

# **NO QUICK FIX POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION OF NEW ARRIVALS IN SWEDEN**

By Henrik Emilsson



**A Series on the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Europe:  
Assessing Policy Effectiveness**



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# **NO QUICK FIX**

## **Policies to Support the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Sweden**

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## Executive Summary

Sweden's strong economic record—at least compared to much of blighted Europe—continues to be marred by its struggles to integrate immigrants, especially those who come through humanitarian or family channels. In recent years, persistently high unemployment rates have prompted the government to invest significantly in labor market integration, reorganize its flagship introduction program (for humanitarian immigrants and their families), and experiment with new policy solutions. While many of the most promising strategies are too young to evaluate fully, progress appears to be slow, suggesting that Sweden has not yet broken the back of this considerable challenge.

Several factors may help explain why positive results have thus far eluded policymakers. Chief among these is the high share of humanitarian migrants and their families, many with low levels of education. Despite reforms to increase incentives to work since 2006, the welfare system creates considerable disincentives to enter the labor market. From the perspective of employers, high costs of hiring and firing, alongside high minimum wages, can make employers disinclined to gamble on untested labor market entrants. And while temporary work can act as an important stepping stone to the labor market for foreign workers—and represents fewer risks for employers—it may also jeopardize sustainable work outcomes and hinder career progression.

Historically, these structural factors were exacerbated by how integration was organized. Immigrants often had to learn Swedish before being able to access employment services, and as a result became stuck in language courses or adult education provided by municipalities. Recent years have seen a number of changes to bring humanitarian immigrants and their families, the main target group for integration policies in Sweden, into contact with employment services more quickly. The main reform, in 2010, has been to deliver the introduction program—an individually tailored program of settlement information, language courses, and training—through the public employment service [PES]. Other innovations have included providing participants in the introduction programs with an “introduction guide” (a private provider who supports the new arrival and is paid according to results) and extensive, subsidized work-experience programs that seek to facilitate early access into the labor market.

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Other groups of new arrivals continue to be supported largely through services designed for the whole population. Sweden's vocational system is extensive, free to learners, and offers financial aid for all, including immigrants. Programs to make courses available in other languages or supplement vocational training with technical Swedish may have improved access for language learners. For those who arrive as adults, some of the most promising programs combine foreign credential recognition with supplementary training, for example to help teachers or medical professionals convert their training to the Swedish system. But it remains difficult to get vocational qualifications recognized, and many new arrivals effectively have to retrain.

All residents who lack basic knowledge of Swedish are entitled to free Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) courses. These courses are frequently criticized for being overly generic. Municipalities are often too small to offer their own employment-focused courses, and face low incentives to pay extra for their residents to attend intensive programs for specific occupations—even though these have better results. As a result, courses that combine vocational training and Swedish are few (or, in the case of the county of Stockholm, the result of a



hard-won cross-municipality agreement), and most participants are enrolled in generic classes that make little difference to employment outcomes.

Sweden is at the vanguard of labor market integration programs, and unique in the scale of its free provision: municipal adult education, postsecondary education, and SFI are all free. These huge investments haven't always been smartly targeted. Recent reforms seem sensible, but it is too early to evaluate their full impact. The reformed introduction program in place since 2010 has so far not brought significant improvements in labor market entry for the participants. Since humanitarian migrants still struggle, the government has tried to increase the number of labor migrants. The 2008 reform to facilitate more labor migration from outside the European Union (EU) has, however, been moderately successful and attracted labor migrants primarily to low-skilled jobs in the private service sector.

## I. Introduction

The Swedish economy has emerged from the economic turbulence of recent years in a relatively strong position.<sup>1</sup> But not all groups are performing well. Youth with limited education and non-European immigrants are groups that are growing in size, and that face difficulties competing in the labor market. The difference in the employment rates of the native and foreign born in Sweden is among the largest recorded in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>2</sup> To improve its long-term prospects, Sweden faces the challenge of better facilitating new arrivals' labor market integration.

A number of factors related to labor supply, labor demand, and migration policy underlie this state of affairs. Since Sweden accepts many humanitarian migrants and sets no economic requirements on family unification, refugees and their families make up a large share of new arrivals.<sup>3</sup> Many of these migrants come from poor countries and have little or no formal education, and thus face substantial barriers to finding work. Meanwhile, Sweden has made it easier for employers to recruit labor migrants from outside the European Union (EU); they represent around 7 percent of new arrivals. However, these workers rarely work in shortage occupations. Instead, they are often employed in low-skilled jobs in the private service sector, mainly in restaurants, and many have an income far below the minimum wages agreed for the sector.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time as the supply of vulnerable groups in the labor market is increasing, the demand side of the labor market also poses challenges. High minimum wages, large tax wedges (the difference between what employers pay and what employees take home), and strong job protection legislation may contribute to employers' reluctance to hire workers without extensive experience on the Swedish job market—such as the young or migrants. Sweden is therefore an interesting case, where the state is committed to fostering large-scale immigration despite huge integration challenges in the labor market. Indeed, immigration has been at an all-time high since 2006, with a yearly inflow of 95,000 to 102,000 migrants, most of whom expect to stay for a year or longer.<sup>5</sup>

This report describes how Sweden is trying to overcome these labor market integration challenges and

- 1 The Swedish economy was described by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as showing “resilience in the face of international turbulence.” Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *OECD Economic Surveys: Sweden* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012), [www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Sweden%202012%20Overview.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Sweden%202012%20Overview.pdf).
- 2 OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2013* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2013-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2013-en).
- 3 Between 2009 and 2012, 30 percent (88,000) of the total number of immigrants (290,000) were family migrants. The second- and third-largest groups were humanitarian (23 percent) and mobile EU nationals (13 percent).
- 4 Pieter Bevelander, Henrik Emilsson, Karin Magnusson, and Sayaka Osanami Törngren, *Världens öppnaste land: Arbetskraftsinvandring efter reformen 2008* (Stockholm: Fores, 2014), <http://fores.se/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Världens-öppnaste-land-webb-ny.pdf>.
- 5 Of these numbers, about 70,000 to 80,000 non-Nordic immigrants are registered yearly with an expected stay of one year or longer.



analyzes how successful its workforce development and integration policies have been in helping immigrants progress from unskilled or low-skilled work to middle-skilled jobs. It first discusses the structural conditions of the labor market and how these affect labor market integration, then analyzes policies to support labor market integration (employment services, skills recognition services, language training, and vocational training), and concludes by offering some recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

## II. Overview of the Swedish Labor Market

In 2011, 82 percent of the Swedish born between ages 20 and 64 had a job, compared to 57 percent of the foreign born.<sup>7</sup> For immigrants who have lived in Sweden for less than five years, the employment rate was 41 percent for men and 25 percent for women. Employment rates during newcomers' initial years in Sweden are especially low for less-educated humanitarian immigrants and those who come through family routes, in comparison to natives and labor migrants from EU countries. Over time, however, newcomers to Sweden improve their employment rates, display income growth similar to natives, and move into middle-skilled positions.<sup>8</sup> A number of factors underlie this situation.

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*Sweden is...an interesting case, where the state is committed to fostering large-scale immigration despite huge integration challenges in the labor market.*

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The Swedish labor market model is characterized by active labor market policies (programs to move people into work), generous unemployment benefits, strong employment protection (high costs of hiring and firing), and an active role for the social partners (employers' associations and unions). Since the social partners negotiate minimum wages through collective agreements, there is little direct government involvement in labor market relations.

