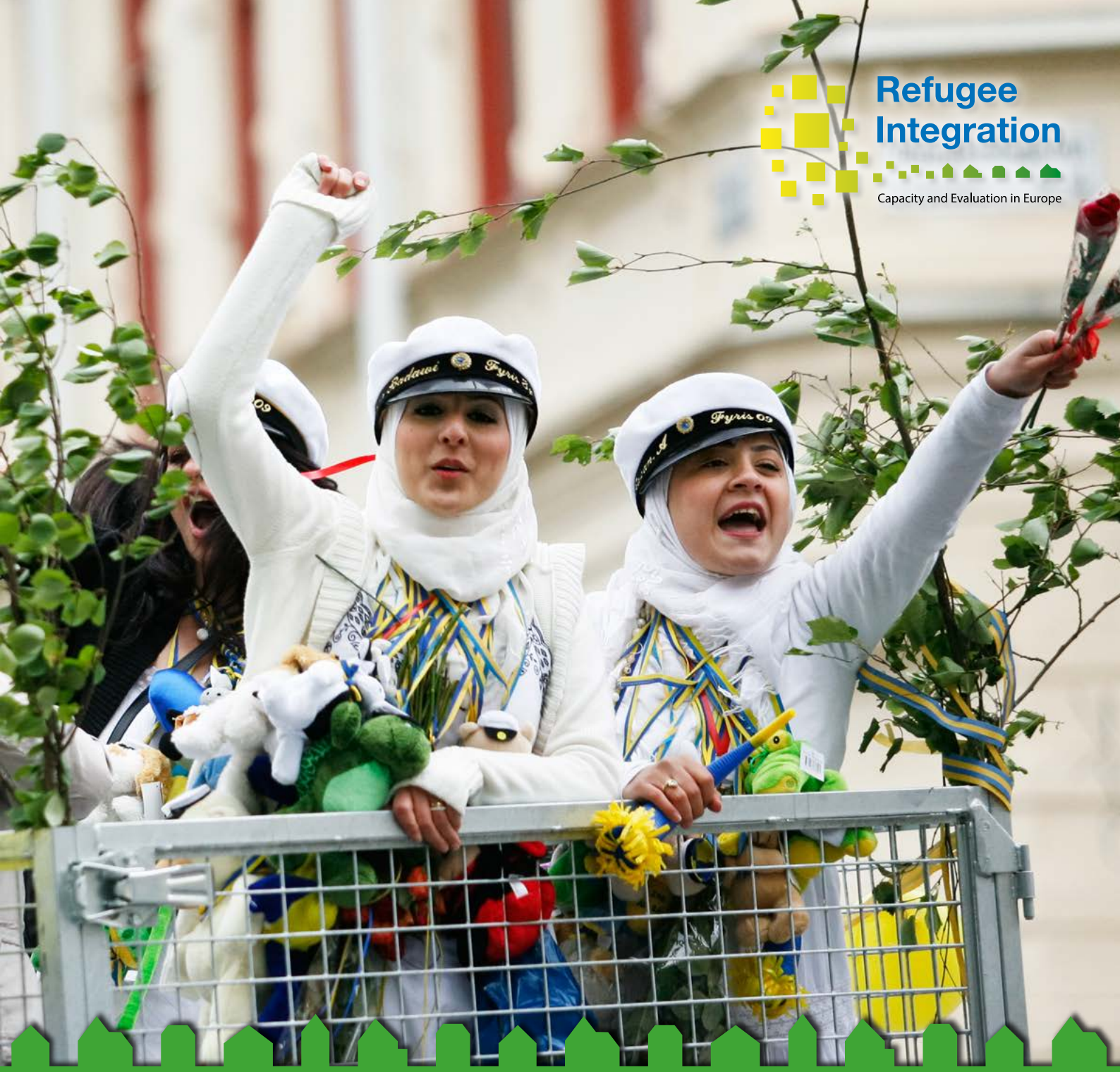

Refugee Integration

Capacity and Evaluation in Europe

A NEW BEGINNING

Refugee Integration in Sweden
It's about time!

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

September 2013

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EU funded study on factors influencing refugee integration

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European Refugee Fund of the European Commission

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Translations: all English translations of national legislation, decisions and reports are unofficial translations by the researchers unless otherwise indicated.

Abbreviations

AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
CAB	County Administrative Board
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
IFR	Cooperation Group for Iranian Associations in Sweden
LGBT-I	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MIM	Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRG	National Reference Group
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SAPM	Swedish Agency for Public Management
SCB	“Statistics Sweden”
SD	Sweden Democrats
SFI	Swedish (language tuition) for Immigrants
SIBC	Somali Information and Business Centre
SIU	Organization for Immigrant Associations in Uppsala
SMB	Swedish Migration Board
SPES	Swedish Public Employment Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This report examines the integration of refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection (hereafter reference will be made to ”refugees” in a generic manner) in Sweden, and focuses on adult refugees and their close relatives. The study encompasses both refugees who have arrived relatively recently to Sweden as well as those who have lived in the country for decades. The findings in this report draw on a literature review of existing academic research, policy documents, other reports relevant to refugee integration, and official statistics on integration indicators. A key part of the study draws on interviews with 55 refugees and presents conclusions from stakeholder dialogues held with representatives from the Government, civil society, integration practitioners and academics.

Monitoring and evaluating integration, both in Sweden and at the European Union (EU) level, often overlook refugee-specific issues. Through this report, UNHCR draws specific attention to the integration of refugees. The study is part of a project covering four Western European countries (Austria, Ireland, France and Sweden) conducted by UNHCR between September 2012 and April 2013. There are national reports for each country and a summary report that examines the research findings, discusses trends on refugee integration and includes broader conclusions about practice in the EU, in the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and Canada.

Project aims

The aim of this study is to map what knowledge is already available on refugee integration in Sweden, in order to review which integration policy areas are considered as particularly relevant in integration literature, and to present integration experience from the perspective of stakeholders and refugees. The study also aims to examine which integration barriers and facilitators are specific to refugees compared to other immigrant populations. Based on a review of literature relating to refugee integration and dialogues with integration stakeholders, such as professionals involved in integration at different levels of society, NGO staff, volunteers and academics, and with refugees, the study tests assumptions on how integration might be evaluated and which policy areas are to be linked to refugee integration. Doing so may result in additional integration policy areas, suggested for future examinations.

The study does not aim to evaluate the extent to which refugees have integrated in Sweden, nor does it aim to evaluate policies or programs related to integration at the national or EU level. This report is therefore not an evaluation report. Within the literature review and consultations, the study considered what approaches to integration appeared to have had positive or successful outcomes for refugees, and sought to identify examples of effective practice. However, the practices identified in this report are not the outcome of any evaluation, nor are the cited examples of practice exhaustive.

Report rationale

Despite the lack of a common definition or understanding of what integration is, integration of refugees and other immigrants is part of a mainstream debate in Sweden. Levels of realized, or perceived as realized, integration shape the political discourse and have an impact on policies and legislation in a number of areas.

Evidence-driven integration policies, underpinned by an analysis of needs, including the specific situation of refugees and guided by best practice, can be instrumental in countering the sometimes polarized and politicized debate with respect to immigration, asylum policies and integration.

For most refugees in Europe, integration is the most relevant, durable solution. UNHCR has been entrusted by the United Nations General Assembly with the mandate to provide international protection to refugees and, together with Governments, seek permanent solutions for the problems of refugees. UNHCR's interest and involvement in the topic thus stems from its durable solutions mandate, the 1951 Refugee Convention's Article 34, which encourages States to facilitate the local integration of refugees, as well as various soft law and policy documents related to integration, such as UNHCR's ExCom Conclusion No. 104 on Local Integration, the 2009 note on strategic approaches for combating discrimination (UNHCR 2009) and other documents. The logic of the Convention framework is that, with the passing of time, refugees should be able to enjoy a wider range of rights as their association and ties with the hosting State grow stronger (UNHCR 2005a). As such, ExCom Conclusion No. 104 calls on States to facilitate, as appropriate, the integration of refugees, including, as far as possible, facilitating their naturalization (UNHCR 2005b).

Definition of integration

For the purposes of this study on refugees, we have taken the UNHCR definition of integration, which itself is not exhaustive but offers an understanding of what is expected when integration is called for at the national and EU levels.

At the core of UNHCR's definition is the concept of integration as a two-way process. The term integration is "used broadly to describe the process and the result of the process, the results of the adaptation of persons of foreign origin into their new home society and the acceptance by that society of the foreigner" (UNHCR 2009: 17). Integration does not require the refugee to relinquish his or her cultural identity (UNHCR 2009: 24) and, in this way, differs from assimilation.

The two-way process underpins the three specific dimensions UNHCR emphasizes as part of the process of refugee integration:

1. **Legal process** – relating to rights and entitlements comparable to those of citizens. These include access to work, education, health and welfare assistance, freedom of movement, the right to own property and to family unity;

2. **Economic process** – relating to self-reliance and contributing to the economic life of the receiving country;

3. **Socio-cultural process** – relating to adaptation and acceptance so that the refugee may live in society without discrimination or exploitation and contribute to the social life of the receiving society.

The end result of integration "should be a society that is both diverse and open, where people can form a community regardless of differences" (UNHCR 2009: 24).

Immigration to Sweden

Migration trends in Sweden have shifted markedly during the last century. Until the First World War, Sweden was a nation of net emigration. However, since the Second Word War, Sweden has had net immigration. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, most were labour immigrants from Nordic and other European countries (Westin 2006; Envall 2012: 313). During this period, migration was a strategic response to rapid industrial and economic growth, facilitated by liberal immigration policies and active recruitment of foreign labour. With the economic downturn and increased unemployment in the early 1970s in Sweden, the competition for domestic jobs intensified, and there was a decline in demand for foreign labour. During the same time period, Sweden opened up to receive growing numbers of refugees (Westin 2006; Bevelander 2009: 51-52).

Sweden ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951 and the New York Protocol in 1967, and refugee status was recognized as ground for permanent residence. During the 1970s about 25 per cent of all immigrants to Sweden came from non-European countries. Most were refugees from Latin American countries. The share of non-European immigrants in Sweden increased in the 1980s and 1990s to about 50 per cent of the total immigration inflow. The majority were refugees from Africa and Asia (Hammarstedt and Palme 2012: 5).

Currently, 15 per cent of Sweden's 9.5 million residents are born abroad (Statistics Sweden SCB 2012d) and 25 per cent of the total immigrant population (aged 15-64) reached the country as refugees (Eurostat 2012a). In the first decade of the 21st century most refugees came from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Syria (SCB 2012b). Today, there is an even distribution between men and women, except from Afghanistan where 70 per cent are men (SCB 2012c).

In Sweden, the concept of integration usually refers to the integration of all first-generation immigrants, including refugees. In some official evaluations of integration, native-born people whose parents were both born in a foreign country are also included (SCB 2011b: 6). Specific integration policies started to develop in Sweden in the 1960s. In 1968, the Swedish Government declared the goal of equality between foreign labour and the rest of the population. Even before this, immigrants were normally included in universal welfare programs (Borevi 2010: 12-13). The approach towards integration in Sweden since the mid-1980s has generally been to grant rights broadly, corresponding to those of citizens (Borevi 2010: 22).

Sweden's integration goal and division of responsibility

In 2008, the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament) adopted the overall goal for Swedish integration policies to be "equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background" (Regeringen 2009; Regeringen 2010a: 5). The Government gives prominence to seven strategic areas that comprise the focus of the integration policies. The prioritized integration areas are:

1. an effective system for reception and introduction of newly arrived immigrants;
2. more people in work and more entrepreneurs;
3. better school results and equal schooling opportunities;
4. better Swedish language skills and educational opportunities for adults;
5. effective anti-discrimination measures;
6. positive development in areas with widespread social exclusion; and
7. a common set of values in a society characterized by increased diversity (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2011: 5).

The focus of the Swedish Government is largely in line with EU goals to increase economic, social, cultural and political participation of non-EU migrants (European Commission 2011: 3). In Sweden, most emphasis is on the policy areas of education and employment, since the Government believes better results in these areas will lead to improved overall integration (Envall 2012: 316). Simultaneously, the Government uses mainstreaming as a method to reach greater integration. The overall integration goal should be realized largely by general measures, designed to benefit the whole Swedish population. Integration policies should thus cover all areas of social development and be incorporated as part of all policy areas (Regeringen 2010a: 4-5).

However, the Swedish Government also recognizes that refugees and immigrants face specific barriers during their first few years in Sweden (Regeringen 2010: 5). Special individual measures, e.g. language support and targeted labour market measures, are thus available for so-called newly arrived immigrants, because of their specific needs related to being new residents in Sweden (Envall 2012: 315). The time factor is seen as crucial, in the sense that integration is expected to improve with time. The longer immigrants live in Sweden, the greater the probability that their economic and social situation will become the same as native Swedes (Envall 2012: 314-315). Therefore, integration is about time, as the title suggests.

The Government also identifies housing segregation, which increases the risks for foreign-born individuals and their children to be caught in life-long social exclusion (Regeringen 2010a: 15-16) as an important integration policy area. When compared to the rest of the country, a number of urban areas with a relatively high proportion of foreign-born inhabitants have been identified by the Government as areas at risk of exclusion or "exclusion areas" (Regeringen 2010a; Regeringen 2013). These areas report higher unemployment, lower average income, and lower grades in lower secondary school, which impedes access to upper secondary school (Regeringen 2010a). Hence, there are ongoing efforts to strengthen, stimulate and develop the identified areas through partnerships between the Government and municipalities. (Regeringen 2010a; Regeringen 2013).

The Establishment Reform of December 2010 is described by the Government as the most important shift in integration policy in decades (Regeringen 2010b). It comprises special measures that are aimed at refugees in particular. Although a number of reports on the outcome of the Establishment Reform have been published, it is still too early to consider its impact on refugee integration.

The main objective of the Establishment Reform is to apply a labour market perspective to refugees from their first day in Sweden (Regeringen 2012b: 18, 28). The Swedish Public Employment Service (SPES) has been given the responsibility to manage the introduction activities for refugees aged 20-64 at a local level, a responsibility previously held by the municipalities (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2011: 4).

Since 2011, the Ministry of Employment has held the main responsibility for the coordination of integration policies at a national level. The Ministry is in charge of a number of areas – assisting newly arrived refugees to establish themselves in the labour market and society in general, anti-discrimination measures, urban development, issues relating to Swedish citizenship and financial support to municipalities for their reception of refugees (Regeringskansliet 2012, Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2011: 4-5).

In addition to the responsibilities of the Ministry of Employment and the SPES, integration responsibility is mainstreamed within all Government bodies at national, regional and local levels, as well as within municipalities in order to achieve the integration policy objectives of equal rights and obligations (Envall 2012: 315).

Municipalities continue to have important functions in the reception of refugees at the local level, as they are responsible for practical assistance related to housing; adult education; schooling, childcare and other programs for children and youth; means-tested income support; social work; care for the elderly and other operations and services. Municipalities are also responsible for the organization of Swedish language tuition, called Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), and providing civic orientation to newly arrived refugees (SALAR 2011). Municipalities that have a refugee reception agreement with the Government receive single payment compensation per refugee and per year from the State. The State subsidy is intended to cover costs of SFI, civic orientation, interpreters and special introductory activities within schools and preschools. Municipalities and county councils may also receive compensation for certain other specific costs (Regeringen 2012a). Reception, or placement of refugees in the municipalities is, under the current system and legislation, undertaken on a voluntary basis. The voluntary aspect of reception in municipalities has been criticized in recent years because, combined with the possibility for asylum-seekers to choose housing, it has placed disproportionate pressure on a few cities. The number of asylum-seekers coming to Sweden in recent years has increased, and the Swedish Migration Board (SMB) forecasts indicate that this trend will continue, thereby creating an important challenge for the authorities in terms of “absorption capacity” and housing.

