
RESOURCE Project

Refugees' contribution to Europe

Country Report: **Sweden**

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I Introduction to RESOURCE

This report will illustrate the positive contribution that refugees can make to current and projected labour market needs. Most refugees come from urban settings and have a good level of education. Many hold academic or professional qualifications and have considerable work experience. They are highly motivated and employers who recruited refugees report being very satisfied with their work performance.

The report is part of a European wide research project called RESOURCE (Refugees' Contribution to Europe), carried out by a partnership of fourteen agencies¹ and funded by the European Refugee Fund. The project analysed elements, practices and policies, which have contributed to refugees' participation in the European labour market from refugees' point of view. It focussed on how refugees' prior skills, qualifications and working experience are being utilised in sectors of the labour market that are currently experiencing skills shortages.

Through desk research and in-depth interviews with employed refugees in EU member states², the project gives insight into the various factors that have contributed to (or obstructed) refugees' integration in Europe. Considering the high levels of unemployment and under-employment among refugees, it is clear that refugees' potential is at present under-utilised by employers. To tackle this waste of human resources the project will describe successful pathways to employment and show how the many barriers refugees encounter can be overcome.

The results are presented in fourteen country reports and one overall publication. We hope that our findings will be an inspiration for:

- Employers to recruit refugees and to take into account the skills, qualifications and work experience they brought with them in exile.
- Refugees to take initiative, build their confidence, and find suitable employment.
- Educational institutes to improve refugees' access to their programmes and develop tailor-made programmes that take into account refugees prior learning.
- Registering bodies to adopt more flexible rules for recognition of refugees' qualifications.
- NGOs and mainstream organisations to provide better support for refugees.
- Policy makers at national and European level to implement more successful integration policies that will create real opportunities for refugees to become self-sufficient.

Because of demographic developments Europe will increasingly be in need of foreign labour to sustain economic growth. Across Europe employers are experiencing difficulties recruiting staff at both skilled and unskilled levels. At the same time the European Union receives over 350,000 asylum applications per year. It makes good economic and social sense to better utilise this huge potential.

¹ RETAS (UK), UAF (the Netherlands), OCIV (Belgium), ETC (Austria), Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland), France Terre d'Asile (France), ProAsyl (Germany), Social Work Foundation (Greece), SPIRASI (Ireland), ICS (Italy), ASTI (Luxembourg), Portuguese Refugee Council (Portugal), CEAR (Spain), CARITAS (Sweden).

² The RESOURCE project is funded by the European Refugee Fund. Denmark does not participate in this programme.

2 The Swedish context

This report's purpose is to analyse and evaluate elements, practices and policies that have contributed to, or obstructed, the integration of refugees in Sweden's labour market. It highlights the difficulties refugees are facing in the Swedish labour market, as well as the ways in which they have managed to overcome these difficulties. The report aims at presenting a fair picture of the situation in Sweden and contributing to the project as a whole.

Altogether 33,000 people requested asylum in Sweden during 2002. The largest group consisted of Iraqi citizens (6,206) and the second largest of citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (5,842). Of these, 7,451 were granted residence as refugees or on other protective grounds and for humanitarian reasons and 1,042 were brought to Sweden within the so-called refugee quota.³

During the 1990s, there was a growth in unemployment across the Swedish labour market, but especially among non-Nordic citizens and people born outside Sweden. The trend changed in 1997, when unemployment stopped rising, and since then it has been falling, due above all to a massive upsurge of employment in 1998 and 1999, but also to a growth of educational initiatives, such as the expansion of higher education and adult education.⁴

Official unemployment in Sweden now stands at about 4%. The number of people registered as long-term unemployed has also reduced greatly. The reduction applies to all groups of applicants, but is greatest among those who previously had a weak position in the labour market, particularly people born outside Europe.

There are shortages of trained labour in a number of areas of the economy, notably medical care, where there is a serious shortage of doctors and nurses, but also of other occupational categories, such as technicians and dispensary staff. Shortages also exist in other technical and scientific occupations, and teaching.⁵ Even though unemployment is decreasing, the integration of refugees and access for refugees to the labour market remains a great problem. One often-debated question is how society should benefit from the academic or professional qualifications and work experience that the refugees have, as well as helping them.

Traditionally the Swedish state acts unilaterally in matters relating to the integration of refugees, both in terms of work and education. Businesses and other professional agencies dealing with education in the private sector rarely take initiatives concerning the integration of refugees. The same is true of refugee organisations and business networks.

To understand Swedish labour market policy and its connection with refugee policy, some facts have to be mentioned about the reception of refugees and the different programmes that exist during the reception process as well as the numerous general labour market policy programmes that are available for refugees after the reception process.

³ Statistics Sweden, www.scb.se, The Swedish Migration Board, www.migrationsverket.se

⁴ The Swedish Labour Market Board, www.ams.se

⁵ *ibid*, AMS, 'Where are the jobs 2002?'

3 Employment policies and schemes for refugees

3.1 Employment/unemployment rates for refugees

The latest available figures concerning the unemployment rates among refugees come from 2002. Unemployment among non-Nordic citizens had decreased by 11%, from 17,200 in 2001 to 15,300 in 2002.

At the same time, more non-Nordic citizens had been offered places in labour market policy programmes. 12,600 non-Nordic citizens participated in labour market policy programmes in September 2002, compared with 11,300 in September 2001.

Among non-Nordic citizens the unemployment in the age group 16-64 years was 9.4%. The unemployment among those who had immigrated during the last five years as 17.2% and those that had immigrated before 1997 was 8.5%.⁶

3.2 Refugees' entitlements to work

Asylum seekers in Sweden are allowed to work if the processing of their application is expected to last more than four months. However, information on this possibility has been poorly spread and it is difficult for asylum seekers to find work when a potential employer knows that a new staff member may have to leave in a couple of months. Those applicants who do manage to find a work and live in a residence centre must pay a contribution towards food and accommodation.⁷

Asylum seekers who have not got a work permit are required to participate in organised activities arranged by the Migration Board. This activity is based on an individual's needs and requirements and should be of benefit to the individual regardless of the outcome of asylum application. Activities include furniture repair, support for new arrivals from the same country or courses and training and local business. Sometimes it is possible for asylum seekers to receive lessons in Swedish.⁸

Those whose asylum application is accepted can start working immediately. However, it is difficult to find work so a thorough introduction programme exists. The education and work situation for refugees must be analysed in the context of this introduction programme system.

Under the current system, introduced in 1985, the Swedish Migration Board concludes agreements with the municipalities regarding the reception of refugees (and certain other aliens) in their area. Once it has agreed to receive refugees, each municipality must establish an integration programme individually tailored to each refugee (the introduction programme). In practice, the programme must be set up in consultation with the individual refugee and in partnership with the local employment office.⁹

Generally speaking, the introduction programme for people of employable age, or with professional training from their country of origin, aims to actively support the individual's entrance into the labour market. It is with the introduction programme that the recruitment process, including the job search and the labour market orientation starts out and it is there the newly arrived get information on changes of career and the transfer of skills.¹⁰

The introduction period normally runs for one year and at most for two years. The introduction must take account of the newcomer's educational background, knowledge and experience from home. For almost everyone, an individual introduction plan is drawn up and the refugee gets the opportunity to go through it verbally in his or her mother tongue. The introduction is planned with a refugee official, a

⁶ AMS, arbetsmarknaden 2002, SCB, Arbetskraftsundersökningarna 2001.

⁷ The Swedish Aliens Act 1989:529, Commentary on the Swedish Aliens Act

⁸ The Migration Board, The Integration Board, The Swedish Association of Local Authorities, 'Agreement concerning development of the introduction for refugees and other immigrants', Asylum seekers Reception Act 1994:137, Asylum seekers Reception Ordinance 1994:361

⁹ Swedish Aliens Act, commentary on the Swedish Aliens Act, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Sweden in 2000 – A country of Migration'

¹⁰ The Integration Board, 'Introduction programmes for new immigrants', The Integration Board, 'Mål för integrationen'

representative for Swedish introduction and a representative from the employment exchange. The municipality, the training organiser and employment services work together in the planning and implementation of the introduction programme.¹¹

When the introduction is completed a recent arrival will know about Swedish conditions, be generally proficient in Swedish and have specific linguistic knowledge related to his or her area of competence, requirements and conditions. The goal is that the individual will no longer require special measures, but will have gained access to society's social insurance system in the same way as the rest of the population. The norm shall be for individuals to support themselves.¹²

3.3 Government schemes to tackle unemployment among refugees

3.3.1 *Labour market programmes within the framework of the introduction programme*

As a part of the introduction programme, the employment offices make available and pays for different work place based programmes and support measures that aim to facilitate refugees' entry into the labour market.¹³

Several programmes and courses existing within the framework of the introduction programme aim to decrease unemployment among refugees and other immigrants. One example is the Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) programme. All immigrants are offered this Swedish language instruction, which is part of the introduction for refugees. The SFI aim to raise all students to the so-called SFI-standard, which is compulsory for many higher educational programmes. In the past couple of years the Government has attempted to better adapt language tuition to the needs and preferences of the individual. Therefore SFI's most recent educational plan has a more differentiated and individualised system, where students are placed in different study groups depending on their educational background.¹⁴