A number of features may affect the labor market integration of new arrivals:

- **High costs of hiring and firing.** The Swedish labor market model is thought to discourage employers from hiring vulnerable groups, such as young people and immigrants. Strong employment protection, coupled with large tax wedges (the difference between workers' take-home pay and what it costs to employ them)<sup>9</sup> and high minimum wages, increase the risk of hiring workers whose performance is untested.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, this model has led to a compressed wage

6 Several important policy topics that affect labor market integration have not been addressed in this report, especially discrimination. Research confirms the presence of discrimination, especially with regard to foreign-born men. At the same time, nothing indicates that discrimination is a larger problem in Sweden than in other comparable countries.

7 Statistics Sweden, *Integration – en beskrivning av läget i Sverige*, Integrationsrapport 6 (Stockholm: Statistics Sweden, 2013), [www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/LE0105\\_2013A01\\_BR\\_BE57BR1301.pdf](http://www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/LE0105_2013A01_BR_BE57BR1301.pdf).

8 Pieter Bevelander and Nahikari Irastorza, *Catching Up: The Labor Market Outcomes of New Immigrants in Sweden* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/catching-labor-market-outcomes-new-immigrants-sweden](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/catching-labor-market-outcomes-new-immigrants-sweden).

9 In Sweden the average tax wedge per worker was about 43 percent in 2012, compared to the OECD average of 35.6 percent. See OECD, *Taxing Wages 2013* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/tax\\_wages-2013-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/tax_wages-2013-en).

10 The effects of job protection legislation and minimum wages on the labor market integration of the foreign born have been studied by Per Skedinger, "Effekter av anställningsskydd—en översikt," *Ekonomisk Debatt* 36, no. 7 (2008): 5–18, <http://nationalekonomi.se/filer/pdf/36-7-ps.pdf>. See also Christel Kesler, "Immigrant Wage Disadvantage in Sweden and the United Kingdom: Wage Structure and Barriers to Opportunity," *International Migration Review* 44, no. 3 (2010): 560–92, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2010.00818.x>.

structure and high minimum wages, alongside relatively few low-skilled jobs, making it hard for new entrants to get a foot on the ladder.<sup>11</sup>

- **Temporary work.** Sweden's thriving temporary sector compensates for these hiring barriers, to a degree, as temporary work can reduce the risk employers face in hiring newcomers. Temporary contracts are relatively unregulated, even by international standards,<sup>12</sup> and increased from 10 percent of total employment contracts in 1990 to 15 percent in 2010.<sup>13</sup> This growth is mainly due to the temporary employment of youth, although temporary positions are also more common among the foreign born.<sup>14</sup> While temporary work can be more accessible for new arrivals, and can act as a stepping stone to more robust employment, it may limit wage progression or access to workplace training, especially among the foreign born.<sup>15</sup> Evidence suggests that 40 percent of temporary workers become permanent within a year.<sup>16</sup> Being employed through a temporary agency improves the likelihood of future employment, especially for the foreign born,<sup>17</sup> and the likelihood of being in temporary work falls with time in the country.<sup>18</sup>
- **Incentives to work.** Since few newcomers have a job on their arrival in Sweden, and the eligibility criteria for unemployment insurance is quite strict, most foreign-born jobseekers are covered by social assistance instead of unemployment benefits.<sup>19</sup> Social assistance is means-tested and set at a high level, thus it can discourage the unemployed from taking a job. For example, the average effective tax rate for transition into full-time work with social assistance is almost 90 percent for a job at 67 percent of the average wage level.<sup>20</sup> The relative economic benefit of working differs depending on the type of household. For a family on social assistance consisting of two nonworking parents and two children, it would take a monthly salary of about SEK 25,000 (2,800 euros) to derive any short-term economic return, considerably higher than the minimum wage of approximately SEK 20,000 (2,250 euros).

11 The percentage of people employed in the lowest-skilled jobs is 5.1 percent in Sweden compared with an average of 9.1 percent in the European Union. The "lowest skilled" is defined as ISCO 9. Eurostat, "European Union Labor Force Survey—Annual Results 2012," June 7, 2013, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product\\_details/publication?p\\_product\\_code=KS-SF-13-014](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/publication?p_product_code=KS-SF-13-014).

12 See, for example, Åsa Olli Segendorf and Tommi Teljosuo, *Sysselsättning för invandrare—en ESO-rapport om arbetsmarknadsintegration*, Rapport till Expertgruppen för studier i offentlig ekonomi 2011:5 (Stockholm: Regeringskansliet, 2011), <http://eso.expertgrupp.se/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2011-5-till-webben.pdf>; and OECD, *OECD Economic Surveys: Sweden*.

13 Per Skedinger, "Tudelad trygghet," in *Jobben kommer och går—behovet av trygghet består*, eds. Alice Teodorescu and Lars-Olof Pettersson (Stockholm: Ekerlids förlag, 2012).

14 For example, two-thirds of workers ages 15 to 24 from outside the European Union are employed on a temporary contract. Among employees ages 20 to 24, the proportion increased from 20 to 50 percent over the period 1990-2010. Skedinger, "Tudelad trygghet."

15 For analysis of temporary employment and the foreign born, see Eskil Wadensjö and Pernilla Andersson, *Bemanningsföretag: Ett sätt för invandrare att nå den reguljära arbetsmarknaden*, delkapitel av SoU 2004:21 Egenförsörjning eller bidragsförsörjning? Invandrarna, arbetsmarknaden och välfärdsstaten (Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 2004), [www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/01/31/80/a3f06331.pdf](http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/01/31/80/a3f06331.pdf); and Statistics Sweden, *Integration—utrikes födda på arbetsmarknaden*, Integrationsrapport 2 (Stockholm: Statistics Sweden, 2009), [www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/LE0105\\_2009A01\\_BR\\_BE57BR0901.pdf](http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/LE0105_2009A01_BR_BE57BR0901.pdf).

16 OECD, *OECD Economic Surveys: Sweden*.

17 In 2005, 12.2 percent of those born in a non-Western country were employed in the staffing sector compared with only 6.9 percent of other employees. See Eskil Wadensjö and Pernilla Andersson Joona, "Bemanningsbranschen 1998–2005: en bransch i förändring" (Sofi working paper 6/2010, Stockholm University, 2010), <http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:320471/FULLTEXT01.pdf>. For the native born the probability of being employed in the future increased from 7 percent to 9 percent as a result of employment through the staffing sector, while it increased from 12 percent to 15 percent for the foreign born. The effect is particularly favorable for those born outside western European countries. Joakim Hveem, "Are Temporary Work Agencies Stepping-Stones into Regular Employment?" (working paper 2012:3, Stockholm University, Linnécentrum för integrationsstudier [SULCIS], 2012).

18 Statistics Sweden, *Integration—utrikes födda på arbetsmarknaden*.

19 Six months of work or more, with a minimum of 80 hours of work per month over the past 12 months.

20 OECD, *Taxing Wages 2013*.





### III. Policies to Support Labor Market Integration

The goals of integration policy in Sweden are equal rights, obligations, and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. As a result, Sweden seeks to support immigrants mainly through general measures that cover the entire population, regardless of country of birth or ethnic background.

All newly arrived migrants who lack basic knowledge of the Swedish language are entitled to free language training<sup>21</sup> and access to labor market services—based on individual needs, and on equal footing with Swedish citizens. For humanitarian migrants and their families, mainstream services are supplemented by targeted, intensive support for their first years in Sweden.<sup>22</sup> These migrants are entitled to an introduction program (described in the subsection on employment services) and an allowance conditional on their participation.<sup>23</sup>

Most integration measures are focused on strengthening economic incentives—both for migrants to improve their skills and for employers to hire them. This combination of stimulating labor supply and demand, and better aligning the needs of jobseekers and vacancies, intends to reduce the barriers that impede the labor market integration of the foreign born.<sup>24</sup> In recent years, the government has allocated about SEK 8 billion (1 billion euros) per year to support humanitarian newcomers alone. In addition, municipalities spend about SEK 2 billion (225 million euros) yearly on language training.