Monitoring and evaluating integration in Sweden

In the 2010 Budget Bill, the Swedish Government identified 27 indicators to track the trends and developments over time within the above-mentioned seven strategic integration policy areas (Regeringen 2012b: 14). The indicators are listed as an appendix to this report. All indicators are used to monitor integration at least once a year (Envall 2012: 323). Similar to the integration strategy, indicators focus heavily on the areas of work and education (Envall 2012: 316) but also include other policy areas. Citizenship is added to the list as a general indicator of integration (Envall 2012: 320).

The statistical data used for monitoring is collected from databases covering the whole population (Envall 2012: 320). It is compiled and published by the Government agency “Statistics Sweden“ (SCB), which is the official source of statistics in Sweden. The data for all indicators can be broken down by geographic origin, sex and age. It can also be analyzed by national, regional and municipal levels, including the urban areas with widespread socio-economic exclusion covered by local development agreements between the Government and the respective municipalities (Envall 2012: 321).

Stemming from the overall goal of equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, the Government’s monitoring system focuses on comparing results related to the chosen indicators. The focus of comparison is on the relationship between different target groups based on geographic background. The evaluation seeks to answer whether differences in the situation between the native population and foreign-born persons have increased or decreased. When these differences have been evened out, it is seen as a sign of successful integration (Envall 2012: 314; 320-321).

The Ministry of Employment uses the indicators regularly to evaluate the impact of the Government's integration policy obligations and build knowledge and develop future policy areas (Envall 2012: 323). The indicators explain neither causality nor trends in integration. Thus the Government and the Ministry use further statistical analyses and qualitative focused studies to acquire a deeper analysis within different integration areas (Envall 2012: 317, 323-324).

The STATIV database is a longitudinal, individual database owned by Statistics Sweden covering all persons registered in Sweden (Envall 2012: 323). The database includes reason for immigration, distinguishing between refugees and other foreign-born immigrants, date of granted permanent residence permit and number of years in Sweden. STATIV can be used for a wide variety of analysis relating to integration, segregation and migration. It facilitates the statistical processing and monitoring by ministries, authorities, county councils, municipalities and academic researchers (SCB 2013a; SCB 2013c).

Since integration policies are largely mainstreamed in Sweden, each Ministry and Government authority is responsible for supervising the integration progress within its domain (Regeringen 2010a: 4-6). Besides the monitoring which is performed at a national level, regional and local authorities such as municipalities carry out their own evaluations; NGOs, universities and other educational organizations also track and evaluate integration (Envall 2012: 316, 321). The literature review in this study provides examples of how integration is evaluated by organizations and researchers.

Report structure

A presentation of the methodology used for this study is followed by Chapter 3, which reviews the literature on refugee integration, including academic research, policy documents and other reports. Relevant data and integration indicators are measurable variables (e.g. employment rates and proportion living in rented accommodation) and are incorporated where appropriate. Subject areas for which refugee integration literature exists to varying degrees include housing, employment, education, health, attitudes and social integration, as well as the impacts of the asylum process and family reunification. Chapter 4 presents evidence from refugee interviews and stakeholder dialogues in relation to the experience of barriers and facilitators to refugee integration. Chapter 4 also highlights the interdependency of different integration areas and includes examples of effective policy and practice. Chapter 5 highlights gaps in policy and research, and presents concluding remarks and recommendations for how refugee integration might be evaluated and which policy areas to include when examining refugee integration.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

This national report forms part of an overall project which itself consisted of two components: one implemented in Western Europe, and a second in Central Europe. The Western Europe component lasted for ten months, from 1 September 2012 until April 2013. The Central Europe component of the project ran for an additional eight months (August to December 2013), which represents the overall duration of the project. The four countries selected to take part in each part of the project were Austria, Sweden, France and Ireland in Western Europe, and Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia in Central Europe.

Participating countries

Ideally, all 27 EU Member States would have been invited to participate in order to provide a comprehensive review of what has already been done on refugee integration as a basis for the work of UNHCR and others. However, the time and resource demands this would have placed on UNHCR offices did not allow for such a broad study. Furthermore, experiences from working with refugees in most of the EU countries show that there are sufficient similarities in the barriers and facilitators impacting refugee integration to allow for a more selective approach. The project countries were selected to include countries with different experiences of refugee flows but where commonalities could nevertheless be observed, and where some integration support was already in place and some evaluation had taken place. All four countries in Western Europe have substantial experience receiving asylum-seekers and with integration of refugees recognized in the national asylum systems. Nevertheless differences in refugee numbers, language, integration strategies and integration support allow for a broader perspective to be presented.

Gathering data

Information was gathered through desk research and consultations. The language of the primary and secondary data was Swedish and English. For the purpose of the report, interviews, stakeholder consultations, policy documents and academic research have been translated to English. In the consultation phase, the focus was on seeking adult refugee respondents (over 18 years) who had come to Sweden through the asylum system. Those with subsidiary protection status were not actively sought, but were included in some interviews and are specified where known. Those who were resettled refugees were not actively sought as participants because of the often very different experience of this group both in reception and integration phases compared with those entering through the asylum system. In the desk research phase, literature and statistical data rarely discerned between resettled refugees and those who came through the asylum system, or between refugees and the wider migrant population. Therefore the report specifies this only where it is known.

Consultations

Consultations have taken place at three levels. The study has been supported by a national reference group (NRG) consisting of participants from the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Stockholm, key authorities responsible for implementation of integration related areas and the Swedish Red Cross – the leading civil society organization supporting refugees to integrate in municipalities in Sweden. The authorities represented include the Ministry of Employment, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), the Swedish Public Employment Office (SPES) and the County Administrative Board (CAB). All of the NRG members have substantial knowledge and experience within the area of refugee integration. Three meetings were held with the NRG during the project. The purpose of these meetings was to learn and obtain feedback from, as well as give information to, the NRG on the progress of the study. The NRG and consulted stakeholders felt the most important areas to examine in relation to refugee integration were health, education, employment, housing and social integration; these five areas therefore formed the themes for the stakeholder dialogue.

To increase understanding of how integration works in practice, the project invited stakeholders with documented experience of integration in their respective fields to participate in focus discussions on the identified themes. They were service providers, policy makers, NGO workers, volunteers and researchers. For example, stakeholders for the health meeting included doctors, psychologists, midwives and nurses. Participants at the focus meeting on education included teachers at Swedish For Immigrants and the SFX tuition model as well as representatives from the SPES and the SALAR. The stakeholder meeting on employment included participants from municipalities, the CAB and the SPES. A full list of stakeholders who participated in the focus discussions is provided in Annex 2.

The day-long focus discussion on employment integration was held in Malmö, in cooperation with the Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM), and the other four half day focus discussions were held at the UNHCR Regional Representation for Northern Europe in Stockholm. All meetings were structured around questions on refugee-specific obstacles and facilitators to refugee integration, and examples of policies and practices the participants wanted to highlight. The meetings also provided an opportunity to discuss issues that had come up during the literature review. After the meetings, the participants were invited via e-mail to read and comment on the minutes.

55 refugees, originating from 13 different countries, have been consulted for the study, through 11 group interviews and three individual interviews. The sample size, although not large enough to offer generalisations, allows for trends to emerge and usefully highlights experiences in relation to refugee integration. Group interviews were preferred because they opened up the possibility for participants to share and compare experiences with each other. The majority of the refugee respondents have

lived in Sweden less than five years. 15 respondents have lived in Sweden for more than 20 years. Most refugees consulted for this study live in the Stockholm region. Four of the respondents live in or close to Malmö and four respondents live in Bollnäs, a small town of approximately 13,000 inhabitants in the coastal region of Hälsningland, in the middle of Sweden.

Refugee respondents were identified with the help of local immigrant organizations, NGOs, SFI schools, and by approaching visitors at an SPES office specifically targeting refugees. The respondents were selected to give a representative selection of men and women of different ages. 34 per cent of the respondents were women and 66 per cent were men. One group interview, conducted at RFSL, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, was held specifically to achieve better Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) representation in the refugee responses for the study. In this group all of the participants identified as LGBT-I. The age of the participants overall ranged from 18 to 71 years old.

The other interviews with refugees were held at meeting venues of NGOs and immigrant organizations, at a Swedish language school and outside an SPES office. All but three refugee interviews were conducted in Swedish; these three were conducted in English because the respondents were more comfortable speaking English. All other groups were divided according to mother tongue to enable participants in the same group to translate for each other. In one group interview, where none of the participants felt comfortable speaking Swedish or English, an interpreter was recruited to translate.

Bias

In general, national level integration policies and directives are the same all over Sweden, yet local contexts do vary. The structure of society and economy looks very different depending on whether it is a small municipality in a sparsely populated area, or a bigger city with surrounding suburbs. These structural differences also influence the practice and outcomes of integration policies as well as the lived experiences of refugees. Although stakeholders and refugees from different parts of Sweden have been consulted for this study, there is a geographical bias in the report. The project researcher was located at the UNHCR Regional Representation for Northern Europe in Stockholm. Due to large distances and the project's time constraint it was not possible to achieve complete regional representation. One stakeholder meeting was held in Malmö, while the other four stakeholder meetings were held in Stockholm, with participants mostly from the Stockholm region. A majority of the interviewed refugees also live in the Stockholm region.

Analysis

The outcomes from the refugee interviews and the stakeholder meetings have been analyzed using thematic analysis. This means that relevant themes, or patterns, within the empirical data have been identified, noted and examined (Braun and Clarke 2006). The themes have been reviewed in relation to the research objective to interpret the material and infer the report's conclusions and recommendations. Thanks to the broad scope of the study it has been possible to get a picture of how different areas are interrelated and how different factors relevant to refugee integration are interdependent.

Ethics

In research involving interviewing refugees it must be borne in mind that ethical considerations are necessary. Not only may experiences of trauma and insecurity have characterized an individual refugee's flight and journey, but such experiences often continue into the settlement context and may influence the individual's ability and desire to integrate. These experiences may also affect a refugee's willingness and ability to participate in research.

UNHCR's guidance on ethics in relation to refugee engagement does not relate specifically to research of this kind; however, a set of project ethical guidelines were followed by each team in the Western Europe component. The project's ethical guidelines reflected the role of the researcher as one of respect for persons, beneficence, and equity, and followed principles of transparency, confidentiality, voluntariness and avoidance of un-due influence. Regarding refugee respondents, original names have not been used and some contexts were changed in order to protect anonymity.

Finally, it should be noted that this study was not intended to be representative of all EU Member States, nor was it intended to be a quantitative study providing extensive statistical data. Instead, this was a qualitative study incorporating consultations across a wide spectrum of those involved in determining policy and support for the integration of refugees, those delivering programmes and initiatives and refugees themselves. The value of this approach lies in bringing together each of these elements in a way that allows each to speak to the other, enabling the conceptualization of a way forward for future research on integration of refugees in the EU. It also allows for a crystallization of some of the barriers and facilitators to refugee integration commonly experienced in the EU, and to highlight good practices used to overcome barriers.

Desk research

In order to identify what knowledge is already available in Sweden and which policy areas are considered relevant in relation to refugee integration, the study started with a wide examination of material on integration in Sweden, including academic research, policy documents, official statistics and reports, as well as reports by NGOs, focusing on material written in the 2000s. Five areas emerged as generally well-researched: health, housing, education, employment and different aspects of social integration. Stakeholders and the NRG confirmed that these areas are most relevant in relation to research on refugee integration in Sweden. The literature review produced information on how integration is understood, discussed, analyzed and measured in Sweden. It also identified obstacles and conditions of refugees compared to other migrant groups and some examples of how refugee integration can be improved.

CHAPTER 3

Literature review

Integration is a well-researched topic in Sweden, both in academic research and studies made on behalf of the Government and NGOs. It has therefore not been possible to capture the entire range of research or to review and analyze all studies within the scope of this project. The areas that appeared as particularly well-researched in Sweden are health, housing, education, employment and different aspects of social integration. Most qualitative studies are within the thematic area of employment, as this is considered key to integration by the Government, while a majority of the studies on the other themes are quantitative.

The stakeholder meetings and refugee interviews revealed the complexity of integration and how different areas of integration impact each other. However, this interdependency is not well reflected in the literature. For instance, it is common to study labour market integration and housing integration as separate domains, although employment often influences the chances to find permanent accommodation; and a lack of available apartments can have a negative impact on labour market integration. The division into thematic or policy areas is best explained by most academic departments' and Government authorities' different profiles and expertise within specialist areas. Since this literature review reflects what emerged during the study, the thematic division of integration will be reproduced in this report. Where there is evidence of interdependency, this report highlights how different areas relate.

The two themes of family reunification and the asylum process were included in the literature review and were found to be comparatively under-researched in Sweden. However, these areas arose as very important in relation to refugees' integration in meetings with refugees and consultations with stakeholders and the NRG. Significantly, most studies on integration in Sweden do not distinguish between refugees and other categories of immigrants, such as labour migrants. Instead, most academic research examines integration through separating native-born and foreign-born groups, and people with Swedish-born or foreign-born parents. Other common categories used by researchers are individuals born in or outside the EU/European Free Trade Association (EFTA). However, the specific situation of refugees and barriers to their integration compared to other groups of immigrants did come up in some of the literature and were discussed in-depth in the consultations and interviews of this study.

Housing

Compared to other immigrant groups, refugees more often live in rented housing and less often in condominiums and private homes (Bråmå et al. 2006; Boverket 2009: 75). In 2009, over 85 per cent of all refugees lived in rented housing. For the category of resettled refugees, the proportion of tenants was even higher at 90 per cent (Boverket 2009: 74). The corresponding number for labour immigrants was 61 per cent and 49 per cent for immigrants who come for educational studies (Boverket 2009: 74).

The weak economic integration of refugees in recent decades partly explains the high proportion of rented share among refugees, even for those who have lived many years in Sweden (Boverket 2009: 8-9). To enter the housing market, refugees face a range of hurdles, including reported discrimination (DO 2010). More crucially, they face very high competition over rental apartments (Boverket 2005: 31-35). Several reports conclude that the financial mechanisms of the housing market, in combination with the current shortage of public housing, present integration hurdles for refugees in the housing market (Boverket 2009: 8-9).

There is a shortage of both private and rental apartments in many parts of Sweden, particularly in the larger cities (Migrationsverket 2012b: 42; Migrationsverket 2013: 28). Since the vast majority of refugees have no other choice but to live in rental apartments, the lack of rental apartments is a real challenge to integration. An aggravating circumstance is the particular shortage of small apartments, which affects many refugees since most arrive to Sweden alone and have strained financial situations. There is also a shortage of apartments with more than three rooms, which affects reuniting refugee families with more than two children (Migrationsverket 2012b: 42).

Demands from housing companies and landlords related to employment and income are also crucial hurdles to acquiring appropriate housing in Sweden (Boverket 2009: 8-9). The thresholds to enter the housing market are not a unique problem to refugees. Currently one million people in Sweden, one out of nine Swedes, do not meet the landlord requirements to secure a rental apartment (Metro 2013). This situation exacerbates the difficulties for refugees to integrate into the housing market.

The income requirements is one example of the interdependency between housing and employment integration. Another example of this connection is the lack of suitable rental apartments and its adverse effects on the ability to reside in a region with a favorable labour market, which is likely to impair employment rates among refugees (Migrationsverket 2012b: 42).

