



Swedish Migrant Integration Policy after 2015. A Revised Approach in the Shadow of the Migration Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates a modified approach to the principles of migrant integration policy in Sweden – the highest ranked country included in the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2015). The modified approach has two main causes: a weaker than initially assumed effectiveness of integration mechanisms applied until 2015 and the migration crisis of 2015 with its global and regional effects. The text critically analyses one of the most important areas of the integration policy – the labour market seen in a broader context including other dimensions of integration, like family reunification, political participation or access to nationality. Based on field research carried out in Sweden in 2018 and 2019, supplemented with a critical analysis of the literature on the subject, I conclude that integration concepts and solutions employed did not fully meet the stated goals. This deficit can be observed in the labour markets' still present and in some cases increasing gaps between the autochthons and the migrants. Much more organizational and financial effort must be directed towards the areas of education and schooling. In addition, in all of the domains, a more active participation of migrants is required.

KEYWORDS

migration;
integration policy;
Sweden;
migration crisis



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1. Introduction

Sweden, like the other Nordic countries, remained mono-ethnic and mono-cultural for many centuries. The limited spatial mobility of residents caused by legal, religious and institutional, administrative and customary restrictions was, in fact, only changed in the second half of the 19th century. Massive emigration beyond Europe, mainly to the United States of America, Brazil, Argentina and Australia lasted for nearly 70 years. Its intensiveness decreased in the time of the First and the Second World Wars. Thus, it is estimated that in the years 1860-1930, nearly one million people emigrated from Sweden, about ¼ of the country's population (Schierup, Hansen, and Castles, 2006; Beijbom, 1971). The "push factors" from Sweden and Scandinavia in general, were poverty, famine, scarcity of land suitable for cultivation and lack of work (Lintelman, 2009; Nordahl, 1994; Norman and Runblom, 1988; Ljungmark, 1965). In turn, the "pull factors" in the receiving countries were mostly the hope of the migrants to start a new and prosperous life, to find work, a new home and land, independence and dignity.

Although emigration from Sweden was intense and sustained and in significant number, some emigrants eventually returned to their country of origin. These returns, however, were not frequent enough to compensate for the growing shortage of labour force. Thus, in the 1950s Sweden began experiencing a significant deficit of workers, especially in rapidly developing sectors of industry. The economy and the market needed qualified employees who were effectively brought from abroad on the basis of governmental contracts signed between Sweden and Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey, among others.

In the following decades, in the wake of political and economic changes in Europe in the 1980s, and conflicts above all in the Balkans, in Iraq and Somalia (1990s), Sweden welcomed both economic and political immigrants as well as those seeking shelter for humanitarian reasons. Immigration due to family reunification also increased.

As a result of the events and socio-political processes in the period of 1980 - 2010, the ethnic and national composition of the Swedish society significantly changed. The society incorporated individuals and groups from countries like Turkey (Kurds), Chile, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, the former Yugoslavia, and Poland (SOU 1993/113, 26-28). In response to these developments, the Swedish parliament accepted a proposal submitted by the government of Prime Minister Göran Persson to modify immigration policy, strengthening and widening its integrative part (Proposition 1997/98,16). The changes concerned institutional and organizational dimensions as well as a reallocation of funds to activities aimed at faster immigrant integration.

The main role was assigned to municipalities which, from then on, had direct responsibility for implementation of integration tasks during the first two years of the immigrant's stay in the country (so-called introduction phase, Swedish: *introduktionsfasen*). An important change in

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the integration process was a new emphasis on an active attitude of both immigrants and native society. The state demanded greater involvement from both sides. But social practice revealed evidence of inadequate effectiveness of these previous efforts (e.g. prolonged, overdue reliance on benefits, postponed entry into the labour market, none or poor Swedish language competence, ghettoization in housing) (SOU, 2017; Fredlund-Blomst 2014).

The next significant wave of immigration to Sweden took place in 2015. That year became a symbolic date for the migration crisis caused by socio-political conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. Due to the crises, 162 877 asylum applications were submitted to Sweden, of which 35 369 concerned unaccompanied minors (Migrationsverket, 2016).

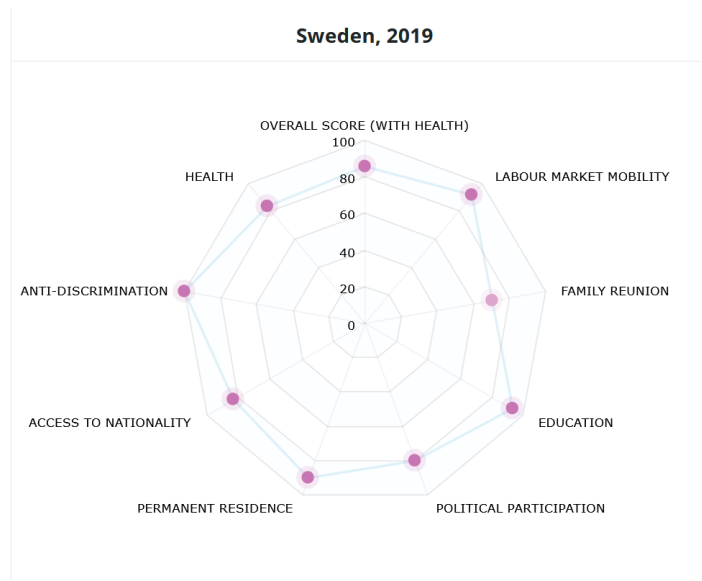
In general, between the years 2015 - 2018, Sweden received 238 894 asylum applications, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Eritrea, among which 39 848 concerned unaccompanied minors (MigrationsInfo, 2019; Migrationsverket, 2019 a). From the total number of applications, 169 837 individuals were approved to stay in the country (around 71%). For the same period, 2015 - 2018, the number of residence permits related to labour market was around 125 000 (Migrationsverket, 2019 b).