#### A. Employment Services

Sweden's central government and public employment service (PES) were long criticized for providing inadequate services to new immigrants.<sup>25</sup> Even though labor market policy was the purview of the national government, municipalities had to shoulder most of the responsibility for introducing newcomers to the labor market. Meanwhile, PES offered few services for newcomers, on the rationale that they were not yet ready for work and had to first learn Swedish. Also, PES had little incentive to offer further services to newcomers already in an introduction program (and the responsibility of municipalities). Since the success of PES is often measured by the percentage entering work, officials tended to prioritize people assessed as being closer to the labor market. This linear approach has been identified as one reason why labor market integration in Sweden has been slow.<sup>26</sup>

Priorities have changed in recent times. The central government is committed to improving access to labor market services for newly arrived migrants. In 2007 a new government regulation gave PES responsibility for providing newcomers with programs to facilitate quick and effective access to the labor market. As part of these responsibilities, PES must improve newcomers' access to mainstream labor market programs ("mainstreaming") or introduce targeted services where limited Swedish proficiency makes this impossible. Behind the policy change is a commitment to increase the supply of labor by mobilizing migrants, the long-term sick, and people who have taken early retirement (in response to concerns about the long-term

21 Anyone who has not reached level D (B1/B1+ in the European framework) can access free language training.

22 Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, *Swedish Integration Policy* (Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden, 2009), [www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/77/34/5b7683a6.pdf](http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/77/34/5b7683a6.pdf).

23 This program is voluntary, in that failure to participate in a language course or an introduction program does not have any residential consequences. Revocation of the residence permit is thus not available as a mechanism to sanction noncompliance. Yet, most humanitarian migrants are compelled to participate for financial reasons: they are not entitled to social assistance so long as they are eligible to be in an introduction program.

24 Ministry of Finance, *2012 års ekonomiska vårproposition* (Government Bill 2011/12:100, 114-15, 2012), [www.regeringen.se/download/54067b1a.pdf?major=1&minor=190529&cn=attachmentPublDuplicator\\_0\\_attachment](http://www.regeringen.se/download/54067b1a.pdf?major=1&minor=190529&cn=attachmentPublDuplicator_0_attachment).

25 For an overview of criticism of the old system for introduction programs, see Henrik Emilsson, *Introduktion och integration av nyanlända invandrare och flyktingar: Utredningar, granskningar, resultat och bristområden* (Brussels, European Commission, National Thematic Group Asylum and Integration, 2008), [www.temaasyl.se/Documents/NTG-dokument/Introduktion%20och%20integration%20av%20nyanl%C3%A4nda%20invandrare%20och%20flyktingar.pdf](http://www.temaasyl.se/Documents/NTG-dokument/Introduktion%20och%20integration%20av%20nyanl%C3%A4nda%20invandrare%20och%20flyktingar.pdf).

26 Ibid.

sustainability of the welfare system and the burden on public finances).<sup>27</sup> As Table 1 shows, the number of newly arrived immigrants who use the Swedish Employment Service is growing, as is the number of Swedish residents born outside Europe.

**Table 1. Total Number of Swedish Employment Service Users, 2010-12**

Category of User	2010	2011	2012
Total number of individuals (ages 16 to 64)	1,113,168	1,072,905	1,075,021
Newly arrived immigrants <sup>28</sup>	49,047 (4.4%)	55,642 (5.2%)	60,749 (5.7%)
Born outside Europe (excluding new immigrants)	180,582 (16.2%)	196,569 (18.3%)	212,352 (19.8%)

Source: Swedish Employment Service, *The Swedish Public Employment Service Annual Report 2012* (Stockholm: Swedish Employment Service, 2013), [www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.3f8eb9ad140aabd13a13a3c/ar2012eng.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.3f8eb9ad140aabd13a13a3c/ar2012eng.pdf).

Efforts to mainstream services and cater to the needs of new arrivals fall into two main categories, introduction programs and services that focus on employment. For both categories there have been efforts to open up services to new arrivals and other immigrants with language barriers.

PES users with language needs have increased greatly since the introduction program became the responsibility of the Employment Service in 2010, and the record immigration of recent years has contributed to these numbers. PES has been experimenting with pilot projects to develop tools to overcome language barriers.<sup>29</sup> Interpreters have been recruited to test different models of remote, online interpretation services. Bilingual employment counselors are recruited to act as cultural and linguistic bridges between newcomers and employers, help newcomers gain work experience, and prepare both job applicants and employers for mutual interaction. General phone services are offered in several languages, including Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Tigrinya, and Russian. Other programs target newcomers who are low-skilled and require more preparation for the Swedish job market.

To harness the skills of new arrivals with higher education, a special training course called *Shortcut* was introduced in 23 municipalities in 2012. The course includes job coaching; skills mapping; short training sessions; university-level, job-specific language training; social studies; and IT courses. The Swedish Employment Service also organizes trade fairs where new immigrants with a professional background can meet exhibitors from various professions. The trade fairs were attended by almost 3,000 new immigrants in 2012 and have, according to the Swedish Employment Service, resulted in a significant increase in the number of new immigrants participating in labor market training.

## I. Introduction Programs

In the past, municipalities were responsible for organizing all aspects of settlement for humanitarian immigrants and their families, including housing, schooling, and a package of settlement information and language training known as an introduction program.<sup>30</sup> In 2010 the government moved responsibility for the introduction program from the municipalities to Sweden's PES, *Arbetsförmedlingen*. One aim was prioritizing

<sup>27</sup> Swedish Employment Service priority groups are newly arrived immigrants, persons born outside Europe, young persons without upper secondary education, persons with disabilities, and persons ages 55 to 64.

<sup>28</sup> The "newly arrived" are defined by the Swedish Employment Service as persons with a residence permit that is less than 36 months old.

<sup>29</sup> These activities are described in Swedish Employment Service, *The Swedish Public Employment Service Annual Report 2012* (Stockholm: Swedish Employment Service, 2013), [www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.3f8eb9ad140aabd13a13a3c/ar2012eng.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.3f8eb9ad140aabd13a13a3c/ar2012eng.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> The target group for the introduction program is humanitarian immigrants and their family members. Until 2012, family members were eligible if they arrived within two years of the date when the humanitarian immigrant was settled in a municipality; in 2012 this period was extended to six years.



entry into the job market by providing these new arrivals with better access to labor market programs. While the main elements in the program remain the same—language training, civic orientation, and labor market activities—the basic content and scope of the program are now laid down in law for the first time. The specific details in each individual program are drawn up by the Swedish Employment Service together with the newcomer.

The reform also introduced two innovations designed to speed labor market integration. First, compared with earlier economic compensation, the introduction allowance provides stronger economic incentives both to participate in the program and work alongside it. The benefit—slightly higher than social assistance—is dependent on “active participation” and not affected by the income of other household members. Thus it creates stronger incentives for both spouses and other family members to work and/or take part in activities. Previously, the compensation was based on household income; if a family member found a job, this lowered payments for other family members. Moreover, the old system created a disincentive for both members of a couple to participate in an introduction program; in the new system household income is doubled if both participate. If participants find work, they keep both their income and the benefit in the short run.

The second innovation is the role of the introduction guide: an independent actor, working with the Swedish Employment Service, who helps the new arrival find a job. One of the key elements of this initiative is that new arrivals choose their own guides (from a selection of private and nonprofit organizations). Guides receive a starting fee and a monthly payment, but further compensation is attached to results: first when a newcomer finds a job, enters education or training, or sets up a business; and second, for a year of sustained, unsubsidized employment. Payments are larger for placing low-skilled migrants—defined as newcomers with six years of schooling or less—in work.