Obstacles to acquiring housing often results in crowded living conditions, which in turn has a negative impact on health and education. This is frequently highlighted in the literature (Molina 2006; Boverket 2009; Myrberg 2012). Several studies cite causes of overcrowding as structural and

political, rather than refugee-related. However, the circumstances, often financial, are what force refugees to live in crowded households (Boverket 2009: 8-9).

Asylum-seekers in Sweden can choose whether they want to find their own accommodation or, if they need assistance, rely on the SMB to arrange residence. Research has shown that asylum-seekers who choose to arrange their own housing, usually with friends, relatives or other fellow countrymen, experience a slightly better housing and employment integration over time compared to asylum-seekers who are placed in a municipality with the assistance of the SMB (Boverket 2008: 34-35). These advantages can perhaps compensate for the inconveniences of living in an overcrowded apartment which is often the consequence when opting for arranging ones own accommodation during the first years in Sweden.

According to Migrationsinfo (2012a), immigrants seem more segregated after five years in Sweden than they were on arrival. This phenomenon seems to have two major explanations. First, segregation is a consequence of the availability of social and economic resources. In segregated areas where immigrants chose to move out, (Andersson et al. 2010: 251) studies found the replacement inhabitants to be comparatively poorer and more likely to be unemployed and dependent on income support, thus maintaining the low socio-economic profile and structural position of the area. Second, resembling self-segregation, many asylum-seekers and refugees seek out fellow countrymen for social networks. For newly arrived refugees, relationships with relatives and countrymen are particularly important in a period of their lives characterized by challenges related to a new cultural and linguistic environment (Integrationsverket 2000: 61).

Employment

Compared to the native population, refugees in Sweden are more likely to be unemployed, have temporary jobs, have lower income and be overqualified for their jobs (Bevelander 2011; Lundborg 2012; Regeringen 2012a). This is particularly true during the first years after arrival. In 2010, among refugees who had lived in Sweden for three years, only 30 per cent had a job (Regeringskansliet 2010). Refugee women are more likely to be unemployed compared to refugee men (Bevelander 2009).

However, the time factor is crucial for both men and women in relation to labour market integration. There is a clear linear process in which the chances of obtaining employment improve with more years in Sweden (Bevelander et al. 2009: 26). According to Lundborg (2012: 28), after refugees have stayed one year the employment gap to native Swedes is 27 per cent; however, after refugees have stayed for 11 years the employment gap compared to native Swedes decreases to around 10 per cent (Lundborg 2012: 28). Szulkin (2012: 6-7) finds that the employment integration of immigrant women after 11 years is comparatively better in Sweden than in most other European countries.

Looking at refugees' unemployment rates in different municipalities across Sweden, Bevelander and Lundh (2007) show there are two types of labour markets that are more beneficial to refugees: municipalities without universities and with a more traditional labour demand, and larger cities with a large private sector economy (Bevelander and Lundh 2007: 23-24).

Bevelander (2009; 2011) has conducted studies of admission status in relation to refugee employment. He finds that refugees who migrate to Sweden on family reunification grounds have a quicker employment attachment than refugees who come as asylum-seekers, who in turn have a faster employment integration compared to resettled refugees (Bevelander 2011: 22).

Hagström (2009: 159-160) argues that the lower employment rates among resettled refugees is because they are assigned accommodation prior to their arrival in Sweden in municipalities with higher than average unemployment rates. In comparison, those who are recognized through the asylum process may choose where to live. According to Rönnqvist (2009:156-7), the freedom to choose and to move to locations where there is demand for labour positively affects refugees' employment outcomes. Another positive factor related to the free choice of where to live is the possibility of moving closer to ethnic networks, which have also proved to positively influence refugees' chances of finding employment (Rönnqvist 2009: 156-157; Bevelander 2011: 22).

There are special policy measures in Sweden to promote immigrant participation in the labour market, such as step-in jobs (Arbetsförmedlingen 2013c) and new start jobs (Arbetsförmedlingen 2013b). There is also a specific program aimed at refugees to promote faster labour market integration, which follows the Establishment Reform of December 2010. All refugees between the ages 20 and 65 are entitled, through this program, to an individual establishment plan and financial establishment support (Arbetsförmedlingen 2013a; SKL 2011).

The SPES develops the individual establishment plan together with the refugee, in collaboration with the municipality, relevant authorities, companies and organizations. At a minimum, the individual's plan should encompass SFI, civic orientation and employment preparation activities, such as validation of educational and professional experiences and internships (Arbetsförmedlingen 2013a; SKL 2011). Refugees who participate in establishment activities are entitled to receive assistance from a guide ("etableringslots") to support them in their efforts to find a job (Regeringskansliet 2010; Regeringskansliet 2013). Since the Establishment Reform has been in effect for less than three years, it is still too early to draw conclusions about the long-term impact on refugees' labour market integration.

Education

It is generally accepted that the Swedish language is key to integration in Sweden in order to find employment, manage everyday life situations and facilitate participation in society. Language tuition is offered free of charge to all immigrants, including refugees, through SFI with courses at progressive levels. This is mandatory for refugees who participate in establishment activities.

According to the latest available statistics from 2007/2008, 29 per cent of SFI participants were refugees (Skolinspektionen 2010). The participants at SFI have more than doubled over the past decade from 41,000 in 2001 to 102,000 in 2011, with a gender split of 59 per cent women attendees and 41 per cent men (Skolverket 2012b). The number of SFI participants with limited or no literacy doubled from 7,300 in 2006 to 14,000 in 2010 (SR 2012).

The SFI courses aim to provide basic functional competency in Swedish, prepare the participants for future studies, and improve access to the labour market (Statskontoret 2009; Skolverket, 2012a: 2). Thus, SFI is controlled and influenced by both education policies and goals, and labour market objectives (Statskontoret 2009: 67). That the connection between education and labour market entry is strong in Sweden can also be seen in that students at SFI have the right to combine studies with employment (Riksdagen 2010a). The schools are obliged by law to ensure that students are given the opportunity to practice Swedish language in a work situation and that SFI can be combined with other activities such as validation of qualifications, internships or other training (Skolverket 2012a: 2). However, so far not many SFI schools help the students to organize internships (Statskontoret 2009; Kennerberg and Åslund 2010: 6-7).

Besides SFI, it is also mandatory for refugees who participate in establishment activities to take a civic orientation course. The civic orientation course should provide a basic understanding of Swedish society and a basis for further studies in Sweden. Teaching should be conducted in the mother tongue or another language that the participant knows well. (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2012: 137; Regeringen 2012c).

Validation of refugees' formal qualifications, training and professional experience are crucial to facilitate further education and employment opportunities. This is addressed in Sweden by a number of validation efforts – and there are more reforms and measures underway. In 2013, the Swedish Agency for Public Management (SAPM) was assigned by the Government to identify and assess which validation tools and methods are effective to assess the skills of newly arrived immigrants. In June 2013, at the time of finalizing the report of this integration study, it was reported by SAPM that the validation of formal qualifications is underutilized in Sweden and that the concept of validation is understood differently by various stakeholders and in fact, refers to different things. The report noted that better co-ordination is needed in this respect, proposing follow up by SPES to clarify some aspects of validation and to identify which indicators are relevant in validation. (Statskontoret 2013:6) Another current evaluation being carried out in 2013 by the Swedish Council

for Higher Education is examining which methods could be used for the assessment of foreign academic degrees in cases where documentation is missing (Regeringen 2012b).

Health

Refugee health is well-researched in Swedish literature, with studies examining subjects such as the relationship between unemployment and health, and refugees' access to healthcare and other social services (Lindencrona et al. 2006). There is also research comparing the living standards between refugees, labour immigrants and native Swedes (Vogel et al. 2002). Research suggests that refugees and asylum-seekers in Sweden suffer from poorer mental and physical health compared to native Swedes and labour immigrants (Vogel et al. 2002; Regeringen 2008b).

A number of researchers and practitioners consider that poor health can heavily impede a refugee's capacity and opportunity to integrate in the receiving society and to concentrate on studies, learn Swedish, find employment and engage in a social life (Björkqvist & Wolandt-Pfeiffer, 2001:1; Regeringen 2008; Eriksson-Sjöö et al., 2010). However, the reasons presented for poor health differ, with some research emphasizing pre-migration factors while others stress the post-migration impact on well-being, illness and mortality (Björkqvist & Wolandt-Pfeiffer 2001; Vogel et al. 2002; Lindencrona et al 2006; Hollander et al. 2012).

Frequently cited pre-migration factors include physical injuries, trauma and torture as well as limited access to health care in the country of origin. A Swedish Government report finds that refugee women experience poorer access to health care in their country of origin compared to men (Regeringen 2008a: 24). Post-migration factors include length of time spent in the asylum process, accumulating feelings of stress, uncertainty, anxiety and social isolation (Gunnersen 2000; Ginsburg 2008: 14; 26), each of which negatively impacts short- and long-term health.

Many researchers believe the post-migration life is more decisive for a refugee's well-being and integration, and that factors in the receiving society contribute to creating mental illness among refugees, whether stress disorders were pre-existing or not (Lindencrona et al. 2006: 30). These authors argue that inequalities exist between refugees and native Swedes, which are caused by refugees' higher exposure to risk factors for illness after they have settled in Sweden (Lindencrona et al 2006: 12). Such risk factors are partly related to social exclusion and general living standards. Others have found correlation between health and income, social status and employment, and suggest that poor integration into the labour market results in poverty, which is the main explanation for severe morbidity in non-Nordic immigrant populations according to some researchers (Klinthäll 2008:46). Others present evidence to suggest higher reports of illness amongst employed immigrants compared to those of employed native Swedes (Vogel 2002), although the authors do not comment directly on refugees.

A Government report identifies a cycle that some refugees enter with different factors that increase their vulnerability to depression and stress, resulting in negative impacts on health. These factors include the inability to access the labour market, poor salaries, employment in physically demanding jobs and limited sickness benefits for newly arrived refugees (Regeringen 2008a: 24-25).

According to Frykman et al. (2006: 8) there is discrimination in crucial public institutions, such as social insurance offices, employment offices and medical and health care services. This is supported by a later study that presents examples of incidents in which refugees with Somali origin have experienced rejection in the medical encounter (Svenberg 2011). The study by Frykman et al. also suggests a correlation between discrimination and poor health, with a particularly strong link in the case of mental illness (2006: 8).

Attitudes and social integration

Johansson Heinö's (2009: 311-312) research states that most Swedes prefer to look at themselves as anti-racist and anti-nationalist. According to a survey by Mella and Palm (2012: 7-8), most people in Sweden have a positive attitude toward immigration and cultural diversity in theory. These factors should contribute to facilitate refugees' social integration in Sweden. However, according to Mella and Palm's survey, one-third of the population never interact with non-European immigrants. Also, 66 per cent of the respondents in the survey agreed with the claim "There are groups of immigrants who fail to integrate into our culture" (Mella and Palm 2012: 7-8), reflecting an attitude that could form a barrier to social integration.

The most negative attitudes that came out in the survey were related to religion and integration. A majority of the respondents, 56 per cent, agreed with the statement that "religious schools discourage integration," and one-fifth of the respondents in the survey were extremely critical of all types of Islamic veils, which Mella and Palm (2012: 8) interpret as an indicator of the level of Islamophobia in Sweden. Studies of how Swedish employers have reacted to job applications from people with Arabic-sounding names show that refugees (and other immigrants) from Muslim countries are vulnerable to discrimination in Sweden (Duvander 2001; Carlsson and Roth 2007; Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2009; Lundborg 2012: 30), which is a clear integration barrier for those affected.

Anti-immigrant attitudes increase in times of economic decline, low economic growth and high unemployment according to Hjerm and Bohman (2012: 10). The political climate has a role to play too, and the prevalence and influence of nationalist and right wing, populist political parties on immigration and integration policies can inflame xenophobic attitudes (Hjerm and Nagayoshi 2011: 832-833; Hjerm and Bohman 2012: 10). In Sweden, there is one anti-immigration party in the Riksdag, the Swedish Democrats (SD). SD entered the Riksdag for the first time in 2010 after winning 5.7 per cent of the vote.

Refugees who can prove their identity with a national passport can apply for Swedish citizenship after living four years in the country with a permanent residence permit. Those who cannot prove their identity can, based on regulations and policy, be exempted from the requirement to prove their identity with documentary proof if they have lived in Sweden for at least eight years. In practice, this exemption applies to refugees from Afghanistan and Somalia (Migrationsverket 2012c; Migrationsverket 2012d).

While the right to vote in the national elections to the Riksdag is reserved for Swedish citizens, municipal and county voting privileges were extended in 1976 to non-citizen residents, who have been registered in Sweden for at least three years (SCB 2008). The rationale behind extending political rights was to increase political interest, self-esteem and influence among foreign citizens resident in Sweden (Bevelander 2010: 286). However, in the 2010 elections for the municipal council, only 36 per cent of the foreign-born who were not citizens, but registered to vote, actually voted . During the same year the election turnout to the Riksdag among foreign-born with Swedish citizenship was 73 per cent. There is still a difference of 14 per cent in election turnout between foreign-born and native-born citizens in the Riksdag elections, but the gap has decreased over time (SCB 2011a).

In a study of voting behavior of more than 70,000 residents, of whom nearly 13,000 were non-citizens, Bevelander and Pendakur (2008: 1; 19-21) found that immigrants who have acquired Swedish citizenship are far more likely to vote in municipal and county elections than immigrants who are not granted citizenship. Hence, citizenship seems to make a real difference to the probability of voting, and thereby increases the formal political participation (Bevelander and Pendakur 2008: 1; 19-21).

In April 2013, the Committee on Citizenship presented its report "The Swedish Citizenship" (The Swedish Government Official Reports: SOU 2013:29) containing a number of proposals to amend the Swedish Citizenship Act. The basic idea of the report is that citizenship "contributes to social cohesion in a society characterized by manifoldness." According to the proposal, this idea should be mirrored in the Citizenship Act by, inter alia, introducing provisions according to

which all children with at least one Swedish parent shall become Swedish citizens at birth, with the same applying to children whose parents are not Swedish citizens where at least one of them has a permanent residence permit and has lived in Sweden for at least five years prior to the birth of the child. Further, the current provision on required minimum stay prior to possible citizenship will be maintained: four years for refugees and stateless and five years for all other non-European immigrants. However, a person who has a certain level of knowledge of the Swedish language shall, according to the proposal, be eligible for citizenship one year earlier than otherwise required. The report also suggests to introduce a new preamble to the law, expressing the fundamental meaning of Swedish citizenship.

Regarding the right to participate as a representatives in political and/or decision-making bodies, several studies have pointed to a significant under-representation of foreign-born peoples of Sweden. The patterns of under-representation are found at all levels of the political decision-making structure (SCB 2008; Dahlstedt et al. 2011). In 2010, foreign-born persons made up more than 15 per cent of the total Swedish population, but the representation in decision-making bodies was only slightly more than half of that share. The proportion of foreign-born individuals elected to municipal councils was 7.6 per cent in year 2010, to the county council assemblies 7.7 per cent and to the Riksdag eight per cent (Migrationsinfo 2012b).

The asylum process

By international standards, Sweden has a high-quality asylum system (Feijen and Frennmark 2011). The Swedish Government has long stressed the need to shorten the asylum process, underlining the negative impact of lengthy procedures. Since 2009, SMB has consciously focused on reducing the processing time of asylum cases and increasing the quality of asylum decisions. The work has yielded good results, and the waiting time has been reduced by several months in the first instance. In 2012 the average time was reduced to 3.6 months, compared to 7.4 months of average turnaround time in 2002. The principle is that no one should have to wait more than three months for a decision (Migrationsverket 2012b: 20).

