WP 5

THE IMPACT OF ADMISSION-POLICIES AND ADMISSION-RELATED INTEGRATION POLICIES ON THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF TCN NEWCOMERS IN SWEDEN

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While integration policies as such are not new, and in some countries date back to the 1980s and beyond, there have been important shifts in the debates on integration and in related re-configurations of integration policymaking in the past decade or so. One of the main recent trends is the linkage of integration policy with admission policy and the related focus on recent immigrants. A second trend is the increasing use of obligatory integration measures and integration conditions in admission policy, and third, integration policymaking is increasingly influenced by European developments, both through vertical (more or less binding regulations, directives etc.) and through horizontal processes (policy learning between states) of policy convergence.

An increasing number of EU Member States have, in fact, adopted integration related measures as part of their admission policy, while the impact of such measures on integration processes of immigrants is far less clear. In addition, Member States’ policies follow different, partly contradictory logics, in integration policy shifts by conceptualising (1) integration as rights based inclusion, (2) as a prerequisite for admission residence rights, with rights interpreted as conditional, and (3) integration as commitment to values and certain cultural traits of the host society.

The objective of PROSINT is to evaluate the impact of admission related integration policies on the integration of newcomers, to analyse the different logics underlying integration policymaking and to investigate the main target groups of compulsory and voluntary integration measures.

The project investigated different aspects of these questions along five distinct workpackages. These analysed (1) the European policy framework on migrant integration (WP1), (2) the different national policy frameworks for the integration of newcomers in the 9 countries covered by the research (WP2), the admission-integration nexus at the local level in studied in 13 localities across the 9 countries covered by the research (WP3), the perception and impacts of mandatory pre-arrival measures in four of the nine countries covered (WP4) and a methodologically oriented study of the impact of admission related integration measures (WP5).

The countries covered by the project were Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Apart from individual cases project reports generally cover the period until end of 2010.

For more information about the project visit http://research.icmpd.org/1429.html.
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I Overview of admission or admission-related integration policies

I.1 Admission policy

Sweden has rather recently – on April 15, 2010 – introduced its first pre-entry admission policy targeting family members. Initiated by the conservative coalition government (leading actor was mostly the dominant conservative party Moderaterna), the new policy requires the family member already in Sweden, the sponsor, to fulfil two requirements: a) to be able to cover his/her costs of living, and b) to have a properly organised housing arrangement that is spacious enough both for him/herself as well as the family members. The government’s expert committee states that the aim of financial support requirements is first and foremost to promote integration, both for the person already in Sweden as well as for the new family members. Therefore, the policy is seen as an incentive to get employed and to be self-sufficient. In addition, it should work as a motivation for individuals to settle down in regions with both good possibilities for employment as well as for housing. This, so the rationale, will lead to an improved integration (SOU 2008:114:81). At the same time the policy’s intention is to solve problems with overcrowded living conditions, as they have been reported mainly from the big city areas, Malmö, Stockholm and Gothenburg (SOU 2008:114:137ff). This has been identified to create a range of social problems. Furthermore, it is seen to create a segregation in the city areas which is understood to lead to an aggravation of immigrants’ access to the labour market. Understanding access to labour market (as a pathway to self-sufficiency) as the key for successful integration, this development is thus seen as hampering integration.

While the most manifest rationale is improved integration, the new policy cannot only be viewed in this light. Given the almost negligible number of immigrant categories targeted by it (see a later page), it became clear during the interviews at ministerial level (as well as when following the debate in the parliament on 10 March 2010) that the new provision has a high symbolic value – especially at the initial stage. The fact that Sweden over a long time was the only country in the EU that did not have a maintenance demand served as an important argument in political debates. In addition, it has to be considered that a momentarily weak maintenance demand for family reunification opens up for further restrictions in the future once it is part of the Swedish legislation (interviewee Int&Gen2).

I.1.1 Target group

Even though the committee states that in order for an overall successful integration as many categories of family members under the Aliens Act’s chapter 5 article 3 and 3a should be included in the policy, there are a rather large number of categories that are exempted by the financial requirements. These are a) family members of Swedish citizens or a person with permanent residence permit that has been in
possession of a residence permit since 4 years, b) family members of a EU/EAS or Swiss citizen, c) family members of a child (person under 18 years of age), and d) family members of persons with refugee status and people with a certain (EU defined) subsidiary protection status. In other words: The target group consists of persons that received a subsidiary protection status based on Swedish law; i.e. “protection on grounds of inner conflicts”. Persons with this legal status who do not have children have to fulfil the maintenance requirement or wait for four years until they can reunite with their family members. A substantial number of people from Iraq got residence permit on these Swedish protection grounds, and are targeted by the new law (interview justice 1&2).