The market for introduction guides has flourished in the past few years. In December 2011, 191 introduction-guide providers were operating in 193 municipalities, the majority of which (three-quarters) were limited companies. (The remainder was sole proprietorships, limited liability companies, economic associations, nonprofit organizations, and foundations.) Two years later, there were 280 introduction-guide providers across 233 municipalities.<sup>31</sup> Yet the effectiveness of this initiative is uncertain. While formal evaluations suggest that guides fulfil an important role in providing social support and that the newcomers are satisfied with their services, efforts to help newcomers enter the labor market are often lacking. As newcomers are in great need of social support, the few hours they spend with the guides is usually not made up of work-focused support. For this reason, and because newcomers’ apparently make little use of their choice over guides, the payment-by-results model has been criticized. Moreover, guides have had only limited success in facilitating access to work. From December 2010 to March 2013, only 991 payments were made for initial employment and only 84 for one year of unsubsidized employment for the 21,763 persons that had been in an introduction program.<sup>32</sup> Follow-ups also suggest that newcomers with an introduction guide are no more likely to enter employment or higher studies than their peers without a guide.<sup>33</sup>

Introduction programs as a whole have had mixed success, at least in the short term. Clearly, these programs have ensured that PES makes contact with and provide services to humanitarian migrants much earlier than was done by municipalities.<sup>34</sup> For example, of the 19,261 participants in March 2013, 74 percent had

31 Swedish Agency for Public Management, *Etableringen av nyanlända: En uppföljning av myndigheternas genomförande av etableringsreformen* (Stockholm: Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2012), [www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2012/201222.pdf](http://www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2012/201222.pdf); Swedish Employment Service, *Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2013: Etablering av vissa nyanlända—statistik kring etableringsuppdraget* (Stockholm, Swedish Employment Service, 2013), [www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.306228a513d6386d3d85667/5a+-+Etablering+av+vissa+nyanl%C3%A4nda+-+kommenterad+statistik+-+.1.0.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.306228a513d6386d3d85667/5a+-+Etablering+av+vissa+nyanl%C3%A4nda+-+kommenterad+statistik+-+.1.0.pdf).

32 Descriptions and follow-ups on introduction guides can be found in Swedish Employment Service, *Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2013*.

33 Swedish Employment Service, *Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2013: Etablering av vissa nyanlända—statistik kring etableringsuppdraget*, Dnr AF- 2012/445712 (Stockholm: Swedish Employment Service, 2013), [www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.1dba97a7142dc24a3c8dff/%C3%85terrapport+Anslag+Adep+13111.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.1dba97a7142dc24a3c8dff/%C3%85terrapport+Anslag+Adep+13111.pdf).

34 See Linus Liljeberg and Kristina Sibbmark, *Uppföljning av etableringssamtal* (Uppsala, Sweden: Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policy, 2011), [www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2011/r-11-28-Uppfoljning-av-etableringssamtal.pdf](http://www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2011/r-11-28-Uppfoljning-av-etableringssamtal.pdf);

preparatory labor market education, 10 percent labor market education, and 13 percent internships.<sup>35</sup> But the transition into the labor market remains sluggish. Of those in an introduction program at the end of March 2013, only 13 percent had been in any kind of job (29 percent for those who had participated for a year and a half or more).<sup>36</sup> A majority of these jobs were subsidized. The reforms have benefited men more than women, both in terms of participation and outcomes.<sup>37</sup> Women are more likely to have a lower level of education, meaning they are ineligible for certain programs. The financial incentives to participate are also low for those with young children, and there are considerable waiting times for child care.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, of those women who had participated for 18 months or more, only 17 percent had been in jobs, compared with 40 percent of men.

## 2. Employment Services for New Arrivals in General

New arrivals who are ineligible for an introduction program can access services such as subsidized employment, job coaching, and labor market programs on the same terms as Swedish citizens.

Subsidized work experience is one of the most popular programs. So-called *new-start jobs* are available to anyone who has been out of work for a long time (or, for humanitarian or family migrants, has been in the country less than three years). Depending on the age of the worker, the employer receives an amount equal to 31 per cent of gross salary for those ages 20 to 25 or 63 percent of gross salary for those ages 26 or older. *Step-in jobs* are offered to humanitarian and family migrants in their first three years, and must be combined with Swedish courses. A subsidy of 80 percent of employer wage costs is paid to the employer for a maximum of two years. In 2011 an estimated 14,000 new arrivals were employed through subsidized employment, either in new-start jobs or step-in jobs.<sup>39</sup>

Participation in both new-start and step-in jobs has been considerable.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the government target for step-in jobs has not been met, in part because employers often prefer new-start jobs. While employers are paid a higher percentage subsidy for step-in jobs, there is a fairly low limit to what they can claim and they face additional insurance costs. Also, municipalities have incentives to recommend new-start jobs over step-in jobs to keep costs down for social assistance. (Participants with a new-start job, but not in a step-in job, are entitled to unemployment benefits if they later become unemployed. Unlike social assistance, this benefit is administered by the central government.)

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Swedish Agency for Public Management, *Etableringen av nyanlända*; Swedish Agency for Public Management, *Kartläggning och bedömning av valideringsinsatser för utrikes födda* (Stockholm: Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2013), [www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2013/201306.pdf](http://www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2013/201306.pdf).

- 35 Preparatory courses are aimed at applicants who need to prepare for a labor market education or work and include activities to help them strengthen their vocational background, learn vocational Swedish, or prepare for studies at varying levels. Labor market training prepares participants for labor market demands and specific occupations, such as work in social care, warehouses, or restaurants. Internships give a person with no or limited experience in the Swedish labor market practical experience in a profession, or a professional orientation in areas consistent with the applicant's experience and education. Of those who had been in the program for 18 months or more, almost all had some preparatory labor market education, 19 percent labor market education, and 27 percent were in internships.
- 36 Swedish Employment Service, *Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2013*.
- 37 Swedish Employment Service, *Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2011*.
- 38 Both the child-care allowance for children ages 1 to 3 and the opportunity for parents of older children to take parental leave for older children in preschool raises the reservation wage for women without other sources of income and thus creates thresholds for newly arrived mothers' participation. The situation for newly arrived migrant women is analyzed in a recent government commission report: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, *Med rätt att delta. Nyanlända kvinnor och anhöriginvandrare på arbetsmarknaden* (Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 2012), 69, [www.regeringen.se/download/c0f64e63.pdf?major=1&minor=202135&cn=attachmentPublDuplicator\\_0\\_attachment](http://www.regeringen.se/download/c0f64e63.pdf?major=1&minor=202135&cn=attachmentPublDuplicator_0_attachment).
- 39 Swedish Employment Service, *Annual Report of the Swedish Public Employment Service 2011* (Stockholm: Swedish Employment Service, 2012), [www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.4ab2e7121379d5897aa80006770/arsredovisning+2011+engelska.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.4ab2e7121379d5897aa80006770/arsredovisning+2011+engelska.pdf).
- 40 Of the total 118,268 new arrivals who were eligible for subsidies in 2008-12, 10 percent had new-start jobs, 7 percent step-in jobs, and 6 percent had both. National Audit Office, *Ett steg in och en ny start—hur fungerar subventionerade anställningar för nyanlända?* (Stockholm: National Audit Office, 2013), [www.riksrevisionen.se/PageFiles/18558/RiR\\_2013\\_17\\_Anpassad\\_Instegsjobb.pdf](http://www.riksrevisionen.se/PageFiles/18558/RiR_2013_17_Anpassad_Instegsjobb.pdf).