It is widely agreed in Sweden, including in integration literature and Government policy evaluation documents, that a lengthy asylum process has a negative impact on health and can delay subsequent integration in several ways (Gunnersen 2000). It has been noted in Sweden during periods of long waiting time, that the asylum process was painful, often characterized by idleness and uncertainty, impeding refugees from planning for their future. These experiences can lead to heightened stress levels and psychological illness (Lindencrona et al. 2008: 125). Besides the uncertainty, other cited factors that can impede health during the asylum process are lack of housing and poor housing conditions, social isolation and experiences of distrust and suspicion from authorities (Gunnersen 2000; Ginsburg 2008: 26-27).

The number of asylum applications in Sweden fluctuates from year to year. In 2012, the SMB received 43,887 applications for asylum, the highest number since 1992 (Migrationsverket 2012b; Migrationsverket 2013). The increasing number of asylum-seekers during the last few years has been a challenge and once more caused longer than desired waiting periods in the reception system. Those who still wait for a decision on their asylum case and those who are granted residence permit and are waiting reception in a municipality are affected (Riksrevisionen 2012: 3). Studies estimate that the number of refugees with a residence permit, who remain in the reception system because they are waiting to be transferred to a municipality, will increase from 6,000 in 2012 to 9,000 in 2013 (Riksrevisionen 2012: 3). This is mainly related to the general shortage of housing in Sweden, pointing towards a potentially delayed integration process in the next coming years.

Family reunification

Swedish policy on family reunification only allows for reunification with family members if the person residing in the country has been granted a permanent residence permit. The number of persons granted a residence permit based on family reunification varies from year to year. In 2011, just over 3,000 persons were reunited with family members who came to Sweden as refugees. In 2012, the number increased to nearly 7,900 persons (Migrationsverket 2013).

UNHCR has received many testimonies and examples which illustrate that family reunification is critical to refugees' health and well-being, and that family separation often significantly negatively impacts their integration. Unfortunately there is hardly any research in Sweden on the impact of family reunification on refugee integration. Through the interviews with refugees and consultations with stakeholders presented in Chapter 3, this study is able to add knowledge to this area and confirm the importance of family reunification.

Lineback and Olson (2001: 135) note that the first thing most refugees ask when they meet public officials is whether they can be reunited with their family members. It is common for refugees to spend much time contacting authorities and others who they hope are able to assist with reunification.

The Swedish Red Cross and Sociala Missionen, which provide counselling and legal assistance in family reunification cases, issued a report in November 2012 about the gaps in policies and jurisprudence related to family reunification called "Vägen till familjeåterförening - nulägesrapport från arbetet med att återförena splittrade flyktingfamiljer" . The report summarizes current policy and points to gaps which make it difficult or impossible for many families to achieve reunification in Sweden (Sociala Missionen & Röda Korset 2012).

One barrier to family reunification is the requirement of submitting a valid national passport, or other identification document, which has become stricter since 2010. A precedent setting judgment, dated January 2012 from the Migration Court of Appeals (MIG 2009:17), regulates the exceptions in relation to the requirement of national passports for persons originating from countries where it is difficult or impossible to obtain a passport; in practice, for Somalis. The judgement offers the possibility of a DNA test to prove the family ties, though it does not provide legal guidance where the family composition of applicants differ from the family composition in the precedent setting case. Hence, the exemptions related to passport requirements only apply to families with biological relationships. Adopted or foster children and children of relatives are not included, and neither are couples without children.

According to the above mentioned report, the current requirements with regard to proof of identity has made it particularly challenging for refugees from Afghanistan and Somalia to access family reunification, as they are not in a position to submit national passports. Refugees from countries where the State exercises persecution and individuals fear to visit the local authorities to apply for identity documents also encounter difficulties, as no exemptions are made in such cases (Sociala Missionen & Röda Korset 2012: 28)

In addition to the above policy related to identity, minors without a legal custodian are not considered to be in a position to apply for family reunification. Moreover, according to the above mentioned report by the Swedish Red Cross and Sociala Missionen, applicants with similar circumstances sometimes receive different decisions.

Another challenge is that the processing time for family reunification cases, both at embassies and in Sweden, is often lengthy. This has led to instances in which children turn 18 years before the process is finished, and then the family's case is closed (Sociala Missionen & Röda Korset 2012: 29).

In general, most refugees who are not able to reunite with their family members experience feelings of loss, anxiety, guilt and uncertainty. These feelings can be overwhelming and make it hard to take in new information and concentrate on learning the language (Lineback and Olson 2001: 135; Sociala Missionen & Röda Korset 2012).

CHAPTER 4

Stakeholder and refugee consultations

This chapter is organized around the five identified policy areas of health, education, employment, housing and social integration, and presents the evidence gathered during meetings with refugees and stakeholders. Five meetings were held with stakeholders, each meeting discussing one of the identified policy areas. Stakeholders were those whose work was relevant to refugee integration, such as service providers, NGOs, various authorities and agencies and academics.

Most meetings highlighted cross-cutting issues beyond the thematic areas. The complexity of refugee integration and the interdependency of factors influencing integration is therefore highlighted throughout via presentation of the dialogues from stakeholder and refugee meetings. The chapter includes aspects and interventions that have been most important or influential (positively or negatively) to the refugee's integration process.

Key points to note which cut across each policy area are that, according to both stakeholders and refugee respondents, there are positive developments resulting from the passing of time, and that time is the most important factor relating to integration.

Secondly, stakeholder consultations show that family reunification is crucial for a refugee's well-being. Delayed or denied family reunification makes it more difficult for the refugee to begin the process of integration across all themes.

Thirdly, the asylum process was found to facilitate subsequent integration where respectful treatment and a quick decision from the SMB occurred. However, if the refugee experiences or perceives suspicion and discrimination during the asylum procedure, this can create additional trauma that must be emotionally processed before integration can begin. Finally, there are large regional differences in Sweden. Living in big cities or in rural areas, or in the north or south of Sweden, has a significant impact on employment opportunities, access to housing and existing social and family networks for refugees.

Health

Health is an important integration policy area since, ultimately, a crucial part of refugee integration is linked to individuals' well-being. The relationship between health and integration is reciprocal. Poor health can impair integration, and a poorly functioning integration process can lead to health problems, both physical and emotional. Health experts among the stakeholders concurred with this view, stressing that slow integration has a negative impact on health and adding that when individuals have no opportunity to use their talents, skills and training, they are more vulnerable to depression and other mental illness. Stakeholders suggested that meaningful activities during the asylum phase would increase refugees' sense of coherence and meaning, and thus improve their health and impact positively on their integration.

There was a consensus among the stakeholders that early health initiatives, including information to asylum-seekers and refugees about health care availability, are beneficial for subsequent integration. In the experience of stakeholders, many asylum-seekers do not discuss their health status even with health care personnel for fear that it will negatively affect the decision on their potential residence permit. It is therefore important that asylum-seekers get information that allows them to feel safe talking about their health.

↘ Practice examples

The Health Communicators ("Hälsokommunikatorerna" in Swedish) are active in the municipalities of Stockholm, Botkyrka, Södertälje, Salem, Sollentuna, Upplands Väsby, Sundbyberg and Nacka, as well as in Östergötland county council, and in Region Skåne. The Health Communicators meet with newly arrived refugees at the SMB and the SFI schools. They provide information on the Swedish healthcare system, PTSD and other health-related issues. The Health Communicators speak the same language and share the same cultural background as those who receive the information. Their health expertise includes a six-month course in healthcare at the Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm.

Health Promotion Intervention Course for Newly Arrived Refugees ("Hälsoskola för nyanlända flyktingar" in Swedish) has been used in Botkyrka, Södertalje, Malmö, and is now used in Göteborg. The Health Course targets refugees who have just been granted a permanent residence permit. It is voluntary and about five weeks long. It encompasses information and dialogue on the Swedish healthcare system and typical problems refugees face such as stress, sleep and concentration problems. The idea is for participants to provide mutual support through discussions. The teachers are clinically trained professionals who work in collaboration with interpreters.

How family reunification impacts health

One factor addressed by stakeholders that affects the psychological well-being of many refugees is family reunification, or rather, the absence thereof. For many refugees, fleeing often means becoming separated from family members, leaving children, sisters, brothers and parents behind in an unsafe area, or fleeing to different countries. The uncertainty about family members' welfare is usually very stressful since the majority of refugees cannot go back to their country of origin to visit family and friends. The separation period can extend to years and decades, thereby increasing feelings of loss and grief.

Several refugee respondents said that trying to reunite in Sweden and staying in touch with their family has been their first priority after arrival. However, based on the consultative meetings, it can be noted that there are two practices in Sweden that many refugees find hard to accept in this regard. First, children over 18 years are generally not allowed reunification with their parents in Sweden, which may result in families being split and family members spread all over the world. Second, couples who do not have biological children together, or who have not co-habited steadily for a longer period before the arrival in Sweden are often denied family reunification.

As expressed by one young man…

> *"I've been told that since we don't have kids, I am not allowed to take my wife to Sweden. This is stressful for both of us, but I can't do anything about it. After I got my permanent residence permit, I'm allowed to travel everywhere in the world, except to Somalia. In order to see my wife and family members I would have to send them money to go to a neighbouring country, so that I can visit them there. This is of course impossible due to my economic situation."*
>
> Young man of Somali origin. Interview in Spånga

How PTSD impacts integration

Alongside involuntary separation from family members, many refugees said they suffer from PTSD. Psychological experts among the stakeholders said it is common to feel well during the period right after the residence permit is secured; however, many refugees with PTSD often feel worse sometime after they have received the residence permit, because that is when their repressed emotions and traumatic memories start coming back. Stakeholders said if PTSD is not addressed it can potentially lead to mental illness and be an obstacle to integration.

A typical downward spiral described by some stakeholders is that PTSD, or other symptoms of stress and depression lead to insomnia, which in turn leads to several adverse health effects, including difficulties in concentration. Concentration difficulties affect the ability to engage with education and work. Many refugees participating in Swedish language tuition (SFI) classes reported problems learning due to concentration difficulties related to emotional distress and insomnia.

> *"I have sleeping difficulties and I have a hard time concentrating, because I think about what I have experienced. In Somalia, I was the top student in my class, but here I don't perform that well. I feel blocked when I try to learn."*
>
> Young female respondent with Somali origin. Interview in Tensta

↘ Practice example

There are psychological centers which offer therapy for refugees who have been exposed to torture, trauma and crisis. These are located at some of the hospitals in Sweden's bigger cities. The Swedish Red Cross also has several centers where they offer help to refugees with PTSD.

Vulnerable groups

Stakeholders mentioned, as particularly vulnerable groups: rejected asylum-seekers, persons who have received only temporary residence permits, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT-I) refugees. LGBT-I groups and women may be particularly vulnerable because of previous discrimination in their country of origin; for instance, they may have been denied medical care. A group with LGBT-I refugee respondents, interviewed in Stockholm, stated they had been denied health care and discriminated against in their country of origin. Stakeholders stressed the importance of medical staff to have cross-cultural competence and knowledge of which groups are particularly vulnerable. On the other hand, refugees and stakeholders agreed that health professionals should not generalize about refugees' health needs. Refugee respondents said they do not want to be labelled as victims. Nor do they want special treatment from health care staff because of their refugee status. Instead, they emphasized non-discrimination, the importance of being treated as an individual and being listened to in relation to their personal health (Interviews in Malmö and Tensta).

The asylum process

The group of LGBT-I refugees who were interviewed recounted that they had experienced a lack of understanding and empathy from the side of SMB staff during the asylum process, which, they felt, resulted in increased stress. This group suggested that SMB officials had advised LGBT-I applicants to return to their country of origin and hide their sexual identity, despite the fact that Sweden has undertaken to grant asylum to LGBT-I persons who are victims of persecution in their home country. Two of the refugees also stated that they felt offended by comments indicating that "they did not look gay." The refugee respondents concerned were disappointed by what they felt was predjudicial treatment and disbelief during the asylum process. They pointed to the need for training in relation to LGBT-I issues and rights to ensure that future applicants receive fair treatment (interview in Stockholm).

Both stakeholders and refugees highlighted the problem that the first period after arriving in Sweden, when refugees wait for a decision, is characterized by inactivity. Since 2012, there have been no organized activities by the SMB during the asylum process, such as Swedish language tuition. Thus, there is nothing to do but to go for the interviews at the SMB and to wait. Stakeholders note the uncertainty pending asylum decision, in combination with the involuntary idleness, can create stress and illness, which can complicate or prolong the integration process.

Several refugee respondents were denied asylum in the first instance and waited for more than one year before being granted a permanent residence permit on appeal to the second or third instance. They describe the prolonged asylum process as a period full of worries, distress and unhappiness. One refugee from Afghanistan waited for asylum for six years and four respondents waited four years before they were granted a permanent residence permit. Some of the refugees informed that they had stayed illegally in Sweden after a final rejection of their application. Eventually, they were granted asylum and a residence permit. During the time of illegal stay in Sweden, they were not allowed to work or study, they were not entitled to non-emergency healthcare, and they worried about the risk of being deported. As a result some felt a lingering frustration over the valuable time lost during these years, time they could have spent studying or working.

Post-migration health factors

As indicated earlier in this report, many researchers believe factors in the receiving society are more decisive for refugees' health than pre-arrival factors. Stakeholders and refugees agree that the encounter with Swedish culture and the integration process itself can contribute to health deterioration. Bureaucracy, demands from the involved authorities during the establishment phase, as well as suspicion and negative attitudes, can worsen the experience, as explained by this refugee:

> *"When you are granted asylum in Sweden as a refugee, surely your situation is instantly improved. However, in your fragile state, the slightest encounter of negative attitudes from people or society at large can make you question why you ever came to this place. By contrast, if you come to Sweden as a labour migrant and not as a refugee, I think you can accept being met with negative attitudes to another extent because you can always go back to your home country after working and saving some money. This idea is completely unrealistic to most refugees."*
>
> Man with Assyrian origin, fleeing from Turkey in the 1970s. Interview in Hallunda

Integration can be challenging in Sweden's highly competitive housing and labour markets, particularly in the big cities. Most newly arrived refugees have a limited social network, and some have no network at all, impeding their success in finding apartments and jobs and sometimes resulting in depression. Refugees from countries where the education system has partially collapsed due to war are particularly susceptible to this since they often have a long and tedious road to employment. This young male respondent from Afghanistan explains:

> *"I was thinking after I get my residence permit I will be okay, but that's not the case. When you get your residence permit, then you start to worry about finding work and a place to stay. All of this is mentally exhausting."*
>
> Interview in Akalla

Stakeholders and refugees confirmed the correlation between illness and morbidity, unemployment, poor living standards, and social exclusion. Being poor in an expensive country like Sweden also affects access to health care and medications; and whilst the Swedish Government subsidizes health care and prescription medicine, this is an expenditure that several refugee respondents describe as expensive, particularly referring to dental care that is only partly subsidized.

↘ Practice example

The Transcultural Centre ("Transkulturellt Centrum" in Swedish) is the Stockholm county council's centre of excellence in transcultural psychiatry, asylum and refugee health care, and dental care for asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants. They offer coaching, consulting and training in asylum and refugee care, pediatrics, psychiatric care and dental care for asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants.