While the committee does not state any reasons as to why Swedish citizens should be excluded from the financial requirements, the exemption of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens is based on the non-discriminatory/equal treatment of EU citizens under the EC treaty since Swedish citizens are excluded. This exemption is suggested to be extended to EEA and Swiss citizens. Moreover, EU, EEA and Swiss citizens only get residence permit (card) if they are self-sufficient which leads the committee to conclude that there is no real need for financial demands. The exemption of persons with a residence permit for four years is based on the rationale that a financial requirement should never hinder a family from reuniting. Therefore, individuals that have not managed to get employed over a longer period should be excluded from the financial demand as well (SOU 2008:114:74). This includes persons in possession of a permanent residence permit that have had either a temporary or a permanent residence permit for four years consecutively. The reason to exclude refugees from the demand for financial means is referred to the EU directive of family reunification. The committee refers to one of the main rules which is that a demand/condition can be put to a refugees right to reunite with his or her spouse or under-aged child only under certain conditions (article 12(1)). The same reasoning is extended to quota refugees.

Another category that is exempted by the condition of financial demand is the case when children, i.e. persons under the age of 18, apply for family reunification with a parent already in Sweden. The committee – itself with reference to the principle of the child’s best - suggested treating each case separately. However, after taking notice of the comments (remiss) from civil society, organisations, authorities etc. the government in the final proposition to the parliament included this category in the list of exemptions as well (Prop. 2009/10:77:33).

There is no information yet as to how this new policy affected migration and integration patterns in Sweden. Reason to that is that the policy came into force very recently, on 15 April, 2010. The desired effects are that a couple of thousands more shall be employed and that the language is learned faster (interviewee Justice2). It will be the Migration Board’s task to evaluate the new law, but by the time the interview was conducted (June 2010) nothing further was decided yet (interviewee Justice2). Some numbers (although not completely representative): between 15 April and 8 June 2010, the Migration Board processed 5,000 family reunification applications. Of those, 90 got checked for maintenance demand, of which 72 were
refused (interviewee Migration Board). Usually the Migration Board does not state
the reason for refusal in their statistics, but due to the profound interest in the
maintenance demand there will be a system in place to track the effect of the new
law (interviewee Migration Board). Some newer numbers: In 2010, the migration
board processed roughly 44,000 applications for family reunification. In a total of
466 cases (i.e. roughly 1 percent) the maintenance demand was tested, which
resulted in 100 positive answers (Migrationsverket, 2011).

I.2 Admission-related integration policies

All Swedish municipalities are required by law to offer an introduction programme
to the group of people that the municipality receives a governmental standard sum
for, i.e. refugees and other persons with protection status as well as their family
members that arrive within two years after the issuing of the residence permit. For
this group of people the municipality ought to establish an integration plan, i.e. a
document that spells out the courses, classes and activities that are intended to lead
to successful (labour market) integration. In most municipalities, this group also has
a more or less automatic right to a monthly living allowance, called introduction
allowance. This is regulated by Article 2 of the Introduction Allowance Act
(1992:1068). However, article 2a stipulates that the municipalities are free to
include other immigrants into their target group as long as they have not resided in
Sweden longer than 36 months (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 1997).
Thus, the some municipalities (such as Malmö for instance) have chosen to extend
the right to introduction allowance to all immigrants that have registered in Sweden
less than 36 months ago (i.e. the so-called newly arrived) under the condition that
there is an economic need for it.

