

Report from  
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# The integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market – National Report Sweden



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**EMN Study 2023:1**  
The integration of applicants for international protection  
in the labour market – National Report Sweden  
**Report from EMN Sweden 2023**  
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## Executive summary

This report represents the Swedish contribution to the 2022 EMN study *The integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market*, which was performed in EMN Member Countries and Observer Countries. This national contribution was produced by the Swedish National Contact Point of the European Migration Network (EMN). Experts from the Ministry of Employment, the Migration Agency, the Public Employment Agency, and the County Administrative Boards all made valuable contributions and reviewed a draft version. The report covers the period from 2017 through June 2022.

Sweden has a specific strategy to support the labour market entry of third-country nationals, but this does not include applicants for international protection. However, there are co-ordinated and targeted measures with a view to promote labour market preparedness / entry of applicants for international protection. Applicants can also access some mainstreaming services such as to register as job seekers at the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) and if they are employed their children can attend pre-school. Targeted measures include Swedish language training, labour market preparedness activities, civic orientation, and a digital tool for skills mapping / matching. Responsibilities for integration measures are shared between the national, regional, and local levels. The Ministry of Employment is the principal government ministry responsible. The Swedish Migration Agency, County Administrative Boards and the PES are arguably the main public authorities involved. Meanwhile, integration measures for applicants for international protection are largely provided by civil society and to some extent by municipalities. Participation is not obligatory, with the exception of a civic orientation course provided by the Migration Agency. The bulk of activities are offered within the framework of "Early measures for asylum seekers". These were launched in 2017 with the purpose to provide a meaningful stay for applicants pending a decision in their case, while at the same time providing a head start to integration for those that are granted a residence permit. In addition to offered activities there is a wide range of, largely internet based, targeted information and self-services in multiple languages available. Finally, recognition of qualifications, and skills / trade evaluations is also available.

Like other EU Member States, Sweden has implemented rules for labour market access for applicants for international protection. More specifically, Sweden has a provision of dispensation that makes it possible for an applicant to start working immediately after having applied until he or she receives a final decision. The Migration Agency initiates this procedure for all applicants 16 years or older. The assessment is normally done by case workers during the personal interview for the application for international protection. Applicants do not need to have a job offer. Formally, applicants become exempt from the work permit requirement. Some categories of applicants cannot become exempt, e.g. those that do not cooperate to establish their identity, or are subject to accelerated procedures and / or transfer to another Member State according to the Dublin Regulation.

The exemption gives full access to the labour market, i.e. no sectors are excluded. However, some employers may have restrictions on hiring applicants

for international protection and some positions are by law restricted to Swedish citizens.

The labour market situation of applicants for international protection is not consistently monitored and there is limited data availability. In the period, approximately 42 000 persons were granted exemption from the work permit requirement, which represented 45 to 65 per cent of applicants in individual years. With some exceptions, the major countries corresponded to the major countries of origin for applicants for international protection in the period, e.g. Syria, Iran, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Ukraine. More men than women were granted access to the labour market, but the number of male applicants was consistently higher. Most of the applicants granted labour market access belonged in the 25 – 34 year age bracket.

Overall, experts estimate that few applicants find employment. Employers are obliged to report to the Migration Agency when they hire an applicant, but data availability in this regard is limited. There is no information available with regard to self-employment amongst applicants for international protection.

Public and policy debate about the labour market situation for applicants for international protection has been limited.

With regard to challenges, some stakeholders e.g. argued that the conditions imposed on applicants to be granted access to the labour market are challenging to fulfil for some people and / or that processing times were too long. In addition, there were examples of misuse / exploitation where applicants for international protection arrived with the primary intention to work. Meanwhile, the Migration Agency's response to these developments introduced safeguards that benefit both applicants (job candidates) and employers, e.g. that the authorisation to work is entered digitally on the asylum seeker card. Finally, there were examples of integration measures that were considered successful, notably Swedish language training provided by civil society, and projects on labour market preparedness / vocational language training for highly skilled people, organised by other stakeholders.

## Sammanfattning på svenska

Denna rapport utgör det svenska bidraget till 2022 års EMN-studie *The integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market*, som genomfördes i EMN-medlemsländer och observatörländer. Detta nationella bidrag har tagits fram av den svenska nationella kontaktpunkten för det Europeiska Migrationsnätverket (EMN). Experter från Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, Migrationsverket, Arbetsförmedlingen och Länsstyrelserna har alla bidragit med värdefull information och kommenterat utkast av studien. Rapporten omfattar perioden från 2017 till och med juni 2022.

Sverige har en särskild policy för att stödja arbetsmarknadsinträde för tredjelandsmedborgare, men asylsökande omfattas inte av denna. Det finns dock koordinerade och riktade åtgärder som har som mål att främja

anställningsbarhet / arbetsmarknadsinträde bland asylsökande. Sökande har också tillgång till en del generella tjänster som att registrera sig som arbetssökande hos Arbetsförmedlingen och om de har anställning kan deras barn gå i förskola. Riktade åtgärder omfattar kurser i svenska, arbetsmarknadsförberedande aktiviteter, samhällsorientering och ett digitalt verktyg för kompetenskartläggning / matchning. Ansvar för integrationsåtgärder är delat mellan nationell, regional och lokal nivå. Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet är huvudansvarig inom regeringskansliet. Migrationsverket, Länsstyrelserna och Arbetsförmedlingen är de myndigheter som framför allt är ansvariga för området. Samtidigt genomförs integrationsåtgärder för asylsökande till stor del av aktörer i civilsamhället och till viss del av kommunerna. Deltagande är inte obligatoriskt, men undantag för den samhällsintroduktion som Migrationsverket ansvarar för. En överväldigande del av de aktiviteter som finns erbjuds inom ramen för "Tidiga insatser för asylsökande". Dessa lanserades 2017 med syfte att ge sökande en meningsfull vistelse under väntan på beslut samtidigt som de ska ge ett försprång mot integration för de som beviljas ett uppehållstillstånd. Utöver dessa aktiviteter finns det ett brett urval av framför allt nät-baserad riktad information och självservice tillgänglig på många olika språk. Slutligen finns tjänster för validering, både av examina och yrkeskunskaper.

Som andra EU-länder har Sverige infört regler gällande asylsökandes tillträde till arbetsmarknaden. Mer specifikt har Sverige en undantagsregel som gör det möjligt för en asylsökande att börja arbeta i närtid efter sin ansökan fram till dess att han eller hon får sitt slutliga beslut. Migrationsverket påbörjar denna process för alla sökande som är 16 år eller äldre. Bedömningen görs vanligen av handläggare i samband med asylutredningen. Den sökande behöver inte ha ett anställningserbjudande. Formellt sett blir de sökande undantagna från skyldigheten att ha arbetstillstånd. Vissa kategorier av asylsökande kan inte få undantag, t.ex. de som inte samarbetar med att klargöra sin identitet eller som är föremål för omedelbar verkställighet och / eller överföring till ett annat EU-land enligt Dublinförordningen.

Undantaget ger fullt tillträde arbetsmarknaden, det vill säga inga branscher är undantagna. En del arbetsgivare kan dock ha begränsningar när det gäller att anställa asylsökande och en del tjänster är genom lagstiftning begränsade till personer som har svenskt medborgarskap.

Läget på arbetsmarknaden för asylsökande bevakas inte systematiskt och tillgången på information är begränsad. Under perioden fick ungefär 42 000 personer undantag från skyldigheten att ha arbetstillstånd, vilket motsvarar 45 till 65 procent av ansökningarna under enskilda år. Med några undantag motsvarade de stora länderna de stora ursprungsländerna för asylsökande, t.ex. Syrien, Iran, Irak, Uzbekistan, Georgien och Ukraina. Fler män än kvinnor gavs tillträde till arbetsmarknaden, men antalet asylsökande män var konsekvent högre. De flesta sökande som fick tillgång till arbetsmarknaden fanns i åldersspannet 25-34 år.

Generellt sett bedömer experter att få asylsökande hittar arbete. Arbetsgivare är skyldiga att meddela Migrationsverket när de anställer en asylsökande, men tillgången på statistik i det avseendet är begränsad. Det finns ingen information tillgänglig när det gäller egenföretagande bland asylsökande.

Den offentliga och politiska debatten om arbetsmarknadsläget för asylsökande har varit begränsad.

Vad gäller utmaningar har vissa aktörer gjort gällande att kraven på asylsökande för att ges tillträde till arbetsmarknaden är svåra att uppfylla för vissa och/eller att handläggningstiderna varit för långa. Därutöver har det förekommit exempel på missbruk/exploatering där asylsökande kommit med främsta syfte att arbeta. Samtidigt har Migrationsverket mött dessa utmaningar med att införa säkerhetsåtgärder som både sökande (arbetssökande) och arbetsgivare har fördel av, t.ex. att rätten att arbeta är digitalt införd på LMA-kortet. Avslutningsvis finns det exempel på integrationsåtgärder som bedömts som framgångsrika, speciellt kurser i svenska som anordnas av aktörer inom civilsamhället, och projekt som syftar till arbetsmarknadsförberedelse/yrkessvenska för högkvalificerade som anordnats av andra aktörer.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and rationale for the study

The study focuses on the integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market.