3.3.2 *General unemployment policy programmes*

3.3.2.1 *Introduction to the Programmes*

In the early 1990's Sweden experienced a huge unemployment shock, going from an official unemployment rate of 1.6% in 1990 to 10.3% in 1994. This dramatic change placed massive pressure on policy makers, who increased public spending on the labour market to decrease unemployment. Labour programmes have represented a huge investment for the government: over 3% of GDP is spent on such measures.¹⁵

People participating in employment policy programmes receive a general reimbursement called activity support. This is calculated and paid out by the social insurance office. Those entitled to unemployment benefit, or whose benefit has expired receive the same reimbursement as would have been paid out for unemployment benefit. Reimbursement is paid out for five days per week and can be reduced if recipients have other sources of income during this same period.¹⁶

¹¹ *ibid*, The National Labour Market Board, The Migration Board, The Integration Board, The Swedish Association of Local Authorities, 'Agreement concerning development of the introduction for refugees and other immigrants'

¹² The Swedish National Audit Swedish National Audit Office, 'Att etablera sig i Sverige. En granskning av introduktionsverksamheten för flyktingar och deras anhöriga', The Integration Board, The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 'Mål för integrationen' Sweden in 2000 – A Country of Migration)

¹³ See above under 3. Refugees position regarding education and work in Sweden and 3.1.3 Information on language training provisions

¹⁴ Swedish for immigrants Ordinance (1986:207), Swedish for immigrants Act Law (1986:159), The Swedish School Board, 'Ny kursplan för Svenska för invandrare', Regeringens skrivelse 2001/02:188, Utbildning för kunskap och jämlikhet – regeringens utvecklingsplan för kvalitetsarbetet i förskola, skola och vuxenutbildning. Proposition 2000/01:72, Vuxnas lärande och utveckling av vuxenutbildningen

¹⁵ The Swedish institute, The Swedish labour market, www.si.se

¹⁶ The Activity Support Ordinance (1996:1100), The activity support statute (1996:1100)

The National Labour Market Administration organises training initiatives to make foreign qualifications viable in the Swedish labour market. In general, employment policy programmes are created for all unemployed people and not especially for refugees. However, refugees and other immigrants often constitute the majority in these programmes.

3.3.2.2 The Activity Guarantee

The largest and most important Swedish employment policy programme is the activity guarantee for the unemployed. When starting the activity guarantee programme, a supervisor and the employment seekers work out a job action plan. The plan specifies what the job centre can offer and what is required of the participants. One of the foundation stones of the activity guarantee is that work shall be conducted in close co-operation with the government, municipalities, companies and parties on the labour market. To break the tendency towards long-term unemployment the municipality gets involved in finding new solutions and routes into the labour market. To find jobs, in both public and private sectors, reimbursement of a maximum 150 SEK (€16.5) per day is payable to companies such as staffing companies and organisations and municipalities organising operations within the activity guarantee plan for administration and associated costs and which is based on agreements between the job centre and working partners.¹⁷

3.3.2.3 The Employment Training Programme

Another large labour market policy programme with many immigrants participating is the employment training programme. This programme aims to improve the chances of obtaining a job and to make it easier for employers to find labour with suitable skills. The county employment board or job centre purchases courses from various training organisers, such as education companies, universities or municipal constancy operations. These courses are vocational, but alternative training can be provided via the regular education system, through adult education centres and universities. However, education in college is available only for disabled and long-term unemployed immigrants. Training time depends on the employment seeker's background and the type of training. At present the average time is about six months.¹⁸

3.3.2.4 Business Start-up Loans

A business start-up loan is available for people who want to run their own business. This is only given to people judged to have good prospects of running a business and in cases where the business is expected to show a satisfactory profit and to provide lasting employment. In addition, the support must not distort the competitive situation for other activities. The applicant must describe his or her business idea and submit the description to the Employment Service, which, with the aid of expert business consultants, will decide whether the applicant is judged to be capable of conducting the business activity and whether other requirements are satisfied. In some places, the Employment Service can offer briefings, counselling and a training course for new entrepreneurs.¹⁹

3.3.2.5 The Work Experience Programme

The important work experience programme aims to strengthen individual's job prospects. A jobseeker can be referred to work experience at a workplace as a means of occasional orientation, vocational practice or experience of working life. Work experience can be arranged by private and public sector employers and also by non-profit organisations. The work experience can last for up to six months and is usually full time. There is no hiring relation in the legal sense between provider and trainee. The trainee has supervision and receives training and instructions on the way in which the work is to be

¹⁷ The employment policy programme act (2000:625), The employment policy programme statute (2000:634), The Labour Market Policy Programmes Ordinance (2000:634).

¹⁸ The employment policy programme act (2000:625), The employment policy programme statute (2000:634)

¹⁹ *ibid*

done. Before having a person referred for work experience, the provider agrees with the Employment Service to pay the State a funding contribution of 3,000 SEK (€333) per month. The employment office may provide work experience without any agreement on funding contribution for immigrants and other groups of people with a high unemployment rate.²⁰

3.3.2.6 Training Initiative For People with a Foreign Background

One labour market policy programme is exclusively addressed to people from foreign backgrounds. This is the 'Training initiative for people with a foreign background' and will only be operative between 2001 and 2003. The programme is for jobseekers with post-secondary or other qualifications from abroad whose skills are not being utilised. Through the provision of supplementary training, above all in areas of serious manpower shortage, it is hoped to raise the level of employment among people of foreign origin. Together with the jobseeker, the Employment Office charts the need for supplementary training. This is done by interviews, tests, evaluation of diplomas, work experience and so on. It often involves contact with experts at national authorities, higher education establishments, organisations and employers.

This investigation results in an individual action plan for the jobseeker. The County Labour Board plan the training in consultation with municipalities, county councils and the national authorities and organisations concerned. The path to employment in the occupation for which the jobseeker is qualified will vary according to the industry and occupational field concerned. Certain occupations require authorisation, while others are subject to a more practical assessment of the foreign training's viability for use in Sweden. The goals and content of the supplementary training are planned in close conjunction between the employers, national authorities, organisations and the County Labour Board. The programme was launched in different ways in different municipalities and its outcome has yet to be evaluated.²¹

3.3.2.7 Other Initiatives for Immigrants

Although the Swedish state traditionally takes responsibility for the integration and education of refugees, municipalities have set up a variety of local initiatives. Just looking at 2002 and 2003, more than 40 local initiatives have been started to integrate refugees and other immigrants into the labour market.²²

Finally it should be noted that in 2001 the Swedish parliament decided to allocate 100m SEK (almost €10m) per year, for the years 2001 to 2003, to increase employment amongst immigrants. Investment was directed towards supplementary training for immigrants with foreign education in health and medical care, teaching, technology and science, as well as validation of foreign occupational qualifications. Unemployed immigrants were to be aided in training as nurses in primary care and care of the elderly. Efforts were also made to improve Swedish language instruction for recent immigrants and establish pilot programmes with alternative job placements for immigrants and an advisory service for immigrants opening and operating small businesses. There also exist long term goals such as encouraging ethnic and cultural diversity in public administration and public businesses, particularly in the social science, computing, law and economics sectors.

The main purpose of the programme is to adjust the introduction process to the needs and conditions of the individual. To achieve these goals all the authorities involved in the project needed to cooperate to make the introduction process as differentiated and individualised as possible. The more individualised the process is, the sooner the refugee or the newly arrived immigrant will start earning their living and participating in society. The government announced that one of the most important measures to be taken was to create work and workplace introduction programmes for the refugees and newly arrived immigrants. Each year there has been an evaluation of this reform. The results of

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ AMS, www.ams.se, The employment policy programme statute (2000:634)

²² ECRE; facts about Sweden, www.refugenet.com, From the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE): 'Setting limits' Research paper on the effects of limits on the freedom of movement of asylum seekers within the borders of European Union Member States, January 2002

the first evaluation showed that improvements had been realised and the evaluators were positive to the results so far.²³

3.4 Recognition of qualifications for the purpose of work

The National Agency for Higher Education evaluates higher education from abroad. Only university and higher education programmes with a completed degree are evaluated. The assessment by comparing foreign undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with those provided in Sweden. The comparison is expressed in terms of Swedish degree levels. The evaluation does not involve the awarding of a Swedish degree, but is intended to serve as a recommendation for an employer. It can also serve as guidance for Swedish universities and higher educational institutions. The universities and higher education institutions themselves make all decisions regarding admissions and crediting of a foreign education. This is the case with both completed and uncompleted education programmes.²⁴

Together with the application form, the refugee has to hand in certified copies of certificates in the original language and a translation made by an authorised translator to get his or her higher education validated. Refugees who have not completed, or cannot prove that they have completed their education in upper secondary school, university or college cannot get their education evaluated.²⁵

Apart from this, a student must meet certain basic knowledge requirements to study at a Swedish university or college. These are divided into a basic eligibility, which is the same for all higher education courses, and specific eligibility, if a particular course requires further prior knowledge. In addition to grades and the National University aptitude test, certain courses of study organise entrance examinations, subject to the approval of the National Agency for Higher Education. These courses include medical training and certain artistic training.²⁶

3.5 Main barriers

One significant barrier for refugees trying to find work is lack of knowledge in Swedish. A significant number of refugees taking Swedish for Immigrants do not attain the 'SFI-standard'. The courses' methodology is often not adapted to the refugees' concrete needs. There is also far too long a period of waiting before the refugees can begin their language tuition. For newly arrived refugees with a higher degree there is no possibility to study Swedish at university or college level.

