

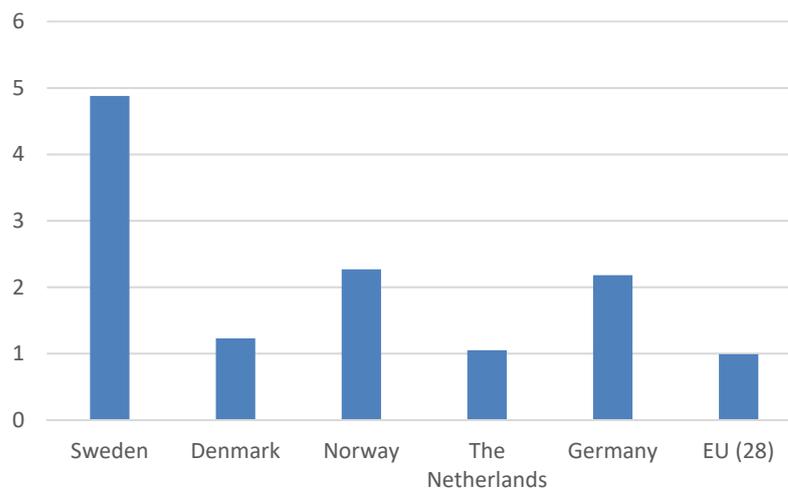
Summary

Sweden has seen a large influx of immigrants since 2000. Immigrants find it difficult to integrate into the labour market. Sweden has the second-largest difference in employment between the foreign-born and the domestic population of any country in the OECD. This is partly explained by the high employment rate among the Swedish-born population, especially women. Another explanation is that humanitarian migrants make up a larger share of migration to Sweden than to most other countries in the OECD. Humanitarian migrants have lower employment rates and higher unemployment than other migrants in all European countries. The labour market integration of immigrants in Sweden is probably also hampered by high entry wages for low-skilled workers, strong employment protection for permanent employees and relatively high welfare benefits.

This report compares the systems for reception, settlement and labour market integration of humanitarian migrants in Sweden with the systems in four neighbouring countries: Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany. These countries have also taken in a large number of humanitarian migrants in recent years, although Sweden has taken in more in relation to its population size. Like Sweden, they also have relatively regulated labour markets and developed welfare systems.

The purpose of the report is to discuss whether there are policies with respect to the reception and integration of humanitarian migrants in these countries that Sweden can learn from. In most cases there is not enough research to judge how different aspects of reception and integration policy affect the integration of humanitarian migrants. Nonetheless, other countries' choices and actions can serve as inspiration for Sweden and offer guidance for new policies.

Figure Total number of asylum seekers 2008–2016 as a percentage of population.



Source: Eurostat.

The labour market integration of humanitarian migrants is a slow process in all countries covered in this report. Employment is very low among humanitarian migrants for the first few years after arrival. It then increases slowly and settles at a level significantly below employment among the native population. The exception is Germany, where employment among humanitarian migrants equals that of natives after 15 years. Female migrants need more time to find employment than male migrants in all countries in this report.

All of the countries issue temporary residence permits to humanitarian migrants for the first few years. Sweden was the last country to stop issuing permanent residence permits, in 2016. All of the countries also have an income requirement for migrants who apply for family reunion. Sweden, Denmark and Germany issue residence permits for a one-year period, while Norway and the Netherlands issue longer permits. Research on the effects of temporary residence permits on integration indicates that they cause insecurity among migrants and obstruct long-term integration efforts. Increasing the duration of the residence permits in Sweden to three years would probably give more breathing space for long-term integration measures.

The processing time for asylum cases has increased in all of the countries since the large influx of asylum seekers in 2015. Long waiting times and uncertain outcomes create stress among asylum seekers and risk making their integration more difficult. The best solution is to shorten the processing times as far as is possible while maintaining legal certainty. If this is not possible, more integration measures should be effected during the waiting period. Sweden only provides limited language training and civic orientation to asylum seekers. Germany and Norway let asylum seekers with good prospects of having their application approved participate in integration measures on the same terms as those with a residence permit. Unless the processing times are reduced, asylum seekers with good prospects of having their application approved should be allowed into the Swedish integration programme.

Local labour market conditions greatly influence migrants' opportunities to find work. In Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany, central government has considerable control over where in the country newly arrived humanitarian migrants are settled. Humanitarian migrants are usually settled in municipalities according to their population size, and less attention is paid to local employment prospects. The geographical distribution of humanitarian migrants is eased by the fact that the vast majority of them live in special asylum centres. These countries also have regulations to make migrants stay in the municipalities they are settled in for a set period, to avoid them moving to areas with high migrant populations. The Swedish system for distributing humanitarian migrants among the municipalities factors in local labour market conditions, but the system does not cover the humanitarian migrants (about half) who have arranged their own accommodation during the waiting time. Sweden does not have rules to retain refugees in the municipality in which they have been settled. The question of individually arranged accommodation and the geographical distribution of humanitarian migrants is a matter of strong debate. The possibilities to find work are greater in urban areas, where asylum seekers who choose to arrange their own accommodation usually settle, but the concentration of large numbers of migrants in specific areas also leads to overcrowded housing, segregation and other social problems.

Germany and the Netherlands do not have long-term, coherent integration programmes for humanitarian migrants. Migrants are instead able to choose between different shorter integration courses consisting of language training and civic orientation and run by independent providers. The local authorities have a responsibility to help migrants find work, internships and vocational training. The fragmented integration support system in the Netherlands has been criticised in national evaluations for putting too much responsibility on the newly arrived migrants themselves. The migrants have to pay full tuition fees for the integration courses, although public loans are available. The German system is also somewhat fragmented, but provides more public assistance for the migrants and the integration courses are heavily subsidised.