The most far reaching reform with post-arrival provisions came into effect on 1
December 2010. The so-called “establishment reform” (etableringsreform) does not
so much change the content of the post-arrival provisions (i.e. the introduction
programme), rather it changes the organisation of it profoundly. For so-called newly
arrived refugees the Employment Services will take over the coordinative
responsibility of their introduction programme. Furthermore, the following changes
are incorporated into the new reform: Firstly, there will be a new actor on the
labour market integration stage, the so-called ‘coach’ (lots). Secondly, similar to the
old system, participants of the establishment reform will receive an allowance upon
fulfilment of their individual establishment plan on which they have agreed upon
together with an officer from the Employment Services. The essential difference is
that the allowance will be handed out to individual participants, and will not, as it is
the practice until now in many municipalities, be impacted by other household
members’ income. This measure is, among others, meant to strengthen women’s
participation in the courses, and on the long run, their establishment on the labour
market. Thirdly, civic education will be an obligatory part in the introduction
programme with its content and extent defined by the government (SOU 2010:16).
1.2.1 Target group

The target group that falls under the responsibility of the Employment Services are the following: Newly arrived immigrants between the age of 20 and 65 whose ability to work is more than 25 percent and that received residence permit on one of the following grounds: refugee, subsidiary protection, and quota refugee, as well as family reunification to one of those persons arriving within two years. Newly arrived immigrants who fall beyond these categories (family reunification with a non-refugee, labour migrants, EU migrants, plus persons whose ability to work is less than 25%) still fall under the municipality’s scope of responsibility. The reason why the refugee-group and their family members are in focus is the anticipation that they are only weakly linked into society. If a family member arrives later than two years the sponsor is expected to be able to support the integration of the newly arrived in a better way. In that case they often come on voluntary grounds which leads the government to believe that their establishment on the labour market will be easier (interviewee Int&Gen2). This new reform reiterates the current governments’ line for a politics that pursues work (self-sufficiency) as the ultimate goal. The new reform makes the link between participation and economic compensation more clear, but there is no link to residence permit or migration politics.

The national policy formulation has mostly been led by the conservative coalition government and in particular by their Minister of Integration and Gender Equality (a member of the liberal party). The foremost rationale behind it is to shorten the average time from arrival to self-sufficiency - which today lies at 7 years (Sabuni, 2010) – through faster and closer contact with the Employment Services (an authority under the Ministry of Labour Market). Another goal is to avoid larger differences in the implementation of the introduction period, as it is the case under the lead of the municipalities.

Criticism came above all from the three opposition parties (social democrats, the Left party and the Green party). Although agreeing in principle that integration has failed and that a new system is necessary, the three parties are doubtful to believe that the proposed reform is the way to go. Above all, they criticize the dominant focus on individual responsibility and point out structural obstacles to immigrant integration that are not considered by the reform. However, as interviewee 2 from the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality reasons, the structural discrimination perspective that received a lot of attention in the first half of the 00s (2002-2005), has lost its driving force due to its unclear focus.
II Data / Studies available

Assumptions behind the maintenance demand for family reunification:

- Language skills are essential
- Incentives (in form of family reunification) lead to faster language learning and work
- Overcrowded living conditions hampers integration
- Policy is an incentive to move to areas with both jobs and accommodation

Assumptions behind post-admission policy

- Faster and closer contact with the Employment Services leads to faster labour market integration
- Individual introduction allowance will strengthen women’s participation on the labour market
- Refugees, persons with protection status and their families that arrive within two years are in more need of introduction/support than other categories of immigrants

II.1 Studies

II.1.1 Immigration category

Bevelander et al (2010) states that refugees have lower labour market participation than other immigrant categories, and significantly lower employment rates than natives. Data is taken from the Swedish register STATIV in 2007 (the statistical integration database held by Statistics Sweden) and shows that recognised refugees have higher labour market participation rate than people in the category “resettled refugees” and “family reunification”. The explanation is on the one hand that there are two selection processes in play (self-selection as well as selection through policy mechanisms). On the other hand, the length of time in the new country (including the time as an asylum seeker) increases the participation rate of immigrants.

II.1.2 Language skills

Rooth and Åslund (2006) show that a lack of or an inadequate level of Swedish language skills explains the lower participation of immigrants on the labour market. Especially, good skills in speaking Swedish increases the odds of an employment (Rooth and Ekberg, 2005). In the 2006 study, Rooth and Åslund present a case where better Swedish skills lead to higher labour market participation and to higher salary. Nevertheless, in the conclusion, they state that they cannot statistically pin down the causal effect of the statement. They reason that the causal chain above might be the opposite, i.e. that a good job increases Swedish skills. Nevertheless, the study (through a questionnaire sent out to employers) confirms a certain level of
discrimination against persons with a foreign name. Also, employers state that they find it difficult to evaluate or estimate a foreign academic or vocational degree or personal references of a former employer in the country of origin. The authors therefore conclude that a well-working validation of foreign degrees and experiences will/would increase immigrants’ labour market integration.