Education

Refugees come with very different educational backgrounds, ranging from professor to no previous schooling. The stakeholders therefore emphasized the importance of adapting counselling and information around education to the specific needs of the individual and to the person's previous training and profession. Stakeholders also stressed that early interventions by both the SMB and the SPES are crucial to improve the overall integration process of refugees. Stakeholders and refugees agreed validation of previous training and experience is best performed as soon as possible so that the refugee can start appropriate supplementary education or internships. Timely and correct information is seen as pivotal by both refugees and stakeholders. The information received should cover Swedish tuition options, secondary school level education, validation, internships, professional mentors, as well as which university courses and programs could be relevant.

➘ Policy example: Counselling adapted to individual needs

According to the current policy of SPES, counselling of refugees and establishment of the individual plan should be based on the individual's previous experience. It should include information about the different options and pathways to find employment for refugees at all places on the qualification and education spectrum. According to the individualized approach the refugee should be assisted in finding an appropriate job to utilize his or hers human capital, which will facilitate the person's integration process.

According to stakeholders, age is an important factor in relation to education. Individuals over the age of 50, in particular the group with little or no previous education, find it hard to become motivated to spend many years in school, while young refugees are often prepared to go through many years of training to reach their professional goals. Several refugee respondents under the age of 30 only went to elementary school in their country of origin but have long-term goals with their education in Sweden. They plan to go to university after finishing the SFI courses and complementary courses at secondary school level. For these respondents and others like them, SFI is crucial since the courses help to prepare participants for further studies, and Swedish is a key facilitator for integration in Sweden.

➘ Practice example: Useful Civic Orientation Course

Since 2011 refugees have been entitled to at least 60 hours of lessons in Civic Orientation (Samhällsorientering). The topics discussed in class are, for example, the Swedish culture, labour market, validation, housing, social insurances and individual rights and obligations. A refugee respondent originating from Saudi Arabia participated in the civic orientation in Stockholm as a five-week intensive course in Arabic. He was very pleased with the quality of the course and said it provided a good introduction to the Swedish society, which would help him in interacting with authorities and throughout the job application process.

Language studies support integration process

All refugee respondents see language as central to integration – first, because Swedish skills are a requirement for most jobs and second, because it will make life in Sweden easier and facilitate participation in society. Several believed that knowing Swedish would increase their sense of belonging, and that their Swedish skills would make it easier to befriend Swedes.

➘ Practice example: Conversation Practice with Volunteers

There is a long tradition for NGOs across Sweden to have language training activities with participants at SFI and Swedish as a Second Language (SAS). The Swedish Red Cross has "Practice Swedish" groups in about 100 different locations, with around 7,000 participants every year. A local NGO in the Stockholm region, Internationella Bekantskaper ("International Acquaintances"), call their project medpratare ("conversation partners"). They are active in suburbs where large shares of the inhabitants have a foreign background and provide the opportunity to students at SFI and SAS to practice conversation.

Read more: http://bekantskaper.se/aktiviteter-2/medpratare/ (website in Swedish)

SFI is one of the institutions most closely associated with the integration of refugees and other groups of immigrants in Sweden. There have been national reforms and local initiatives to make SFI more adaptable to individual needs. A local example in Stockholm County is the SFX model, which provides Swedish language teaching with different vocational profiles. SFX students maintain their professional identity while learning Swedish, get to know a network of people with the same profession and learn technical terms within their field.

Stakeholders were very much in favor of the SFX model and suggested it should be replicated in all municipalities with sufficient numbers of students. In smaller municipalities, the students might be too few to divide into different SFX classes. However, stakeholders pointed to a possible solution. In Gävleborg County neighboring municipalities have cooperated to divide SFX classes across municipal borders. Students have thereby been able to commute to a nearby municipality to participate in a class that fits with their professional profile. So far, the proportion of refugees among the SFX students has been very low. Stakeholders recommended refugees should be offered SFX education in every case in which it suits the individual's previous educational and professional background.

Students at SFI are entitled by law to combine their studies with employment and internships. The Government's strategy to facilitate this combination is reflected through the experiences of several refugee respondents. One of the refugee respondents, a man with Somali origin in his early twenties, was assisted by a SFI school in a Stockholm suburb to start a part-time internship program as a warehouse truck driver. To him, the internship was a strategy to obtain a reference from a Swedish employer, which would improve his chances of finding a well-paid part-time job. His goal was to finance his university studies and finally become an engineer (Interview in Spånga).

Another refugee living in a Stockholm suburb who wants to become a chef, also combined language studies at SFI with a part-time job in a canteen:

> *"It's a good combination to study and learn at school and then practice my language skills at work. This combination of working and learning at the same time makes learning much easier."*
>
> Man with Eritrean origin. Interview in Spånga.

Combining SFI with internships and work is clearly being valued as a strategy for future integration by the two respondents above. However, these two experiences are unfortunately not representative. According to research, the situation is likely to be very different for different individuals, between different schools, and depending on geographical location (Statskontoret 2009; Kennerberg and Åslund 2010: 6-7).

Validation of qualifications

A common problem among refugees is lost documentary evidence of previous education, training and professional experience. It is still difficult to have non-documented qualifications recognized and credited in Sweden; validation is therefore hindered and delayed. Stakeholders noted that common consequences include obstructed admission to higher education and employment, and that refugees start their education in Sweden at a too elementary of a level. These issues may improve in the next few years since the Swedish Council for Higher Education has been commissioned by the Government to suggest methods that could be used for assessment in cases where documents are missing.

Stakeholders expressed hope that all those involved in education and employment: politicians, SPES, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, the Swedish Council for Higher Education, and other organizations and academic institutions that perform validation, would continue to prioritize an improved validation system. Stakeholders added that the SPES exercised limited expertise in assessing refugees' background in terms of education and experience, suggesting part of the problem lies in standardized, rather than personalized, work methods. Although a qualification validation service exists in Sweden, existing research shows there are shortcomings in the assessment and validation process resulting in many refugees being employed below their qualification or experience level. Stakeholders stressed SPES must recognize refugees' human capital from the beginning and inform them about their options to validate previous education and work experiences, beginning with the questions "What would you like to do for a living in Sweden?" and "What qualifications do you have already?" A further challenge encountered within SPES was, according to the consulted stakeholders, that translators were not familiarized with regulations and the system, resulting in poor information communication.

Also, as mentioned in the literature review, an evalutation report by SAPM published when finalizing the current report, confirms that efforts are needed to clarify methods of validation and to strenghen its use.

↘ Stakeholders' Suggestion: Employ interpreters to assist validation

Since validation is pivotal for the integration process of refugees, interpreters who are familiar with the technical terms of the relevant professional groups should be employed in the validation process. If there are no qualified interpreters to perform this job, there is a need to train such a group.

Regarding refugees with academic degrees from other countries, stakeholders suggest there is a need for greater flexibility in Sweden to take advantage of their skills and qualifications. Stakeholders noted that refugees with academic degrees often attended many years of additional university courses or programs in Sweden. According to a stakeholder, there is also evidence of a "lock-in" effect for highly educated immigrants who work in an unskilled sector. The effect is amplified over time and after six years of working in unskilled jobs, it is nearly impossible to return to the previous profession. To reduce the numbers of refugees with academic degrees who start work in unskilled occupations, or who end up studying the same courses at university all over again, early validation is crucial.

↘ Stakeholders' Suggestion: More flexible solutions at university level

To increase flexibility and minimize the waiting period, refugees with academic degrees could be offered shorter supplementary courses at university level. Admittance periods could be adjusted to facilitate admission several times during the school year. There should also be more opportunities to complement previous education by doing online distance courses.

In 2010, the numbers of SFI participants with limited or no literacy were 14,000, a 50 per cent rise since 2006. The sudden rise has presented challenges to SFI schools since there are not enough teachers who are qualified to teach illiterate students. Stakeholders advocated for the pedagogic method by which illiterate students are first taught how to read and write in their native language before embarking on their Swedish language tuition. The method requires hiring teachers and assistants who can teach in the students' mother tongue. Through new start jobs, employers are offered reduced payroll tax or social security contributions if they employ someone over 25 years who has been out of work for more than one year, or someone between the ages of 20 and 25 years who has been unemployed for six months. That way, the municipalities could afford to offer extra language support to illiterate students at SFI as more refugees get the opportunity to enter the labour market.

↘ Stakeholders' Suggestion: Employ refugees

To improve the language tuition for illiterate refugees stakeholders suggested employing Swedish-speaking refugees with the right language qualifications as teachers and assistants. To make this alternative attractive to employers, the teachers and assistants could be hired via SPES through the new start job program ("nystartsjobb").

How the economic situation impacts studies

Stakeholders noted that personal economy is an important factor that determines the possibility and level of motivation to study. Refugee respondents stressed they are grateful to have the opportunity to study Swedish free of charge, and that they receive financial support during the first two years after obtaining a permanent residence permit. However, Sweden is by international standards a very expensive country and the establishment support is only around 6,500 SEK (around 780 Euro), which, for most people, results in a financially strained situation.

Refugees who continue to study at SFI, Swedish as a Second Language, or some alternative adult education at secondary school level after the two-year establishment period often rely on income support. However, this equals a minimum living standard. When the refugee respondents discuss living on income support, several of them describe it as degrading.

> *"I don't like to live on income support since the money is just enough to get around. [There]'s something shameful about it and I prefer to not have it. If I could work I would get more money so I could pay for myself, pay the taxes and send money to my family."*
>
> Young man of Somali origin. Interview in Spånga.

Many of the refugee respondents think being self-sufficient and having a financially sustainable position is an important part of the integration process as it involves both personal security and dignity.

After the two-year establishment period, student loans are another optional source of income for those who continue to study. However, stakeholders note that student loans can implicate an economic risk for refugees. Many have debts due to student loans, which they are unable to repay. For Muslims, the issue of student loans also has a religious dimension. Interest rates are seen as "haram" (sinful) and many young Muslims choose not to study since they are not aware of any bank in Sweden that offers students a different solution, such as interest-free loans in return for rapid pay back.

Refugees explain that they often have a responsibility to support not only themselves and their family in Sweden, but they may also have dependents in other countries too. Some have a debt to pay to the smugglers who helped them cross national borders during flight. These types of financial burdens mean many refugees feel the pressure to find a job as soon as possible and prefer to opt out of costly studies if they find a job.

The relation between personal finances, employment and dropout rates from SFI has not been sufficiently examined in order to say there is a connection. It is also not possible to draw general conclusions from existing studies about the impact on long-term labour market integration, when refugees choose to work instead of finishing SFI and other complementary education.

↘ Stakeholders' Suggestion: Grants would enable refugees to finish studies

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) suggests refugees should be offered a time-limited study allowance to finish high school and secondary school level, after the two-year establishment period is finished. Thereby more refugees would acquire the skills necessary for labour market integration, and they would not depend on income support or take large student loans and incur debt. The main share of the allowance should be a grant and only a small share should be a loan. The suggested timeframe for the allowance should be adapted to the individual's circumstances and educational background but be limited to a few years.

Family reunification difficulties impede learning

Based on stakeholders' experiences, when refugees face difficulties with family reunification it is hard for them to focus on education. If the primary focus is to overcome difficulties in accessing family reunification, or if family reunification has been denied, participation in SFI can seem meaningless. According to stakeholders who work as SFI teachers, discussion topics and pictures displayed in teaching environment can trigger anxiety. Feelings of sadness sometimes overwhelm students. Their emotions make it difficult to concentrate and complete the studies. As discussed in the section on Health and Refugee Integration, many refugees also suffer from PTSD symptoms that make it difficult to concentrate on learning. It is impossible to quantify how the factors of health and family reunification affect the education outcome, but the consulted stakeholders felt that these factors are very real problems that affect most refugees. The literature review highlights some effects of current policies and practice in the area of family reunification. Two aspects that have been mentioned as particularly difficult to understand and accept by the refugees interviewed during this study is the strict interpretation of family and dependency resulting in unmarried children over 18 years being unable to join their parents and siblings in Sweden; and the fact that couples without children, or those who have not co-habited steadily before arrival in Sweden, are often denied reunification under current policy.

Employment

Stakeholders discussed how employment is central to integration for many reasons and a connection point between other factors that impact integration. Evidence shows that employment generally increases health and well-being, while unemployment contributes to poor health. Stakeholders noted that employment makes people feel part of the community and facilitates social integration. A job also contributes to securing housing since it provides an income, which helps meet landlords' criteria for rental apartment contracts and banks' requirements for housing mortgages. To conclude, employment provides security and dignity, and is a step toward independent living.

When asked about what would make them or what make them feel integrated, the first thing most refugee respondents thought of was having a job. When asked about what kind of help they think is most valuable, many respondents said it was being introduced to different paths leading to employment. Refugee respondents emphasized that they wanted to work and earn their own salary, and that no one wants to be dependent on income support. Part of this is linked to feelings of acceptance and respect by the majority population, but also of pride in oneself and being content with life in Sweden. Many refugee respondents also said they wanted to give something back by paying taxes to the society that has given them a safe haven.

➘ Practice example: Subsidized Entrance on the Labour Market

The Government initiative step-in jobs (instegsjobb) aim to facilitate employment for immigrants, including refugees. A requirement is that the employment is combined with language studies at SFI. The employer receives 80 per cent subsidy of the salary costs during a time period between six and 24 months, depending on whether the working hours are more or less than 50 per cent. One of the refugee respondents with an Eritrean background had a six-month step-in job as a construction worker in the Stockholm area. He was pleased to be able to combine work with language studies and enjoyed his first job in Sweden.

Read more: http://goo.gl/R33XYU (website in English)

Several refugee respondents mentioned that they like to see people from the same country of origin in different professional roles because they see them as role models and feel inspired. A woman of Somali origin said seeing fellow countrymen who are employed gives her hope:

> *"People who find employment make positive examples to other immigrants from the same country. We can see that it's possible to find a job, and that it's probably not because of discrimination that we don't find employment."*
>
> Interview in Tensta

Stakeholders highlighted that working adults also become role models for the younger generation, who identify with them. Positive examples among parents or friends' parents motivate children and adolescents to study and plan for their future. This creates a positive spiral of integration over the generations. Conversely, widespread long-term unemployment and thereby socio-economic exclusion have negative impacts on the next generation. This phenomenon of social inheritance is not unique to refugees. It is also prevalent among other categories of immigrants and native-born groups.

Barriers to labour market integration

Research tells us that compared to native Swedes, refugees in Sweden are more likely to be unemployed, have temporary jobs and lower income. Stakeholders note that in times of economic difficulties, when there are high levels of unemployment and high competition among the labour force, refugees tend to be more disadvantaged compared to Swedes. Currently the labour market in Sweden is characterized by high unemployment among refugees and young adults under the age of 25. A young woman with Somali origin in the Stockholm area says she is desperate to find a job:

> *"I wish there had been more jobs so that we could work instead of getting income support. I could work with childcare or geriatric care, in a restaurant, as a cleaner, I would clean the streets if I had the chance, anything!"*
>
> Interview in Tensta

Some stakeholders argued that lower starting salaries and less rigid regulations concerning employment would facilitate refugees' integration in the labour market. Stakeholders highlighted prejudice as an integration barrier for many refugee women. Prejudices come from employees in authorities in particular, who sometimes seem to be of the impression that women from developing countries prefer to be housewives or work part-time rather than being full-time employed. Stakeholders suggested that this perception negatively impacts the behavior of public officials who are supposed to facilitate the labour market integration for these women.

Research confirms that the initial integration of refugee women in the labour market is slow in Sweden compared to the labour market integration of men (Bevelander 2009). However, there must be beneficial factors that impact integration over time, since the employment integration

of immigrant women is better after 11 years in Sweden than in most other European countries. Stakeholders suggested that labour market participation by both refugee women and native women is facilitated by social policy measures such as subsidized child day care, generous parental leave and awareness of gender inequality by employers.