Another barrier is the difficulty in getting access to higher education, which requires a mandatory level of knowledge in Swedish. It is difficult and time consuming to acquire the 'basic knowledge requirements' and since only completed high school grades are validated, most refugees have to go through the equivalence to the whole Swedish high school course. The agencies evaluating foreign university degrees only take into account those that have been completed and that are at least three years long. The validation process is very time consuming and working experience is totally ignored. Most universities are also very strict on basic knowledge requirements when accepting students to their courses. The demand for a certain degree of knowledge in Swedish and English eliminate general qualifications for some educational programmes.

Although there are several different labour market policy programmes, they seem to be somewhat inefficient and are not really individually tailored to each refugee. Refugees with university degrees,

²³ Report from the Integration Board to the Swedish government: 'Förbättrad introduktion för nyanlända'

²⁴ Higher Education Act Law 1992: 1434, Higher Education Ordinance 1992:100 The National Agency for Higher Education, 'Validering av utländsk högskoleexamen'

²⁵ The National Administration for higher Education, 'Ansökan om bedömning av utländsk gymnasieutbildning', From the National Agency for Higher Education: 'Swedish Universities and University colleges - Annual Report', 2001, 'Evaluation of foreign university/higher education programmes', May 2001 From the National School Board: 'Adult Education', August 2002, 'Information om den nya kursplanen för Sfi', July 2002, 'Det svenska skolsystemet', July 2002, 'Vuxenutbildning', July 2002, From the National Administration for Higher Education: 'Ansökan om bedömning av utländsk gymnasieutbildning', 'Validering av utländsk högskoleexamen'

²⁶ The National School Board, 'Det svenska skolsystemet', 'Vuxenutbildning'

who are not able to work in jobs that make use of their training and are forced to take inferior jobs, are excluded from government action programmes as they are not listed as unemployed.

Although the introduction programme has many advantages, it can also be a barrier as the process can be slow and bureaucratic. Business and professional organisations are absent during introduction periods and there is a general lack of the kind of business knowledge that would benefit skilled people in finding work or further education.

Prejudice is another major barrier. Employers look to hire people with Swedish working experience. Some employers require a Swedish degree and have difficulties accepting those acquired in a foreign country. Others require a Swedish degree as a pretext, so they will not be obliged to hire refugees and other people with foreign backgrounds.

4 Labour needs in specific sectors

4.1 Labour market needs

4.1.1 *Official Swedish facts and figures*

According to reports and statistics from the Swedish government and different Swedish authorities²⁷, the Swedish labour market has developed very positively in recent years and the number of unemployed has dropped dramatically. At the end of 2000 unemployment was down to 4% and the number of jobs was constantly increasing on most areas.

Looking at the labour market by sector, the public sector reports the greatest increase in jobs. However, there is manifest reduction in demand within the transport and construction sectors.

Areas with trained manpower shortages include medical care, where there is a serious shortage of doctors and nurses, but also other occupational categories, such as technicians and dispensary staff, other technical/scientific occupations, doctors and teaching professions.

In 2002 there were a total of 30,000 doctors practising in Sweden, of which 85% were in the public sector. Of these, approximately 12,000 were consultants in hospitals. From 2005, a sharp rise in retirement among consultants is expected, both within general practice and other specialist fields. The projected recruitment need for doctors suggests that there will be a demand for about 1,400 new doctors per year. Each year approximately 800 doctors qualify from the Swedish medical schools, but the reduction in medical courses, implemented during the 1990s, will continue to have an adverse effect until around 2010.

The 1990s saw a steady increase in the number of nurses, as the increasing number of older patients with multiple and chronic complaints imposed greater demands for more home nursing and primary care. Currently, 3,200-3,500 nurses qualify annually from basic courses, and the number of course places will be increased over the next few years to just over 5,000. In 2002 there were 83,543 nurses in county councils and municipalities. The retirement rate of nurses will increase steadily and peak around 2015. The projected need for more nurses suggests that there will be a demand for about 6,000-7,000 nurses per year.

Other sectors where there is an increased demand include labour intensive activities such as transport, communications (including telecommunications), biotechnology, engineering, construction, merchandising and certain other private services.

Although the number of people in employment has increased, the strong increase of jobs within the private services sector observed in recent years slowed down in 2002. The most negative development is found within the IT sector, where employment has fallen by 10% or 10,000 people over the last year. The sector believes that recruitment demand will take off again.

4.1.2 *Facts and figures from Swedish enterprises*

Facts and figures from Swedish companies give a different picture of labour market needs and shortages.²⁸ Apparently companies are having difficulty in finding qualified personnel with proper education and work-experience. According to a study that was carried out in 2002, three out of four companies trying to recruit during 2001 experienced difficulties.

Nearly a quarter of companies trying to recruit during the first six months of 2001 were unable to fill the quotas they required. In the economy as a whole this meant at least 25,000 job vacancies.

Companies identified a shortage of personnel with good higher education qualifications as well those for duties requiring little prior knowledge. Examples of professions where recruiting problems

²⁷ AMS employment prognosis until the end of 2002, AMS 'Where the jobs are 2002'

²⁸ The Swedish Federation of Enterprise: 'Invandring för tillväxt och nya jobb, juli 2002', The Swedish Labour market Board, The Swedish Labour market Board, 'Rekryteringsenkät från våren 2001, Brister i arbetsmarknadspolitiken bromsar tillväxten, juli 2001'

have occurred include: technicians and scientists at all levels, civil engineers, engineers with CAD-education, construction workers, product developers, service riggers and turners. Other professional categories having recruitment difficulties are drivers with professional education, professional chefs and other restaurant workers.

There is also a high demand for craftsmen such as electricians and plumbers. In some professional areas more than 20% of employers don't receive enough applications for job vacancies. According to the Swedish Labour market Board, this goes for professions requiring only a shorter time of university studies (two to three years) including salesmen, miners, construction workers, craftsmen within construction and manufacturing, transport, machine workers (drivers), service and health care, technicians and engineers, service and security, physiotherapists, and nurses.

4.1.3 *Labour market needs in the near future*

Consequently, access to manpower is shrinking in an increasing number of occupations and shortages are becoming more common across virtually all of Sweden. However, this is not due to a general manpower shortage, despite shortages occurring in a number of occupations and a number of regions.

As yet, with the exception of certain professions such as doctors, nurses and teachers, there is no sign of an increase in recruitment problems. However, it is possible to predict a serious labour shortage in the next few years, owing to the large number of people who will be retiring. This impending labour shortage threatens future growth within the country and several counter measures have been put in motion.

Most jobs will naturally be generated by the health and welfare sectors, and 20,000 new jobs are predicted. However, the widespread lack of university educated care personnel is hindering the growth in employment, which could otherwise have been more marked.

The manpower reserve available to fill vacant positions that arise is small in many occupations. At a time when Sweden anticipates a pending upward swing in the business cycle, this is disturbing, as it might consequently prove difficult to find the manpower necessary to fill many of the jobs becoming vacant. The shortage is most acute within certain occupational areas requiring higher education.²⁹

4.2 **The reasons for the shortages**

Recruiting problems in some sectors originate from a rapid increase in demand and a temporarily overheated labour market.

However, the main part of the problem relating to a lack of qualified personnel is due to long-term structural factors such as the inability to match available jobs with people unemployed and imbalances in the labour market. According to recent studies, in a few years demographic issues will worsen these recruitment problems.

Because of the population's age structure there will also be a great need to recruit within the public sector. A couple of years ago The Swedish Association of Local Authorities estimated the increase in demand for new recruits resulting from the retirement of 620,000 workers until 2010. The recruitment need for health care alone amounted to 527,000 until 2015.

There are also major problems caused by the registration of people as long-term sick and early retirement owing to disability. In the last two years, the loss of manpower owing to sickness benefit and disability-related early retirement has exceeded additions through population increase by around 25,000 people per year. These people are not considered either as unemployed, or as part of the workforce. The growth in this group creates some of the shortages shown in the labour market.