Sweden, Norway and Denmark have long-term national integration programmes that include language training, civic integration and various labour market initiatives. Cohesive integration programmes make it easier to plan effective measures for the migrants and offer them dual programmes with parallel language training and labour market measures. In Sweden the programme is two years long, but only one in three participants have work or have started education when the programme is finished. Denmark and Norway have recently begun applying more flexible timespans to their integration programmes. In Norway, the programme can last two to three years depending on the needs of the participants, and in Denmark one to five years. The Swedish integration programme should be made more flexible, to allow extra time for participants with a greater need for assistance.

Improving the labour market prospects among female migrants is crucial for increasing overall employment among immigrants. Women more often migrate as family members of refugees or other migrants. In Sweden, only family members of refugees have a right to participate in the integration programme, even though other – mostly female – family migrants also have difficulties finding employment. In Denmark, the integration programme is mandatory for all family immigrants from non-EU/EEA countries. In Norway all family migrants can take part in the integration programme on a voluntary basis. Employment among female migrants would probably improve if more family migrants where

obliged to take part in the integration programme or were offered more labour market oriented support in other ways.

Norway and the Netherlands have the highest rate of economic assistance to participants in the integration programs in relation to the basic salary for low-skilled work: they receive 70 per cent of the basic salary. In Denmark and Germany the benefit is only 30 per cent of the basic salary. In Denmark the benefit is increased when migrants have passed an approved language test. Sweden occupies the middle ground, with economic assistance at 50 per cent of the basic salary. It is difficult to determine which level of economic assistance best helps labour market integration in the long run. Low benefits provide an incentive for rapid transition to work, but they can also cause social vulnerability and make it more difficult for newly arrived migrants to enrol in longer integration measures – for example more advanced language training – that might help their employment prospects in the long run.

In the Netherlands, a permanent residence permit is conditional on the migrant having passed a civic integration exam consisting of a test of language skills and civic orientation. In Denmark, Norway and Germany, both certain language skills and self-sufficiency are required for permanent residence. In Sweden, self-sufficiency is required for permanent residence, but there are no language requirements. There is clear research showing that good language skills increase the likelihood of successful long-term employment. Making certain language skills a prerequisite for a permanent residence permit in Sweden could strengthen the prospects of better labour market integration among humanitarian migrants.

Table Rules on migration and integration for refugees, those in need of subsidiary protection and their families in 2017.

	Sweden	Denmark	Norway	The Netherlands	Germany
<i>Rules on migration</i>					
Temporary residence permits	Yes. 13 months for those with subsidiary protection. Three years for refugees.	Yes. One year for those with subsidiary protection. Two years for refugees.	Yes. Three years for both refugees and those with subsidiary protection.	Yes. Five years for both refugees and those with subsidiary protection.	Yes. One year for those with subsidiary protection. Three years for refugees.
Possibility of family reunion	Yes, for refugees. No for those with subsidiary protection.	Yes, after three years.	Yes	Yes	Yes, for refugees. No for those with subsidiary protection during the first two years.
Income requirement for family reunion	Yes, except if an application is filed within three months.	Yes	Yes, except if an application is filed within six months.	Yes, except if an application is filed within three months.	Yes, except if an application is filed within three months.
Can rejected asylum seekers become labour migrants?	Yes	No, except people with special qualifications.	No	No	No, except young participants in apprenticeship programmes.
<i>Terms for asylum applicants</i>					
Possibility to live in individually arranged housing	Yes	No	No	No	Yes in some Länder.
Average duration of asylum procedure (2016)	11 months.	6,5 months.	12 months.	7 months.	7 months plus registration time.

	Sweden	Denmark	Norway	The Netherlands	Germany
Integration measures for asylum applicants	Some language training and civic integration.	Obligatory participation in language training and civic integration.	Right to some language training and civic integration. Those with high prospects of being allowed to stay can participate in the integration programme.	Some language training.	Those with high prospects of being allowed to stay can participate in integration courses, vocational training and labour market initiatives.
<i>Settlement and integration</i>					
Compulsory dispersal of refugees to all municipalities	Yes, based on population, local labour market and previous reception of refugees.	Yes, based on population and previous reception of refugees.	No; voluntary quotas based on negotiations between state and municipalities.	Yes, based on population.	Yes, to both regions and municipalities. Based on population and tax revenues.
Compulsory integration programme	Yes, for refugees, those with subsidiary protection and their families.	Yes, for refugees, those with subsidiary protection and families from countries outside the EU/EEA.	Yes, for refugees, those with subsidiary protection and their families.	Yes, for all migrants from countries outside the EU/EEA.	Yes, for all migrants from countries outside the EU/EEA receiving social assistance.
Length of integration programme	Two years.	One to five years.	Two to three years.	Different lengths. An integration exam must be passed within three years.	Six months.
Content of integration programme	Language training, civic integration and labour market training.	Language training, civic integration and labour market training.	Language training, civic integration and labour market training.	Language training and civic integration.	Language training and civic integration.

	Sweden	Denmark	Norway	The Netherlands	Germany
Responsible for integration programme	Central government	Municipalities	Municipalities	Private actors and civil society.	Private actors and civil society.
Tuition fees for integration programme	No	No	No	Yes, full fees. Public loans are available.	Yes, subsidised fees. No fee for those receiving social assistance.
Economic assistance to participants in integration programme	EUR 710 per month after tax. 49 per cent of basic salary.	EUR 815 per month before tax. 33 per cent of basic salary.	EUR 1 682 per month before tax. 71 per cent of basic salary.	EUR 1 086 per month before tax. 70 per cent of national minimum.	EUR 404 per month after tax. 31 per cent of national minimum wage.
Language skills required for permanent residence	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes