter work. This is well known, but evaluations and follow-ups do not provide gender analysis of why



this is so, and how it can be changed. As indicated in our interviews and discussed above, this can partly be related to stereotypical understandings of refugee women and men among the case workers. These stereotypes are gender roles associated with *Other* women and men. Here *Other* women and men refers to 'non-Western' and 'traditional' gender roles.

Moreover, the report presents statistics showing labour force participation among foreign-born women and men. While the comparatively low labour force participation among third-country national women has been of political concern for a long time, there are few targeted measures for this group. One measure, however, was introduced in conjunction with reform of the introduction program for refugees and their families in 2010. At this point, the introduction allowance was individualised with the aim of creating an economic incentive for women to participate. Another measure was introduced in 2013, when the parental leave for children born before settlement in Sweden was limited. This measure was taken as extended periods of parental leave was considered a 'trap' for refugee women, even though the commission reports indicated that women are eager to enter the labour market, but seem to have higher thresholds to pass, including labour market discrimination (SOU 2012:9; SOU 2012:69).

Our interviews with civil servants and caseworkers at the regional and local level, indicate that while basically everybody are aware of and find it relevant to consider gender inequalities, gender sensitive approaches are not applied. Instead, also here, to the extent that gender is regarded, it seems to focus on the family as a whole. This includes for instance measures organised through open pre-schools, in which the municipality tries to reach out to both mothers and fathers of young children in order to, in the long run, strengthen labour market integration for both women and men.

In contrast to these gender mainstreamed projects, the three NGO projects presented in this report, have projects targeted towards women only. It is also interesting to notice that these projects, at least initially, were not publicly funded, although some receive public co-funding today. Even though these projects explicitly aim at strengthening women and their labour market integration, it is also true that they, at least as indicated in our interviews/materials, do not have specified gender-sensitive approaches to this. Instead, here the focus is on the particular individual case of each woman's situation and needs. While this approach is relevant and humane, it is not clear what it is that make these projects 'women's projects', except the gender of the participants.

From a more theoretical perspective, these different approaches, that is, gender awareness as measures targeted towards the family as a whole vs. gender awareness as measures targeted towards women, highlights two much debated risks of gender awareness. On the one side, gender awareness as measures targeted towards the family as a whole, faces the risk of going gender-blind treating women and men as equally oppressed. On the other side, gender awareness as measures targeted towards only women faces the risk of essentialising and reducing gender awareness into a focus on a 'given' (and binary) category of women, instead of power structures and structural inequalities as something dynamic and relational. What is complicating the matter here, to some extent beyond comprehension, is that we are considering intersecting inequalities. These are social, racial and gendered inequalities on the global scale, intersecting with social, racial and gendered inequalities on the local scale. While it is crucial to discuss the results of this report with some, at least basic, understanding of these intersecting variables, obviously it goes beyond both the empirical and theoretical scope of the report to engage in this kind of analysis (see for instance the work by Ann Stewart (e.g. 2011) for models of this kind of analysis).



Besides labour market integration, this report also explores gender aspects related to housing and accommodation, and language training and education. While, as discussed, foreign-born women have a comparatively low participation at the labour market and risk of becoming marginalized in Swedish society, the analysis also reveals a lack of effective efforts to deal with this issue. The findings on language training and education contributes to this picture by showing that mainly women get stuck in the program on Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), and are at risk of ending up marginalized from Swedish society.

Both national and local efforts such as the Public Employment Service and the municipality of Malmö finance and collaborate in third sector initiatives targeted at supporting and helping newly arrived women to overcome some of the many thresholds, they need to pass to participate in the labour market. These initiatives work with the emotional well-being and empowerment of women as a motivator for entering the labour market and becoming self-supportive. Several of these projects include different types of mentors (from business life) to guide and inspire the women.

While such efforts involve all women born outside of Sweden, the findings on accommodation and housing reveal several issues related to the situation of newly arrived since 2015. First of all, the very organization of housing for newly arrived is gendered, as men were the first to arrive, and commonly placed in small corridor accommodation for men only. Others who do not fit this heteronormative gender category – such as women and LGBTQI persons – are at risk of ending in very vulnerable situations, including homelessness, prostitution or other forms of trafficking. In cases of marriage unification, where the female partner is sent for, it is the man's responsibility to find housing for the family, which is an impossible task because of difficulties getting access to affordable housing while in a situation where the state has withdrawn from the housing market. Consequently, newly arrived families, also with children, are among the groups that are at high risk of becoming homeless. In the process of applying for family unification, men may risk getting their case rejected because they do not have access to appropriate housing, or in cases of divorce, may lose custody over their child due to inappropriate housing.

9.3 Policy strengths and improvements

At the local level, the region of Scania seems to relate gender equality in measures targeted towards asylum seekers to the social conditions of the family as a whole, and not to gender as such. For instance, only a few activities funded by means allocated by the County Administrative Board, target gender equality or issues such as LGBTQI. The municipality of Malmö has a focus on gender mainstreaming, which like the national policies is general and, as regards the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, mainly target the labour market. Only a few activities within the municipality of Malmö target gender issues, and mainly from a family-oriented approach.

From a prevalent Swedish equality of opportunity perspective, newly arrived women are mostly affected by unemployment and marginalization. Yet, local policies and political actors in particular do not appear to attend this situation sufficiently. Instead, a preference for an overall family perspective is considered. While Swedish policy maintains a gender mainstreaming, the gender equality is far from being included in all processes of decision making, when it comes to foreign-born people. This absence is particularly seen in the in-efficiency of national policies



targeting gender mainstreaming among foreign-born women, in the lack of gender mainstreaming in local policy, and in the strong presence of third-sector projects which work hard to implement gender mainstreaming, but rely on voluntary forces and lack financial support. The Swedish governmental bodies such as the Migration Agency initiated this gender mainstreaming process in 2019, and this process should spread to other national and local policies and concrete programmes.



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