Contemporary Swedish society, as a result of the migration processes of the 19th, the 20th and the first decades of the 21st century, is no longer a largely mono-ethnic, mono-cultural or mono-religious one. The mosaic of European and non-European groups creates a colourful spectrum, which on the one hand builds a huge socio-economic, political and cultural potential, but on the other poses a challenge for governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations responsible for social cohesion.

Decisions of subsequent Swedish governments to accept immigrants, first as a complementary support for the domestic labour market and later on the grounds of humanitarian aid (refugees), resulted in a series of legal and organizational arrangements aimed at creating a space for harmonious cooperation of the autochthons and the newcomers.

Unlike other countries importing labour force participants (e.g. France, Germany), the governments of Sweden assumed that foreign workers would not necessarily so widely return to their countries of origin after completing contracted work. Passing decades since the 1960s verified this assumption as correct. One of probable explanations of such state of affairs seems to be a positive and welcoming attitude of the host society regarding immigrants, not only as a work force but also as individuals, human beings with their own hopes, plans, ambitions. We must bear in mind, the state plays an important role in establishing adequate laws, policies, and conditions conducive of harmonious, long-term partnership between autochthons and immigrants. This assumption is still present in the foundations of the current migrant integration policy in Sweden. As compared to many European and non-European countries, the Swedish integration policy model seems to be still effective. Its effectiveness is reflected in data available on the Migrant Integration Policy Index website (MIPEX). The index, developed mainly by two institutions, Barcelona Center for International Affairs CIDOB and the Migration Policy Group MIG, with financial support of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, is further strengthened through close cooperation with a number of domestic and international institutions, which increases its credibility (www.mipex.eu/who-produces-mipex). Based on available data, Sweden occupies top positions in the integration ranking among 52 countries surveyed and scores well as illustrated in the following diagram referring to eight integration areas: labour market, family reunion, education, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination regulations and health.

Graph 1. Migrant Integration in Sweden, 2019.



Source: MIPEX www.mipex.eu/sweden (accessed: 26th April 2021).

Swedish regulations concerning labour market as well as regulations combating discrimination in its various forms and enforced in all areas of community life were sufficiently effective for immigrants to have a guaranteed right to access the labour market relatively quickly and choose work corresponding to their qualifications. In these two dimensions, i.e. access to labour market and anti-discrimination laws, Sweden received 91 and 100 points respectively out of 100 possible. Least favourable conditions are related to family reunion and political participation (71 points and 80 respectively). Aspects such as access to nationality, health, permanent residence, and education scored from 83 to 93 points. The overall picture may suggest that the Swedish migrant integration policy is indeed effective at least in its conceptual frame. Field research carried out in Sweden by the author in 2018 and 2019 may complement the above data with findings relevant for the general interpretation of the MIPEX statistics. Modifications of integration policy introduced by Swedish authorities after 2015 highlighted some discrepancies between what had previously been assumed and what occurred in reality – and the resulting picture seems far less optimistic than originally expected (Konle-Seidl, 2018: 38). Thus, the article's main objective is to investigate the modified approach to the principles of migrant integration policy in Sweden focusing on one of the most important areas of the integration policy – the labour market seen in a broader context including education and vocational training.

The main research questions include the following: what new mechanisms/solutions have been introduced as regards altering integration of migrants into the labour market? What solutions have been made compulsory and why? How the introduction path into the labour market is organized? What institutions and so called third parties are involved in the process of migrant integration? What are the costs of the integration endeavours?

2. Methodology

The methodology applied in the study consisted of desk research, content analysis and field research, and included: 1) critical review of academic literature on the subject published after

2010; 2) analysis of documents and reports issued after 2015 by Swedish government and the *Riksdag* (the Swedish Parliament); 3) in-depth study of reports developed by international organizations i.e., the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). Field investigations were conducted in Sweden in the period of June – September 2018, as well as in May and August 2019. The empirical part covered study visits to selected migrant communities in municipalities with high percentage of immigrants, i.e. the municipalities of Malmö, Örebro, Växjö, Göteborg, Uppsala, Stockholm and Södertälje (in total 24 in-depth interviews with immigrants aged 19-46 were carried out). This fundamental part of the research also included consultations with Swedish academics and researchers working on the subject (ten individuals) and interviews with municipal representatives in Malmö, Växjö and Örebro (four individuals). Each semi-structured interview lasted for about one hour and was recorded upon consent of the interviewees. There were only three positive responses from municipalities to my requests for consultation. The majority of official requests sent to municipalities remained either unanswered (even when repeatedly renewed) or were rejected under the premises of time shortage or as lying beyond the person's scope of competence. This constituted a significant obstacle and limitation in the research. However, data obtained through interviews and expert consultations allowed to articulate findings and conclusions in the paper's closing part.

3. Modifications of the integration policy after 2015 - main objectives and areas

Over nearly seven decades, 1950 - 2020, Sweden gradually evolved from an emigration to an immigration country. This evolution necessitated changes in the approach how to manage an increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural social fabric. Some multicultural characteristics of the Swedish society began to emerge in the 1960s. The specific philosophy of that transformation can be traced back to certain proposals made by the king (Proposition 1968) and the government (Proposition 1975), followed by subsequent modifications of the community life regulations (Proposition 1976). The latter proposal, in particular, paved the way for crucial changes by allowing immigrants to participate in local and regional elections and vote in nationwide referenda upon three years of residence in Sweden. Thus, the partnership policy, steps towards equal treatment of all members of the-to-be multicultural society took on a real shape (Schierup, Hansen, and Castles 2006: 221-24).