²⁹ In this part the information come from: The Swedish Labour market Board, 'Rekryteringsenkät från våren 2001, Brister i arbetsmarknadspolitiken bromsar tillväxten, juli 2001', Landstingsförbundet: 'Prognos 2001-2010 – Rekryteringsbeov och tillgång, oktober 2001', The Swedish Labour market Board, 'Den framtida personalförsörjningen inom vård och omsorg – tillgång och rekryteringsbehov till år 2015, juni 2002', Government bill 1997/98:16 Sweden, the Future and Diversity

There are several related causes for shortages of healthcare personnel, such as substantial financial cutbacks and reduced training places during the 1990s and the restructuring of healthcare services. The high average age of healthcare personnel will result in a high retirement rate in the near future, at the same time as there are increased care needs for an ageing population. Within a few years a substantial shortage of manpower will arise in this sector, unless there is a fundamental change in the current situation. Already there are shortages throughout most of Sweden particularly for doctors, nurses and assistant nurses. Furthermore there are, or it is anticipated that there will be, recruitment problems, both locally and regionally within other professional groups (such as dentists, pharmacists and physiotherapists).

The shortage of nurses is to some extent one of nurses with a specialist training, which can be explained by the changing structure of healthcare, the introduction of new technology and new healthcare methods.³⁰

4.3 The Government's Response to Labour Needs

Demographic developments will force the labour market to adapt to a shrinking workforce, while the average age of the workforce will increase. The government are carrying out big changes in order to cope with expected shortages. They are focussing the operation on three areas: to match individuals who are ready for work with available jobs; to carry out good labour market training and education that is directly related to labour market demands; and to offer initiatives for those who find themselves distanced from the labour market.

The government has also stressed that it is important to make use of unutilised resources both in the workforce and outside it. Today such labour resources exist primarily among those born abroad who have a weaker connection to the labour market.

Immigrants are also an important potential source of labour supply since they have a more favourable age composition than the rest of the population, from a labour market perspective. The unemployment rate is higher within this group than for those born in Sweden. Moreover, immigrants with professional training often have a poor yield from their education. Many immigrants in occupations where there is a scarcity of labour get stuck in unqualified, poorly paid occupations with limited opportunities for vertical career development.

Initiatives to increase the employment rate among those born abroad are of key importance to increase the total labour supply. On the basis of the National Labour Market Board's and Statistics Sweden's statistics, the potential labour force reserve can be estimated at almost 100,000 people.³¹

³⁰ The Swedish Federation of Enterprise: 'Invandring för tillväxt och nya jobb, juli 2002', The Swedish Labour market Board, 'Rekryteringsenkät från våren 2001, Brister i arbetsmarknadspolitiken bromsar tillväxten, juli 2001', Landstingsförbundet: 'Prognos 2001-2010 – Rekryteringsbeov och tillgång, oktober 2001', The Swedish Labour market Board, 'Den framtida personalförsörjningen inom vård och omsorg – tillgång och rekryteringsbehov till år 2015, juni 2002'

³¹ Näringsdepartementet, www.regeringen.se, AMS, www.ams.se, The Swedish Federation of Enterprise: 'Invandring för tillväxt och nya jobb, juli 2002',

5 Qualitative analysis

5.1 Pathways to employment

5.1.1 *Refugees' own perceptions of the match between their current job and the skills and abilities acquired in their country of origin*

The refugees interviewed had either started working for the first time after arriving in Sweden, or had the same job, or were studying to get the same job, as they had in their country of origin.

Many women who did not have to work or who were not allowed to work in their country of origin started working when they came to Sweden. Most of the women refugees were told by staff at the different reception agencies that in general women work in Sweden. They were also told that they had to work to be able to integrate in the Swedish society. Since one of the real labour needs in Sweden is in the health and social care service, people working at unemployment offices in some cases recommended that the women start working in this sector, regardless of their previous professions.

It should be noted that there are also examples of men and women who worked in the health and social care sector in their country of origin who have been encouraged to continue working in this sector in Sweden.

People who stated that the job they held in Sweden matched the skills and abilities acquired in their country of origin often stated that this match was only partial. This was usually because they had to repeat their studies in order to work in Sweden. In some cases this was because they did not have their original qualification certificates, in others that their education and work experience did not qualify them for a work in Sweden.

The interviewees who are studying to be able to continue working in the same profession as they did in their country of origin were the most critical to the match between their current job situation and the work they used to have in their home country. They find their current situation frustrating and are tired of working in sectors like the service sector just to make a living while they go through the re-qualification process.

5.1.2 *The overall relation between refugees' educational and work background and current employment*

As stated above, some of the people interviewed came to Sweden with no work experience at all. This group comprised of women who had not worked in their country of origin and people who were too young to have started work when they came to Sweden. Sweden has a well functioning and generous system for refugees with little or no education. Great possibilities exist for these people to start a new life and get a proper education. There are numerous examples of refugees who have done just that.

The refugees who came to Sweden with an education and who had work experience from the country of origin seem to be in a tougher position than those who could start studying for the first time in Sweden. These people have all continued, or are studying to continue, in the same profession. Most have stated that they were encouraged to do so by people they met during the introduction programme, at adult education, at the employment office or at the university. It seems to be almost impossible to quickly requalify and continue working in the same profession in Sweden as in the country of origin. The interviewees in this group stated that they have to be extremely patient and work very hard to requalify. Some refugees also mentioned that it was almost impossible for them to go through the requalification process because they simply could not afford all those years of additional study.

5.1.3 *The impact of recognition procedures on finding employment*

Almost all of the interviewees who had completed their education in their country of origin thought the requalification process was too long. Most of them had to start from zero with the introduction pro-

gramme and Swedish for Immigrants.³² After about one year they continued their studies at Swedish high school or, if they were too old to go to high school, at adult education. It was not until they got a Swedish high-school diploma that they could begin the additional studies to 'become what they were' in their country of origin. All the interviewees found that their educational background and work experience were worth less than they had expected.

A common complaint was that the requalification process prevented the refugees from working. Some of the interviewees mentioned that, though the education they got during the requalification process was very good, they already learned much of it in their country of origin. Some also mentioned that they have experienced hostility towards their foreign education. For example, two refugee doctors did not bring any qualification certificates to Sweden. Therefore they had to start all over again to be recognised as doctors. It took them approximately six years each before they could start working as doctors in Sweden.

It should also be noted that even those who brought their certificates to Sweden had to go through additional studies. No diplomas were fully recognised. Most interviewees found that their education from their home country only allowed them to skip one or two semesters out of four to five years' education.

5.1.4 *Different pathways to employment*

All the interviewees mentioned good knowledge of Swedish as a pathway to employment. Some stated that they had wanted to study Swedish at university level and were very frustrated when they had to attend the Swedish instruction Swedish for immigrants. People who arrived in Sweden more than five years ago stated that the language instruction was inefficient, mainly because all refugees and other immigrants were put in the same class, regardless of their educational background. According to more recent arrivals, language instruction has improved. Today Swedish for immigrants is better adapted to the needs and preferences of the individual, and students are placed in different study groups depending on their educational background.

Most interviewees mentioned the importance of a proper education as a pathway to employment. This was particularly true of the women who had to start working when they came to Sweden. The refugees working as nurses also mentioned the introduction programme as a pathway. It was through this that they got information about work opportunities in the health sector. They also mentioned that they got a lot of help and support during the introduction programme.

Some interviewees also mentioned meeting the right people, learning about the Swedish society and their personal skills and competence.

To sum up, according to the results of the interviews, the most important factor that have helped refugees to find suitable employment in Sweden is a good knowledge of Swedish. A woman from Iran, who now works as a dentist, mentioned that although the additional studies she had to go through were very important for her, she would never have got her job if she had not been able to speak Swedish fluently. Those refugees who got some Swedish language tuition while they were living in Sweden as asylum-seekers, considered it to be an important pathway to further studies in Sweden.

The second most important factor is, according to the interviewees, was acceptance of the Swedish system for requalification. Most of them thought that they had to study too much and for too long a period before they could requalify. However, they also mentioned that once they had requalified, they had no problems in finding suitable jobs. Most interviewees also mentioned the importance of starting the requalification process quickly after arrival in Sweden.

The third most important factor that was mentioned and discussed a lot was the importance of gaining knowledge about Swedish culture and society, and specifically the labour market. The women who came to Sweden without work experience mentioned that it was thanks to the information they got about the shortages in the health and social care sector that they got their first job in Sweden. Others mentioned that since the Swedish mentality is very different from what they were used to in their country of origin, it took some time before they realised how to behave when looking for work in

³² See above under 3.3.1, Labour market programmes within the framework of the introduction programme

Sweden. Some felt they had to start considering themselves as Swedes and adapting as much as possible to Swedish society before they found a job equivalent to the one they had in their country of origin.

It should be noted that all of the interviewees mentioned additional studies in the host country as a pathway to employment. However, considering the requalification process in Sweden, this seems more like a mandatory measure than a pathway to employment.

