



SHARE

Building a resettlement network for European municipalities, cities and regions www.resettlement.eu

THE SHARE PROJECT

Being an integral part of the wider European Resettlement Network, the SHARE project offers opportunities for structured dialogue, exchange of practices and networking between cities, regional actors and NGO partners, and between experienced resettlement countries and countries planning or considering resettlement.

With a worldwide membership, staff and operations and working with migrants and refugees in more than 40 countries, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) serves and protects uprooted people – refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants – regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality.

Since its creation in 1951, ICMC has identified and accompanied one million refugees for resettlement and provides expertise through the ICMC-UNHCR Resettlement Deployment Scheme.

SHARE Network National Briefing: SWEDEN

1. Governance

Sweden is governed by a national parliament ('Riksdag'), and is divided into 20 County Councils ('landstingen') and 290 municipalities ('kommuner'). Riksdag, county council and municipal authorities are elected at the same time, every 4 years. The next round of elections is due in September 2014.



Sweden has a history of strong local government. The principle of local self-government is enshrined in the Swedish constitution and practically set out in the Local Government Act (1991). Municipalities are responsible for a wide range of functions, including:

- Social welfare
- Pre-school, primary & secondary education
- Housing
- Planning
- Water & waste collection

County Councils deal almost exclusively with the provision of healthcare. County Administrative Boards (CABs) are a branch of central government at county level, with responsibility for ensuring counties proceed in accordance with national policy and legislation. CAB members are appointed by central government.

2. Regionalisation

The county council level of government is not constitutionally recognised, and the OECD has characterised Sweden's political system as an 'hourglass', with strong central and local government and relatively weak County Councils. Since the mid-1990s, Sweden has undertaken several reforms and initiatives to decentralise policy-making and strengthen the role of regions, resulting in a pattern of 'asymmetric regionalisation' across the country.

In the late 1990s, 2 pilot regions (Skåne and Västra Götaland) were created by merging several County Councils. The 2 regions are governed by elected assemblies, and have taken over a number of functions from the relevant CABs. In 2009, the pilot regions were made permanent. Since 2002, County Councils have been able to merge to form regional coordination bodies, and 14 have been established to date. These bodies are indirectly elected, and responsible for a range of regional development functions. The Swedish government is currently considering the future of regionalisation, including potentially extending the pilot region model and including areas such as employment and higher education within regional competencies.

3. Migration – an overview

During 2006-11, an average of 80-100,000 people migrated to Sweden every year. These numbers reflect those individuals who are registered with a municipality as 'immigrated' - a requirement for those intending to remain in the country for a substantial period - and so may not capture short-term migrant categories such as seasonal workers.

Family reunification is the most common cause of migration to Sweden from countries outside of the EU and the Nordic Council, constituting 37% of all



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immigration in 2012. The vast majority of these migrants join family members granted residence in Sweden as refugees. Immigrants from EU and EEA countries - the majority from Nordic neighbouring countries, Poland, Germany and Romania - made up 20% of all immigration in 2010, and non-EU/EEA students (15.5%) and workers (23%) were also substantial contributing categories.

During 2013, Sweden received just under 54,270 applications for asylum. The most common countries of origin of asylum seekers in Sweden are Syria, Eritrea, Somalia and Afghanistan. Sweden receives high numbers of asylum applications from unaccompanied children relative to the rest of the EU, the majority of which are from Afghani nationals. In 2013, just over 50% of initial asylum decisions granted some form of protection and residency.

From January 2005 to June 2013, 16,601 refugees have been resettled to Sweden.

4. Policy – Asylum, Integration & Citizenship

• Asylum

The Swedish Migration Board (SMB) is responsible for refugee status determination (RSD) in Sweden, and for arranging accommodation and a daily financial allowance to cover basic living costs for those asylum seekers who cannot provide this for themselves. Asylum seekers who can prove their identity are able to take up employment in Sweden at any point during the time their claim is being determined.