Relating to general impediments refugees encounter in finding employment, stakeholders suggested that the Employment Service's limited expertise in assessing refugees' background in terms of education and experience presents a barrier. Stakeholders believe part of the problem is that the work methods are too standardized and not personalized enough. Besides unemployment, another unfortunate effect from shortcomings in the assessment and validation process is that many refugees in Sweden are overqualified for their jobs (Regeringen 2012b: 16). For more discussions on the importance of validation, see pages 19 and 20 in the section on Education and Refugee Integration.

Another significant disadvantage that many refugees share is that they are initially outsiders in society and lack networks. High competition for jobs means personal networks have become more and more important in finding employment, both for native Swedes and refugees. A female economist from Eritrea, who came to Sweden two years ago, said she finds it very hard to find a job, although she speaks quite good Swedish and has a university degree and job experience as an economist (Interview in Akalla). However, building networks is also related to the time factor, since most people build networks over time.

➘ Practice example: Vocational Mentoring

Between 2010 and 2012, nine NGOs were mandated to develop projects focused on vocational mentoring for refugees through a Government supported program. The mentees and the mentors, native Swedes or immigrants established in the Swedish labour market, were matched according to their professional background. Through the mentoring process, the refugees were encouraged to maintain their professional identities and gained access to the mentor's networks as well as the mentor's experience of working within the profession in Sweden. The goal was to increase opportunities for employment or encourage entrepreneurship.

Read more: http://goo.gl/itgVGb (website in Swedish)

Regional differences

Labour market integration varies largely across Sweden. In the experience of the stakeholders, most refugees who travel to the northern municipalities, where there are more traditional labour demands, do not have an academic degree. Refugees who go to the bigger cities in the south part of Sweden have a more mixed background.

A majority of the refugee respondents in this study live in the Stockholm area. The main reason for their choice of residence was that compared to other cities, Stockholm has more available work for non-skilled and skilled professionals, thanks to the city's large private sector. The jobs that were easiest to attain in Stockholm include waiting, clearing tables and doing the dishes at restaurants, cleaning jobs, hairdressing, working on construction sites, or as a warehouse worker or car mechanic.

Another reason why refugees choose to live in bigger cities is the proximity to fellow countrymen, a factor that, according to research, will facilitate their labour market integration (Rönnqvist 2009: 156-157; Bevelander 2011: 22).

➘ Practice example: Business Advice to Entrepreneurs

Somali Information and Business Centre (SIBC) provides advice to refugees in Swedish and Somali on how to start and run a business. The project is located in the southernmost part of Sweden with its head office in Malmö and branches in Kristianstad and Eslöv. The aim is to encourage entrepreneurship as well as promote and increase the visibility of Somali business. The Centre also provides community information to refugees and publishes reports on Somali entrepreneurship. SIBC's activities are inspired by Somali centers in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada.

Read more: http://www.somalicentre.se (website in Swedish)

Suggestions for improving labour market integration

Stakeholders stressed the importance of recognizing the refugees' human capital from the beginning and informing them about possibilities to validate prior educational and work experiences. In Sweden, this is the responsibility of SPES. Therefore, the SPES officials should start with the questions, "What would you like to do for a living in Sweden?" and "What qualifications do you have already?" in the first meeting with the refugee. Individual assessments and good advice are crucial first steps to subsequent integration. This includes examining if it is possible to fulfill the qualifications needed to get the refugee's dream job, and if so, to make an individual plan for how to get there. It also involves providing information about which professions have a labour shortage and which professions have high competition.

Stakeholders noted that interpreters at the SPES are sometimes not informed about the regulations and the system, and many are not qualified as interpreters. To make sure refugees who do not understand Swedish get correct information that can guide them in the right direction, there is a need to employ more certified interpreters, as well as to employ and train Swedish-speaking, established refugees to provide information in their mother tongue to other refugees. There are many advantages when it comes to engaging people who come to Sweden as refugees and establish themselves in society through the integration process. Advantages include having the language skills, cross-cultural competence and perspectives that most native-born Swedes lack.

Stakeholders generally felt that the establishment period, while helpful, could be more flexible and involve more actors from the public, private and civic sectors to improve refugees' chances for employment. Employers within public, private and civic sectors need to be more open to diversity and use the opportunity to employ people with a different background. Since many jobs are gained through personal networks, it is important to facilitate contacts and meetings with people who are established in the labour market and already have a social network.

Housing

There is a shortage of rental apartments all over Sweden with the worst situations occurring in the three largest cities: Stockholm, Malmö and Göteborg. The shortage of rental apartments creates a major problem in relation to housing integration for both asylum-seekers and refugees. According to stakeholders and refugee respondents, there is a lack of both small and larger apartments. Many refugees arrive alone to Sweden and need an affordable studio or a one-bedroom apartment. For refugees who are reuniting with family members in Sweden, the shortage of larger apartments is a problem. According to the stakeholders, there were approximately 62,000 rental flats available at the end of the 1990s in Sweden. The current total number of available rental apartments, in the private and public stock combined, is estimated to be around 12,000. There is a limit for the apartment stock that needs to be kept as reserve housing, which has already been exceeded. One explanation as to the shortage of rental apartments is that, since 1992 it has been legal to convert apartments into privately owned condominiums. Additional deregulations of the rental market, especially since 2007, have increased the sale and conversion of public housing, which has sharpened the shortage

of rental apartments in the most densely populated areas. The sale of public housing is mainly a problem in the big cities, where condos are in high demand. In the countryside, or in small towns, the proportion of condominiums is much lower, since people who can afford to buy housing often prefer to buy a house.

Most of the refugee respondents said they would need more help and assistance to find decent housing. Nearly all of the refugee respondents who came to Sweden less than five years ago and were living in suburbs close to Stockholm and Malmö were unhappy with their housing situation. Some families were very stressed because of their living conditions and said it had a negative impact on their health. A young couple from Afghanistan had to live on the streets for ten days before they managed to find a tiny room. Common problems for the respondents were overcrowded apartments, short-term solutions without contracts and apartments that failed to meet housing standards (interviews in Malmö, Akalla, Spånga and Tensta). Stakeholders noted the fact that many refugees living in overcrowded apartments negatively impacts their studies since it is hard to find a quiet place to concentrate on assignments and reading. A woman with Eritrean origin, who lives in a Stockholm suburb with her eight year-old daughter in one small room without a kitchen, cried when she described her housing situation:

> *"Our room is 12 square meters. I sometimes use a hotplate on a table to cook food, and I use the toilet sink to do the dishes. It's cumbersome to cook without a kitchen, so most of the time I buy something from outside for us to eat. The doctor says my daughter needs to lose weight, but how can I cook healthy food for her? My husband is in another country and he wants to reunite with us here in Sweden, but it is impossible as long as we live in a small room. I can't focus on my studies at SFI because I feel so stressed about our situation."*
>
> Interview in Akalla

Refugees enrolled in the establishment program are entitled to receive assistance from the Employment Service to find housing, either close to where they work or, if they are unemployed, in a municipality where they are likely to find employment. After the SPES, the municipal Social Services Centre is responsible for ensuring that all residents have a decent housing situation. When no other sustainable housing option is available, Social Services Centres are supposed to help refugees to arrange accommodation through the municipal Housing Services. According to stakeholders, due to the shortage of rental apartments, the Social Services Centres are not able to aid many individuals in the bigger cities. The assistance works better in smaller towns. Occasionally, municipalities and other organizations in less populated areas have projects to help with housing and placement of refugees.

↘ Stakeholders' Suggestion

Stakeholders highlighted that the wish of many refugees to move to the most populated cities and areas is part of the general urbanization in society. Native Swedes also move in from the countryside and small towns to the big cities. Stakeholders stressed the necessity of constructing new houses and increasing the availability of rental apartments in the bigger cities in order to accommodate all the new inhabitants.

Stakeholders noted that the attitudes of local politicians and their willingness to receive refugees have facilitated municipality placement. Municipalities with more outspoken refugee-friendly politicians and decision makers have, to a certain extent, been able to find housing for refugees. Many municipalities in the north of Sweden suffer from a demographic deficit because the younger generation is moving out to find work in the coastal and southern parts of Sweden. Therefore, depopulated municipalities often see refugees as a positive factor, helping to maintain the population. On the downside, these municipalities usually have less economic expansion and employment opportunities, compared to municipalities with population growth.

➘ Practice example: Municipality Builds Flats for Refugees

The municipality Östersund in northern Sweden expects to receive 320 refugees throughout 2013. Since there are few vacant rental apartments, the municipality decided to refurbish existing properties in order to be able to receive more refugees. In addition, the municipal housing company Östersundshem will set aside a tenth of its vacant apartments to refugees.

"This is primarily about humanitarian aid, but we also want refugees to feel the reception is so good [that] they want to stay here," says municipal commissioner Ann-Sofie Andersson (S) in a press release.

Read more: http://goo.gl/hHOu1d (website in Swedish)

Private economy and housing

According to the stakeholders, besides the housing shortage, the root cause of the housing problem for many refugees in the bigger cities is the lack of social networks, unemployment and poor economy. A requirement to enter the housing market is mainly about having employment and a stable income; refugees who study at SFI and are unemployed normally have a strained financial situation.

In Sweden, people with low incomes, students and those unemployed, can apply for an income-tested housing subsidy from the Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). However, a housing subsidy requires a first- or second-hand housing contract. This does not apply to most refugees in the bigger cities where the housing shortage impedes chances to get a rental contract. Most refugees in the bigger cities have the option to share housing with relatives and acquaintances, or to rent a room or apartment without a binding contract. A man from Syria describes an economic situation that seems to be quite typical for a refugee in Stockholm who lives on establishment support:

> *"I rent a room at a friend's apartment for 3,000 SEK a month (about 350 Euro). The public transportation costs 800 SEK (about 95 Euro). This gives me 2,700 SEK (about 320 Euro) per month for food, clothes and all the rest. I think everything else in the refugee reception is well thought of and planned [out], but the small amount of money that refugees get to live on each month creates a real problem."*
>
> Interview in Spånga

Another issue related to leasing without a contract is that it often is an insecure, short-term solution. A female respondent who studies at SFI, has three children and lives in a Stockholm suburb, said that most people she knows rent second- or third-hand:

> *"It's always temporary so you never know how long you can stay in the apartment. It doesn't feel safe because you always risk being kicked out. The first questions if you try to rent a first-hand apartment are 'What is your income?' and 'Are you employed?'. I don't know how to solve this because finding a job is really hard too."*
>
> Interview in Tensta

Stakeholders identify the short-term housing solutions as a barrier to integration partly because it leads to frequent moving. Sometimes refugees have to move to a different city or a different part of Sweden to find housing, and the repeated moving impedes the pursuit of SFI studies and other education.

Stakeholders also identify a vicious circle that some asylum-seekers enter when living in bigger cities, where having a job without a contract leads to living in housing without a contract, which together creates a very insecure situation, and represents another barrier to integration. According

to stakeholders, to be able to register in overcrowded areas, asylum-seekers and refugees pay contractors to register at their address, while they live somewhere else, often in poor conditions and without an official contract.

➘ Practice example: Quick Housing Integration in Bollnäs

Four of the refugee respondents live in the town Bollnäs. All of them have first-hand contracts for rental apartments provided by the municipal housing company Bollnäs bostäder. The respondents think it is easier to integrate in Bollnäs compared to a big city, mainly because of the favorable housing situation. One of them used to live in Uppsala, where he queued for four years before he gave up the idea of getting a rental apartment. In Bollnäs he acquired a lease in one week. A woman who lives with her family in a four-room apartment says she probably would not have been able to afford the rent if they had lived in a similar apartment in a big city.

Stakeholders note that refugees can have difficulties accessing public housing in less populated areas across the country too. Some public housing companies refuse to rent to persons who are dependent on income support, including refugees. Although discrimination toward refugees may not be intentional, these regulations have a discriminatory effect in practice, since many refugees are unemployed during their first years in Sweden and depend on income support.

The general competition for small rental flats primarily concerns not only refugees, but also the elderly, students and young adults who wish to move to their own apartments or move in together. Stakeholders note that the competitive situation over housing has already caused negative opinions about refugees in different parts of the country, and since there seems to be little change underway regarding the shortage of rental apartments, there is a risk that negative attitudes could increase.

Housing segregation

In the Malmö suburb, Rosengård, and the Stockholm suburb, Rinkeby, a vast majority of the residents are foreign born. Most of the refugee respondents who live in the areas around Malmö and Stockholm describe the residential segregation as a problem and failure in terms of integration. When they had just arrived, they felt that their only housing option was to move to suburbs where many immigrants live. A female respondent with Somali origin who lives in a Malmö suburb comments:

> *Malmö is supposed to be a multicultural city, but really it as a very segregated place. Ethnicity, origin and class divide the city. In some areas, there are only native Swedes. In other areas, like Sofielund and Rosengård, the inhabitants are almost exclusively immigrants.“*
>
> Interview in Malmö

Of the many effects on integration from housing segregation, one example is that the housing standard is the lowest in areas with a high proportion of people with a foreign background. A woman living in the immigrant-dense Stockholm suburb, Tensta, likes her neighborhood, but says most houses in the area need refurbishing. She thinks houses are nicer and fresher in areas where many native Swedes live. Another female respondent says the service gets worse when there are only immigrants in an area, and all native Swedes are moving out:

> *Even the ambulance hesitates to go to Rosengård, because of the negative image and the bad reputation of the area.”*
>
> Interview in Malmö

A man with Bosnian origin thinks the socio-economic composition of the housing area affects the prospects of finding employment. He says that an area where the majority live on income support is not a good place to network and learn about jobs (Interview in Hagsätra).

Stakeholders' Suggestion

Refugees' housing integration generally works better in small towns and the countryside. Thus, a strategy to facilitate the integration of more refugees and prevent further housing segregation in the bigger cities is to improve the matching process between refugees and different municipalities across Sweden. Many asylum-seekers are not informed about the possibilities to find employment and housing outside the big cities. Stakeholders suggest SMB and SPES have a responsibility to develop how they advise asylum-seekers about their options in different parts of Sweden, so that refugees, once they have received a residence permit, are able to make more informed decisions about where to live.

In May 2013, while the report was being finalized, riots led by mainly young men broke out in the northwestern Stockholm suburb of Husby, one of the areas in Stockholm with a significant proportion of immigrants and refugees, subsequently spreading to other suburbs. Cars were set on fire and rocks were thrown at the police for days. The cause of the riots has been extensively debated, but it is believed that they were sparked by a fatal police shooting in the suburb. Youth groups claim that the police used degrading and racist language towards them when trying to stop the riots, which led to a spread of the violence. The incident, which is not the first of its kind in Sweden, illustrates that social vulnerabilities, such as segregation and feelings of marginalization and powerlessness described above, are components which can contribute to tensions and spark unrest and violence. The incidents have triggered an intensive discussion on issues related to integration, such as housing segregation, that were already high on the media's and politicians' agendas, as well as on the behavior and use of force by the police.