However, as the Councillor for Integration and Employment in Malmö states, many persons from Western Europe and North America do not take the offer for neither the language course nor the introduction programme. Also, there are hardly any Russians, Chinese or persons with mother tongue English in the municipal courses, neither sfi (language) nor introduction (civic education and some labour market preparation courses). Furthermore, 50 percent of all immigrants that came to Sweden in 2005 had not started sfi after 36 months (interviewee KA in WP3 on Malmö). While this does not say that Swedish language skills are not essential, it says, however, that the “Swedish for Immigrant”-courses (Sfi) is not the only way to acquire language skills. Fredrik Rakar (2010:27) also states that almost half of all immigrants that arrived in Sweden in the past 20 years have not started sfi, and among those that started sfi only 50 percent have received a final degree. Therefore, he rejects the popular claim that sfi courses are necessary in order to get a job or to get by in society (WP3 on Malmö).

A study by Louise Kennerberg (2009) from IFAU (Institute for labour market political evaluations) states that from all immigrants that obtained permanent residence permit between 1994 and 2001 40 percent did not attend the municipalities’ language classes (sfi). Of the non-participants the majority was born in Western countries and had stronger connections to the labour market than among the group participating. On the other hand, there was also a relatively big number among the non-participants that did not have any income at all; some of them lived on social allowances, but many of them had an unknown income (the author’s conclusion is that they might have been receiving money from family members in Sweden or abroad).

Interviewee JT furthermore estimates that the sfi classes that combine language with a vocational education display the best results. Here there are most (80-90 percent) participants that reach the goal, in other words: finish sfi and start employment (WP3 on Malmö).

II.1.3 Human factors, such as health issues

In general, an interviewee (JT) at the town hall’s unit for integration and employment criticizes the introduction programme for leading to a slow integration into society. In that sense, he agrees with the national view on integration in Sweden (see for example the conservative leading party’s article on failed integration (Dagens Nyheter, 29 August 2010)). However, he speaks about some facts contributing to that: for example, 30 percent of all immigrants have a migration-related health issue; many people move around in the country and that not
everybody sees language as a key to society (interviewee JT). He calls them the “human factors” that contribute to a slow / late entry into the labour market (see also WP3 on Malmö).

II.1.4 Missing alternatives

Furthermore, interviewee JT states, that the introduction programme is only a part of all the processes that should lead to achieving the municipality’s integration goal. According to him, the municipality should have alternatives for the people who do not manage to follow an sfi class (see also WP3 on Malmö).

II.1.5 Gender-informed activities

Interviewee TÄ from the Employment and Integration Center (AIC) states that even though more women than men are enrolled with a Employment and Integration Center (AIC) in the course of their introduction programme, men seem to benefit more from it. He explains this by referring to the centers’ activities that he sees as slightly more directed towards men (for example the recruitment education for becoming a bus driver). The result is that despite the large number of women enrolled with AIC, more men participate in concrete activities. In order to increase the participation of women, interviewee TÄ sees the need to expand the work on gender equality in the everyday work, and to encourage both women and men to look for work that might not fall into their traditional choice of work. Also interviewee AB from the Swedish Associations of Regions and Local Authorities (SKL) agrees with that view, and states that the system makes substantial differences between men and women (see also WP3 on Malmö).

II.1.6 Participation of Women on the labour market

An important change of the establishment reform (though one that Malmö has not yet implemented) is that the establishment allowance will be individual and based on the ability to perform. Interviewee LK from the Employment Services states that in today’s system it is the family that has a big say in the individual household member’s participation in integration activities. With the reform and the individual allowance system, the state will weaken the family’s stronghold substantially, and by that improve women’s position on the labour market (see also WP3 on Malmö).

II.1.7 Slow access to Employment Services

An evaluating study on the municipalities’ practical work with newly arrived refugees and immigrants conducted by the Integration Board in 2007 shows that in
most municipalities it takes more than one year for the immigrant to be involved in any kind of labour market activity; be it information, preparation course or education. The report criticizes this circumstance and calls it a “lost year”. This finding can be found as an assumption in the government's proposition on the establishment reform, where the main change is the quicker contact with the Employment Services.

II.2 External factors

II.2.1 Human Capital and Labour Market Experience

Studies show that for refugees integration into the labour market is dependent on the human capital achieved in the home country as well as the investment in human capital and labour market experience in the country of origin (Rooth, 1999).