In the EU, access to the labour market is a shared competence, regulated for different groups under various legislative acts. For applicants of international protection access to the labour market is regulated under Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU).<sup>1</sup> The idea of allowing access to the labour market for the applicants of international protection is connected with the aim of promoting the self-sufficiency of applicants even whilst their applications are being processed. This contributes also to having better prospects for eventual integration of those who will ultimately be granted protection.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, access to the labour market with an aim to increase applicants' self-reliance and possible integration prospects is regulated in EU Member States by the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) currently in force. However, in terms of practical implementation, EU Member States have considerable flexibility in deciding whether to allow this access once the nine months deadline set as a maximum in the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) is reached, directly after the application is lodged, or sometime in between. Although almost all EU Member States give applicants access to the labour market during the asylum procedure, the period after which access to employment is granted, varies considerably from one Member State to another.

EU Member States experienced an unprecedented influx of incoming applicants for international protection in the period of 2014-2016,<sup>3</sup> which, in addition to

<sup>1</sup> Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 96–116.

<sup>2</sup> Recital 23 in the Directive 2013/33/EU.

<sup>3</sup> Overall figures of Eurostat show a total of 431 095 first time asylum applicants in 2013 and 626 960 in 2014 in the European Union. In 2015 and 2016 more than 1.2 million first time applicants for international protection were registered.

immense pressure on the asylum systems, also led to changes in the integration programmes and activities offered to applicants for international protection. According to the results of a study carried out by the European Migration Network (EMN) in 2018,<sup>4</sup> one of the main areas where the changes were detected was access to the labour market, with the study reporting on different measures taken after 2015 to improve such access for applicants of international protection. Although, the above-mentioned study brought out several changes EU Member States carried out in the period of 2014-2016, an in-depth study for the more recent years is needed to examine further the laws, policies and practices (measures) of the EMN Member States and Observer Countries and developments when it comes to the integration in the labour market of applicants for international protection.

As noted above, the first point of divergence between the EU Member States is *when* labour market access is granted. Further issues relate to variations in the laws, policies and measures which guarantee that this access, when granted, is *effective*.

Under the expression 'effective access', there are several questions that need to be looked at. As the practical implementation of access to the labour market is under national laws, questions arise about whether EMN Member States and Observer countries, for example, use labour market tests, and what kind of impact they have in practice. Another basis for divergence comes from the rights that applicants in different EU Member States are entitled to when accessing the labour market and whether they are guaranteed equal treatment with nationals of the Member State or similar to as other third-country nationals who are working in the European Union (EU). Another issue which allows divergences between the EMN Member States and would need to be explored further, is whether applicants for international protection are excluded from some specific labour market sectors and, if so, if this is limited in time. Another question would be on the rights of the applicants in different EU Member States as regards the length of employment permits and hence, contract duration, equal treatment for freedom of association and affiliation, education and vocational training, the recognition of professional qualifications and diplomas and social security.

Access to the labour market for the applicants of international protection would need to be in full compliance with labour market standards (such as a minimum wage, working conditions), which should also help to avoid distortions in the labour market. Research suggests that differences between EU Member States' rules on access to the labour market may also create incentives for secondary movements of asylum seekers.<sup>5</sup>

While several EU Member States do not apply any specific restrictions<sup>6</sup> with regard to the applicants' access to the labour market but as integration

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<sup>4</sup> European Migration Network, [Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers 2014-2016](#), 2018, last accessed 6 February 2023.

<sup>5</sup> European Migration Network, [EMN Policy brief on migrant's movements through the Mediterranean](#), 2016, See also: [European Parliament, 'Secondary movements of asylum-seekers in the EU asylum system'](#), 2017, Brekke J.P., Brochmann G., 'Stuck in Transit: Secondary Migration of Asylum Seekers in Europe, National Differences, and the Dublin Regulation', (2015), *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28 (2), p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> [Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection \(recast\) COM\(2016\) 465 final 2016/0222 \(COD\)](#)

measures vary, it is important to have an up-to-date and clearer overview of the ways the integration to the labour market is currently provided and facilitated by the EMN Member States and Observer Countries.

In a study carried out by the EMN and published in 2019, which explored the labour market integration of third-country nationals in the EU Member States, the following most common obstacles were identified:<sup>7</sup>

- The accreditation of job qualifications / assessment of skills of those arriving from outside the EU;
- Tackling discrimination within recruitment processes and;
- Managing varying levels of language skills in integration measures.

These difficulties were found to be more pronounced when dealing with migrant women or vulnerable groups.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that similar difficulties can come into play when it comes to ensuring effective access to the labour market for applicants of international protection.

## 1.2 EU legal and policy context

According to article 78 the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (EUTF)<sup>9</sup> the EU shall develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection with a view to offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*. According to the second paragraph of the same article, the EU shall adopt measures for a common European asylum system comprising standards concerning the conditions for the reception of applicants for asylum or subsidiary protection. With this aim in mind and in order to promote the self-sufficiency of applicants and to limit wide discrepancies between EU Member States, the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU)<sup>10</sup> provides for rules on the applicants' access to the labour market. According to article 2 of the Reception Conditions Directive EU Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant, in accordance with their national law, while ensuring that applicants have effective access to the labour market.

According to article 15 in the current Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) EU Member States shall ensure that applicants have access to the labour market no later than nine months from the date when the application for international protection was lodged, if a first instance decision by the competent authority has not been taken and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant.

According to the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) article 15(2), EU Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the

<sup>7</sup> European Migration Network, '[EMN Study on Labour Market Integration of Third-Country Nationals in EU Member States](#)', 2019, last accessed on 04 August 2022.

<sup>8</sup> This is also confirmed by other studies for example European Commission and Joint Research Centre, '[Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status](#)', 2020

<sup>9</sup> [Treaty of the Functioning of the EU \(EUTF\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) OJ L 180, 29.6.2013

labour market for the applicant, in accordance with their national law, while ensuring that applicants have *effective access* to the labour market. When it comes to ensuring access to the labour market to the applicants of international protection, for reasons of labour market policies, EU Member States may give priority to EU citizens and nationals of State parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EAA), and to legally resident third-country nationals. According to Article 15(3) of the same Directive access to the labour market for applicants of international protection shall not be withdrawn during appeals procedures, where an appeal against a negative decision in a regular procedure has suspensive effect, until such time as a negative decision on the appeal is notified.

In the Reception Condition Directive Recast proposal COM(2016) 465 final, the European Commission has proposed to further reduce the time-limit for access to the labour market from no later than nine months to no later than six months from the lodging of the application. In the same proposal, EU Member States were also encouraged to grant access to the labour market no later than three months from the lodging of the application where the application is likely to be well-founded.

### 1.3 Study aims and primary questions

The overall aim of the study is to inform the target audience (e.g. practitioners, policy officers, decision makers at both EU and national level, including the European Commission and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), academic researchers, civil society organisations and the general public) on the labour market access of applicants for international protection, identifying existing laws, policies and measures regarding the labour market integration of applicants, good practices and challenges in the period of January 2017-June 2022.

The study's main objectives are:

- To map current national legal and policy frameworks in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries as regards providing access to the labour market for international protection applicants.<sup>11</sup>
- To map current national measures in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries as regards supporting effective access to the labour market for international protection applicants, and potential obstacles that hinder access.
- To identify the key actors, including where relevant on the local and regional level in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries, responsible / involved in the design and implementation of support measures aimed at facilitating the labour market integration of international protection applicants.
- To provide examples of good practices and challenges from EMN Member States and Observer Countries on the measures adopted at national level, but also, where applicable, at the regional or local levels, to

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<sup>11</sup> Taking into account what is foreseen in the Article 15 of the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU).

facilitate access to the labour market for applicants of international protection.

## 1.4 Definitions

The following key terms are used. The definitions are taken from the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary,<sup>12</sup> unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

Term	Definition
<b>Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications</b>	In the EU migration context, conditions and requirements governing the admission to procedures for recognition of professional diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications for third-country nationals (legally resident third-country nationals, beneficiaries of international protection) in EU Member States in accordance with the relevant national procedures.
<b>Access to employment (also referred to in the study as labour market)</b>	In the EU migration context, authorization of third-country nationals (legally resident migrants, beneficiaries and applicants for international protection to engage in employed or self-employed activities in EU Member States subject to the rules generally applicable to the profession and public service, as well as employment and working conditions.
<b>Applicant for international protection</b>	A third-country national or a stateless person who has made an application for international protection in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.
<b>Integration</b>	In the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States
<b>Integration indicators</b>	Benchmarks used to measure the integration of migrants in specific policy areas, such as employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

## 2. Integration of applicants for international protection - data and debates

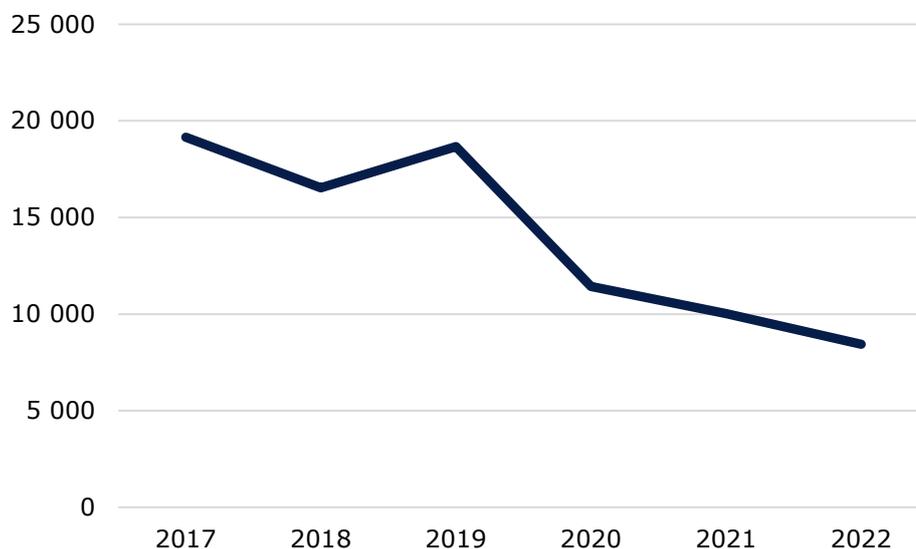
### 2.1 Overview of the main trends in international protection applicants

There was a noticeable trend of a decreasing number of applications for international protection in Sweden in the 2017-2021 period, going from 19 155 in 2017 to 10 020 in 2021. However, from January through June 2022, 8 440

<sup>12</sup> EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, online: [EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/emn/glossary), last accessed on 31 January 2022.

applications were received, which represents an increasing trend compared to the previous year.<sup>13</sup>

#### All applicants for international protection 2017-Q.2 2022, rounded



Male applicants accounted for an at times clear majority of applicants. E.g., in 2018 10 280 applications were received by men, whereas women accounted for 6 250. Throughout the period the share of male applicants hovered around 60 per cent of the total number of applicants.