Interestingly enough, none of them mentioned employment support or initiative from governmental organisations and employment services as a pathway to employment, although a wide range of different labour market policy programmes exist in Sweden.³³

5.1.5 *Recommendations to improve refugees' chances of finding employment*

The following recommendations were offered by interviewees to improve refugees' chances of finding work that reflects their qualifications and skills:

- Learn Swedish.
- Create a network of contacts.
- Gain knowledge of Swedish society and culture.

The following were mentioned as recommendations to the Swedish government:

- Create a new, special adult education for refugees.
- Introduce more intensive language courses.
- Take measures against workplace prejudice and discrimination (This is surprising, as hardly anyone had mentioned these as barriers).

Other recommendations that were suggested by some interviewees included:

- Refugees should get information about which sectors have labour shortages, so that they could look for work in these sectors
- Refugees should be allowed to begin their studies directly after arriving in Sweden.
- There should be more cooperation between educational institutions and the private sector.

More long-term recommendations were to get the society to accept all people as being of equal value, and the acceptance of foreign countries' education and experiences.

5.1.6 *Barriers and the steps that refugees have taken to overcome the three most common barriers*

The barriers mentioned by interviewees were lack of knowledge in Swedish, lack of knowledge about the Swedish society and the Swedish labour market, lack of references, discrimination, prejudice and the requalification process.

5.1.6.1 **Knowledge of Swedish**

The most common barrier mentioned was lack of knowledge of Swedish. All the interviewees mentioned that they could not feel part of Swedish society until they had learned Swedish properly. Some of them mentioned that the language tuition was far too basic and at far too low a level. Some also mentioned that they thought they would have attained the 'SFI-standard'³⁴ a lot sooner if they had been given the opportunity to speed up the learning process.

Some refugees also mentioned that the SFI-courses suffered from a lack of methodology adapted to the individual, concrete needs of the refugees. They also mentioned that there was far too long a waiting period before they could begin their language tuition. Some strongly criticised the fact that

³³ See above 3.3 Government schemes to tackle unemployment among refugees

³⁴ See above under 3.3.1, Labour market programmes within the framework of the introduction programme.

there are no possibilities for newly arrived refugees with a higher degree to study Swedish at a university or college.

The lack of knowledge of Swedish made it difficult for some of the refugees to find work in Sweden. Some mentioned that employers who do not want to employ people with a foreign background use the refugees' lack of knowledge in Swedish as an excuse not to hire them, even though the work does not require that the employee speak Swedish fluently.

The natural step taken by refugees to overcome this barrier is, of course, to learn Swedish. With only one or two exceptions, all the interviewees speak very good Swedish today. Some mentioned that they took a lot of personal initiatives to speed up the language learning process, such as reading a lot of Swedish literature and trying to speak Swedish at home with their families.

5.1.6.2 Requalification

Among refugees who had completed their education and had significant work experience in their country of origin, the second most common barrier that was mentioned was the requalification process. All of them stated that it was very difficult and time consuming for them to get access to higher education. The reason for this was mainly the universities demand of a mandatory knowledge in Swedish, and 'basic knowledge requirements'³⁵. The agencies that evaluate foreign university degrees only take into account those that take three years or longer and have been completed. These agencies also ignore working experience when they validate foreign university degrees. Getting grades evaluated was also very time consuming and the fact that only completed high school grades are validated was mentioned as a great disadvantage in the Swedish requalification process.

The fact that they had to go through several years of additional studies also made the financial situation difficult for the refugees with long recognition periods and their families. The steps that were taken to overcome this barrier were mainly that they just accepted that they had to go through a long requalification process and that they did not give up. Most of the people interviewed even stated that they had to work in jobs such as cleaners, taxi drivers or dishwashers while they were studying so that they would get an extra income.³⁶

5.1.6.3 Knowledge about Swedish society

The third most commonly mentioned barrier among those who had to requalify was lack of knowledge about Swedish society and Swedish rules and regulations. Some stated that they felt greatly frustrated when they finally got their residence permit, but still couldn't work in the same profession as in their country of origin and they did not understand why. None of the interviewees could mention a concrete step they had taken to overcome this barrier; it was more a question of accepting the Swedish rules and regulations and adjusting to the Swedish system.

Among those refugees who did not have an education or work experience when they came to Sweden, the second most common barrier mentioned was lack of knowledge about Swedish society and the Swedish labour market. Some of them stated that they understood that they would have to get an education in Sweden, but they did not know what to study. The people interviewed stated that they overcome this barrier as they learned more about the Swedish society.

The third most common barrier for this group of people was their financial situation and their family responsibilities. Also this group took jobs as cleaners, taxi drivers and so on to get an extra income while they were studying.

³⁵ See above under 3.4, Recognition of qualifications for the purpose of work

³⁶ It is important to note that all persons in Sweden have access to the study support system. This means that all the refugees who are studying in Sweden or who are going through the requalification process can get all their studies financed by this system.

5.1.7 *The impact of factors such as age, gender, legal status and family responsibilities on the job seeking process*

Since the requalification process is long and time consuming, it is clear that it is easier for young people who come to Sweden as refugees to get an education and work. For them it could be something they would have done even in their country of origin, compared to the refugees who already have an education.

The fact that it can take a long time before refugees get their residence permit also has a negative impact on the job seeking process. Some interviewees had to wait up to two years before they got their residence permit and they felt that it was hard to begin the requalification process after this long period of waiting.

Family responsibilities seem to slow down the job seeking process in the sense that refugees who went through the requalification process or started studying in Sweden also had to work to support their families. For younger refugees the situation was different since they did not have the same family responsibilities.

5.2 Case studies

5.2.1 *Health and social care sector – Ms P*

Ms P was born in 1967 in Iran. She came to Sweden in 1991 and got a residence permit in 1997 on humanitarian grounds. She had not worked in Iran but she had studied natural sciences at high school for four years with good results.

Ms P brought her high school diploma with her to Sweden and got it validated. The validation only took two months but after that she was told that her degrees and diploma from Iran was not worth much in Sweden. She therefore had to attend adult education for four years before she was considered to have the equivalence to a Swedish high school diploma in natural sciences.

During her adult education studies she decided to become a pharmacist and she started studying pharmacy at university. She has not finished her studies yet, but she has already started working at a pharmacy. While studying, she has worked with elderly care to get some extra money. She has never been unemployed or participated in any labour market policy programme.

Factors she mentioned that helped her find employment are that she got in contact with the right people who helped her find employment, that she learned Swedish quickly and the experiences she had from her home country.

The greatest difficulty she encountered when she was looking for employment was discrimination and prejudice. She therefore decided to get an education, work hard and get a good job so that she would prove these people wrong. Her second greatest difficulty was lack of work experience in Sweden. Most employers she met demanded previous work experience in Sweden, which was impossible for her to get. The only ways she could overcome this barrier were by continuing to search for a job and continuing to study. A third barrier she mentioned was lack of knowledge about the Swedish labour market and how to look for a job. She managed to overcome this barrier by asking questions, reading information and learning from her mistakes.

To improve refugees' chances of getting work she suggested all employers be required to hire a certain percentage of immigrants. Employers would then learn that a perfect knowledge of Swedish does not mean that a person is right for the job. Employers would be forced to look behind language difficulties. She also thinks that employers should get information about how important it is that they hire refugees.

5.2.2 *The IT-sector – Mr R*

Mr R was born 1969 in Eritrea. He went to school and got good grades. His brother ran a construction agency where he used to work part time. At high school he chose to study natural sciences. He knew

that as long as he continued his studies, he would not have to join the army. He also knew that the day he graduated from high school he would be conscripted into the army and forced to go to war. Therefore, he fled from Eritrea to Sweden right after he graduated from high school. In Sweden he got a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.

When he came to Sweden he did not have any qualification certificates at all. He had not had the chance to bring them and nobody in Sweden asked for them. He had some work experience from his brother's firm and a good theoretical knowledge but he never got a chance to prove this to anyone.

When he got his residence permit he was put in the introduction programme and at the same time he started studying Swedish at SFI. He went to SFI for six months and participated in the introduction programme for a year. After this the people in charge at the introduction programme thought it was time for him to study so that he would get a Swedish high-school diploma. Therefore, he started studying the technical programme, which, at that time, was a four year long high school programme.

Mr R graduated from high school with good grades and chose to continue to study at a technical college. His college studies took three years. During this time he got more and more interested in computers and he hoped that one day he would have the chance to work with computers.

Mr R started working right after he got his residence permit. When he was a student he worked at the post office, as a cleaner and sold tickets in the metro. When he graduated from college he instantly got job in IT and computing at Ericsson. The job as just what he had hoped for and he is still working there today.

Mr R considers it to be a good thing that he had to go through the Swedish high school. In this way he learned a lot about the Swedish society and he quickly learned Swedish and 'Swedish behaviour'. His only complaint is that it took over a year before he could start high school.

He has never had any problems in finding work in Sweden. He has never been unemployed or in a labour market policy programme. He considers himself to be very lucky to find a job at Ericsson and he thinks that Ericsson has as a policy to think about ethnic diversity when they are hiring new employees. For example, he knows that when he got the job, his boss was specially looking for people with a foreign background. Today this boss does not work at Ericsson anymore, and there have been many redundancies. In spite of this, Mr R has managed to stay in the company.