II.2.2 Situation of labour market in specific area

The choice of the city as well as the situation of the labour market are influential factors (Åslund and Rooth, 2007).

Evidence from WP3 on the small municipality of Älmhult (15,000 inhabitants):

There are several components that impact on Älmhult’s work on integration: Firstly, there is a strong and driving industry and trade sector, which was until recently able to absorb all labour. As several interviewees stated, up until the beginning of 2009, there was no unemployment in Älmhult at all. This is not only characteristic for Älmhult but large parts of the Småland region.

Secondly, what strengthens the labour market argument further are the existence of strong formal as well as strong informal networks between employers in trade and industry. Several interviewees identified the numerous informal networks among the municipality’s inhabitants in general as decisive (interviewees TL, BS, SJ, EP). Especially those among the small-scale entrepreneurs. Interviewee TL from the Moving-In Service stresses that special skills facilitate integration tremendously, close to seconding Swedish language skills. Also the municipality’s executive board’s chairperson (interviewee EP) refers to the region’s reputation as an entrepreneurial stronghold characterized by dense networks between small-scale, yet specialized companies.

Thirdly, in addition to the informal and formal networks of the industrial sector, there are also strong informal networks between the inhabitants of the municipality. Persons that meet immigrants on a professional basis in the introduction process often try to arrange things for their clients/students on a personal basis; often by arranging a contact.
Fourthly, Älmhult has built up an operative cooperation framework called “Way In” that is working towards facilitating not only a smooth transition between integration steps, but also takes sustainability and individuality as a core of integration. Most interviewees explain the successful integration of immigrants (i.e. the high employment rate, the low rate of xenophobic expressions, as well as the fact that integration has not become an issue) by referring to the operative mode of work of “Way In” that brings together institutions without tearing down their operative boundaries.

Fifthly, most of the interviewees agreed that while much of the success story depends on the favourable labour market situation and the advantages of a operative cooperation framework, any explanation on the success of integration would be incomplete without mentioning the engagement, devotion and enthusiasm of the people working in the field.

Sixthly, the last three points leading up to another factor accounting for enabling a successful integration. As some interviewees explained, integration work in Älmhult is characterized by short channels of decision making as well as short information channels. This has a.o. to do with the fact that “Way In” has up until now not been fully instrumentalised. This circumstance allows the project coordinator to act rather independently, to take fast decisions and to make use of his vast contact net in the municipality.

A seventh, and final, factor explaining Älmhult’s success in immigrant integration is ascribed to the presence of IKEA. Though IKEA is not a big employer of the introduction programme’s participants, its presence is seen to contributing to an “everyday diversity” which has positive effects on the overall social cohesion in the municipality. Today it is not experienced as something extraordinary to hear Hindi, Chinese, English, Russian or Dutch on the streets, in the shops and in restaurants. Furthermore, the fact that IKEA and other companies see foreign employees as an important resource for their business success is seen / explained to spill over to other companies in the region as well. Yet, there is another positive effect deriving from IKEA’s presence in the municipality: as some interviewees explained, the continuous presence of foreign labour in Älmhult has not only gotten the general public used to foreigners but also the municipality as a service provider for its inhabitants. Älmhult municipality, so the argument goes, has gotten used to handling people from all over the world, and is, in the words of the interviewees, “not afraid of other people” (interviewee TL). Nevertheless, two interviewees explain that despite the cosmopolitan influence on a daily basis there is a housing segregation as IKEA employees (and other better off parts of society) usually live in a different area (houses) than persons that came here on refugee grounds.

II.2.3 Labour market regulations

Sweden scored highest in the MIPEX project studying six indicators (labour market access, family reunion, log term residence, political participation, access to
nationality and anti-discrimination) for integration. Other studies, however, contradict this finding somehow stating that labour market regulations as well as the dispersal policy for asylum seekers and refugees employed in Sweden between 1985 and 1991 had negative effects on the labour market integration of immigrants (Bevelander et al, 1997).

II.2.4 Housing arrangements

A further study reveals that asylum seekers who were living with friends or family had higher probability of finding employment than asylum seekers that were living in apartments provided by the Swedish Migration Board (Bevelander et al, 2008). An explanation to that finding is that the Migration Board’s accommodations usually are in municipalities with lower overall labour market performance where, in turn, accommodation is easier to find.
References