With Sweden's 1995 accession to the structures of the European Communities (later the European Union), the concepts of admitting immigrants were further modified by wider political and Union trends. The process of later expansion in 2004, opened up the markets of better developed West European countries to economic migrants from the central and eastern part of the continent, causing significant inflows from Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and other parts of the former communist bloc. The economic mobility of people occurred in parallel with refugee movement triggered even earlier by armed conflicts, mainly in the Balkans, Iraq, and Eastern Africa. Overall the number of refugees and asylum seekers grew rapidly after 1990, and Sweden decided to open its borders for a relatively high percentage of those in need, as compared to other European countries (Westin, 2006; Sanandaji, 2018).

In consequence of the processes that happened on the global scene, the Swedish parliament, *Riksdag* accepted an initiative by the then prime minister Göran Persson's titled *Sweden: the future and diversity - from immigration policy to integration politics* (original: Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden - från invandrapolitik till integrationspolitik, Proposition 1997). The most important changes proposed in that document concerned equal rights for autochthons and immigrants, while at the same time imposing equal obligations for both groups. The state

offered to guarantee equal access to education, the labour market, and participation in the social and cultural life of the country, as well as participation in local and regional elections. The modified integration policy was to be defined by a strong focus on equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities for everyone. The institution in charge of monitoring the integration process, Integration Board (Integrationsverket) established in 1998, was 11 years later replaced by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. This change was required by increasing need to pay greater attention to actions aimed at securing equal opportunities and access to material and symbolic goods, especially in the case of immigrants of non-European origin and immigrant women.

Another notable challenge for the Swedish integration policy came from slow absorption of immigrants (especially refugees) into the labour market. The economic integration reform, introduced in December 2010, redirected most of the decision making power to the Swedish Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*). According to relevant guidelines the process of integration was meant to start as soon as possible with the enrolment in a language course, accreditation of any existing diplomas, assessment of the immigrant's vocational qualifications, and identification or verification of other possible non-vocational skills.

These modifications and successive improvements of the integration reform provide evidence of an active attitude among Swedish authorities and institutions involved in the development of concepts and solutions aiming to establish social, economic, political and cultural cohesion. Apart from state institutions and non-governmental organizations, also the host society and migrants themselves (immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers) were meant to actively participate in the integration process. As of 2019, the increasingly active role of migrants is a determinant of the current integration model, placing requirements and duties on newcomers and autochthons more than before.

The migration crisis initiated in 2013 had a direct impact on the record high number of asylum applications submitted in Sweden in 2015: 17 applications per 1,000 residents. By comparison, in the other Nordic countries the figures in the same year were much smaller: in Norway and Finland - six, Denmark - four and Iceland - one per 1,000 residents (Marklund, 2018: 4). An attempt to respond to this acute situation in Sweden was a so-called temporary asylum law, adopted by the Swedish parliament in June 2016 and applicable from July that same year (Lag, 2016: 752). The law significantly reduced possibilities to apply for asylum in Sweden. Imposed limitations were necessary to ensure efficient management of already accepted groups of asylum seekers.

The law designed for the period of 2016-2019 introduced a new category of migrants, i.e.: those requiring temporary shelter, who would be entitled to residence for a maximum of 13 months (*tillfälligt uppehållstillstånd*). However, exceptions to this rule were also envisaged, taking into account specific circumstances in case of probable risks of persecution, loss of life or health upon return to the country of origin.

Migrants with a refugee status are currently entitled to no more than three years of protected stay. At the same time, people who can provide for themselves and their closest family (spouse and minor children) may apply for this temporary status to be changed into permanent residence permit.

It should be stressed that in addition to the ability of migrants to be self-sufficient, a financial disposition is also required to pay for accommodation of at least minimal standard accepted by authorities. This benchmark may especially refer to migrants of non-European origin and cultures where extended family cohabitation is widely practiced. Swedish authorities tend to reduce the scale of this phenomenon. Reduced comfort, space, and privacy are disadvantageous mostly for children and young adults who are deprived of the right conditions to study, prepare homework, etc. This conditions have a negative impact on educational

progress and may severely affect acquisition of skills and competences enabling intellectual advancement as well as professional development in the future (Sharif, 2017).

Evaluating the effectiveness of integration reveals that the inclusion of migrants into mainstream society is still too slow. This can be seen in the scarcity of permanent or long-term employment among migrants, their poor socio-cultural orientation (which e.g. hampers enrolment in supplementary or vocational courses), in marginalization of ethnic and national groups or in ghettoization (conscious and purposeful isolation of migrants in ethnic enclaves). Some of the conclusions stemming from the analysis are not optimistic. As it turns out the percentage of unemployed individuals with five years long residence in Sweden was still high. In the case of refugees it was more than 50% (Konle – Seidl, 2018; Åslund, *et al.* 2017). In fact, despite favourable institutional and legal environment, migrants still had difficulties in taking up permanent employment (Joyce 2017, 7). Thus, a further modification of the integration policy is highly required.

In the above-mentioned context, integration policy implemented in Sweden after 2015 developed the following modified components, which are mandatory for all categories of adult migrants:

- accelerated inclusion in the labour market; this stage begins immediately after the arrival in Sweden and lasts for a maximum of two years with a full state support; a special ‘fast truck’ program was designed for this purpose;
- more effective and faster verification of potential competencies, educational and professional skills of the immigrants; this is based on notification and verification of submitted documents (if any) or in the absence of such documents by means of an interview and a three weeks long practice in a selected workplace;
- offers of vocational training, allowing migrants to start permanent jobs as soon as possible;
- obligatory Swedish language courses (SFI) also containing basic knowledge about the Swedish state, society, culture, nature etc; the course is focused on acquiring basic communication skills, especially useful in terms of future employment; a special Introduction program (original: Etableringsprogrammet);
- special educational courses for illiterate migrants, preparing individuals for later basic education courses;
- restricting family reunion rights to persons directly related only;
- tightened maintenance requirements – stimulating migrants to quickly become self-reliant and able to secure independent accommodation (initial support from the state and local government reduced in terms of time and finance);
- lack of positive effects in integrating becomes a basis for returning migrants to the country of origin (although it does not apply to refugees or asylum seekers, whose return to the country of origin may mean a risk to life or a risk of serious health deterioration).