As the factors that helped Mr R to find employment he mentions good luck and his ability to take the initiative. He also mentions his personal interest in computers and that the labour market for these kinds of jobs was good at the time when he got his job.

Mr R does not think that he had any real problems when looking for a job in Sweden. One thing that he knows is a problem for other refugees in Sweden is the refugees' lack of knowledge about the Swedish society, about how to behave among Swedish people and about how to look for a job in Sweden. According to him, the most important measure that has to be taken to change this situation and make it easier for refugees to find work is to get new arrivals to learn Swedish quickly and start adapting to Swedish society.

Mr R also consider it as relevant that refugees who come to Sweden quickly get information about the areas of the Swedish labour market where there is a need for labour. He mentioned that when he came to Sweden, he had no idea that there was such a shortage of teachers. If he had known that, he might have studied to become a teacher.

5.2.3 *An engineer – Mr S*

Mr S was born in Iraq in 1955. He studied to become an engineer and when he graduated from university quickly got work in the air force. He continued this career for 29 years before he had to leave the country and fled to Sweden.

He came to Sweden in June 1998 and got his residence permit in June 2000 on humanitarian grounds.

It was impossible for him to bring any qualification certificates to Sweden and when he finally got his residence permit he wanted to start working as soon as possible. Therefore, he started to contact business and went to conferences for technical companies. He soon got into contact with a company in Stockholm that works with fibre optics. The company hired him and he still works there today. At his

job, he soon took initiatives so that his company expanded and started to make contacts in the Arabic world. Today he is responsible for the company's contacts with the Middle East.

Since he got his residence permit Mr S has only been out of work during a short period before he got his current job. He has never received any state financed aid or been in any labour market policy programme.

The most difficult thing for Mr S was integrating into Swedish society. He has come to the conclusion that the people responsible for the introduction process must teach immigrants how to work in Swedish society, how to behave and how to look for a work. He knows that he got his job as a result of his personality, his ambition and his work experience from Iraq.

Mr S thinks that newly arrived immigrants need a lot of information about the Swedish labour market and how to become successful in Sweden. Skilled refugees must be shown how to work in Sweden and then the Swedish enterprises must start to hire these people.

Mr S also suggests that people from the same country should share their experiences in this matter. Also, people working with these issues must understand that refugees are afraid that Swedish society will not accept them.

5.3 Summary of the analysis of the interviews

In Sweden there are no real sectors that are facing skill shortages. The only sector of the Swedish labour market with serious shortages is health, where there is a shortage of nurses and doctors. Recent studies suggest that shortages will develop in many other sectors due to demographic changes. The interviewed refugees from this sector have stated that they were encouraged to use their skills and experience and to continue in their previous profession, as were those from other sectors. The problem however, is that the process that must be completed before refugees' skills and experiences can be used is too difficult and time consuming.

The majority of the interviewees mentioned recognition of qualifications as a major barrier. The documentation required for validation is very strict. University courses require a mandatory knowledge of Swedish, even if the literature is in English. Work experience is not validated, only that confirmed by qualification certificates. This means that there is nothing to validate for refugees who arrive without their certificates.

Somewhat inefficient language tuition has a negative impact on refugees' chances of finding work. According to the interviewees, a more individually tailored language programme would really have helped immediately after their arrival. Teaching would be more effective if there was greater differentiation between pupils and if it wasn't necessary to wait so long before starting. The refugees have also requested Swedish language tuition, which is already reinforced while the refugees are living in Sweden as asylum-seekers, as well as a better financial system for those who study Swedish for immigrants.

Even the introduction programme sometimes has a negative impact on refugees' ability to use their existing work experience. This can happen when introduction efforts are not fully tailored to the individual's needs and occupational background.

Interviewees in the Health sector stated that once they were requalified they had no real problem finding work. However, in sectors where there is no skill shortage, interviewees mentioned that they have had problems with prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, they requested a general raising of awareness among employers on the situation for refugees and how employers can assist them. They also requested much more co-operation between the private sector and the authorities responsible for refugee education and work. Similarly they recommended increased co-operation between the private sector, the universities and employment offices.

Refugees in the engineering and IT sectors also stated that there is a considerable shortage of complementary education in sectors other than those where labour is in demand.

In many ways the introduction programme is a good start for refugees arriving in Sweden. Refugees mentioned that the introduction programme lacked courses and information about business knowl-

edge. Such knowledge would be a major benefit for skilled refugees in finding work or entering further education.

As many interviewees stated, it is clear that employers look to hire people with Swedish working experience. Employers also require a Swedish degree and have difficulty accepting education or work experience acquired in a foreign country.

The interviews suggest that the municipalities are not that well prepared when refugees arrive. It is common that refugees with university degrees are working at a level much below their qualifications. A result of this is that these refugees are totally excluded from government action plans, since they are not listed as unemployed. Refugees who have trained or worked in the health sector seem to have a relatively good chance to follow complementary labour market training while they are going through the recognition process. However this is not true in other sectors, like engineering and IT. However, it should be possible for all refugees with higher education or other professional training to receive complementary labour market training and not just in areas where there is a shortage of manpower. There should be an interest in all immigrants with education and work experience from their home country and not just those who can help the Swedish economy with labour market shortages.

It seems that employment offices structure their work around the needs of employers and labour market shortages and around the needs of the people looking for a job. There is also a lack of contact between employment offices and business and professional organisations. In the same way there is a lack of contact between the universities and industry. Budget cuts in the municipalities have led to the withdrawal of guidance counsellors from adult education, which has made the step from the initial SFI on to other educational programmes more difficult.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Creation of more developed language tuition

Refugees must get the chance to study all the Swedish they want at the level they prefer. For instance, they should be able to study Swedish at university and the SFI must develop so that its courses are even more adjusted to individual needs and educational backgrounds. There should also be greater opportunities for refugees to study Swedish while they are living in Sweden as asylum seekers.

Recommendation 2: Increased co-operation between educational agencies and industry

Refugees can easily participate in different kinds of education, but it seems they have difficulty moving from the education sector into the labour market. It is clear that there must be a change in employers' attitudes concerning foreign education. Other measures that need to be taken are a well-developed programme of internship for refugees and better possibilities for refugees to follow vocational training.

Increased co-operation between the private sector, the universities and employment offices, would help change employers' attitudes and raise general awareness about refugees' situation and on how employers can assist them.

Recommendation 3: A better prepared reception

The municipalities need to know well in advance what refugees are coming and what their educational and professional levels are, so they can take suitable action as soon as possible. The municipalities should create the possibility for refugees with post-secondary education or other professional training to receive complementary labour market training enabling them to return to working in their existing profession.

The educational and occupational background of the refugee should be mapped out already during the asylum period. Asylum-seekers with professional experience should also be given access to employment counselling during the asylum period, in part to gain a basis from which to improve their professional skills, and in part to better prepare them for possible settlement in Sweden.

When an asylum-seeker receives a residence permit, the refugee should get assistance in finding a job and this assessment should be made before the individual is offered an introduction spot in a municipality. A refugee with professional training or previous work experience who chooses to participate in the introduction programme should also receive an introduction that is work-oriented, for example, a workplace-based introduction within his or her professional area where possible.

Recommendation 4: A new recognition process

The documentation required for validation should be less strict. The agencies should also be granted the competence to validate work experience in professional life and not just to evaluate documents. Refugees missing their documents should have the possibility to undergo a validation of their real competence.

Refugees must be offered better possibilities to follow complementary education programmes. Financial incentives to help further the education of certain groups would also help. There should also be courses where knowledge of Swedish is not mandatory. In this way refugees could decide for themselves if they wanted to complete a course in spite of lacking knowledge of Swedish.

*Recommendation 5: **More efficient employment offices***

Employment offices must adjust their work to the needs of refugees. Even though they have to meet the needs of the employers and the labour market as a whole, they cannot ignore the educational and occupational background of refugees. Employment offices should also work more intensely with the business and professional organisations, the universities and industry. There should be greater opportunities for refugees to get guidance counsellors in adult education and refugees should receive help in taking the step from SFI to other educational programmes.

6.2 Conclusion

Refugees are an important potential source of labour supply since they have a more favourable age composition, from a labour market perspective, than the rest of the population. The unemployment rate is higher within this group than for those born in Sweden. Moreover, refugees with professional training often have a poor return from their education. Many refugees in occupations where there is a scarcity of labour get stuck in unqualified, poorly paid jobs with limited opportunities. Initiatives to increase the employment rate among those born abroad are of key importance to increase the total labour supply.

The demographic development in Sweden will mean that the proportion of elderly will increase in the early decades of the 21st century. A decline in the proportion of the population who are of working age will lead to an absolute reduction in the labour force.