Rigorous evaluation is difficult. On paper new-start jobs have better outcomes: migrants who have had a new-start job have a higher probability of entering the labor market in three years, whereas there is no such evidence for those in step-in jobs. Meanwhile, people often move from step-in jobs to new-start jobs, and selection effects might mean that the most resourceful newcomers take advantage of both programs. The jobs on offer are for the most part low-skilled—in sectors such as hotels and restaurants, retail, and for the municipalities, in health care and other services. Few are in large companies or offer opportunities for progression; it is easy to replace a subsidized worker with another subsidized worker.<sup>41</sup> In 2012, the state's total cost for step-in jobs was SEK 339 million (39 million euros; SEK 13,000 or 1,500 euros per month per participant for roughly 6,500 participants) while the cost of new-start jobs for newcomers was SEK 410 million (47 million euros; the average cost per new arrival was SEK 9,800 or 1,100 euros).

*Migrants who have had a new-start job have a higher probability of entering the labor market in three years, whereas there is no such evidence for those in step-in jobs.*

Other options on offer include preparatory labor market education, which provides an opportunity for jobseekers to explore possible occupations or supplement their knowledge before embarking on a training program. Participants have increased in recent years (see Table 2), partly because of the enhanced connections between the introduction program for humanitarian immigrants and their families and employment services. Among other initiatives, internships have proven to be modestly successful.<sup>42</sup> People who had had an internship found a job 6 percent faster than other jobseekers, and also achieved better income and social assistance levels over time.

**Table 2. Labor Market Programs and Activities for Recent Immigrants at the Swedish Employment Service, 2009-11**

	2009	2010	2011
Registered as unemployed	34,500	39,823	44,325
<b>Labor Market Programs and Activities</b>			
New-start jobs	3,658	5,548	6,839
Step-in jobs	6,328	7,064	7,532
Start your own business	126	181	203
Internships	5,949	8,734	7,622
Labor market education	1,461	1,705	2,338
Preparatory labor market education	2,619	4,731	10,596
Internal job coaching	897	2,408	1,301

Note: Number of unique individuals in each group. Note the same person may participate in more than one group.

Source: Swedish Employment Service, *Annual Report of the Swedish Public Employment Service 2011* (Stockholm: Swedish Employment Service, 2012), [www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.4ab2e7121379d5897aa80006770/arsredovisning+2011+engelska.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.4ab2e7121379d5897aa80006770/arsredovisning+2011+engelska.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Anders Forslund, Linus Liljeberg, and Leah von Trott zu Solz, *Job Practice: An Evaluation and a Comparison with Vocational Labor Market Training Programmes* (Uppsala, Sweden: Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policy, 2013), [www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2013/wp2013-06-job-practice-an-evaluation-and-a-comparison-with-vocational-labor-market-training-programmes.pdf](http://www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2013/wp2013-06-job-practice-an-evaluation-and-a-comparison-with-vocational-labor-market-training-programmes.pdf).

Overall, experts conclude that new arrivals now have good access to labor market services.<sup>43</sup> But the effectiveness of the services is less clear. Compared to their number registered at PES (see Table 1), fewer newly arrived immigrants transitioned into jobs in 2010-12 (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Number of Transitions into Work and Education, in Total and For Priority Groups, 2010-12**

	Transitions Into Work			Transitions Into Education		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Transitions into work and education	596,339	562,400	548,666	56,845	51,276	49,399
Newly arrived immigrants	13,965	16,242	16,678	3,315	3,993	3,576
Born outside Europe (excluding new immigrants)	99,197	106,866	108,693	15,294	15,462	15,069

Source: Swedish Employment Service, *The Swedish Public Employment Service Annual Report 2012*.

## B. Skills Recognition Services

Skills recognition in Sweden is referred to as “validation,” and is defined as “a process of a structured assessment, valuing, documentation, and recognition of knowledge and competences that an individual has gained, irrespective of how they have been acquired.”<sup>44</sup> Like most policies for newly arrived immigrants, validation policy has come under criticism. The government has sought to improve the use of foreign skills and improve the infrastructure for assessing education. In order to simplify the process, one governmental agency, the Agency for Higher Vocational Education, has been in charge of coordinating the national validation strategy since January 2013. This reform has reduced the number of authorities with responsibility for validating different qualifications, but implementation remains decentralized and there are still multiple actors involved.

The national structure is divided into (1) assessment of foreign credentials, and (2) validation of prior learning gained through work experience, which is open to both the native born and immigrants.

### I. Assessment of Foreign Education

Since 2013 the Council for Higher Education has been responsible for assessing all kinds of foreign credentials: secondary diplomas, postsecondary vocational educations, and academic degrees. The only exception is qualifications for performing regulated professions—i.e., professions that require official authorization or registration to work in Sweden—such as doctors, real estate agents, and electricians.<sup>45</sup> For regulated professions, foreign nationals have to apply for the right to practice the profession in Sweden from the agency responsible, for instance, the Board of Health and Welfare for nurses or the Electrical Safety Board for electricians.

In 2011 more than 5,000 people from 137 countries applied for an assessment of their higher-level education. Of those, more than 4,150 people received a statement of equivalence with the Swedish educational system.<sup>46</sup> The number of applications has more than doubled over the past decade. While processing times fell by about two months between 2009 and 2011 (from 148 to 90 days for cases with complete documentation), there are no recent evaluations of how validation affects labor market

<sup>43</sup> Segendorf and Teljosuo, *Sysselsättning för invandrare*.

<sup>44</sup> Valideringsfo, “Validation — making skills visible,” [www.valideringsinfo.se/en/](http://www.valideringsinfo.se/en/).

<sup>45</sup> Most regulated professions can be found here, Universitets- og høgskolerådet, “Regulated professions in Sweden,” last updated May 24, 2013, [www.uhr.se/sv/Information-in-English/Qualifications-recognition/Akademisk-start/Work-in-Sweden/Regulated-professions-in-Sweden/](http://www.uhr.se/sv/Information-in-English/Qualifications-recognition/Akademisk-start/Work-in-Sweden/Regulated-professions-in-Sweden/).

<sup>46</sup> Agency for Higher Education, *Bedömning av utländsk utbildning—gör den nytta?* (Stockholm: Agency for Higher Education, 2012), [www.uhr.se/Global/Fr%C3%A4mjande%20och%20analys/V%C3%A5ra%20uppdrag/1220R-bedomning-utlandsk-utbildning.pdf](http://www.uhr.se/Global/Fr%C3%A4mjande%20och%20analys/V%C3%A5ra%20uppdrag/1220R-bedomning-utlandsk-utbildning.pdf).



integration.<sup>47</sup> A study by the Agency for Higher Education in 2012 found that a majority of users thought validation had helped their future careers, provided a good starting point when planning their future career in Sweden, and boosted their self-esteem.

In addition to validation, many universities and other higher education institutions organize supplementary courses for people with academic degrees to get them ready for the Swedish labor market. In the *Government Bill for 2009*, SEK 51 million (6.5 million euros) a year was allocated to reinforce this work over the 2009-11 period. The funds were primarily intended for supplementary courses in health care and teaching. According to one evaluation, participation in supplementary teacher education increased average income by 39 percent three years after the start of the program (compared with a control group). For persons with a foreign diploma in public administration, the mean income increased by 71 percent.<sup>48</sup>

## 2. Validation of Prior Learning

Validation of prior learning and work experience is a complicated affair involving multiple actors. There are a number of different options, and the process can be initiated by municipalities, PES, or joint guidance and counseling centers (where central and local government officials work together). Examples are as follows.