Sweden operates a national distribution system for asylum seeker accommodation, providing accommodation in municipalities throughout the country. The SMB agrees with municipalities the number of asylum seekers to be accommodated in their area, and works with municipalities to source suitable accommodation. At October 2011, 19,762 adult asylum seekers (58% of all adult asylum seekers living in Sweden) were accommodated in SMB accommodation in 212 municipalities across all counties of Sweden. A further 14,279 were living in accommodation they had arranged themselves, with large numbers of these resident in the 3 main urban centres of Göteborg, Malmö and Stockholm. Also in October 2011, 919 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were accommodated by 197 municipalities in all but one of the Swedish counties.

Municipalities are responsible for providing organised activities for adult asylum seekers, including Swedish language lessons, and offering education and childcare to asylum-seeking children and young people and their families on the same basis as other Swedish residents. County Councils provide asylum-seeking children with the same health and dental care as other resident children, and adult asylum seekers with care that 'cannot be deferred' (including maternity care). The SMB is responsible for the payment of compensation to municipalities and county councils for the reception measures they take.

• Resettlement

The SMB is responsible for the selection and transfer of refugees resettled to Sweden. SMB delegations undertake in-country selection missions or, where this is not possible, select cases on the basis of a dossier submission by UNHCR. All resettled refugees are given a permanent residence permit prior to departure.

Refugees are resettled to municipalities (150 of the 290 municipalities in Sweden currently receive refugees) which are responsible for the provision of reception and introduction activities and support. Municipal participation in the programme is voluntary and based on written agreements signed prior to the refugees' arrival. From 2007, County Administrative Boards have arranged written agreements with municipalities and coordinated the allocation and placement of



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resettled refugees. Municipalities receive compensation per individual refugee and for reception activities they undertake.

- **Integration**

Swedish integration policy is set out in the Swedish government's 2008 publication 'Empowerment against exclusion – a strategy for integration'. As part of a wider re-organisation of central government responsibilities introduced in January 2011, coordinating responsibility for integration was transferred from the Ministry of Integration & Gender Equality - which was then abolished - to the Ministry of Employment.

A new system for integrating new arrivals in Sweden was introduced in December 2010, focusing on access to the labour market as the main route to integration and aiming to standardise introduction measures across the country. 'New arrivals' in this context are those aged 20-64 (or 18-19 with no parents in Sweden) who have received a residency permit as the outcome of an asylum claim, or who are joining a family member who has been granted this type of residency within the past 2 years.

Responsibility for coordinating introduction activities has been transferred from municipalities to the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES). The SMB refers all 'new arrivals' are linked to their local job centre, which will assess their skills and develop an individual introduction plan. Introduction plan activities run for 40 hours per week for a maximum of 24 months, and include as a minimum 'Swedish for Immigrants' language tuition, employment preparation (training or workplace experience) and civic and social orientation.

Those following an introduction plan can select an 'introduction guide' from a bank of organisations contracted by PES to support individuals into employment, education and/or training, and receive a standard financial introduction benefit (receipt of which is conditional on following introduction plan activities). The job centre will encourage individuals to move to municipalities where they are more likely to find employment, and will assist in finding housing in these areas.

Municipalities agree how many refugees they will receive and guarantee accommodation for them. Municipalities retain responsibility for language training, civic and social orientation, schooling and childcare, and are compensated for the cost of these activities. County Administrative Boards are responsible for coordinating the activities of all parties and for evaluating the overall programme.

- **Citizenship**

Any foreigner legally resident in Sweden for 5 years, and who has not been convicted of a criminal offence whilst in the country, can apply for Swedish citizenship. Language skills or special knowledge of the state are not required, and dual citizenship is permitted. Those recognised as refugees or stateless persons can apply for Swedish citizenship after 4 years of residency. Children born in Sweden to non-Swedish parents retain their parents' citizenship until such time as their parents become naturalised.



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