In the light of the analysis so far, three main domains for successful inclusion of newcomers seem to play fundamental role in the integration process: the labour market, housing and education, including lifelong learning and nature-based education (XXX, 2019). In the following parts of the article the programs, mechanisms and solutions enhancing integration on the labour market are critically analysed.

3.1 Programs enhancing integration in labour market

From the perspective of recent decades (at least since the 1990s), immigrants’ activity in the Swedish labour market appears much weaker than that of the autochthons. Data available from Statistics Sweden (SCB) and the Public Employment Service (PES) (*Arbetsförmedlingen*, AF) reveals a considerable disproportion in terms of employment, type of occupation and reliance

on social unemployment benefits. Despite the fact that in the last decade an increase in employment across the whole society was observed, this improvement affected immigrants only to a limited extent. At the end of the second decade of the 21st century, there are still disparities in this respect between natives and newcomers. This state of affairs persists despite dedicated, extended, and continually amended integration programs. In 2018, professional activity of people aged 20-64 was respectively: 86.5% among autochthons and 70.1% among immigrants; for the society as a whole, this rate equalled 82.6% (CSB, 2019; AKU, 2018).

The reasons why professional activity of immigrants remains weaker can be explained by some characteristics of modern migrations. Among individuals arriving in Sweden after 1990, a significant part were not economic migrants, who dominated the scene in 1950 -1980, but refugees. For this category of newcomers integration processes move more slowly, both in the social and cultural as well as economic spheres. An important role is played by psychological factors related to refugee traumatic experiences, which hinder normal functioning in a new society. This motif appeared repeatedly in interviews the author conducted in 2018 and 2019 in four Swedish cities: Malmö, Växjö, Örebro and Göteborg (24 in-depth-interviews, individuals aged 19 – 46).

Psychological aspects, however, are not the only ones that need to be considered. Institutions, organizations, financial, legal and educational arrangements also play an important role here. Despite all the combined effort, permanent monitoring of the situation of migrants is still needed, especially to assist refugees on the labour market in finding the best possible outcome: programs, institutional and organizational support, permanent employment, etc.

The general outline of the current integration approach is a consequence of a few factors, including the heterogeneity of various migrant groups (also refugees). Years of experience indicate that the most effective programs are those which were developed for a specific, clearly defined migration group, taking into account the group's cultural, national, ethnic, religious origin, as well as other conditions relevant for the country of origin of the migrants.

Uncertainty affecting migrants who await refugee status approval or residence permit has a significant impact too on the pace and effectiveness of the integration process. Depending on the number of applications, the waiting time for a decision of relevant Swedish authorities may extend up to several months (Migrationsverket, 2019; Lawline, 2019). Although help is offered in the administrative procedures also by non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International, *Röda Korset* (Red Cross), Svenska Kyrkan (Swedish Church), *Caritas Sverige* (Caritas Sweden), *Rädda Barnen* (Save the Children) and others, for migrants the bureaucratic factor may still be an additional psychological burden.

For an asylum seeker, the waiting time for approval of an application inevitably coincides with uncertainty and stress in that liminal phase in which the future of the migrant is decided outside their ambit. The state of “suspension” does not have a mobilizing effect; it does not encourage the migrant to put extra effort in learning a new language, in acquiring new cultural, social and professional competences. There is no guarantee that the effort would be worthwhile, resulting with employment and permanent residence in Sweden. It can turn out to be a lost and futile investment of one's time and dedication if Swedish authorities (via Migrationsverket) refuse to grant asylum or so-called alternative protection (*asyl or alternativt skyddsbehov*). In 2016 this risk increased in Sweden significantly with the introduction of the so-called temporary asylum law.

Acceleration of migrants' integration and improvement of its effectiveness is currently implemented through five programs. The first one, the initial element of the whole process, serves the purpose of validation and assessment of migrant's theoretical and practical competences. It is managed and monitored by the Public Employment Service in cooperation with another state institution - the Council of Higher and University Education (*Universitet och Högskolerådet* - UHR). Specially appointed entities are in charge of verifying any documents

submitted by the migrant. In case the migrant is unable to provide any educational or professional documentation, the person is directed to a three weeks long internship where their skills are assessed or verified. The apprenticeship is arranged by the Public Employment Service, which allocates the migrant to a suitable workplace in a public or private company, choosing from a set of voluntary offers.

Selection of an appropriate internship opportunity is based on a prior signed agreement between the Public Employment Service and the business owner. PES provides all necessary administrative and financial support for relevant evaluation. The owner or manager of the company, however, is responsible for preparing a workplace, providing equipment and if necessary for providing also special personal protective clothing.

In case of insufficient language competences an interpreter is arranged at the workplace by PES. Also the employee insurance is covered by the Employment Service. The evaluation process should not become a burden for the employer, on the contrary, the aim is that all parts involved gain something from the cooperation – the migrant, the company (the market), the state as represented by the Swedish Public Employment Service and the Swedish society.

In terms of finance necessary to execute the program, during the validation period the migrant is granted on average 800 SEK per day, but not more than 12 000 SEK for the whole period of 21 days of contracted practice. It should be stressed that the employer – if they find it profitable - may extend the employment, requesting a change in the engagement from validation practice to a fixed-term employment. If, on the other hand, the employer evaluates cooperation with the migrant unfavourably, SPES transfers the trainee to another company.