Other negative effects mentioned by respondents include the comparatively lower standard of children's education in immigrant-dense areas. Because of this, parents fear their children will suffer disadvantages later in life. A young woman with Bosnian origin worked as a substitute teacher in 29 different schools in Stockholm County. She described large differences between resources in the suburbs and the city center. In her experience, a school in Botkyrka south of Stockholm does not have the same material resources as a school in the center of Stockholm, and teachers are also less qualified (interview in Hagsätra). A man with Iraqi origin living in another suburb said in his area, very few of the schoolteachers speak native Swedish. The different demographic compositions and cultures among the various suburbs are reflected in the children's dialects:

> *"In areas where there are exclusively people with a foreign background, the children don't learn how to speak with a Swedish pronunciation. My kids learned fluent Swedish when we lived in Nyköping (a smaller town in south of Sweden) because they had Swedish friends in kindergarten and at school. When we moved to Alby (a Stockholm suburb), there were hardly any native Swedes, and they suddenly began to speak Swedish with a foreign accent."*
>
> Man with Bosnian origin. Interview in Hagsätra

A group of Assyrian origin, who fled to Sweden in the 1970s, said their children still live in the same suburbs that their families first moved to after immigrating. Their children are determined to work hard to afford to move from the segregated suburbs. A woman with Turkish origin says:

> *"My children are raising their own children now and want to move to places where there are more Swedes; they want their children to have Swedish friends."*
>
> Interview in Hallunda

A man with Assyrian origin thinks housing integration will happen with time, although it may take a generation or two. However, at a societal level, he thinks newly arrived refugees will continue to find their place in the suburbs with many immigrants. His assumption is supported by research that shows when people can afford to move out of immigrant dense suburbs with a low socio-economic profile, those who move in are more likely to be unemployed and dependent on income support (Andersson et al. 2010: 251).

Social integration

Stakeholders interpreted social integration as being about the processes of everyday life, human relations and feelings of belonging. They agreed that the responsibility to improve integration is shared by the Government, the municipalities, the private sector, the civil sector and individuals. Regarding the responsibility of the individual, they suggested that refugees can contribute to social integration through their choice of residence in Sweden, although the choice, in practice, is increasingly limited, and also through their efforts to find a job and their level of engagement with society. Native Swedes have a reciprocal responsibility to learn from refugees and immigrants, and to provide opportunities for participation in different social contexts. Stakeholders argued that native Swedes can also facilitate social integration through their choice of where to live and send their children to school. One of the stakeholders said:

> *"The big challenge associated with increased housing segregation and school segregation is to get white middle class parents – who might support integration on a theoretical level but are unwilling to experiment in practice with their children – to not escape their responsibility to contribute to integration."*

When native Swedes and refugees live in separate areas and their children go to different schools, there are few natural venues at which they interact. Most of the refugee respondents who live in immigrant-dense areas close to the big cities Malmö and Stockholm do not have contact with many native Swedes. Several of the respondents who live in the big city suburbs said it is complicated to befriend Swedish people. Their explanations differ depending on how long they have lived in the country. Respondents with Somali, Afghan and Ugandan origin who were newly arrived and did not speak Swedish found it hard to communicate with Swedes while respondents with Mandean Iraqi, Assyrian and Assyrian Turkish origin who have lived for decades in Sweden remarked that "it is difficult to interact with Swedes" and "Swedes are not social people" (Interviews in Vällingby and Hallunda).

Stakeholders' Suggestion: New Friendships in Haparanda

In the small town of Haparanda, in northern Sweden right on the border with Finland, a locally driven integration initiative has enhanced social integration. Activities have included trips, sports, lectures, as well as a men's group and a women's group with native Swedes and refugees with origin from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. Participants have discussed cultural topics, their different backgrounds and shared experiences. One of the volunteers, Lars Suo, said the project contributed to bring people together and create new friendships. The "Integration Project" was started by a group of volunteers from the local branches of the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children and the UN Association, with financial support from the EU. Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan was the project manager.

Read more: http://goo.gl/vbzQZG

Two female respondents who moved to the small town, Bollnäs, three years ago said they have frequent contacts with native Swedes. Bollnäs is the kind of town where everything is close, and a person can walk from one end to the other in 10 minutes. The women, one from Eritrea and the other from Afghanistan, meet native Swedes all the time – in the neighborhood, through work, at their children's school and kindergarten. One of them has made friends with Swedish people at church (Interview in Bollnäs).

➘ Practice example: Ski into Community

Jämtland County in northern Sweden is mountainous, and skiing is a popular hobby. In the village Almåsa, refugees are encouraged to learn to ski as a way to make friends and integrate in the local community. In 2013, the Regional Council of Jämtland County decided to finance "Project Leisure" which currently helps immigrants to get in touch with associations and participate in their activities. The County Sports Federation (Jämtland-Härjedalens Idrottsförbund) operates the project.

Read more: http://goo.gl/jYpzc6 (website in Swedish)

A refugee with Afghan origin who has lived in Sweden for one year and a half said it is important to have friends for the purpose of integration; he tries to make friends from all parts of the world, not just with "one kind of people" (interview in Akalla). A few young respondents emphasized the misconception that it is necessary to have Swedish friends, or for that matter to feel "Swedish" in order to feel integrated in society. What makes them feel integrated is to have lived for many years in Sweden; thus it feels like home. Knowing the language also contributes to their feelings of integration (interview in Vällingby). Two respondents with Mandean Iraqi origin, who live in suburbs with predominately foreign inhabitants, said it can be easier to integrate in these areas compared to neighborhoods with predominately native Swedes. They are surrounded by people who also struggle with the experience of coming to Sweden as refugees and learning a new language, which makes it possible to relate to each others' situations and support each other.

Multiculturalism

The stakeholders stressed that a diverse society, by its very definition, should have room for different cultures, not only the majority's culture. Groups representing each of these cultures should be encouraged to integrate with and amongst each other with mutual respect and understanding. Many of the refugee respondents emphasized that it is not desirable or even possible for them to change completely to fit in. Two men with refugee backgrounds, one of Assyrian Turkish origin and the other of Bosnian origin, who have lived in Sweden for decades, say they embrace the positive sides and traditions of both their cultural identities:

> *"To have two cultures that you feel strongly about makes you rich. One should not try to resist or thwart the old or the new identity, but instead try to combine the two identities. You can call me Swedish-Bosnian or Bosnian-Swedish. I always root for Sweden, as long as it is not Sweden versus Bosnia."*
>
> Interview in Hagsätra

According to refugee respondents who have lived in Sweden for more than 15 years, the important thing to understand to successfully enter Swedish society is to have a good balance between freedoms and rights on one hand, and obligations and duties on the other, and how to abide by Swedish law. A woman of Assyrian Turkish origin refers to this as "breaking the Swedish code" or understanding important details of Swedish culture (interview in Hallunda). Another facilitator to integration on the individual level is to accept the impossibility of return to the country of origin, so that the individual attempts to make the most of his or her life in Sweden (interview in Hagsätra with group of Bosnian origin who fled to Sweden in the 1990s).

➘ Practice example: Campaign to Increase Voter Turnout

Immigrant-dense areas, where many inhabitants have a refugee background, have long had the lowest voter turnout in Uppsala. Before the most recent election, the organization for immigrant associations in Uppsala, SIU, engaged 72 “election ambassadors” to encourage more inhabitants in these areas to vote. They disseminated election information in 14 languages through flyers and local radio, knocking on doors and arranging debates.

Read more: http://goo.gl/FV3Wl4 (website in Swedish)

Integration and the family

Stakeholders and respondents agree there is a correlation between age at the time of arrival in Sweden and how well individuals integrate. The younger generation finds it easier to integrate in a new society. Several of the refugee respondents describe that their children have become a link into Swedish society. They also stress that having children can motivate and help facilitate the parents to better integrate themselves. A man of Assyrian Turkish origin said one needs to encourage the younger generation to feel that they belong in both the Swedish and the Assyrian community (interview in Hallunda).

At the same time, the biggest clashes between different cultures often happen within the family. There are incidents of honor violence and killings in Sweden. Underage girls have reported they have been forced by their family to marry during a trip to their country of origin. Less serious incidents, conflicts and frictions are even more common. A young woman of Mandean Iraqi origin expressed her experience as such:

> *“Parents are unable to control their children as they grow up with better knowledge of how the Swedish society works and may use their better knowledge against the parents.”*
>
> Interview in Vällingby

She thinks it would be helpful for refugee parents to be offered more support and information about the culture and the social codes, since many parents are insecure on how to raise their children in the new society. Better information is something most of the refugee respondents requested, not just for parents regarding rearing, but about Swedish culture and norms in general.

➘ Stakeholders’ Suggestion

People who came to Sweden as refugees and are now established in society have an important role to play within social integration. They can share their experiences and knowledge of coming as new arrivals to Sweden. In particular, if they have participated in social integration projects, they can act as cultural translators and build bridges between the Swedish society and refugees.

Citizenship and a Swedish passport

When asked how citizenship impacts integration, respondents said it is important for integration because citizenship acts as further confirmation that their stay in Sweden is permanent. It also gives access to additional rights, such as the right to vote in the Riksdag election and the right to obtain a Swedish passport. Respondents who have not obtained Swedish citizenship would like to apply for it as soon as they are entitled to do so. They highlight that it is impossible to travel to many countries, with the travel documents that are issued to refugees who cannot prove their identity, as this information is mentioned in the travel document. For those refugees it can take many years before they get the chance to meet family members and friends who do not live in Sweden.

Some groups of refugees, in particular refugees from Somalia and Afghanistan, cannot easily meet the requirement to submit a national passport or other form of ID documents required to be granted citizenship. They must wait for the existing exemption, which is provided after eight years of legal stay in Sweden. This time frame was perceived as lengthy by refugees. Respondents from these countries say they feel unfairly treated because of these rules. A woman of Somali origin explains that it makes her feel excluded, and she thinks the regulations are too harsh (interview in Tensta, November 2012).

The findings that acquiring a Swedish citizenship is of high importance to the refugees is confirmed in the inquiry report issued by the Committee on Citizenship mentioned in the empirical chapter; and if the proposals of this report are approved by Parliament and a government bill is passed in this respect, refugees who acquire a certain level of Swedish language will be eligible for citizenship earlier than what is currently the case.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

This study reviewed academic literature and Government policy documents relating to integration and, through dialogue with integration stakeholders and refugees, tested assumptions about what are relevant integration indicator policy areas in the case of refugees, and what are the main factors influencing success, or the lack of success, in those areas.

The integration of immigrants in general, including refugees, is considered an important Government policy area in Sweden. Since the mid-1980s, the goal of equal citizen rights, and an emphasis on the extension of rights to everyone who resides legally in the country, have guided the reception of refugees. In addition to the egalitarian approach of equal rights, equal obligations and opportunities for all, which guide the Government's policy decisions in a mainstreamed approach to the issue, particularly in relation to education and employment, refugees receive various forms of individual targeted introductory support to help overcome initial barriers and challenges in the integration process. The primary goal of the targeted introductory support is to achieve labour market integration as soon as possible.

The Government allocates large budgets for programs aimed at facilitating the initial integration process, in particular in the labour market, but also in other areas such as language tuition. There is a wealth of experience and knowledge from longstanding reception and integration of refugees across the country. The commitment to refugee integration is also reflected in continuous assessments, impact evaluations and reforms aimed to improve integration policies. However, the complexity of integration and the number of different authorities responsible and involved at national, regional and local levels, requires a high degree of cooperation and coordination of efforts to be efficient and firmly effective. This is acknowledged by the various authorities involved. However, stakeholders also highlighted that there is a need for structures to take better stock of various integration project results, findings and good practice in order to preserve and learn from the expertise gained through these projects.

The Swedish Government and various State bodies have, over recent years, repeatedly acknowledged and emphasized the need to shorten the asylum process in order to reduce the financial and humanitarian costs resulting from a lengthy procedure. It has been argued in particular that the negative impact of a long asylum process hampers both integration for those applicants who were granted residence permit, and the timely return of rejected asylum-seekers. Hence, SMB has spent significant financial and managerial efforts to shorten the first instance asylum procedure, which has proven successful. This study re-confirms the view among stakeholders as well as in reviewed policy evaluation reports that an efficient asylum process has a positive impact on subsequent integration. Testimonies from refugee respondents also substantiate this conclusion. Some researchers point to post-migration factors as being even more decisive than pre-migration factors when it comes to risks of negative impact on the overall integration process.

Although it is widely acknowledged that integration is a process that takes time, the experience of the stakeholders clearly confirms that early interventions and support are beneficial to the integration process. There is a consensus among stakeholders that the first months of reception are pivotal, and therefore, much is gained if integration can begin during the asylum period.

In addition, during the asylum process, respectful treatment and attitudes from staff and officials working for the authorities will facilitate the subsequent integration process. If asylum-seekers experience suspicion and discrimination in relation to their claim for protection, this can create additional trauma that must be overcome and may delay integration. In this study, a group of gay refugees highlighted the negative impact of decision-makers' attitudes towards them as LGBT-I asylum-seekers.

It has emerged in this study that health impacts integration since it affects employment and studies. The stakeholders stressed the need for early health check-ups and referrals for treatment so as to prevent and rehabilitate refugees from both somatic and psychological or PTSD-related illness. They also emphasized the need to ensure a thorough medical examination of the refugee after he or she is granted a residence permit, since many asylum-seekers do not inform SMB about their medical status in fear that it will negatively impact the decision on the asylum claim. To promote good health, refugees should receive timely information about PTSD and what health services, including psychiatric care, are available; they should also be assured that their health status will not affect the outcome of their asylum application.

Refugees' education has an impact on their chances to find employment and improve their economic situation. A common barrier within this area is that many refugees lack documents to prove their qualifications. Early interventions, such as mapping and validation of qualifications and capabilities, are therefore particularly important for this group. Preferably this should be carried out already during the asylum procedure. A key aspect of the connection between education and integration relates to learning the Swedish language. All immigrants who cannot speak Swedish, including refugees, can study the language for free at different progressive levels at SFI (p. 12). Also, complementary secondary school education for adults is free of charge. This is clearly an advantage for the labour market and social integration of refugees, since many are living under poor economic conditions. In addition, studying at primary and secondary school levels, as well as at college and/or university, is free of charge for all residents including refugees. The civic information course is a mandatory part of refugees' establishment program. It only requires 60 hours and provides a basic understanding of the Swedish society.

In Swedish integration policy, labour market integration is regarded as a key element, and employment numbers are seen as a pivotal indicator of integration. To counter the generally slow integration in the first five to ten years, the Government has introduced several specific interventions. The main purpose with the so-called Establisment Reform, which came into effect

in December 2010, is to prioritize refugees' labour market integration from their first day in the country. One of the biggest changes introduced through the reform is that SPES has taken over the main responsibility for the introduction of refugees, which used to be the responsibility of the municipalities. The introduction is designed as a two-year establishment program for all refugees who have obtained a permanent residence permit, or who are registered in Sweden for more than one year with a temporary residence permit. During the program, the refugee studies Swedish at SFI while receiving support with validation of previous qualifications and personalized advice from SPES on what needs to be supplemented in order to find a suitable job. Other major government interventions include "step-in jobs" and "new start jobs" as well as "guides" to the labour market for refugees with an establishment plan. There are also several initiatives to provide supplementary higher education and improve the assessment and validation of foreign qualifications. Stakeholders agreed that improvements are still needed in assessing refugees' background in terms of education and experience, suggesting part of the problem lies in standardized, rather than personalized, work methods. Recent policy evaluation reports have confirmed that validation as a concept still needs to be elaborated and clarified, and that working methods of involved stakeholders and authorities need to be strengthened.

Although there is high unemployment, particularly in the group of newly arrived refugees, employment rates certainly improve with time in Sweden. The employment gap of 27 per cent between newly arrived refugees and native Swedes falls sharply to around 10 per cent after refugees have lived in the country for 11 years. Immigrant women in general have higher employment rates after living 10 years in Sweden, compared to immigrant women in most other European countries. One explanation may be the high level of employment among native Swedish women as well as social policies implemented over many decades aimed at well-developed childcare to support the labour market integration of all women.