With regard to age distribution, the bulk of applicants were in the two age brackets 18-34 years and 35-64 years. The 18-34 years age group was by far the major group in any year in the period, and accounted for more than half of the total in any individual year. Overall, the distribution in the four age groups was quite stable over time with some marginal increase in the 35-64 years group with a corresponding decrease in the 18-34 years group. Finally, younger applicants (14-17 years) were the third biggest group and older applicants (65 years or more) were the smallest group in any year.

Applicants from **Syria** were the major group throughout 2017-2022 (through June), with numbers ranging from 3 335 in 2017 down to 1 410 in 2021. **Iraq, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Georgia, Uzbekistan, stateless** and **Somalia** were the other top 10 countries in the period. Nearly half of all Ukrainian applicants (2 235) in the period arrived in 2022 and Afghanistan also increased sharply after 2021, whereas numbers for Eritrea were decreasing over consecutive years. In the case of Georgia, the bulk of applicants arrived in the 2017-2019 period, after that numbers were significantly lower.

<sup>13</sup> Data on applicants for international protection from Eurostat. Data for 2022 is limited to the January to June period.

**Turkey, Albania, Palestine, Mongolia, and Russia** were following immediately after the top 10. Russian applicants increased in 2022 compared to the previous year, whereas Albanian applicants decreased significantly over the period.

## 2.2 Data availability and monitoring of the labour market situation

There is no comprehensive reporting / data collection on labour market integration and / or employment rates of applicants for international protection in Sweden. The general opinion seems to be that few applicants for international protection have employment.<sup>14</sup> Some government agencies such as the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) and the Swedish Migration Agency perform limited data collection. The PES is managing a digital tool where new arrivals and international protection applicants can register their skills profiles. Limited data is currently available from this tool (e.g., number of profiles registered, profile language, number of active users).<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, employers that hire an applicant for international protection are required to report this to the Migration Agency, and the same obligation applies when employment is terminated.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, County Administrative Boards administer grants to civil society organisations and municipalities as part of their co-ordinating role for the government assignment "Early measures for asylum seekers". Annual reports are published that give an overview of recent developments within the framework of this responsibility.<sup>17</sup> Some reporting is also available from the Swedish Agency for Regional and Economic Growth, which launched a number of projects aimed at labour market preparedness / self-employment of international protection applicants in 2015-2016, some of which continued into 2017.<sup>18</sup> The Swedish National Council of Adult Education, has records on applicants' participation in Swedish language training.<sup>19</sup> Finally, evaluations / analyses of some integration measures and the waiting time in the reception system were performed.

Some of the data registered by the Migration Agency is possible to extract. Primarily this applies to the number of issued exemptions to the work permit requirement. Since there is no per se application required to be granted exemption from the work permit requirement, there is no data on refusals.

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<sup>14</sup> The Swedish Government Official Report [Ett ordnat mottagande – gemensamt ansvar för snabb etablering eller återvändande \(SOU 2018:22\) \(regeringen.se\)](#), p.297ff, concluded that few applicants for international protection were working. The report contains data from the 2012-2017 period, as per data collection performed by the Migration Agency. E.g., Joyce (2019), "Sverige kan lära om integration från sina grannar" in *Ekonomisk debatt, no 2/2019*, states that only 2 per cent of applicants for international protection have employment. See [47-2-pj.pdf \(nationalekonomi.se\)](#), last accessed 4 November 2022.

<sup>15</sup> The Government commissioned the PES to develop this skills tool in 2016 and it was operational in 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 7, section 1a of the Aliens Ordinance (2006:97), this provision was amended in 2008.

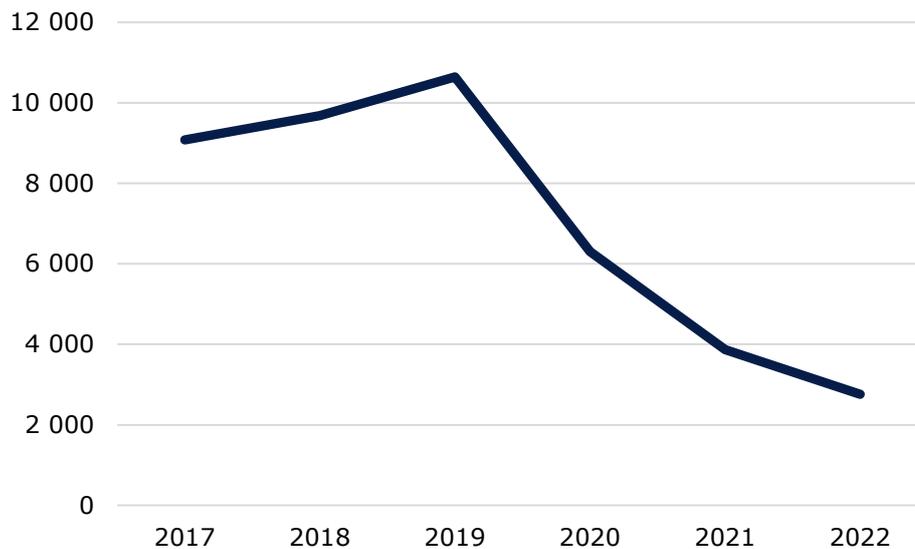
<sup>17</sup> County Administrative Boards: [Tidiga insatser för asylsökande återrapportering 2021 - Länsstyrelsernas integrationsarbete \(lansstyrelsen.se\)](#), last accessed 15 November 2022.

<sup>18</sup> The Swedish Agency for Regional and Economic Growth: [Rapport Snabbare integration 170505 nytt förord \(tillvaxtverket.se\)](#), last accessed 15 November 2022.

<sup>19</sup> The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: [Folkbildning med asylsökande 2021 - Folkbildningsrådet \(folkbildningsradet.se\)](#), last accessed 15 November 2022.

In 2017, 9 077 exemptions from the work permit requirement were granted, compared to 9 681 in 2018, 10 644 in 2019, 6 303 in 2020 and 3 862 in 2021. In the January-June period 2022, 2 759 exemptions were issued. In the period a total of 42 332 (26 395 men, 15 937 women) exemptions from the work permit requirement were issued.<sup>20</sup> In the individual years, this represents 50 per cent (2017), 61 per cent (2018), 65 per cent (2019), 64 per cent (2020) and 45 per cent (2021) of applicants. In January-June 2022, 49 per cent were issued exemptions. The share of applicants being exempt from the work permit requirement is based on the age group 16 years or older.

#### Applications for international protection with exemption from the work permit requirement 2017-Q.2 2022



The top ten countries in the period were **Syria, Iran, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey, Afghanistan, stateless, and Mongolia**, followed by **Colombia, Eritrea, Palestine, Albania, and Nicaragua**. Data suggests that comparatively fewer applicants from Afghanistan and Eritrea were granted access to the labour market, and this was particularly true for applicants from Somalia. A probable explanation is that more applicants from these countries were, inter alia, facing challenges in establishing their identity, which is one of the requirements to be granted access to the labour market. Meanwhile, while the number of applicants from Colombia and Nicaragua were comparatively fewer all told, many of these applicants appear to have fulfilled the conditions to be issued an exemption. The majority of applicants granted were in the 25-34 year age group.

<sup>20</sup> All data on issued exemptions from the work permit requirement is from the Swedish Migration Agency. Data for 2022 is under-reported since, at the time of writing, personal interviews had not yet been performed with all applicants for international protection that lodged their application in January-June 2022. Case officers examine whether or not to issue an exemption from the work permit requirement based on information and identity documents collected as part of the personal interview for asylum.