The mechanisms in organizing and running the validation practice are similar to that of a fixed-term employment (up to two years) in four other forms of integration programs named as *etableringsjobb* (job accommodation), *introduktionsjobb* (job introduction), *nystartsjobb* (freshman/freshwoman job) and *extratjänst* (extra service). All forms are subsidized by the state and address migrants and long-term unemployed Swedes. Their goal is to help in entering the labour market sustainably through finding permanent employment rather than a series of temporary contracts, interrupted by gaps of prolonged unemployment.

Particular attention should be drawn to *etableringsjobb* because unlike the other four, it is a program developed jointly by the government and the representatives of Swedish employers. Agreement between the parties involved, reached on 5 March 2018 and effective from the second half of 2019, aims to support in its pilot phase at least 10 000 migrants. Employment offered through this program has to contribute to continued professional activity of the migrants and at the same time to strengthening business sectors, where relatively high workforce deficits occur, e.g. construction, forestry, agriculture, catering, hotel and gastronomy, health care, nursing.

As envisaged in the agreement, remuneration in this type of employment should not be lower than the minimum wage jointly agreed between employers, trade unions and the state, so called *kolektivavtalen*. This type of dialogue, where main actors meet to collaborate and work towards a consensus, has a long tradition in Sweden. One of the outstanding examples is provided by the Saltsjöbaden agreement from 1938 (Lundth, 2009; Lagerström, 1996).

Introduktionsjobb, formerly called *instegjobb* (entrance job), had its name and scope modified to combine different forms of support dispersed among other related but rather limited programs. Apart from offering practice positions and other opportunities to develop practical skills, the program in question promotes also theoretical training. Persons undertaking this type of employment may work and study simultaneously. In such a case the time for studying counts towards the work time as long as the study subject complements the practice, is compatible with the work and fits in the vocational profile. The work position obtained through this program is subsidized by the state with up to 80% of the entire cost, but not more than 20,000 SEK per month.

Another way of support for permanent employment is called *nystartjobb*. Co-financed in large part by the state (50% of the total costs, including cost of wages) it is designed to encourage employers to offer migrants and long-term unemployed Swedes an opportunity to gain new competences, verify practical skills, and above all, to work and become independent. In the case of migrants, this type of employment has to begin within 36 months after a residence permit was granted.

The *extratjänst* program offers a special type of subsidized employment related exclusively to jobs in state-owned enterprises or non-profit institutions. The entity obtaining an employee through this form of support receives a financial contribution from the state of up to SEK 20 000 to pay monthly remuneration (with full-time employment).

A separate mechanism facilitating rapid introduction to the labour market is provided by *etableringsprogram*, which addresses refugees aged 16-64 who were already granted a residence permit. All other migrant categories, also asylum seekers, are excluded from the scope of this program. The *etableringsprogram* became effective from 1 January 2018 and introduced major changes to an earlier, similar program of 2010. One of its latest modifications pertains to the legal basis – from 2018 the program is based on a set of regulations that do not require approval at parliamentary level as was the case with its 2010 predecessor. Changing the program's legal basis from parliamentary law to ministerial regulation simplified and accelerated some bureaucratic and administrative procedures.

Introduction of an explicit requirement for migrants to actively engage in the efforts by the state and other entities (municipalities, NGOs, etc.) to expedite entrance into the labour market was another important change. The 2010 program already offered relevant opportunities, but as of 2018 the new program made the use of these opportunities compulsory. Consequently, migrants are now encouraged by formal regulations to undertake courses of the Swedish language for beginners, courses on culture & society for better understanding of the rules and habits important in Sweden, and above all vocational trainings to help complementing necessary work skills. Any refusal to participate in such courses – selected on an individual basis upon consultation with authorities – results in a full or partial withdrawal of financial support. For a full-time participation (corresponding with five working days per week) the benefit equals 308 SEK a day, being proportionally reduced according to migrant's lack of engagement in the program activities (75% of participation equals 231 SEK per day, 50% equals 154 SEK per day). Youths of 18 – 19 years of age are provided with a compulsory high school education followed by internship or further studies at a university.

The programs presented above are designed to compound work with practical learning. A different approach that focuses entirely on work and its quick acquisition, so-called fast track (*snabbspår*), is addressed only to migrants who already have sufficient competence and can work in sectors where workforce is severely needed. The fast track consists of three stages: document based validation of competences, practical assessment of skills, and complementary courses to amend or reshape existing competences. This employment support program was agreed between three parties: the union of employers, the trade unions and the Swedish Public Employment Service. The program covers strictly defined professions, currently around 30, where an acute need for additional labour force was identified.

3.2 Effectiveness of the labour market integration policy

In the light of the MIPEX data, Sweden occupies the top position in terms of migrant integration policy effectiveness. However, this may not necessarily be the case, as the assessment of general policy outcomes may depend on a specific set of aspects selected in the assessment process. In this context three main elements of assessment should be taken into consideration to provide a credible view of the subject:

- 1) effectiveness measured in real numbers of migrants and long-term unemployed individuals that entered the labour market after completing one or a combination of programs discussed in the previous chapter (number of attendees versus number of long-term employed individuals),
- 2) finances invested into the organizational and practical execution of the integration programs compared with the numbers of permanently employed individuals – beneficiaries of the programs,
- 3) real impact of the employed workforce of immigrant origin on economy branches and businesses they are active in.

The three elements, however, are characterized by differing grades in terms of assessment difficulty and accuracy. In the case of the first, the assessment is relatively easy to perform using statistical data monitoring employment rates and migrants' work activity.

The second element, more complicated to measure but still measurable, provides evidence that integration policy has always been associated with significant financing. On the reception and integration programs Sweden spends 1.35 % of its GDP, far more for instance than Germany (0.5%) or Austria (0.37%) (Konle-Seidl, 2018: 35). According to OECD, the approximate reception and integration costs of one migrant/refugee may reach 10 000 euro during the first phase, varying later in individual cases (OECD, 2017:1). Thus, an effective integration policy on the labour market would reduce the general integration costs.