- **Professional industry validation.** Validation of professional skills depends on the industry model, of which there are 25 in Sweden covering approximately 140 professions. Because recommendations are largely made for jobseekers with experience in shortage occupations, few newcomers get their skills validated according to the professional industry models.<sup>49</sup> Among the foreign born, 1,418 jobseekers had their skills validated in 2011 and 2012, including 242 who had arrived within the past three years (and only ten who were covered by introduction programs). The most common occupations were in construction, transportation, health and social services, and restaurants and catering. These validations had limited success: almost one-third of the 2012 cohort had a job after 90 days (21 percent for new arrivals).
- **Municipal adult education.** People with qualifications corresponding to compulsory school or upper secondary education can also have their prior learning validated in Sweden's well-developed system of municipal adult education.<sup>50</sup> All adults over the age of 20 with a residence permit for one year or more have the right to participate in free adult education. Validation in adult education is a process that contains one or more steps of mapping and assessment and ends with an overall documentation of the student's knowledge and skills. Several of the larger municipalities offer orientation courses with validation in particular professional specializations, such as in health care, baking, or tiling. Around 1,300 migrants (the majority of them women) got their skills validated in this way in 2012 within the 67 (of 290) municipalities that submitted data,<sup>51</sup> suggesting that thousands of such validations take place annually.
- **In-house PES validation.** Less comprehensive validation efforts—such as merit portfolios, placement tests, and vocational orientation that are classified as employment preparation training—can be carried out in-house at PES.<sup>52</sup> Many of these (54 percent) are in the male-

47 Martin Nordin, *Invandrades avkastning på utbildning i Sverige*, Rapport 2007 (Uppsala, Sweden: Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policy, 2007), 10, [www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2007/r07-10.pdf](http://www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2007/r07-10.pdf); and Dan-Olof Rooth and Olof Åslund, *Utbildning och kunskaper i svenska: Framgångsfaktorer för invandrare?* (Stockholm: SNS förlag, 2006).

48 Susan Niknami and Lena Schröder, *Utvärdering av kompletterande utbildning för akademiker med utländsk examen: Juristutbildning, lärarutbildning och förvaltningskunskap* (Stockholm: Institutet för Social Forskning [SOFI] och Stockholms universitets Linnécentrum för integrationsstudier [SULCIS], 2012), [www.su.se/polopoly\\_fs/1.161153.1388657495!/menu/standard/file/Utv%20av%20kompletterande%20utbildning%20f%C3%B6r%20akademiker%20med%20utl%C3%A4ndsk%20examen%20-%20jurist,%20l%C3%A4rare,%20f%C3%B6rvaltningskunskap.pdf](http://www.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.161153.1388657495!/menu/standard/file/Utv%20av%20kompletterande%20utbildning%20f%C3%B6r%20akademiker%20med%20utl%C3%A4ndsk%20examen%20-%20jurist,%20l%C3%A4rare,%20f%C3%B6rvaltningskunskap.pdf).

49 Agency for Public Management, *Kartläggning och bedömning av valideringsinsatser för utrikes födda*.

50 Skolverket, "An overview of the Swedish education system," last updated July 18, 2011, [www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/andra-sprak-och-lattlast/in-english/the-swedish-education-system](http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/andra-sprak-och-lattlast/in-english/the-swedish-education-system).

51 See footnote 39.

52 A merit portfolio maps an individual's work experience and previous education. The portfolio contains eight modules, some of which constitute validation. The Swedish Employment Service decides the exact content of the merit portfolio in dialogue with the client. The validation is carried out in accordance with a national standard. A placement test may have different

dominated industries of transportation or industry, but also in health care, which accounts for 50 percent of the validation of foreign-born women. Assessments can also be paired with internships in the “Try at the Workplace” (internships of up to three months where jobseekers are giving the opportunity to showcase their skills, resulting in the employer either hiring them or providing them with a certificate of skills they acquired in the internship) and “Professional Competence Assessment” programs (where employers assess jobseekers over a period of one day and three weeks and either hire them or provide a certificate of their skills). Professional competence assessment can be done separately or included in a “Try at the Workplace” internship.

In the period 2011-12, 23,499 validations for foreign-born jobseekers were conducted.<sup>53</sup> Over a third of these concerned new arrivals in introduction programs, a fifth were for other newcomers, and almost half were for people who had been in the country for more than three years. The new introduction program has drastically changed the number of newcomers who receive validation. A third of introduction program participants registered at PES have received validation, compared to 4 percent of other foreign-born newcomers registered at PES.<sup>54</sup>

### C. Language Training

All adult immigrants, including EU citizens, have the right to free Swedish classes on registration in their municipality. SFI is organized by the municipalities as part of the adult education system. Around 60 percent of new arrivals take advantage of the program.<sup>55</sup>

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*All adult immigrants, including EU citizens, have the right to free Swedish classes on registration in their municipality.*

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SFI seeks to provide adult immigrants with basic Swedish proficiency, help those who cannot read and write acquire basic literacy, and prepare migrants for further study. Courses should normally be available within three months of the individual’s registration as a resident of a municipality. The principal organizer is supposed to provide students with opportunities to practice their Swedish in working life; as such SFI can be combined with other activities such as job orientation, validation, internships, or other educational programs. While for participants in introduction programs the coordination of different activities is clearly laid out—as are the responsibilities of different actors—the process is more ad hoc for other newcomers.

SFI offerings vary significantly across geographical regions. Most larger cities offer courses in the evenings and on some weekends, making it possible to combine SFI with employment. Depending on his or her educational background and prior knowledge, the student is placed in one of three study programs with varying difficulty. The different programs are made up of A-D courses, each building on the previous course, with D being the highest level. Regardless of the study program begun by a student, he or she is entitled to continue studies up until course D of study program 3, which corresponds to B1/B1+ in the European framework.

There have been substantial efforts to improve SFI results. The government introduced a new syllabus in

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purposes but will usually result in a foundation for development of an individual education plan. The test is used to better adapt the studies to the individual’s prior knowledge. Vocational orientation involves the in-depth mapping of individual skills. No assessment of individual skills is documented in the form of a certificate.

53 Agency for Public Management, “Kartläggning och bedömning av valideringsinsatser för utrikes födda” (Stockholm: Agency for Public Management, 2013), [www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2013/201306.pdf](http://www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2013/201306.pdf).

54 Ibid.

55 Statistics Sweden, “Theme: Education—Swedish for Immigrants” (themed papers 2009:1) (Stockholm: Statistics Sweden, 2009), [www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/UF0539\\_2008T02\\_BR\\_A40BR0901.pdf](http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/UF0539_2008T02_BR_A40BR0901.pdf).





2003 and national exams in 2008 to standardize provision, and earmarked additional funds for SFI teacher training in the period 2007-15.

In 2010 a national SFI bonus, an incentive of 10,000 SEK (1,100 euros) for participants (other than students and labor migrants) to complete the course early, was introduced. And special commissions have examined whether newcomers could be required to learn Swedish faster by introducing a time limit on participation or introducing an SFI voucher whereby students could choose their language provider (currently municipalities choose whether to offer SFI in-house or subcontract it).