At the outset of this study NRG and stakeholders highlighted and discussed the need to keep in mind that refugees in Sweden come from very different, individual backgrounds which will inevitably impact their personal integration process. Although this report has shown that there are certain common structural obstacles and challenges that refugees face, these difficulties will not be solved if refugees are not recognized as individuals, rather than viewed as a homogenous group for whom the exact same interventions are envisaged. For the integration process to work well, it is important to respond to each person as an individual with a unique background, personality and resources. Every refugee has a different human capital brought in the form of previous education and experiences and networks in Sweden. The view that refugees are unique individuals, deserving personally tailored, targeted introduction support, is also reflected in SPES individual establishment plans.

As noted in the literature review, stakeholders consulted in this study emphasize the interdependence of different integration policy areas. Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended to invest in policies and initiatives that will accelerate labour market integration. Most of the other examined areas of integration relate back to the area of employment. Research has found that income, employment and social status impacts health and morbidity. In general, employment increases health and well-being, while unemployment contributes to poor health. The risk factors for illness that refugees face are thus partly related to the fact that many are unemployed during their first years in Sweden, resulting in comparatively lower living standards and social exclusion. Stakeholders also noted that employment makes people feel like part of the community and facilitates social integration. A job also contributes to housing integration since it provides an income, which helps to meet landlords' criteria for rental apartment contracts and banks' requirements for housing mortgages.

In relation to housing, asylum-seekers in Sweden have the advantage of choosing whether they want to find their own accommodation and thus settle where they want, or, if they need assistance, to rely on SMB to arrange residence. Accommodation provided by SMB in cooperation with a municipality is usually a rental apartment in an apartment block. It can be almost anywhere across the country, except in the big cities. For asylum-seekers who already have a network of friends and acquaintances in Sweden, it is a positive factor to be able to choose to settle together with or close to their friends. This means they can be surrounded by a social network, which increases the feeling of security, and also facilitates their introduction to Swedish society in several ways. The freedom to choose where to live has also made it possible, so far, to settle down in the largest cities, which

have the most advantageous labour market. Another positive factor in Sweden is that the majority of asylum-seekers live in regular residential areas, mixed with the population, instead of living for years in refugee reception centres without contact with the rest of society.

However, the shortage of rental apartments creates a major problem in relation to housing integration for both asylum-seekers and refugees. This is particularly the case for refugees living in the larger cities. There are many examples of the interdependency between housing and employment integration. The lack of suitable rental apartments adversely affects the opportunity to reside in a region with a favorable labour market, which potentially impairs employment rates among refugees. Poor housing integration often results in short-term housing solutions and crowded living conditions, which in turn has a negative impact on health and education. Stakeholders identify short-term housing solutions as a barrier to integration partly because it leads to frequent moving. Sometimes refugees have to move to a different city or a different part of Sweden to find housing, and the repeated moving impedes the pursuit of SFI studies and other educational opportunities. Also, some asylum-seekers and refugees in the larger cities enter a vicious circle, where jobs without contracts lead to housing without contracts, which together creates a very insecure situation and represents another barrier to integration.

Stakeholders note that refugees can have difficulties accessing public housing in less populated areas across the country. Some public housing companies refuse to rent to persons who are dependent on income support, including refugees. Although discrimination may not be intentionally directed at refugees, these regulations have a discriminatory effect in practice, since many refugees are unemployed during their first years in Sweden and depend on income support. To conclude, it is important to see the connections between housing and employment integration, and to examine any possible ways to accelerate housing integration so as to facilitate, rather than obstruct, the integration process.

This study has also contributed to confirm that family reunification is crucial for refugees‘ well-being and their ability to focus on integration. Depending on the outcome, reunification can be either a facilitator or a barrier to integration. Strong emotions related to difficulties in achieving family reunification are likely to affect the ability to concentrate and learn new things; thus, participation in establishment activities and language tuition can seem meaningless. Delayed or denied family reunification makes it more difficult for the refugee to begin the integration process. This area requires more attention from integration policy makers and researchers.

Another barrier to integration, common among newly arrived refugees, is their limited social network, in particular with native Swedes. This impedes their success in finding both apartments and jobs. Lack of networks and social isolation can also result in depression and poor health.

The interdependency of these different areas makes integration a very complex issue to study and understand. But the complexity explains why integration takes time, and how positive developments within the process of acquiring housing, for example, can facilitate positive developments in health and employment.

Identified gaps, challenges and recommendations

As mentioned in the section on project aims, this study does not seek to evaluate the integration of immigrants and refugees in Sweden. Hence, the following section on gaps, challenges and recommendations is not an attempt to measure the "success" of current policies on integration. Moreover, the scope of the study was limited from the outset and does not, for example, encompass all of the seven integration policy areas identified by the Swedish Government. An evaluation would, at a minimum, require all areas to be studied. This study seeks to highlight positive examples of integration measures that appear to work and yield good results in the context in which they have been undertaken.

In recent years, Sweden has faced a significant increase in the number of asylum-seekers; this, in combination with the general lack of rental apartments, has put pressure on the reception system. Refugees is one of the groups most affected by the shortage of housing as they often lack social networks which can help find housing and lack the financial means to buy a house or apartment. Municipalities are independent and are not, under the current system, obliged to receive refugees granted asylum.

- While a majority of municipalities have reached agreements with the County Administrative Boards to receive refugees, there is a need for more municipalities to conclude such agreements in order to overcome the challenge in finding placements for refugees. In addition, as stakeholders suggested, building more rental apartments would help facilitate the housing integration of refugees.

Throughout this study, the close links between family reunification and refugees' well-being and prospects for integration have been highlighted by stakeholders and refugee respondents. Specific obstacles to speedy family reunification have been mentioned; these include practical problems related to the requirement to initiate an application for family reunification abroad and problems with securing the necessary documentation. These obstacles result in delayed or no reunification, which impacts the health and well-being of refugees and their ability to concentrate on language studies; this, in turn, negatively impacts their employment integration. Refugee respondents also voiced strong disappointment over certain aspects of the current family reunification policy and practice, for example that they cannot reunify with certain members they regard as close such as children above 18 years. For Afghans and Somalis, delays in reunification due to their frequent inability to produce a national passport to prove their identity and/or documentary evidence of relationships, has been particularly challenging. Due to their frequent lack of ID documents, it is UNHCR's understanding that many Afghans and Somalis have also had to wait almost twice as long to apply for naturalization compared to other groups of refugees who can prove their identity.

- The close connection between refugees' ability to speedily reunify with family members in Sweden and their ability to focus on the various aspects of integration, including Swedish language studies and rehabilitation from PTSD, seems under-researched in light of the findings that have emerged from the literature review and consultations with stakeholders and refugees. Further studies to help improve the knowledge of how current policies and practice affect various groups of refugees could provide a better basis for policy development and decision-making in this area.

Consultations with refugees have confirmed that acquiring Swedish citizenship is a further affirmation of the fact that one's residency in Sweden is permanent; this recognition contributes to refugees' commitment to integration. Naturalization also gives the individual important rights, such as the right to vote in parliamentary (Riksdag) elections and the right to obtain a Swedish national passport. Refugee respondents from Afghanistan and Somalia expressed that they feel disadvantaged in regard to naturalization due to the documentary requirements for proving ones identity.

- In view of the positive impact naturalization can have on refugees' committment to integrate in the society and on their political participation, it is recommended that ways of reducing the waiting time for refugees unable to submit national ID documents be considered, not least

in recognition of the fact that refugees will often have arrived with the barest necessities and without personal documents, and be unable to obtain such from the authorities from which they fear persecution.

The timely reception of accurate information is crucial during the whole establishment phase. Many of the refugee respondents mentioned that they have felt overwhelmed and somewhat inferior when they have received large numbers of letters from the authorities, written in advanced Swedish using bureaucratic terms. Their testimonies suggest that methods for communication and sharing of information could be adapted to better suit the needs and capacities of the recipients. Stakeholders also pointed to the need to employ more qualified interpreters in the early stages of the integration process.

- In order to improve refugees‘ timely reception of information important for their integration process, stakeholders and refugees have suggested that written information be complemented with meetings and oral explanations, and that qualified interpreters, immigrant organizations as well as individuals who have come to Sweden as refugees be engaged to a greater extent than today in providing advice and information to refugees during the establishment phase. This includes information about the Swedish culture and norms as well as help with interpreting and understanding legal and practical information sent by the authorities.

In terms of statistics and research, it is possible to disaggregate data on immigrants in Statistics Sweden’s official database to include background variables. This facilitates the examination of refugee integration variables for academic researchers and analysts working for the authorities. Nonetheless, the majority of academic research and official reports on integration make no distinction between refugees and immigrants, which hampers specific analysis of the situation of refugees. Furthermore, policy evaluations primarily seem to focus on quantitative studies and less on establishing causal links between various factors and explaining trends. In addition, the interdependency of different policy areas is not always considered and reflected in literature and studies on integration, which hampers the ability to get a comprehensive understanding of how different factors interplay.

- In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how a refugee’s situation and “success“ within various areas such as health, education, employment, housing, social integration, family reunification and citizenship interact and impact on the individual’s integration, it is recommended that future research considers interlinkages and interdependency to a greater extent. This can help ensure that future policies and programs on integration are not “compartmentalized“ and of limited overall impact.

Stakeholders and refugees consulted during the study have recommended that refugees should be consulted and involved in policy formulation, decision making and implementation to a greater extent than today, in order to ensure that refugees’ real needs and experiences inform processes and outcomes. Stakeholders and refugees have also highlighted the need to empower refugees by engaging them more in their own integration process and in the reception of newly arrived refugees.

- In light of Sweden’s strong tradition of and support for a participatory and age, gender and diversity approach, it is recommended that ways of enhancing consultations with refugees and their active participation in the formulation and implementation of integration policies and programs be considered. This would help ensure that new policies and programs are truly informed by the “user perspective,“ anchored within empowered refugee communities, and are effective and sustainable.

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APPENDIX 1:
Sweden's 27 official indicators for monitoring integration

AREA: AN EFFECTIVE SERVICE FOR RECEIVING AND INTRODUCING NEW ARRIVALS.

INDICATORS:

- The number of people employed two to four years after national registration (born in the EU/European Economic Area [EEA] and outside the EU/EEA)
- The number of people active two to four years after national registration, i.e. in employment or regular education (born in the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA)

AREA: MORE PEOPLE WITH WORK. MORE ENTREPRENEURS.

INDICATORS:

- The proportion who are employed (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA)
- The proportion who were employed in the previous year and who are still employed this year (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA)
- The proportion (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) who were unemployed in the previous year, but have gained employment (openly unemployed and in programmes)
- The proportion of those educated to a post-secondary level (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) who have work that requires post-secondary competence
- The proportion of entrepreneurs who are employed (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) showing better results and greater equality in schools

AREA: BETTER RESULTS AND GREATER EQUALITY IN SCHOOLS.

INDICATORS:

- The proportion of pupils (with a Swedish background and a foreign background born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) who have achieved the targets in grade three
- The proportion of pupils (born in the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) who have qualified for entry to upper secondary school and who were entered in the national registry after the school-starting age, compared with pupils with a Swedish background

- The proportion of pupils (with a Swedish background or a foreign background born in the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) who have qualified for entry to upper secondary school and who were entered in the national registry before school-starting age

- The proportion of pupils (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA) who have qualified for entry to tertiary education

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AREA: BETTER LANGUAGE SKILLS AND MORE ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES.

INDICATORS:

- The proportion of the target group that has passed the national test in Swedish Tuition for Immigrants

- The proportion of Swedish Tuition for Immigrants teachers with an educational university degree

- The median time from national registration to passing the test in Swedish Tuition for Immigrants

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AREA: EFFECTIVE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION MEASURES.

INDICATORS:

- The number of reports to the Equality Ombudsman concerning ethnic discrimination during the year

- The number of cases of ethnic discrimination that the Equality Ombudsman has taken to court during the year, and those that led to convictions

- The number of settlements in ethnic discrimination cases that the Equality Ombudsman was involved in during the year

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AREA: POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN DISTRICTS WHERE SOCIAL EXCLUSION IS HIGH.

INDICATORS:

- The proportion of those who are employed and live in urban areas with a local development agreement, divided into the population as a whole, and those born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA

- The proportion furthest away from the labour market (people who have received income support for at least 10 months and have not received any other income-based benefits) in urban areas with a local development agreement, compared with the corresponding proportion in the country as a whole

- The proportion of young people between the ages of 20 and 24 who are neither employed nor studying, compared with young people in urban areas with a local development agreement and the country as a whole

- The proportion of pupils in urban areas with a local development agreement who have qualified for entry to upper secondary school compared with the country as a whole

- The difference in employment rate between people moving into and out of urban areas with a local development agreement

- The proportion that says they are worried a lot or often about crime, compared with those living in urban areas with a local development agreement and the population in the country as a whole

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AREA: COMMON BASIC VALUES IN A SOCIETY CHARACTERIZED BY INCREASING DIVERSITY.

INDICATORS:

- The proportion of elected representatives born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA

- The proportion of those in a managerial role (born in Sweden, the Nordic Region, the EU/EEA and outside the EU/EEA)

- The number of reports of xenophobic hate crimes during the measurement period

ADDITIONAL INDICATOR OF INTEGRATION:

- Citizenship: The proportion of foreign-born persons who have acquired Swedish citizenship after living in Sweden for six years.

Source: Regeringen (2009), "Förslag till statsbudget för 2010. Integration och jämställdhet," Prop. 2009/10:1 utgiftsområde 13, p. 27, accessed at: http://goo.gl/WKH5FC

APPENDIX 2:
List of stakeholders who participated in themed focus meetings

Health

Anna Maria Mitchell, Fittja Asylmottagnng

Catrin Lindberg,
Asyl-Integrationhälsa Västmanland

Cornelia Gunnersen,
Swedish Public Employment Office

Haibe Hussein, Transkulturellt Center

Kerstin Hacksell Gavralidis, SLL Fittja

Kristian Svenberg,
Enheten för vuxna flyktingar Göteborg

Kristiina Nyqvist, Red Cross Center

Solvig Ekblad, Karolinska Institutet

Wanda Emtestam, Kris o traumacentrum

Education

Anne Markowski, SFX

Beatrice Lauper, SFI

Björn Andersson, Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions

Leonora Lippig-Singewald, SFI Västerort

Åse Rislund,
Swedish Higher Education Authority

Horea Ben Chaouch Arizcurinaga,
Stockholm University, Korta Vägen

Lovisa Fältskog Johansson,
Stockholm University

Social Integration

Anna Bjurvald, ABF

Carin Larsson, Centrum för Samhällsorientering

Gunnar Myrberg, Uppsala Universitet

Ida Holmgren, Swedish Red Cross

Johanna Persdotter,
Södertälje Församling, Svenska Kyrkan

Mohamed Jimale, www.somaliska.com

Sonia Sherefey,
Centrum för arabiska familjer i exil

Amil Sarsour, SIU

Meshesha Andargachew, SIU

Employment

Pieter Bevelander, MAH

Benny Carlsson, Lund University School of Economics and Management

Anders Heimer,
Swedish Public Employment Office

Göran Schmidt, LS Västernorrland

Maria Walther Rosenberg,
Hudiksvalls Kommun

Fozia Slone, Somali Centre

Per Brinkemo, Somali Centre

Hilding Åkerman, Merit AB

Henrik Nilsson, MAH,

Gabriela Galvao, Nationell Matchning

Khaled Abdu, Swedish Public Employment Office Christina Merker - Siesjö ABF Yallatrappan

Yassin Ekdahl, Swedish Red Cross, Malmö

Housing

Per Florell, Swedish Migration Board

Karin Perols, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

Ulrika Sax, SABO

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