The third element is much more difficult to assess due to its temporal dimension that in this case requires long - term monitoring of the relevant economy sectors and businesses employing migrant workers. The impact of these sectors and businesses on the overall economy of the country remains significant for determining future integration programs and integrational approaches.

The general outlook of the labour market in terms of migrant participation prompts several remarks. The majority of migrants with refugee status face difficulties to get a permanent job, mostly due to psychological factors associated with trauma they have been exposed to while fleeing their countries of origin. In the case of Sweden only 2.2% of the migrant labour force are refugees. On average they remain long-term unemployed and need up to 20 years to reach the activity level of the natives (Konle-Seidl, 2017: 9). During this time, while granted a permanent residence permit, they still need assistance and prolonged support which generate costs. Statistical data provided by Eurostat (indicators of immigrant integration) shows that 15% of migrant women and 16.7% of migrant men in 2016 remained unemployed compared to 4.5% and 5.3 % of the autochthons respectively (Joyce 2017, 35). Interestingly, in terms of migrants these figures were slightly higher while compared with the EU average, where 13.4% of women and 11.9% man remained outside the labour market. This could be explained by several factors, one of them identified as still not fast enough bureaucratic and administrative procedures. Another factor is correlated with skills assessment and recognition of qualifications. In several cases during the interviews I conducted with young migrants in cities of Malmö, Örebro, and Växjö in 2019 this issue came to the fore. Young graduates in computer science from Nigeria, Iraq and Syria, all agreed that the waiting time for labour market entrance was too long (in some cases up to 8-9 months) which resulted in growing frustration and decreasing trust towards the state institutions, such as the Public Employment Service or the Council of Higher and University Education. Apart from this, the skills and competences they gained in their countries of origin did not help them to obtain a job in Sweden matching their diplomas. This could be regarded as mismanagement of human resources on one hand, on the other as a probable incompatibility of the educational systems and the educational systems' final products (skills, competences and knowledge). This disconnect may partly contribute to some direct or indirect discriminatory attitudes shared by Swedish and non-Swedish employers active on the Swedish market (Wiesbrok, 2011: 61). Lack of trust toward third countries'

educational systems, especially from regions torn by social and military conflicts, results in reluctance to engage individuals with a refugee/migrant status, despite diplomas recognized by Swedish authorities. Thus, special introductory programs and vocational training schemes have been implemented since 2016 to facilitate employers and potential employees towards faster and more accurate matching.

Another relevant factor which should also be taken into account is work ability and readiness to get employed. As indicated in the book *Employment (in)ability – from a multidisciplinary perspective* (Swedish: *Arbets(o)förmåga – ur ett mångdisciplinärt perspektiv*) edited by Lotta Vahlne Westerhäll, the presence and work activity of immigrants on the Swedish labor market is a function of many incentives, including: the work per se value for the immigrant as well as for the employer, work ethics and ethics of a community life, competence expectations raised by the employers toward employees, programs supporting people who cannot readily undertake a job due to health reasons (mental, physical), medicalization of the welfare state, and the general social policy ruling the socio-political system (Westerhäll, 2010).

The ongoing and frequently altered adaptation of new solutions requires proper organizational infrastructure, personnel and adequate financing. A decentralized structure with municipalities as the main agents was replaced by a system where PES has the main role as the coordinating body supported by the Swedish Migration Agency, the Council of Higher and University Education and the civil society active inter alia through non-governmental organizations.

In terms of finance, the overall costs for Sweden in 2016 for the integration procedures and programs made a sum of 754 million euro. The money was used to cover Swedish language courses, assessment of skills, diploma verification/recognition and personnel costs of institutions engaged in the integration process. Due to the significant role of municipalities, their individual integration budgets were increased to 2.6 billion SEK or 272 million euro. In 2018 the Swedish government assigned a total sum of 1.6 billion euro for integration, which indicates continuous expenditure- and cost growth (Konle-Seidl 2017, 36). These increases would imply two kinds of conclusions, either the integration policy effectiveness is not satisfactory, thus requiring improvement; or the policy is indeed effective in its best possible way but due to the dynamics of the international environment affecting in turn the national scene, the policy demands additional investments, organizational efforts and entrepreneurial management. Evidence for the former is given by proposals of further modifications of the labor market regulations.

The project to remodel immigration and integration policies submitted by the coalition government of Prime Minister Stefan Löfven (reelected in January 2019), assumes even more restrictive requirements for immigrants applying for a stay in Sweden. Among these requirements is an intense Swedish language course from the first day of the stay, to be combined with vocational training, preparing newcomers to find a job and become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Importantly, educational and professional progress are to affect proportionally the amount of benefits received by a migrant in their initial phase of stay in Sweden. It is meant to encourage newcomers' active involvement in the labor market.

For individuals with low general skills, educational and vocational courses were developed to allow them to prepare for simple work such as cleaning, washing or ironing. This kind of work was labeled with an acronym RUT from the Swedish words *Rengöring*, *Underhåll* och *Tvätt*, which mean cleaning, care service and laundry. With the Riksdag's decision of 2007 this RUT work falls under lower taxation, which helps to reduce the black market and facilitates immigrants, particularly from less developed countries, often employed in these industries, to integrate faster with the society (Sveriges Riksdag, 2011; Eurofound, 2013).

The current proposal aims to increase the number of simple jobs and jobs covered by lower taxation, and also aims to liberalize self-employment regulations regarding RUT. It is of

particular importance; hence, nearly 38% of companies operating in the RUT sector are run by immigrants (Sjöberg, 2018: 155).