### 2.3 Main public and policy debates

Public and policy debates that specifically dealt with the labour market integration of applicants for international protection appear to have been limited. whereas a more thorough search in media and policy documents is not possible within the confines of this study, a few examples can shed light on some of the topics subject to discussion. The time frame for applicants' access to the labour market was subject to debate early in the period (2016-2017) in particular, when application processing times at the Migration Agency were long in the wake of the 2015 migrant and refugee crisis.<sup>21</sup>

E.g. the Swedish Confederation of Enterprise and the Swedish Federation of Business Owners argued in favour of facilitating labour market access for applicants, and criticised what they considered too much red tape (e.g. applicants' perceived challenges in acquiring a so called "co-ordination number" from the Tax Agency<sup>22</sup>) and long processing times for granting applicants access to the labour market. Additional lines of argument were essentially that it was problematic that applicants willing to work and whose skills are in demand by local employers were denied access to the labour market since they were unable to substantiate their identity.<sup>23</sup> In 2017, when the current system for activities aimed at applicants during their waiting period was introduced, the Migration Agency was no longer tasked to provide internships for applicants. The latter change was criticised by some employers saying that the system at the time was effective in promoting labour market entry and Swedish language learning for new arrivals and at no cost for tax payers.<sup>24</sup>

A search in parliamentary records in the period shows that the right to work for applicants for international protection e.g. was raised in written questions to the Government, e.g. with regard to how the Migration Agency examines and assesses access to the labour market for applicants that do not have identity documents. In addition, an example of abuse by employers was raised. The latter case concerned applicants for international protection with allegedly unsubstantiated claims, and exempt from the work permit requirement, which had arrived in Sweden with the intention to work in construction in Sweden.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sveriges Television: [162.000 kom till Sverige – 500 fick jobb | SVT Nyheter](#), 31 May 2016, last accessed 14 October 2022.

<sup>22</sup> The Swedish Tax Agency: [Coordination numbers - Tax | Skatteverket](#), last accessed 17 October 2022.

<sup>23</sup> The Swedish Confederation of Enterprise: [Låt asylsökande få jobba \(svensktnaringsliv.se\)](#), 31 May 2016, [Migrationsverket skapar problem för asylsökande \(svensktnaringsliv.se\)](#), 28 March 2017, Swedish Federation of Business Owners: [Integration - Företagarna \(foretagarna.se\)](#), last accessed 14 October 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Svenska Dagbladet: ["Stoppa inte asylsökande från chans till praktik" | SvD Debatt](#), 2 January 2017, last accessed 4 November 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Swedish Parliamentary Records: [AT-UND och krav på att klargöra sin identitet Skriftlig fråga 2016/17:1061 Johan Forssell \(M\) - Riksdagen](#), [Missbruk av undantag från arbetstillstånd Skriftlig fråga 2020/21:706 Lars Mejern Larsson \(S\) - Riksdagen](#), last accessed 14 October 2022.

## 3. Integration policies

### 3.1 Strategies to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals

The goal of Sweden's integration policy is to ensure equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background.<sup>26</sup> These policy objectives are to be achieved primarily through general policy measures for the whole of the population. However, applicants for international protection are not generally included in such measures.

Arguably, there is a hybrid approach with examples of both mainstreaming and targeted measures. The designated law on reception of applicants for international protection states that they should be offered activities, including the possibility for Swedish language learning, which should contribute in making their stay meaningful.<sup>27</sup> Applicants for international protection that are granted exemption from the work permit requirement have full access to the labour market. Furthermore, they can register as job seekers at the PES, but are not generally included in labour market policy measures. At the same time, there are examples of targeted measures for this group, e.g., "Early measures for asylum seekers" (includes civic orientation, labour market preparedness, Swedish language training, and health). In addition, it is compulsory for applicants to take part in a targeted civic orientation course. Finally, there are examples of government measures that target several groups, including applicants for international protection, beneficiaries of international protection, and beneficiaries of temporary protection.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2 Changes in the policy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals

Specifically with regard to applicants for international protection, policy changes were made. Previously, the Migration Agency e.g. had agreements with businesses and public actors that provided internship opportunities and in addition the Migration Agency was responsible for providing Swedish language training. However, these responsibilities were phased out in 2016-2017 and eventually replaced by the "Early measures for asylum seekers" system. Conversely, in 2020 the Government commissioned the Migration Agency to develop and perform compulsory civic orientation for applicants for international protection.<sup>29</sup> Civic orientation, which includes information about study options

<sup>26</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: [Mål för nyanländas etablering - Regeringen.se](#), last accessed 2 November 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Swedish Parliament: [Lag \(1994:137\) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl. Svensk författningssamling 1994:1994:137 t.o.m. SFS 2022:1006 - Riksdagen](#), last accessed 4 November 2022. Act (1994:137) on the reception of asylum seekers and others, Section 4.

<sup>28</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: [Uppdrag att fördela medel till utbildningar för nyanlända och asylsökande med erfarenhet av arbete inom hälso- och sjukvård eller utländsk vårdutbildning - Regeringen.se](#), last accessed 28 September 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: [Uppdrag inför ett genomförande av obligatorisk samhällsintroduktion för asylsökande \(regeringen.se\), last accessed 24 November 2022.](#)

and the labour market, is performed by the Migration Agency since 1 October 2021.<sup>30</sup>

Early intervention is generally considered to have a positive impact on the integration process. When the waiting times for asylum decisions increased in 2015 it became even more important that the waiting time could be spent in a meaningful way. To this end the Government allocated funding and in early 2017 introduced a new structure for coordinating early measures for international protection applicants.<sup>31</sup> These provide international protection applicants with a wide array of preparatory activities, such as information about Swedish society, opportunities for skills assessment and Swedish language training. Civil society organisations and in some cases municipalities are providers of "Early measures for asylum seekers".

In Sweden, access to early measures – i.e. integration preparing activities such as language courses or civic orientation – for international protection applicants, have varied over the years. Typically, measures have been introduced when the number of applicants and the waiting times for asylum decisions have increased, and then been reduced or abolished again when the waiting times were shortened.

The current system was introduced as a response to the high number of international protection applicants and the prolonged waiting times for asylum decisions in 2015. Early measures for asylum seekers are funded by the Government, coordinated by the County Administrative Boards (regional state agencies), and offered mainly by civil society organisations or in some cases municipalities. Early measures include language courses and social activities such as sports and language cafes. They are open to all applicants for international protection but are not mandatory.

With the current system the responsibility to find the measures lies with the applicant. Participation is not mandatory, but this also means that there is no right to get access to measures.

### **3.3 Governance structures in place to support the labour market integration**

Labour market integration of international protection applicants is a shared responsibility at national, regional and local level.

<sup>30</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: [Samhällsintroduktion blir obligatorisk för asylsökande - Migrationsverket](#), last accessed 14 November 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: [Tidiga insatser för asylsökande - Regeringen.se](#), last accessed 7 November 2022.

***National level/Responsible ministries:***

The Ministry of Employment: responsible for issues and matters concerning integration, the labour market, labour law and the work environment, for residents and applicants alike.

The Ministry of Justice: inter alia responsible for the authorities in the judicial system, migration and integration, and legislation e.g. in the areas of migration and asylum law.

***"Early measures for asylum seekers"***

This initiative was launched by the Government in 2016 and came into effect 1 February 2017. Early measures for asylum seekers aim at facilitating integration into Swedish society and working life by taking advantage of the period when applicants are waiting for a decision. The rationale is to use this time period in meaningful way, inter alia, with the purpose to shorten the path to integration for those that are granted residence. Projects are centred on learning the Swedish language, understanding of the Swedish society and labour market, and health. Civil society organisations and municipalities can apply for government funding for early measures for asylum seekers and for mentorship, sports, and social activities for both applicants for international protection and newly arrived immigrants as well as beneficiaries of temporary protection. <sup>32</sup>

***Targeted information dissemination:***

A dedicated website, "Information Sverige", is available in eleven languages, and has basic and up to date information about Swedish society, rights and obligations, and the labour market, and is aimed at anyone who is new in Sweden, including applicants for international protection. Additionally, it has a great deal of content on learning Swedish, including online resources for self-studies, glossaries, pronunciation guidance, numerous video clips etc.<sup>33</sup> It is funded by the Government and run by the County Administrative Boards.<sup>34</sup>

***Public Authorities:***

The Swedish Migration Agency: responsible for examining eligibility for exemption from the work permit requirement, performs civic orientation courses for applicants for international protection that include information about the Swedish labour market and information about support available for labour market entry, including Swedish language training, inform applicants about activities available in the framework of "Early measures for asylum seekers", pays for travel costs and mobile data costs (for online participation, temporary measure to be phased out 31 December 2022) incurred by applicants attending such activities. The Migration Agency co-operates with other stakeholders in

<sup>32</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: [Tydiga insatser för asylsökande - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se/tydiga-insatser-for-asylosokande), last accessed 31 October 2022. In addition, the government's website has a Q and A page on "Early action for asylum seekers": [Frågor och svar om tidiga insatser för asylsökande - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se/frgor-och-svar-om-tydiga-insatser-for-asylosokande). The latter webpage has links to the legal base of the reform (ordinances issued in 2016).

<sup>33</sup> [Learn Swedish | Informationsverige.se](https://www.informationsverige.se), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>34</sup> [Home | Informationsverige.se](https://www.informationsverige.se), last accessed 7 November 2022. The County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland is formally responsible for the website.

performing some of these responsibilities, which are specifically aimed at applicants for international protection.

The Swedish Public Employment Service: applicants for international protection can register as job seekers and apply for vacancies listed at the PES. In addition, applicants can use general online services such as self-evaluation for some trades, and a career guide, aimed at all job seekers. Information is available in a number of different languages and the PES's website has a translation tool for all languages. Since 2017 the PES has been tasked in the government appropriation letter to provide a skills mapping tool ("Jobskills") for applicants for international protection. Overall, there is a mainstreaming approach, and the PES has few responsibilities that deal specifically with applicants for international protection.