So far these reforms have met with limited success. The 2003 syllabus failed to affect results and the SFI bonus was to be terminated as of July 2014 after it was shown to have very limited effect.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, there are large numbers of dropouts.<sup>57</sup>

Evidence on the influence of SFI on labor market outcomes is also somewhat mixed. A year after the completion of SFI, only 36 percent of participants had a job.<sup>58</sup> Students who dropped out or finished at levels B, C, and D had similar employment rates as non-participants, all higher than students who only finished level A. According to another evaluation, SFI participants initially have lower employment and earnings than their peers who do not participate, but catch up later.<sup>59</sup> Yet, over time, a greater proportion of participants move from low- to medium-skilled occupations. Although participants may have faster upward mobility during a ten-year period, they don't catch up with nonparticipants when it comes to holding a medium-skilled or skilled job. But the positive result applies only to those who complete the training up to level D. Those who start but do not finish at the highest level have a long-term position on the labor market equivalent to those that do not undertake SFI at all.

To make language training more relevant to the labor market, some municipalities, especially larger ones or those that have entered into mutual agreements, offer Swedish for professionals (SFX). SFX targets newcomers from a particular occupational group, such as medical practitioners, teachers, craftsmen, or entrepreneurs, and combines SFI with sector-specific language training and information about the local labor market and how professions operate in Sweden. Due to selection biases the results cannot be compared to newcomers in general, but participants in SFX are both more successful and more likely to be working in their professional field after finishing the training.<sup>60</sup>

56 For an evaluation of the syllabus, see Agency for Public Management, *Sfi—resultat, genomförande och lärarkompetens En utvärdering av svenska för invandrare*. For an evaluation of the SFI bonus: Olof Åslund and Mattias Engdahl, "The Value of Earning for Learning: Performance Bonuses in Immigrant Language Training" (working paper 2012, Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policy, 2012), 24, [www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2012/wp12-24-The-value-of-earning-for-learning.pdf](http://www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2012/wp12-24-The-value-of-earning-for-learning.pdf).

57 In 2012, 38 percent of the students completed a course, 23 percent dropped out, and 39 percent continued the course the following year. The share to complete or drop out of their courses has remained virtually unchanged over the past years. Another way of presenting the results is to follow a cohort. For the 2010 beginners, 62 percent finished at least one course up until 2012, while 25 percent dropped out without finishing a course, and 13 percent continued their studies in 2013 without completing a course. There are some clear differences between men (55 percent) and women (67 percent) in the share that complete at least one course. Of the men who were beginners in 2010, nearly one-third dropped out without finishing a course up until 2012. National Agency for Education, *Elever och studieresultat i sfi 2012*, PM 2013-06-27, Dnr 71-2013 (Stockholm: National Agency for Education, 2013), 28, [www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtwpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D3034](http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtwpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D3034).

58 Agency for Public Management, *Sfi—resultat, genomförande och lärarkompetens En utvärdering av svenska för invandrare*.

59 After ten years in Sweden the income level is comparable but participants have about a 5 percentage point higher employment rate. These differences are greater for women than for men, for less educated than for highly educated, and for individuals from non-European countries. Louise Kennerberg and Olof Åslund, *Sfi och arbetsmarknaden*, Rapport 2010:10 (Uppsala, Sweden: Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policy, 2010), [www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2010/r10-10-Sfi-och-arbetsmarknaden.pdf](http://www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2010/r10-10-Sfi-och-arbetsmarknaden.pdf).

60 Arlen Herrera, *Utvärdering av SFX* (Stockholm: Kommunförbundet Stockholms län, 2011), <http://sfx-yrke.se/upload/KSL-rapport%20utvardering%20Sfx.pdf>; Robert Höghjelm and Petros Gougoulakis, *De är ju mina kolleger: En metastudie av SFX* (Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet, 2009), <http://sfx-yrke.se/upload/SFX-studie%20slutrapport%20Stockholms%20universitet.pdf>.

## D. Vocational Training

Sweden has a long tradition of vocational education and training (VET) for adults, provided in many different forms, including initial vocational education and training (IVET) for adults, higher vocational education, supplementary education, postsecondary training, folk high schools,<sup>61</sup> internships, labor market education, and competence development in the workplace. The main objective of this type of training is usually to assist labor force entry, but it can also lead directly to higher vocational education and training or to higher education.

Funding barriers are minimal: almost all adult education and vocational training is free of charge. Participants who go through PES can support themselves through social assistance or unemployment benefits. For vocational education that more closely resembles traditional education (e.g., adult education and higher vocational education), student loans are available for all persons with a permanent residence permit and most persons with a temporary permit. Student loans are for a maximum of six years and consist of two parts: a grant and a loan (80 euros and 175 euros per week, respectively).

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*Sweden has a long tradition of vocational education and training for adults, provided in many different forms.*

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The two most popular forms of VET are upper secondary IVET and higher vocational education. Employers also play a significant role in provide continuing vocational education and training (CVET).

- **Upper secondary (IVET)**, which attracted 190,000 participants in 2010, acts like a “second-chance” system, in that it provides those who missed out on ordinary secondary education with a chance to acquire vocational qualifications.<sup>62</sup> Municipalities are required to offer upper secondary IVET free as part of adult education to residents 20 years of age or older. The courses can, just as in secondary school, be both theoretical/academic and vocationally oriented and can lead to continued education and training or direct labor market entry.
- **Higher vocational education (HVE)** is the largest form of purely vocational postsecondary training in Sweden, with 42,000 participants in 2010, and provides specialist expertise for various sectors.<sup>63</sup> Programs are designed in consultation with employers and delivered by universities, local authorities, or private training companies. While all programs are free of charge and qualify for student loans, the entry requirements (an upper secondary qualification) can be an obstacle for newcomers. Reforms to accept foreign secondary school qualifications, consider prior experience in lieu of qualifications, and combine vocational study with professional Swedish courses (about 60 percent of HVE programs now offer students professional Swedish) seek to address these barriers.<sup>64</sup> Limited part-time provision can make it hard to pursue postsecondary VET courses while employed. Moreover, the transition from higher vocational education to higher education is hard, since there are no systematic arrangements for credit transfers.
- **Employer-led continuing vocational education and training (CVET)** is not governed by regulations requiring enterprises or social partners to provide CVET (whether formal or

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61 National Agency for Education, “What are folk high schools?” accessed August 7, 2014, [www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/andra-sprak-och-lattlast/in-english/the-swedish-education-system/2.927/what-are-folk-high-schools-1.109278](http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/andra-sprak-och-lattlast/in-english/the-swedish-education-system/2.927/what-are-folk-high-schools-1.109278).

62 Statistics Sweden, *Theme: Education Adult Learning 2010*, Theme report 2012:1 (Stockholm: Statistics Sweden, 2012), [www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/AA9998\\_2010A01\\_BR\\_A40BR1201.pdf](http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/AA9998_2010A01_BR_A40BR1201.pdf).

63 The largest programs by number of enrolled students are in economics, administration, and sales (28 percent of students); technology and manufacturing (18 percent); and in health care, nursing, and social work (11 percent).

64 Ministry of Education and Research Sweden, *Skills beyond School: OECD Review of Vocational Education and Training. Background Report from Sweden* (Stockholm: Ministry of Education and Research Sweden, 2013), [www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/SkillsBeyondSchoolSwedishBackgroundReport.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/SkillsBeyondSchoolSwedishBackgroundReport.pdf).



nonformal) to employees and members, but these matters are often negotiated among social partners at either the sector or business level. Moreover, since the 1970s, all employees who worked for the last six months or for a total of at least twelve months during the last two years have had the right to unpaid leave for studies of any kind, without any restriction on the duration of the leave. Swedish enterprises are among the most training intensive in Europe; 87 percent of enterprises provided training, and 53 percent of employees participated in CVET courses in 2010.<sup>65</sup>

Other forms of VET include (1) supplementary education (at upper-secondary and postsecondary levels) in single subjects in the fields of arts, crafts, and culture; (2) postsecondary, occupation-specific training programs within the municipal adult education system; (3) folk high schools that prepare students for work as, for example, journalists, sign-language interpreters, or recreation leaders; (4) apprenticeship-like training for adults governed solely by joint training boards (the social partners at the sectoral level); and (5) vocational training offered by the Swedish Employment Service.