Economic integration understood as integration on the labor market (integration with categories and forms of available work) may be the most effective way to build a cohesive society in a highly competitive international context. This is indicated - albeit to varying degrees - by the works of a number of scientists (Light and Bonacich, 1988; Rex, 1996; Kraus and Kivisto, 2003; Kuper 2017). They point at the importance of integration, not assimilation or adaptation, as the ultimate goal for multicultural and multiethnic societies, where all working groups become functional elements of a given system, treated with full respect, with equal rights and mutual obligations.

Compared with other European countries the integration policy in Sweden, until 2015, was generous in terms of financial support for the so-called disadvantaged migrant groups. This approach had been strongly criticized by the governmental opposition and met with increasing criticism from the public, especially its right-wing sections, as well as experts and business analysts warning against excessive costs of the Swedish welfare state (Sanandaji, 2018; Anxo, 2014; Bergh, 2011; Lindbom, 2001). Demands to tighten the requirements imposed on immigrants were reflected in the slogans and programs of political parties before the parliamentary elections of 2018. One year later some of them (e.g. Swedish language skills and social orientation) are indeed put into practice.

Although current modifications of integration policy are mainly due to pragmatic reasons, their perception by immigrants is not unequivocally positive. Such observation emerges from individual in-depth interviews I conducted in cities with high representation of immigrants, as listed in the methodological part (chapter 2.)

The table below contains essential remarks and opinions on the labor market accessibility expressed by three categories of subjects, representatives of immigrants (24 individuals), of municipalities (4) and researchers specializing in migration and integration problems (10).

Table 1. Labor market accessibility from three perspectives.

Labor market accessibility evaluation by	Immigrants	Municipal officials	Researchers
Positive outcomes	<p>1. real care, assistance and protection from the municipal authorities and bodies engaged in the implementation of the integration mechanisms.</p> <p>2. visible readiness of the municipality employers, NGOs and private individuals to be of assistance.</p> <p>3. procedures' simplification in elimination of ineffective solutions (e.g. accommodation, internship, vocational training).</p>	<p>1. municipalities as co-agents in the integration process, supported by the state.</p> <p>2. active involvement of the civil society, non-governmental organizations and also businesses to help newcomers enter the labor market.</p> <p>3. Public Employment Service as the main coordinator of actions undertaken by the state, the main responsibility shifted from the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket).</p>	<p>1. educational and training courses designed to meet individual dispositions of immigrants and simultaneously individual needs of the potential employers.</p> <p>2. programs like <i>fast track</i> enabling the real entrance in the labor market with growing chances for the immigrants to stay employed.</p> <p>3. more effective programs addressed for immigrant women, offering vocational training particularly in the RUT sector (cleaning, care service, laundry).</p>

	<p>4. engagement of private entities and individuals to help in performing everyday tasks.</p> <p>5. engagement of co-ethnics to serve as an introduction person familiar both with the culture of the host society and the native culture of the newcomer (especially in terms of work culture, work standards, work organization, work evaluation etc.).</p>	<p>4. educational support especially for low-educated individuals or individuals requiring basic literacy courses (immigrant women's overrepresentation) with special focus on labor market specification and demand.</p>	<p>4. more programs designed for young adults to enhance their further education, (from low skilled to high skilled).</p>
Negative outcomes	<p>1. prolonged waiting time for diploma notification and documents certifying competences, and consequently long waiting time for a job corresponding with skills acquired during studies or training in the immigrant's country of origin.</p> <p>2. another consequence of the above, undertaking jobs below the immigrant's qualifications.</p> <p>3. too little interest shown from Swedish employers, particularly private companies, to employ individuals from third countries, especially from areas affected by conflicts, which may also be a consequence of distrust as regards foreign education systems and different cultural systems.</p>	<p>1. integration policy goals diffuse and more unclear (compared with those before 2010) due to polarization of the Swedish internal political scene.</p> <p>2. problems correlated with dwelling patterns, particularly regarding immigrants from African and Arab collective cultures (overcrowding in European standards).</p> <p>3. relatively low presence of immigrant women (especially from African and Arab countries) on the labor market.</p> <p>4. in some cases low work ability due to poor education (basic or none), thus in such cases a literacy course is required which in turn postpones access into the labor market.</p>	<p>1. housing problem and associated urban spontaneous segregation.</p> <p>2. low participation in the labor market of women stemming from African and Arab countries.</p> <p>3. in some cases low work ability due to psychological problems and problems with adaptation into a new environment also in terms of climate, nature, food.</p> <p>4. integration policy outlines changing due to changes on the internal political scene.</p> <p>5. radicalization of the internal and external political discourses which affect the general approach to integration policy, especially in terms of the labor market, seen as a crucial and relevant area for integration.</p>

Source: author's own field research.

Comparison of the integration policy's strengths and weaknesses, as shown in the table, allows us to state that in each particular immigrant case, a more individualized approach was applied and supplemented with detailed and more accurate evaluation procedures designed for adequate

identification of skills and competences.³ Special focus was on women as a disadvantaged group prone to remain outside the labour market more often than men. Activating the female work force was placed high on the agenda since the market setting seemed to constitute an effective transition path/corridor into the host society. Especially in cases when women are encouraged by their native cultures to stay at home, the role of the outside work opportunities cannot be overestimated. For young adults, additional educational and study paths combined with vocational training were offered, allowing to gain more time for individual consideration whether to start an academic career or enter the labour market directly. The individualized approach is also exercised by personal assistance provided for migrants who are unable or show limited ability to face the new reality on their own. Help with everyday tasks, legal and/or medical assistance, are of great value for the effectiveness of integration. In short, the rule “I2I” – “individual to individual” rather than “S2I” – “state to individual” became the paradigm for the current integration policy.