The Swedish Tax Agency: issues "coordination numbers" to non-residents, which are generally needed to access (public) services in Sweden, including to open a bank account etc.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education, and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education: evaluate foreign qualifications / skills in order to provide support for people looking for work in Sweden.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth: has previously coordinated projects to promote labour market integration for this target group. These projects were initiated in 2015-2016 for the most part, some of which continued past 2017.

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: distributes funding to service providers / schools that perform Swedish language training for applicants.

The Cooperation delegation: The Cooperation delegation, an inter-agency co-operation forum between government agencies and other stakeholders responsible for the reception / integration of applicants for international protection and beneficiaries of international protection was formed in 2018. It consists of the County Administrative Boards, the Migration Agency, the PES, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. The aim of the forum is to improve and facilitate co-operation between the stakeholders and includes e.g. exchange of information, analysis and planning and implementation of co-organised activities. Much of the co-operation is carried out in thematic working groups.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Regional level and local level - the 21 County Administrative Boards and the 190 municipalities:***

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

County Administrative Boards: responsible for the regional coordination of national integration measures; administer applications for funding for activities in the framework of "Early measures for asylum seekers", organised by civil

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<sup>35</sup> The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions: [Samverkan | SKR](#), last accessed 28 September 2022.

society or municipalities. The County Administrative Board of Skåne has a coordinating role

Municipalities: responsible for pre-schools and schools, which children of applicants for international protection can attend. These schools are part of the mainstream school system. Additionally, municipalities can apply funding for and organise projects for applicants in the framework of "Early measures for asylum seekers" and the "refugee guide" initiative.

#### **Non-governmental organisations:**

Civil society organisations, e.g. the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, an umbrella organisation, and numerous organisations, associations and societies that perform trainings, language courses etc. within the framework of "Early measures for asylum seekers".

## **4. Accessing the labour market**

### **4.1 Procedures for accessing the labour market**

Sweden has a provision of dispensation that facilitates access to the labour market for applicants for international protection. This makes it possible for an applicant to start working immediately after having applied until he or she receives a final decision.<sup>36</sup> The provision is formally called an "exemption from the requirement of a work permit" (often referred to as "AT-UND" in Swedish, which originally is a term for internal use at the Migration Agency).

There is no minimum period from lodging an application for international protection after which an applicant has access to the labour market. However, there are certain conditions applicants for international protection need to fulfil in order to have labour market access in Sweden. These conditions are laid out in law. Firstly, he or she needs to produce proper identity document(s) supporting his or her identity, or to cooperate with the Migration Agency in establishing his or her identity.

If the Migration Agency assesses that an applicant is likely to be subject to accelerated procedures (refusal of entry with immediate effect) because the protection claims are manifestly unfounded, an exemption from the requirement cannot be issued. Applicants from countries considered to be safe countries of origin are normally subject to accelerated procedures.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, applicants that the Migration Agency assesses are to be transferred to another Member State according to the Dublin Regulation cannot be exempt from the work permit requirement. Finally, applicants that are subject to security concerns

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<sup>36</sup> Sweden does not distinguish in law between making and lodging an application for international protection.

<sup>37</sup> On 1 May 2021 Sweden amended its legislation and the Migration Agency was tasked to establish and apply a list of safe countries of origin. The Swedish Migration Agency: [Safe country of origin - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se). These countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Georgia, Kosovo, Mongolia, North Macedonia, and Serbia, last accessed 17 October 2022.

cannot either be exempt from the work permit requirement.<sup>38</sup> These conditions are prescribed by law, and soft law in the case of the list of safe countries of origin.

The procedure to grant access to the labour market is normally initiated by the Migration Agency and does not require an application. Rather, the Migration Agency is obliged to examine if an applicant fulfils the requirements to be exempt from the work permit requirement. This should be performed in all applications where the applicant is 16 years or older. There is no upper age threshold. These steps in application processing follow from Migration Agency guidelines for case workers. If an applicant that was not yet granted exemption submits (additional) identity documents, case workers should re-examine if there are grounds to grant him or her exemption from the work permit requirement.

The assessment is normally done by case workers during the personal interview for asylum. Case workers are instructed to make a record of the assessment in the minutes of the personal interview or as a separate file in the case management system, and inform the applicant about the assessment.

In case the applicant produces an offer of employment prior to the personal interview, case workers are instructed to assess if there is ground to issue an exemption without further ado. There are no formal requirements with regard to the job offer. However, the names of the employee and employer, contact details to the employer, and starting date should be indicated. A certificate of employment does not need to be presented. These steps in application processing follow from Migration Agency guidelines for case workers.

The Migration Agency is responsible for issuing a certificate indicating that the applicant for international protection is exempt from the work permit requirement. This is prescribed by law. Since 1 January 2022, this information is entered on the "asylum seeker card" (LMA card), which is issued to all applicants for international protection in Sweden. Employers can check if the holder has the right to work by scanning the QR code on the card.<sup>39</sup>

The average duration for issuing a certificate that an international protection applicant is exempt from the work permit requirement varied in the period. Overall, the waiting time increased from 6 days in 2017 from when the point in time when the application for international protection was lodged to 40 days in 2021.<sup>40</sup> The increase is chiefly explained by the fact that the decision to grant access to the labour market was pushed back to the point in time of the personal interview for asylum. Applicants that have a job offer are to be issued an exemption without further ado.

Finally, it can be added that rejected applicants for international protection can receive a temporary residence permit for work purposes if they fulfil certain conditions ("change of status"). Some of these conditions are that he or she was granted exemption from the work permit requirement and had employment for

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<sup>38</sup> Entered into force 1 July 2022. Lag (2022:700) om särskild kontroll av vissa utlänningar.

<sup>39</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: [LMA card for asylum seekers - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se), last accessed 29 September 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Source: Swedish Migration Agency (mean value).

at least four months at the same employer, which will continue for at least one year. Apart from this, the general conditions for work permits apply, including the requirement of a passport.<sup>41</sup> This is prescribed in law.<sup>42</sup>

## 4.2 Access to self-employment

Access to self-employment for international protection applicants is regulated differently than access to employment. It does not require a decision from the Migration Agency, but like the procedure to access employment there is no waiting period.

Normally, a third-country national that intends to remain in Sweden for longer than three months with the purpose of running his or her own business needs to have a residence permit for self-employment. The residence permit must have been granted before entry to Sweden. However, applicants for international protection can start a business (self-employment) in Sweden. First, they need to apply for F-tax (Swedish corporate tax) registration with the Swedish Tax Agency. Subsequently, the Tax Agency issues a "coordination number". A coordination number is used in the same way as a personal identity number, which is often required in Sweden to access public and private services.<sup>43</sup> The business must then be registered with the Swedish Companies Registration Office.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, it should be added that rejected applicants for international protection that are self-employed cannot benefit from the possibility to receive a temporary residence permit ("change of status") in the same way as those that are employed.

## 4.3 Conditions and limitations in accessing the labour market

Access to the labour market for applicants for international protection is regulated by law.<sup>45</sup>

An exemption from the work permit requirement is valid until the applicant (returnee) leaves the country or when a decision to grant him or her a residence permit gains legal force. However, the exemption is no longer valid for a returnee that does not cooperate to return when the return decision has gained legal force.

The Migration Agency's decision to grant access to the labour market to an applicant for international protection is not limited to certain sectors or

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<sup>41</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: [Former asylum seekers who have found employment and want to apply for a work permit - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se), last accessed 17 October 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Aliens Act (2005:716) Chapter 5, section 15a.

<sup>43</sup> [For asylum seekers and new arrivals - verksamt.se](https://www.verksam.se), last accessed 2 November 2022.

<sup>44</sup> [For asylum seekers and newcomers to Sweden - Bolagsverket](https://www.bolagsverket.se), last accessed 23 November 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Aliens Ordinance (2006:97), Chapter 5, section 4. Swedish Parliament: [Utlänningsförordning \(2006:97\) Svensk författningssamling 2006:2006:97 t.o.m. SFS 2022:1285 - Riksdagen](https://www.riksdagen.se), last accessed 29 September 2022.

occupations or a certain employer. There is no labour market test for applicants for international protection.

There are limitations to accessing certain jobs, but these are imposed by law or other restrictions. Like in other countries, limitations in law on accessing certain jobs more often make the distinction between Swedish citizens and other nationals. E.g. employment at the Swedish Police Authority, in the Swedish Armed Forces and in some positions in the judiciary and government offices is restricted to Swedish citizens. Additionally, some professions are regulated (e.g. healthcare practitioners that require a licence to practice, as well as optometrist, veterinary, some teacher positions etc.), which makes it necessary for applicants to fulfil those conditions if they wish to work in their profession (recognition of qualifications). Finally, employers (public and / or private) may have limitations in place that in practice restrict applicants from certain jobs.

## 5. Support measures to enhance labour market integration and self-employment

This chapter looks at examples of labour market integration measures targeting applicants of international protection, i.e. main policy or legislative measures, and their rationale and aims, which make the policy / strategy to support the labour market integration / self-employment of applicants for international protection, by integration area.

### 5.1 Language acquisition

Overview of the main measures	Stakeholders	Target group
Swedish language training offered both in person and online. Since 2016, the Swedish Study associations and Folk high schools have been granted government funding for outreaching measures targeted at primarily international protection applicants with the aim to strengthen their knowledge of the	Provided as (1) part of the "Early measures for asylum seekers" <sup>46</sup> scheme co-ordinated by County Administrative Boards (provided by municipalities and civil society organisations), and  (2) co-ordinated by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education <sup>47</sup> ; "Swedish	All adult applicants for international protection, beneficiaries of temporary protection.