One of the strengths of the Swedish model is the central role played by employers. This includes extensive partnerships between employers and training providers, a strong tradition of workplace learning, and participation—through social partnerships—in quality and certification.<sup>66</sup> Through their involvement in joint business-labor occupation advisory committees, social partners control certification of many VET occupations at the sectoral level. Moreover, a significant proportion of VET for adults is not regulated by the government, but is subject to the negotiations and local solutions of social partners.<sup>67</sup> For example, higher vocational education programs are often developed at the local and regional level based on consultations with industries. And apprenticeships take place in companies where there are collective agreements between employers and trade unions, particularly in sectors such as construction, and in particular the sheet-metal, ventilation, and painting industries.

Vocational education may have particular benefits for the foreign born. Foreign-born students (who composed 16 percent of new entrants to HVE) were more likely to be in jobs a year after graduation than those from general higher education (81 compared to 74 percent).<sup>68</sup> Students born outside Sweden or the European Union, though, have a lower employment rate after the completion of their studies. But vocational education, especially postsecondary, increases the job opportunities of foreign-born workers more so than does theoretical education. One reason is that vocational education provides a specific skill set and qualifications that are easier for both institutions and individual employers to understand. Vocational education not only increases job opportunities for the foreign born, but also their probability of being correctly matched according to their skills.<sup>69</sup>

Persons born abroad, especially those who arrived within the past ten years, are more likely to participate in formal education than those born in Sweden (see Table 4).<sup>70</sup> The main difference is that foreign-born people are especially likely to participate later in life. However, the high share of migrants in education is not necessarily a positive sign. Due to the activation policy—i.e., measures targeted at people receiving public income support—many unemployed migrants are more or less forced to participate in education programs in order to keep their economic support. Some studies even claim that adult education has become

65 Eurostat, “Continuing vocational training statistics,” January 2013, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Continuing\\_vocational\\_training\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Continuing_vocational_training_statistics).

66 Małgorzata Kuczera, *Skills Beyond School: Commentary on Sweden, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013), [www.myh.se/Documents/Publikationer/Rapporter/a-skills-beyond-school-commentary-one-sweden.pdf](http://www.myh.se/Documents/Publikationer/Rapporter/a-skills-beyond-school-commentary-one-sweden.pdf).

67 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), *Vocational Education and Training in Sweden: Short Description*, Cedefop Panorama series; 180 (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2009), [www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/5198\\_EN.PDF](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/5198_EN.PDF).

68 Ministry of Education and Research Sweden, *Skills beyond School*.

69 Pieter Bevelander and Inge Dahlstedt, “General versus Vocational Education and Employment Integration of Immigrants in Sweden,” *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 8, No. 2 (2010):158–92, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2010.480879>; Inge Dahlstedt, “Occupational Match. Over- and Undereducation Among Immigrants in the Swedish Labor Market,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 12, No. 3 (2010): 349–67, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12134-010-0172-2>.

70 Statistics Sweden, *Theme: Education Adult Learning 2010*.

a repository for migrants, and that educational efforts such as introduction programs prolong the transition to the labor market.<sup>71</sup>

**Table 4. Share of Population (Ages 20-74) in Education by Country of Birth, Year of Immigration, and Form of Education, 2010**

Form of Education	Born in Sweden	Foreign Born	Foreign Born, Latest Immigration Year		
			0-5 years	5-10 years	10 years or more
<b>Formal Education</b>					
Basic higher education	7	6	9	7	5
Municipal adult education	2	6	11	12	3
Swedish for immigrants	0	6	21	5	0
Higher vocational education	1	0	0	1	1
Labor market education	0	3	2	1	1
Other formal education	2	2	3	4	2
Total in formal education	12	24	47	29	12
<b>Nonformal Education</b>					
Staff training	32	23	15	19	26
Courses and study groups outside of work	12	9	7	8	10

Source: Statistics Sweden, *Theme: Education Adult Learning 2010* (Stockholm: Statistics Sweden, 2012), [www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/AA9998\\_2010A01\\_BR\\_A40BR1201.pdf](http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/AA9998_2010A01_BR_A40BR1201.pdf).

## IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Swedish migration policy is not designed to meet economic objectives or fulfill labor-market needs. Most immigrants arrive without a job and income, and are given equal rights to welfare and services. The labor market has struggled to absorb the record immigration of the past couple years, and large gaps between the employment rates of the native and foreign born persist. There are promising signs of change: foreign-born employment is steadily rising, accounting for almost all the increases in jobs over the past decade. But the number of the foreign born who are unemployed and outside the labor force has also tended to increase at the same pace. These poor outcomes can be explained both by factors relating to individual characteristics and resources, and the structure of the labor market. A majority of immigrants are humanitarian and family migrants without knowledge of the Swedish language.

Government efforts have focused on strengthening individual human capital and incentives to work, with substantial investments in language training, the validation of foreign credentials and experience, supplementary education, and labor market preparation. Humanitarian migrants and their families are eligible for a two-year introduction plan, and other migrants have the same access to services as do Swedish citizens. Almost all services are free of charge.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Integrationsverket, *Rapport Integration 2005* (Elanders Berlings, Malmö, 2006); Elisabeth Svantesson, "Determinants of Immigrants Early Labor Market Integration" (working paper No 2, Örebro University, 2006), [www.oru.se/PageFiles/15372/WP%202%2006.pdf](http://www.oru.se/PageFiles/15372/WP%202%2006.pdf); Elisabeth Svantesson and Ted Aranki, "Do Introduction Programs Affect the Probability of Immigrants getting Work?" (working paper No. 3, Örebro University, 2006), [www.oru.se/PageFiles/15372/WP%203%2006.pdf](http://www.oru.se/PageFiles/15372/WP%203%2006.pdf).



Labor market integration in Sweden takes time. In general, most newly arrived migrants spend several years developing their human capital before they can seriously compete in the labor market. At the same time, labor market structures reduce employers' demand for labor. The industrial sector has declined while the service sector has increased its share of total employment, even as low-skilled jobs have been replaced by high-skilled ones. As qualification requirements in the labor market increase, employers are less likely to take hiring risks. To counter such trends, government incentives to hire the foreign born, especially through subsidized employment are promising. In addition to subsidized employment, studies show that supplementary education and the validation of foreign credentials and skills can have a positive effect—but the evidence is still inconclusive.

Sweden's experience shows that it is difficult to improve labor market integration for immigrant newcomers. Despite increased government spending, improved access to labor market services, and a willingness to try innovative measures, outcomes have not improved. While migrants access services in large numbers, the results are often disappointing. Language training seems to have limited effect on the labor market position of the foreign born and recent efforts to improve the introduction program for humanitarian migrants have not lived up to expectations.

The profile of immigrants Sweden receives has made it difficult to increase the effectiveness of the labor market integration policies. Changing immigration policy—or perhaps, completely redesigning the basic structures of the welfare state—might be the only way to significantly improve outcomes. But immigration policy and integration are seen as two different policy areas, and no recent governments in Sweden have been inclined to adapt immigration policies in order to improve labor-market integration.

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*The labor market has struggled to absorb the record immigration of the past couple years, and large gaps between the employment rates of the native and foreign born persist.*

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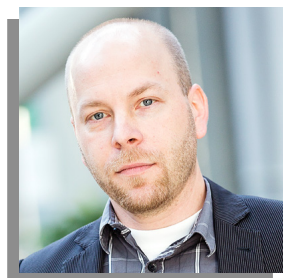




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