The weaknesses as displayed in the table concern administrative procedures that may still hamper and delay newcomers’ entrance into the host society. However, the bureaucratic aspect is unavoidable in the management processes of migration and integration. Finding the right proportions between necessary and unnecessary paper work belongs to the challenges that the municipalities and the state face. It is relevant especially in the case when integration outlines seem more diffused and vague compared to those prior to 2010. One of the explanations for this is the dynamics characterizing contemporary global migrations which requires an adequate and also dynamic integration approach based on continuously occurring modifications. Among the factors influencing integration policy’s perceived vagueness is the Swedish internal political scene, which is more divided and more turbulent than it used to be in previous years, currently featuring a strong position of the liberal-conservative and national-conservative parties. Housing problem connected with persistent deficit of proper dwellings results in segregation, including self-induced segregation, which in turn works against the integration. Areas with high immigrant overrepresentation like Rinkeby (Stockholm), Vivalla (Örebro), Rosengård (Malmö), Araby (Växjö) are disadvantaged and suffer from higher rates of crime, school dropouts, unemployment, poor health etc. Difficulties with adaptation and integration affect especially refugees, for whom traumatic experiences forcing them to flee, remain often a long term burden, despite the state’s effort to arrange for circumstances conducive to normal and stable life.

4. Conclusions

Contemporary Sweden has become over the past decades a multiethnic and multicultural country. The emigration (ca. 1860-1930) and immigration (1960-2015) flows laid a conceptual foundation of the Swedish migration and integration policy of today. The emigration and immigration experience is still visible in the contemporary integration concepts, trying to meet the challenges of the present. Competitiveness of the international market forces countries to shape economies so that they are able to meet high specifications and demands in terms of technology, efficiency, green energy, etc. Sweden tries to adjust to these challenges by organizing its internal labor market to ensure that the available potential is fully utilized. MIPEx statistics for Sweden indicates a high percentage of professionally active people - 80% of the Swedish labor force, one of the highest rates among developed countries (MIPEx 2015). A large number of the employed are the first and second generation immigrants. It should be

³ An example of this approach is delivered by the Göteborg municipality’s program Vägvisaren (Road Sign), tinyurl.com/36sprtb2 (accessed 28 August 2019).

noted, however, that the unemployment rate among this group remains still high as compared to the autochthons. State authorities and associated institutions, continuously try to develop and implement programs aimed at the economic, social, political and cultural inclusion of immigrants. This includes initiatives addressing primary and secondary education students, followed by vocational training courses and so called *fast track* options for adults being able to commence work immediately.

In case of refugees, a selection of psychological programs and a medical care system were established to minimize the effects of trauma experienced while fleeing from persecution or other forms of abuse in their home countries and regions. Of particular value are programs addressing unaccompanied minors who, as a particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable group, require specialized assistance and stronger, better care.

Immigrant women, mostly from African and Arab countries, are another group which requires special attention due to systematically low labor market participation. High unemployment rates among these women make them marginalized and detached from the mainstream society. This in turn negatively affects integration and leads to growing atomization of ethnic minorities with pronounced dominant patriarchal structures. The challenges of migration and integration make a broad and diverse spectrum with a dynamic unique and specific for each country that experience human in- and outflows. The concepts and programs applied in the discussed Swedish context are built around assumptions that an individualistic approach is much more effective than a collective one. It means that integration paths for each individual human being should be constructed based on their personal abilities, skills, competences and life experience. Thus, if possible, an individual plan of introduction into the labour market for every adult migrant is developed involving agents like the migrant himself/herself, the state represented by the Swedish Public Employment Office, the relevant municipality, businesses (private and state enterprises) and other third party actors, e.g. NGOs.

The individualistic approach raises questions about time, money and infrastructure needed to secure realization of the idea. In this process, countrymen with immigrant related experience, so called mentor(s), provide a crucial assistance for newcomers. Mentor networks for work, home, health, study, leisure, etc. are developed to commence the integration process and make it advance at a required pace. Continuous assistance and evaluation of the integration outcomes allow interventions when necessary or even pre-emptively. The character and dynamics of contemporary migrations make the integration highly challenging, crossing state borders and socio-political and cultural boundaries of societies involved. More thorough and meticulous diploma evaluation provides an example where close collaboration between domestic and foreign institutions may enhance and speed up integration. Programs and courses addressed to individuals who lack basic literacy competences are another exemplification of efforts aiming to facilitate integration. First offered in migrants' native languages and later in Swedish, these programs help to communicate and transfer basic knowledge, competences, skills and values to foreign, disadvantaged communities and individuals.

As evident from the article, Swedish integration policy developed and mastered over the past decades is complex and multilevel, with more strengths than weaknesses. Some of the solutions once effective, over the course of time started hampering integration. Extended financial support in the form of benefits and long-term institutional assistance at some point resulted in weakening migrants' activity. Lack of conditionality between increasing competence in Swedish language and the size of benefits was certainly partly to blame. The case of Sweden indicates at least two major necessary features of present integration policy in general: the ongoing need for continuous readjustment of the policy framework and milestones, making the policy a dynamic subject and phenomenon; and extended active involvement of stakeholders, including receiving society and communities, NGOs, state and municipalities as well as migrants themselves. Integration policy based on a consensus constitutes an extraordinary

challenge for decision makers trying to foster country's socio-economic and political cohesion. Sweden may serve in this respect as a good reference for other states in Europe and outside, providing indication as to which solutions proved less or more effective. Integration policy as a dynamic phenomenon offers ample prospects for future research on continuously revised regulations relevant for a prosperous and harmonious cooperation between newcomers and the receiving society.

The Swedish case discussed here may gain additional importance also in the context of the official agenda of the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, elected by the European Parliament in July 2019. In the document providing the guidelines for the European Commission for 2019 – 2024 (Leyen, 2019: 15-16) migration makes one of the most significant challenges, that need modified and renewed solutions, particularly in terms of asylum regulations, border security, Schengen Area coherence and a unified approach of the EU member states to effectively address the issues.

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