<sup>46</sup> County Administrative Boards: [Tidiga insatser för asylsökande - Länsstyrelsernas integrationsarbete \(lansstyrelsen.se\)](https://www.lansstyrelsen.se), last accessed 4 November 2022.

<sup>47</sup> The National Council of Adult Education: [Folkbildningsrådet - Folkbildningsrådet \(folkbildningsradet.se\)](https://www.folkbildningsradet.se), last accessed 4 November 2022.

Overview of the main measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>Swedish language and about Swedish society.</p> <p>The initiative gives participants a meaningful activity during the waiting period and opens the door to the local civil society. An increase in the knowledge of the Swedish language leads to a faster integration in the labour market.</p>	<p>from Day One” (provided by Folk high schools and Study associations), and “Everyday Swedish” (provided by Study associations).</p>	

## 5.2 Vocational education and training

Overview of the main measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>Provided on ad-hoc basis, e.g. in combination with vocational language training. Primarily examples from medical professions.</p>	<p>E.g. The County Administrative Board of Stockholm allocated funds for a project with a view to promote labour market integration of applicants with medical degrees and nurse degrees in 2018-2020. The County Administrative Board of Stockholm was tasked with a co-ordinating role in a similar project in 2022.<sup>48</sup></p>	<p>Highly skilled applicants for international protection and beneficiaries of international protection, the recent initiative (2022) includes beneficiaries of temporary protection.</p>

## 5.3 Civic integration / orientation courses

Overview of the measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>Obligatory one-day course in <i>civic orientation</i>. The purpose</p>	<p>Provided by (1) the Migration Agency by welcome information</p>	<p>All applicants for international protection 15 years and older</p>

<sup>48</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: [Uppdrag att fördela medel till utbildningar för nyanlända och asylsökande med erfarenhet av arbete inom hälso- och sjukvård eller utländsk vårdutbildning - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se/uppdrag-att-for-dela-medel-till-utbildningar-for-nyanlanda-och-asylsokande-med-erfarenhet-av-arbete-inom-halso-och-sjukvard-eller-utlandsk-var-dutbildning), last accessed 23 November 2022.

Overview of the measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>of the course is to provide applicants for international protection with a greater understanding of how Swedish society works (including democratic values and norms), and of their rights and obligations as applicants as well as to provide better conditions for integration for those that are granted a residence permit.</p> <p>One objective of the "Early measures for asylum seekers" scheme is to promote knowledge of Swedish society.</p>	<p>package, and in civic orientation for applicants (one day with mandatory participation) and (2) with voluntary participation as part of the "Early measures for asylum seekers" scheme, co-ordinated by County Administrative Boards (provided by civil society organisations, and municipalities).</p>	<p>(obligatory civic orientation by the Migration Agency), targeted information to children under 15 years, and unaccompanied minors. The course has been offered online to beneficiaries of temporary protection. All adult applicants for international protection ("Early measures for asylum seekers").</p>

#### 5.4 Support for recognition of diplomas and certificates

Overview of the measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>Recognition of qualifications, including in situations where documents were lost or destroyed. Performed upon application for foreign qualification assessment (can be submitted online).</p> <p>In addition, there is an online qualifications assessment tool, where users can see what a particular foreign qualification is comparable to in Sweden. Around 1 000</p>	<p>The Swedish Council for Higher Education</p>	<p>Mainstreaming service aimed at all people with foreign qualifications.</p>

Overview of the measures	Stakeholders	Target group
qualifications in 77 countries are listed. <sup>49</sup>		

### 5.5 Skill assessments to validate prior learning and experience

Overview of measures	Stakeholders	Target group
Self-evaluation for different trades available in multiple languages. Users can print a form related to their trade, read the statements and circle the answer that applies them. Answers will give them an idea of how to use their experience on the Swedish labour market. Upwards of 40 trades listed, e.g. chef, hotel staff, painter / decorator, and welder. <sup>50</sup>	The PES	Mainstreaming service aimed at all people with foreign qualifications.

### 5.6 Information and counselling

Overview of measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>The civic orientation course and welcome information package for applicants supplied by the Migration Agency have information about the Swedish labour market.</p> <p>Online information, in multiple languages about rights and</p>	The Migration Agency, the PES, Country Administrative Boards, municipalities, civil society organisations	All applicants for international protection 15 years and older (compulsory civic orientation course), All applicants for international protection and beneficiaries of international protection ("Jobskills"), all applicants for international protection

<sup>49</sup> The Swedish Council for Higher Education: [Qualifications Assessment Tool - Swedish Council for Higher Education \(uhr.se\)](https://www.uhr.se/), last accessed 4 November 2022.

<sup>50</sup> The Swedish Public Employment Service: [Självskattning - Arbetsförmedlingen \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://arbetsformedlingen.se/), last accessed 4 November 2022.

Overview of measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>obligations on the Swedish labour market.<sup>51</sup></p> <p>A digital tool ("Jobskills"), for mapping education and skills for people who are new in Sweden and for employers who want to find new competence.<sup>52</sup></p> <p>Activities with a view to labour market preparedness, knowledge about Swedish society and health are offered within the framework of the "Early measures for asylum seekers" system.<sup>53</sup></p> <p>"Refugee guide and family contacts"-municipalities can apply for funding for activities that aim at facilitating establishment in society, create networks, and support language learning.<sup>54</sup></p> <p>A dedicated multilingual website for training basic digital skills -</p>		<p>and beneficiaries of temporary protection ("Early measures for asylum seekers"), all applicants for international protection, beneficiaries of international protection and unaccompanied minors ("Refugee guide").</p>

<sup>51</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: [Working while you are an asylum seeker - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Working_while_you_are_an_asylum_seeker), last accessed 4 November 2022, and the Swedish Public Employment Service: [Jobba under asyiltiden - Arbetsförmedlingen \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://arbetsformedlingen.se/Jobba_under_asyiltiden), [Arbeta i Sverige - Arbetsförmedlingen \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://arbetsformedlingen.se/Arbeta_i_Sverige) last accessed 4 November 2022. The Swedish Migration Agency also has an FAQ page about the right to work: [Frequently asked questions about AT-UND and the right to work - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Frequently_asked_questions_about_AT-UND_and_the_right_to_work), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>52</sup> The Swedish Public Employment Service: [Jobskills \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://arbetsformedlingen.se/Jobbskills), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>53</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: [Activities while you are waiting for a decision on your asylum application - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Activities_while_you_are_waiting_for_a_decision_on_your_asylum_application), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>54</sup> County Administrative Boards: [Developing activities with refugee guides and family contacts | Länsstyrelsen Stockholm \(lansstyrelsen.se\)](https://lansstyrelsen.se/Stockholm/Developing_activities_with_refugee_guides_and_family_contacts), last accessed 25 November 2022.

Overview of measures	Stakeholders	Target group
"Digitala jag", aimed at anyone who wants to become more confident in using digital services in everyday life, e.g. in contacts with public authorities. <sup>55</sup>		

## 5.7 Support for self-employment

Overview of measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>Primarily provision of information on conditions and on actors that can provide advice / support. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth co-ordinated some projects which aimed at promoting self-employment for applicants in 2015-2016.</p> <p>Targeted information on self-employment aimed at applicants for international protection.</p> <p>E-services available for most government services.</p>	<p>A designated website, "verksamt.se" (government service for businesses) collects relevant information and conditions for international protection applicants that want to become self-employed.<sup>56</sup></p> <p>The Migration Agency, the PES, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth<sup>57</sup>, and the Swedish Companies Registration Office all have targeted information on their websites.<sup>58</sup></p>	<p>All adult applicants for international protection (but no targeted support).</p>

<sup>55</sup> [Digitala jag - Your training in everyday digital skills.](#), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>56</sup> [Start, run and develop a business in Sweden - verksamt.se](#), last accessed 7 November 2022.

<sup>57</sup> The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth: [Starta företag i Sverige - Tillväxtverket \(tillvaxtverket.se\)](#), last accessed 7 November 2022. The information booklet is available in multiple languages, including Arabic, Dari, French, Somali, and Tigrinya.

<sup>58</sup> The Swedish Companies Registration Office: [For asylum seekers and newcomers to Sweden - Bolagsverket](#), last accessed 7 November 2022.

## 5.8 Indirect support

Overview of measures	Stakeholders	Target group
<p>International protection applicants that participate in projects in the framework of “Early measures for asylum seekers” can be reimbursed for travel costs.<sup>59</sup> Applicants can also be reimbursed for expenses for use of mobile data when they participate in an online training.<sup>60</sup></p> <p>All minors that are international protection applicants have the right to attend preschool and school. Children from age one are entitled to attend preschool while their parents work or study. From the autumn term of the year in which a child turns three years, he or she is also entitled to 15 hours of preschool a week, irrespective of whether the parent(s) are working or not.<sup>61</sup></p>	The Migration Agency, municipalities	All adult applicants for international protection, and their children (conditional)

## 6. Good practices and challenges

This chapter provides three examples of integration support programmes, projects, legislative or other practical initiatives available that specifically

<sup>59</sup> Swedish Migration Agency: [Activities while you are waiting for a decision on your asylum application - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-migrationsverket/Activities-while-you-are-waiting-for-a-decision-on-your-asylum-application.html), last accessed 7 November 2022. Applicants that have received a (non-final) return decision or are subject to transfer to another Member State according to the Dublin Regulation cannot receive reimbursement.

<sup>60</sup> This measure was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic to facilitate online participation and is expected to be phased out 31 December 2022.

<sup>61</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: [Education – school for asylum seeking children - Swedish Migration Agency \(migrationsverket.se\)](https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-migrationsverket/Education-school-for-asylum-seeking-children.html), last accessed 7 November 2022.

facilitate effective access to the labour market for applicants of international protection and have been identified by experts as a "good practice". More generally, the Cooperation Delegation described in chapter 3, serves as an important venue for collaboration between stakeholders. Collaboration takes place at different levels and co-ordination at national level provides good conditions for collaboration at regional level. E.g., there is a dedicated working group on "Early measures for asylum seekers", and a working group on civic orientation was set up recently. Stakeholders confirm that the Cooperation Delegation is an established and well-functioning forum.

Subsequently, some of the challenges identified are discussed.

## 6.1 Good practice 1 - Language acquisition

<b>Name</b>	Swedish language training
<b>Type</b>	Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)
<b>Access</b>	Adult applicants for international protection registered in the reception system, beneficiaries of international protection that are staying in reception facilities pending settlement in a municipality, and as of April 2022 beneficiaries of temporary protection can also access Swedish language training ("Swedish from day one" and "Every day Swedish").
<b>Target group</b>	Applicants for international protection, and as of April 2022 beneficiaries of temporary protection were added as a target group
<b>Coverage</b>	National
<b>Link</b>	The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: <a href="https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/nyheter/2022/11/24/svenska-fran-dag-ett-och-vardagssvenska">Svenska från dag ett och Vardagssvenska - Folkbildningsrådet (folkbildningsradet.se)</a> , last accessed 24 November 2022.
<b>Source and justification</b>	The Swedish language courses "Swedish from day one" and "Every day Swedish" are offered by Study associations and Folk high schools. This Swedish language training was evaluated by the Swedish Agency for Public Management. <sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education publishes annual progress reports on the developments of this Swedish language training. <sup>63</sup> These courses have been monitored over a longer period.

The Migration Agency provides information to applicants for international protection about these Swedish language courses as well as "Early measures for

<sup>62</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management: [Utvärdering av folkbildningsinsatser för asylsökande och utrikes födda kvinnor \(statskontoret.se\)](https://www.statistik.se/nyheter/2022/11/08/utvardering-av-folkbildningsinsatser-for-asylosokande-och-utrikes-fodda-kvinnor) (2020), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>63</sup> The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: [Folkbildning med asylsökande 2021 - Folkbildningsrådet \(folkbildningsradet.se\)](https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/nyheter/2022/11/12/folkbildning-med-asylosokande-2021), this is the most recent annual report (in Swedish only), last accessed 12 November 2022.

asylum seekers”, which also include Swedish language training. It is up to applicants themselves to contact local Study associations, Folk high schools and other providers, where classes are organised. Both “traditional” classes with in-person participation and online classes are organised.<sup>64</sup> Courses are voluntary and free of charge. This Swedish language training was first introduced in 2015<sup>65</sup> and subsequently also integrated in the government’s initiative “Early measures for asylum seekers”, which was launched in 2017. They are accessible upon arrival and aim to provide a meaningful activity during the waiting time pending a decision. In addition they aim to facilitate integration in working life and in society for those that are granted a residence permit. The Government will provide less funding for the course “Swedish from day one” in 2023 and the funding is expected to be phased out in 2024.<sup>66</sup>

“Every day Swedish” has focus on language acquisition (e.g. in everyday situations, contacts with authorities, educators), whereas “Swedish from day one” is more focused on civic orientation (e.g. democracy, gender equality, critical thinking, and training and job opportunities).

The government has allocated funding for the training to the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, which also has a co-ordinating role. Education providers apply for funding from the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.

Participants can get reimbursement for travel expenses. The Migration Agency is responsible for receiving, examining, and deciding on such applications. Participants need to submit proof of attendance.

These two Swedish language courses were evaluated by the Swedish Agency for Public Management, using both qualitative and quantitative methodology and taking into account the perspective of all stakeholders and examining if and to what extent the objectives of the funding and projects were achieved. The report concluded that the goals were achieved, i.e. that the courses were meaningful and increased participants’ activity in daily life. Afterwards, participants said they could easier navigate Swedish society, and those that continued in Swedish tuition for immigrants after receiving a residence permit made quicker progress.<sup>67</sup> The evaluation report stated this Swedish language training reached approximately 40 per cent of applicants for international protection. Participants were generally very pleased and the funding made available to Study associations and Folk high schools increased their possibilities

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<sup>64</sup> Swedish language training is also organised and offered by other providers within the framework of “Early measures for asylum seekers” and funded via the County Administrative Boards.

<sup>65</sup> Swedish Parliament: [Förordning \(2015:521\) om statsbidrag till särskilda folkbildningsinsatser för asylsökande och vissa nyanlända invandrare Svensk författningssamling 2015:2015:521 t.o.m. SFS 2022:223 - Riksdagen](#), last accessed 12 November 2022.

<sup>66</sup> The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: [Anslaget till folkbildningen minskar när tidsbegränsade satsningar försvinner - Folkbildningsrådet \(folkbildningsradet.se\)](#), 8 November 2022, last accessed 12 November 2022.

<sup>67</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management: [Utvärdering av folkbildningsinsatser för asylsökande och utrikes födda kvinnor \(statskontoret.se\)](#) (2020), last accessed 8 November 2022, The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: [Statskontoret: Folkbildningens insatser är ändamålsenliga och viktiga för målgruppen - Folkbildningsrådet \(folkbildningsradet.se\)](#), 7 February 2020.

to offer this Swedish language training.<sup>68</sup> Finally, the evaluation report said that providers sometimes were unable to meet the demand for participation amongst applicants for international protection and that activities often reached persons that were already motivated to learn, and perhaps not those that most needed it.

## 6.2 Good practice 2 - Procedure to access the labour market

<b>Name</b>	Procedure to grant access to the labour market for applicants for international protection
<b>Type</b>	Legislative / policy (structural) measure
<b>Access</b>	Applies to all applicants for international protection
<b>Target group</b>	Applicants for international protection
<b>Coverage</b>	National
<b>Link</b>	Swedish Migration Agency: <a href="#">Working while you are an asylum seeker - Swedish Migration Agency (migrationsverket.se)</a> , <a href="#">LMA card for asylum seekers - Swedish Migration Agency (migrationsverket.se)</a> , last accessed 24 November 2022.
<b>Source and justification</b>	In 2020-2021, the Swedish Migration Agency altered the procedure for granting applicants for international protection access to the labour market, and in 2022 new features were introduced on the asylum seeker card (LMA card) with regard to accessing the labour market. The evaluation of the trial period preceding the implementation of the new procedure indicated that the objective of the measures would be met.

As explained in chapter 4, applicants need to fulfil the conditions for becoming exempt from the requirement of a work permit. Up until 2021-2022, case officers normally examined whether an applicant could become exempt from the work permit requirement at the point in time when the application for international protection was lodged. An altered procedure was introduced in a trial period from December 2020 to March 2021 (Stockholm region) and subsequently rolled out nationally in August 2021. New features on the asylum seeker card (LMA card) were introduced in January 2022.

The altered procedure meant to defer the decision to grant access to the labour market due to indications of misuse and / or exploitation by applicants and / or employers. The primary objective was to reduce late cancellations of appointments for the personal interview for international protection, and expectation to reinforce safeguards against human trafficking / exploitation and crime in working life. The Migration Agency decides if the applicant can be

<sup>68</sup> This is a near verbatim translation of information provided in the report, in particular p.40-41, 80, 82, 94, and 99. It should be noted the report also identified some challenges.

exempt from the work permit requirement. This information is subsequently entered as a QR code on his / her asylum seeker card. These cards can be digitally updated. Employers can scan the QR code to confirm if a candidate / job seeker is exempt from the work permit requirement.

The new procedure is generally understood to have met its anticipated objectives. The altered procedure provides a possibility for a more thorough examination of the identity documents submitted by the applicant and his / her statement relevant for the decision to grant access to the labour market, which benefits both the applicant, the authorities and employers. It reinforces decision-making with regard to which applicants should be granted access to the labour market and which should not, and provides an additional safeguard against misuse and exploitation of applicants by employers and / or others. The supplementary measure to introduce the QR code on the asylum seeker card facilitates for candidates / job seekers and employers alike since the job candidate's right to work can be easily determined. The fact that the information is digitally entered on an identity card also makes it more difficult to misuse or manipulate. An evaluation of the trial period showed that the number of (late) cancellations of appointments for the personal interview for asylum were considerably fewer after the altered procedure was implemented.

### 6.3 Good practice 3 – Vocational language training

<b>Name</b>	Vocational language training for newly arrived medical doctors and nurses with degrees from outside the EU / EEA 2018-2020
<b>Type</b>	Projects (ad-hoc)
<b>Access</b>	Beneficiaries of international protection, and applicants for international protection with a medical degree or a nurse degree.
<b>Target group</b>	Tailor-made labour market integration measure, (only applicants for international protection), new arrivals (beneficiaries of international protection) was also a target group.
<b>Coverage</b>	Regional
<b>Link</b>	County Administrative Board of Stockholm: <a href="#">Yrkesinriktad språkutbildning och kommunikativa krav i arbetslivet. Rapport 2020:22 (lansstyrelsen.se)</a> , last accessed 14 November 2022.
<b>Source and justification</b>	The project was widely publicised and documented, <sup>69</sup> and identified as a good example in an evaluation report (link provided above).

<sup>69</sup> The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth: [Rapport Snabbare integration 170505 nytt förord \(tillvaxtverket.se\)](#), last accessed 25 November 2022, The County Administrative Board of Stockholm: [Arbetsmarknad, utbildning och kompetensförsörjning | Länsstyrelsen Stockholm \(lansstyrelsen.se\)](#), last accessed 14 November 2022.

The measure was aimed at international protection applicants with a degree in medicine (first batch), and both international protection applicants and beneficiaries of international protection with a medical or nurse degree (second batch). Admission was upon application and interviews, and participation free of charge. Participants could apply for admission to the training by sending an application to the Swedish Society of Medicine. The measure was one of several launched with an aim to address labour shortage in the healthcare sector with regard to medical doctors and (specialised) nurses in particular.

The project ran from 2018 to 2020. The training comprised one year. The purpose of the project was to facilitate for professionals that are new to Sweden in learning Swedish / and enter the labour market. Some participants had arrived only two months prior to the training started, which suggests they were eligible upon arrival and had received information about the training. The first 4-5 months of the training was focused on Swedish language learning, including vocational / medical language (including final exam, C1 level), followed by orientation courses in medicine, practical exercises, and internships. The aim of the training was to prepare participants for the exam for medical doctors with a degree from outside the EU / EEA, organised by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

The training was adapted to beginners in Swedish and was organised by Södertörn University, Stockholm, in collaboration with the Swedish Society of Medicine. Funding for the training was allocated by the Stockholm County Administrative Board.

The project was considered to have met its anticipated objectives. Firstly, the training was considered successful from a skills provision perspective. The approach to combine vocational Swedish language training with practical training was deemed particularly effective. The training facilitated and shortened participants' path to receive a license to practice medicine in Sweden. The fact that teachers were practising medical doctors themselves was also considered positive since participants were able to network and build contacts important for their future working life. Participants' experiences and expectations were collected through surveys following the training. Furthermore, interviews were made with both participants and educators and, and the course structure was examined, e.g. with regard how it was adapted to professional / vocational requirements and participants' previous knowledge and needs. An evaluation was made after the first batch. Based on this feedback some minor adjustments were made to the course design.

The measure was project based in the framework of the Stockholm County Administrative Board's task to allocate funding to projects that perform Swedish language training with components of theoretical and practical medicine.

#### **6.4 Challenges identified for labour market access**

Since the labour market situation for applicants for international protection is not specifically monitored there is limited knowledge to draw upon. Reasonably, applicants for international protection face many of the same challenges that beneficiaries of international protection face in gaining foothold on the Swedish labour market, i.e. learning the Swedish language, finding employment in their occupation / skills level, recognition of qualifications / skills etc.

From a larger integration perspective, reports have pointed at the importance of a meaningful waiting period.<sup>70</sup> On a similar note, recent studies of applicants for international protection in Sweden say that longer waiting slows down integration and affects labour market outcomes for an extended period.<sup>71</sup> Hence, waiting periods themselves and how applicants spend them are potential challenges, both for the individual and the host country.

Looking at procedures for granting access to the labour market and the conditions that applicants need to fulfil, some stakeholders have argued applicants can find it challenging to produce identity documents and / or to be deemed to cooperate with the authorities in establishing their identity, and / or to be issued a "coordination number".<sup>72</sup>

Misuse of the right to work by applicants for international protection prompted the Migration Agency to take measures with regard to granting access to the labour market. An increasing trend in 2020 was that applicants for international protection of some nationalities cancelled their appointment for the personal interview for asylum with short notice or did not show up. This incurred additional costs for the Migration Agency for interpreters and legal counsels that were present for interviews that could not be performed. In 2020, most eligible applicants were granted access to the labour market in connection with lodging their application. At the time there were indications that applicants of some nationalities applied for international protection citing fabricated claims in order to be granted access to the labour market pending a final decision in their case. After a trial period, the Migration Agency eventually decided to push back the examination of granting access to the labour market, and since August 2021 this is normally performed in connection with the personal interview for asylum, unless the applicant has a job offer at an earlier stage. The changed procedure was also expected to contribute in countering attempts at human trafficking (exploitation of workers) and irregularities in working life.<sup>73 74</sup>

The Swedish Agency for Public Management has evaluated some of the early measures for applicants for international protection. Of particular interest for this study, the evaluation inter alia looked at Swedish language training offered to applicants for international protection. Whilst the overall conclusions of its evaluation report argued the aim of the activities were largely fulfilled, some challenges were identified. E.g. the demand for participation amongst applicants was higher than the places offered in classes, and the language training often

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<sup>70</sup> Swedish Government Official Reports: [Ett ordnat mottagande – gemensamt ansvar för snabb etablering eller återvändande \(SOU 2018:22\) \(regeringen.se\)](#), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>71</sup> The Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy: [Förlorad tid eller förberedelser för integration? Om betydelsen av handläggningstiden för asylärenden, Rapport 2022:1](#) (2022), last accessed 8 November 2022. There is a working paper in English of this report available on its webpage.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth have argued e.g. that it should be easier for applicants for international protection to be issued an exemption from the work permit requirement and receive a "coordination number", and that applicants that are self-employed should be eligible for "change of status" in the same way as those that are employees, see the report [Nyanlända och vägen.pdf \(tillväxtverket.se\)](#), last accessed 23 November 2022.

<sup>73</sup> The Swedish Migration Agency: Decisions and internal working papers.

<sup>74</sup> The Migration Agency's new procedure for granting an exemption from the work permit requirement is partly discussed in this recent report from the Swedish National Audit Office: [Spårbyte i migrationsprocessen – kontroller och uppföljning i Riksrevisionen](#), 22 October 2022, last accessed 23 November 2022.

reached individuals that were already motivated to study but not those that were in most need of it. Furthermore, women were over-represented in Swedish language training and it was observed it was difficult to reach applicants that were staying in private accommodation.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, annual progress reports from the County Administrative Boards on the “Early measures for asylum seekers” scheme identify both good examples and areas of development. The Covid 19-pandemic was an overall challenge in 2020-2021. Many projects / trainings were organised online (or in hybrid format) instead, or the size of groups was reduced. Some activities had to be cancelled and overall participation in activities was somewhat lower because of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>76</sup>

## 7. Conclusions

No government agency or other public actor in Sweden is tasked to specifically monitor, compile data on, or analyse labour market integration of international protection applicants. Hence data availability is limited and it is difficult to describe the group other than in more general terms. The general opinion seems to be that few international protection applicants have employment. However, little or no data is available on employment rates or in what sectors applicants that do find work are employed. In addition, information aimed at applicants on the conditions for self-employment is disseminated by a number of stakeholders, but to the best of our knowledge there is no data available on how many international protection applicants that have started their own business. Public and policy debates regarding the labour market integration of international protection applicants must be described as limited, particularly in the past few years. Possible explanations are that the number of applicants for international protection in Sweden decreased (as did waiting times) in the years following the 2015 refugee and migrant crisis and that policy focus shifted towards the integration of the high number of beneficiaries of international protection.

International protection applicants can access some mainstreaming services and in addition there are targeted measures for this group. One of the primary drivers for the “Early measures for asylum seekers” scheme was to provide a meaningful waiting time for applicants, and while many of the activities offered touch upon the labour market, this is not the primary purpose of the activities. This is also understandable since activities are offered to all applicants, i.e. regardless of their possibilities of ultimately receiving a residence permit. As mentioned in the study, participation in these activities, except the civic orientation course organised by the Migration Agency, is voluntary. By and large, the system leaves it up to the individual to decide about their situation. As mentioned, applicants that find employment during their waiting period can, if they are rejected and if certain conditions are fulfilled, receive a work permit. Reasonably, applicants that are e.g. in shortage occupations or highly skilled are

<sup>75</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management: [Utvärdering av folkbildningsinsatser för asylsökande och utrikes födda kvinnor \(statskontoret.se\)](https://statskontoret.se) (2020), last accessed 8 November 2022.

<sup>76</sup> County Administrative Boards: [Tidiga insatser för asylsökande återskott 2021 - Länsstyrelsernas integrationsarbete \(lansstyrelsen.se\)](https://lansstyrelsen.se), last accessed 15 November 2022.

most likely to succeed. To become exempt from the work permit requirement is easy for those that have proper identity documents and access to the labour market is then swift

As mentioned in the study, there are a number of targeted measures, such as Swedish language training, "Early measures for asylum seekers", and the digital skills mapping / matching platform, managed by the PES. Applicants can also access some mainstreaming services such as register as job seekers at the PES but there seems to be limited information about to what extent applicants actually take advantage of some of these services offered in the mainstream system. Two of the good examples identified in the study deal with language training and / or highly skilled applicants. Possibly, language training is easier to evaluate than some other activities offered. In addition, the evaluation report of the latter example noted that participants were highly motivated, which in all likelihood contributed to explain the positive results. Conversely, evaluation reports indicate that some measures have failed to reach the applicants most in need of participation. On the same note, the fact that participation is voluntary (except for the civic orientation course provided by the Migration Agency) means that participation is very much up to the individual and his / her ability or interest to participate. Additionally, civil society plays an important role in organising many of the activities offered.

## EMN

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an EU funded network, set up with the aim of providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum for institutions of the European Union, plus authorities and institutions of the Member States of the EU, in order to inform policymaking. The EMN also serves to provide the wider public with such information. The EMN was established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC adopted on 14 May 2008. The Swedish Migration Agency is the Swedish National Contact Point (NCP) for the EMN.

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