Swedish society must find new ways of enabling asylum-seekers and refugees to develop their resources, and render the work of the employment agencies more effective by co-ordinating efforts. The introduction programme will not be fully successful until it works in such a way that it is dependent on the refugee's own sense of responsibility and motivation, together with a well functioning co-operation between the responsible agencies and municipalities. It is also clear that the requalification process must be adjusted so that it will focus more on the experience and knowledge that the refugees actually have and match the reality the refugees come from.

7 References

Rules and regulations

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 Asylum Seekers Reception Ordinance 1994:361
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 Swedish Aliens Act 1989:529
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Legislative work

Government bill 1997/98:16 *Sweden, the Future and Diversity*
 Regeringens skrivelse 2001/02:188, Utbildning för kunskap och jämlikhet – regeringens utvecklingsplan för kvalitetsarbetet i förskola, skola och vuxenutbildning.
 Proposition 2000/01:72, Vuxnas lärande och utveckling av vuxenutbildningen
 Commentary on the Swedish Aliens Act

Reports and other publications

From the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE):
 'Setting limits' Research paper on the effects of limits on the freedom of movement of asylum seekers within the borders of European Union Member States, January 2002

From the Integration Board:
 The Integration Board, 'Mål för integrationen', 'Introduction programmes for new immigrants', October 2001, Report from the Integration Board to the Swedish government: 'Förbättrad introduktion för nyanlända' Redovisning INT-19-10-1715, Introduktionsavdelningen, Integrationsverket, Report from the Integration Board to the Swedish government: 'Etnisk mångfald på frammarsch' Redovisning 2002-08-15, Integrationsverket, 'Rapport - Integration 2001', Report 2001, 'The task of the Integration Board, Integration Board 2002', 'Att etablera sig i Sverige. En granskning av introduktionsverksamheten för flyktingar och deras anhöriga', June 2002

From the Migration Board: 'Facts and figures 2002', February 2002

From the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'Sweden in 2000 – A country of Migration, Past, present and future', UD01.028

From the Swedish Federation of County Councils: 'Prognos 2001-2010 – Rekryteringsbehov och tillgång' October 2001.

From the National Labour Market Board: 'Den framtida personalförsörjningen inom vård och omsorg – tillgång och rekryteringsbehov till år 2015' June 2002, 'The labour Market for non-Nordic citizens' Icen 2001:4, 'Arbetsmarknadspolitiska åtgärder', July 2002, 'Fakta om arbetsmarknadsunderstöd' January 2001, 'Fakta om arbetsträning' January 2001, 'Where the jobs are 2002'

From the National Labour Market Board, the Migration Board, the Integration Board and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities: 'Agreement concerning development of the introduction for refugees and other immigrants' April 2001

From the National Agency for Higher Education: 'Swedish Universities and University colleges - Annual Report', 2001, 'Evaluation of foreign university/higher education programmes', May 2001

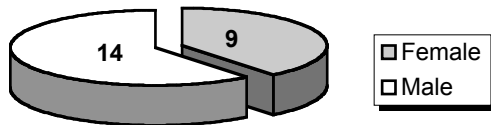
From the National School Board: 'Adult Education', August 2002, 'Information om den nya kursplanen för Sfi', July 2002, 'Det svenska skolsystemet', July 2002, 'Vuxenutbildning', July 2002

From the National Administration for Higher Education: 'Ansökan om bedömning av utländsk gymnasieutbildning', 'Validering av utländsk högskoleexamen'

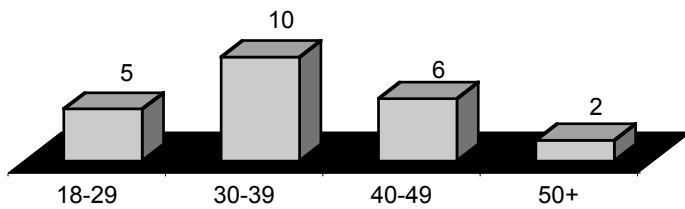
8 Appendix: quantitative data

The 23 interviewees had the following characteristics:

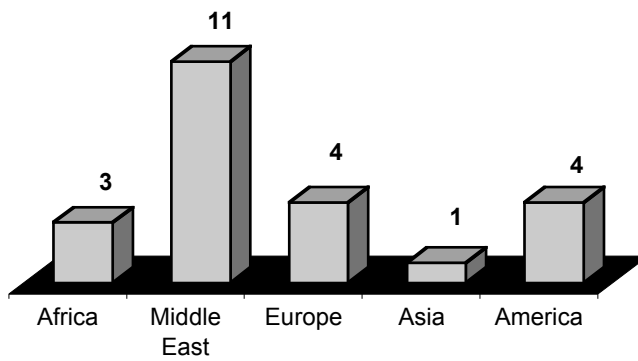
1a Gender



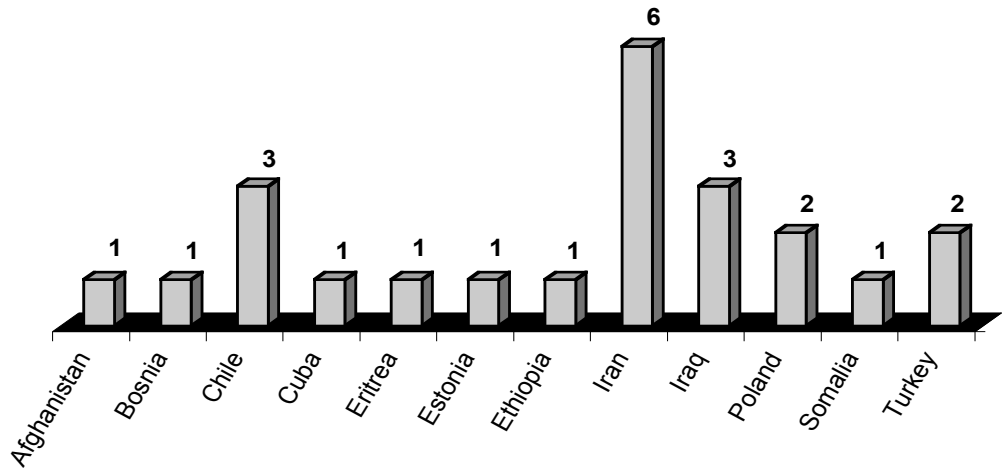
1b Age



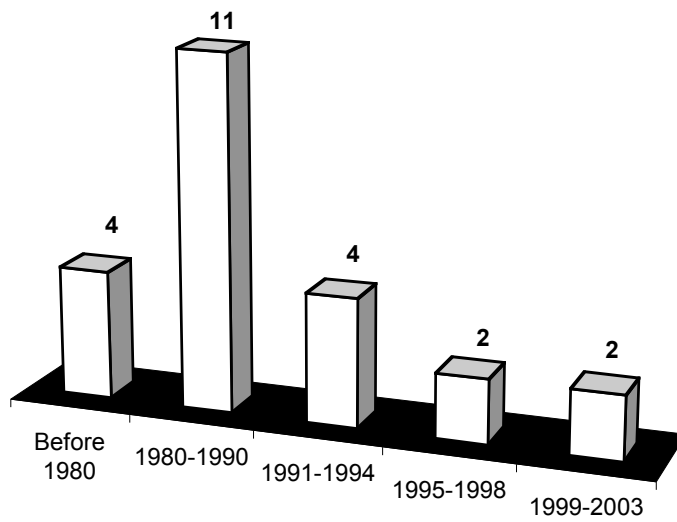
1c Region of origin



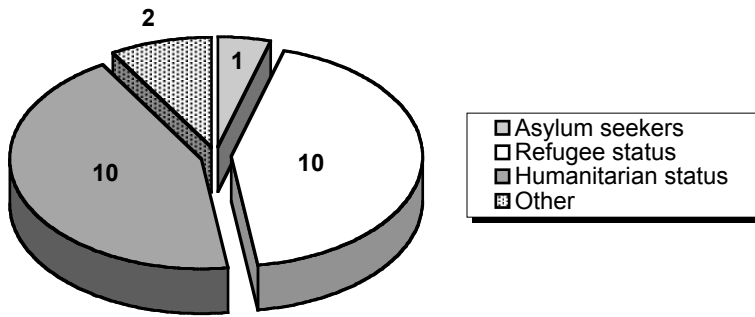
ld **Country of origin**



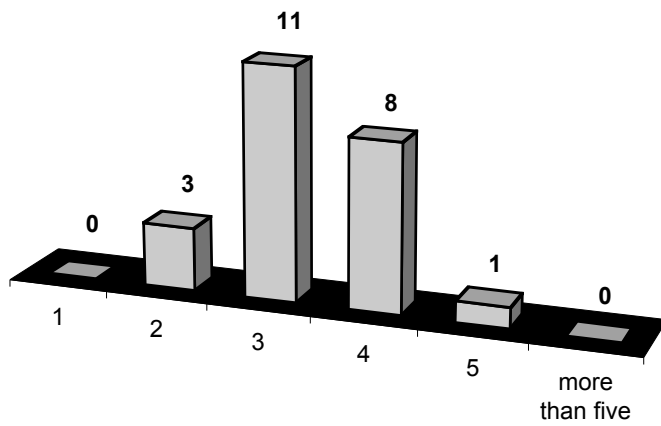
le **Date of arrival in Sweden**



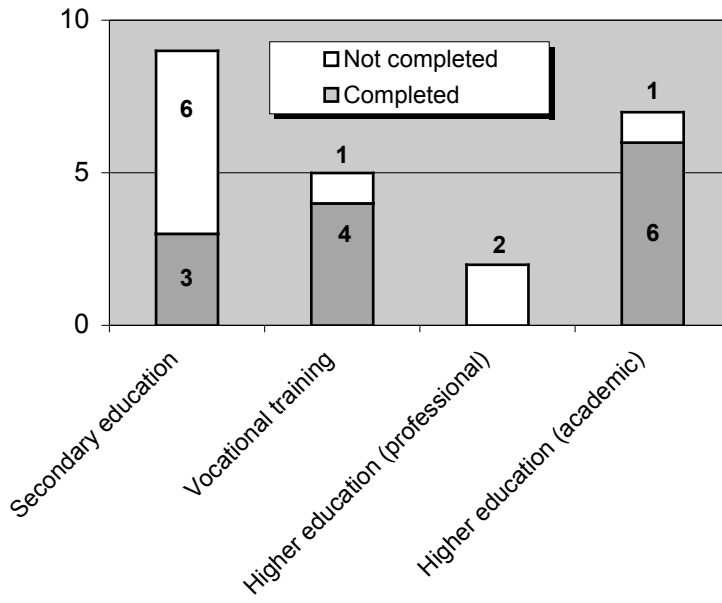
If Status



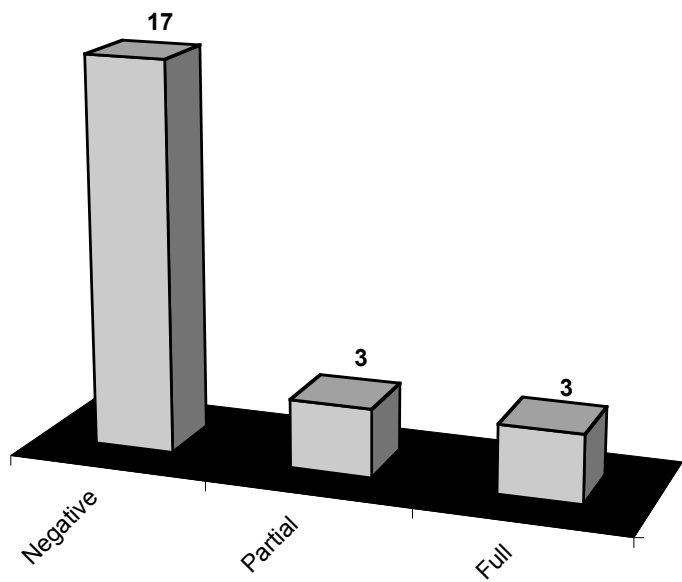
2 Knowledge of languages (including mother tongue)



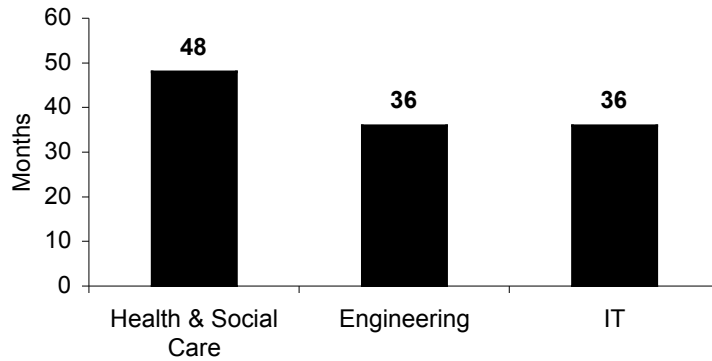
3a Highest level of education before arrival in Sweden



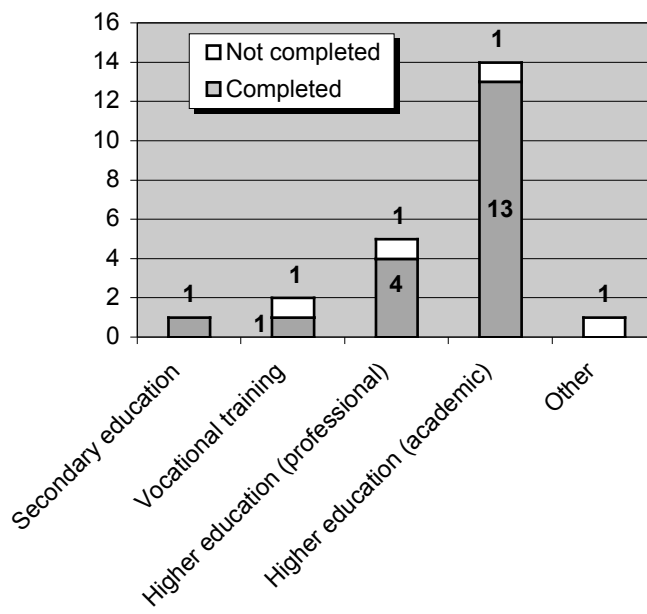
3b Diploma/equivalence recognition in EU country



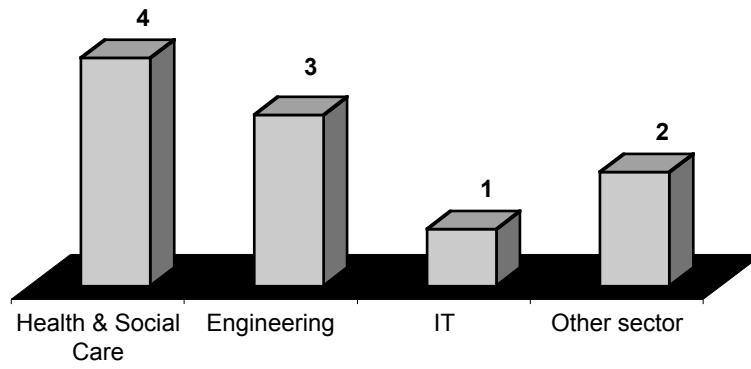
3c Average length of recognition procedure per sector



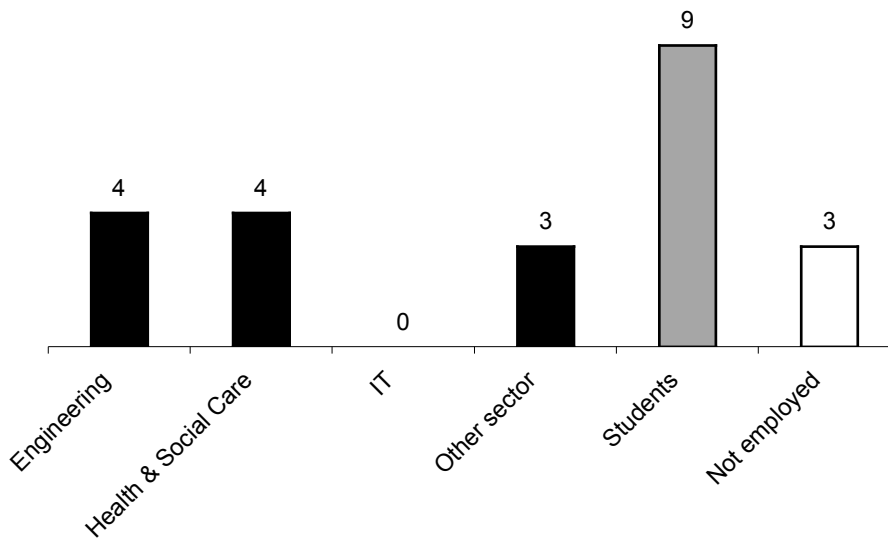
3d Highest level of education in Sweden



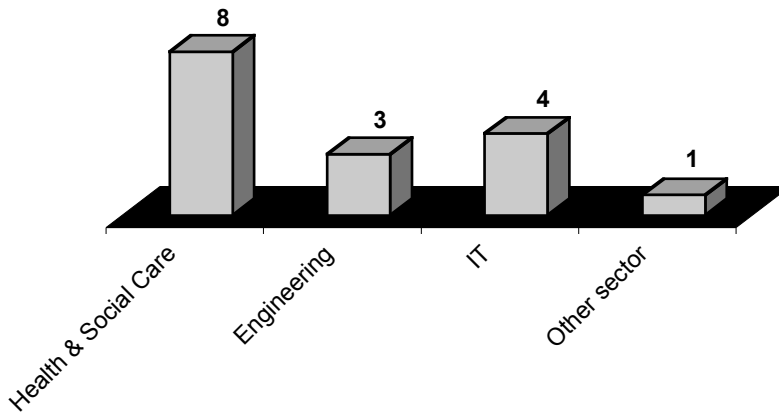
4a Number of refugees who followed practical training before arrival in EU (per sector)



4b Number of refugees employed before arrival in Sweden (per sector)

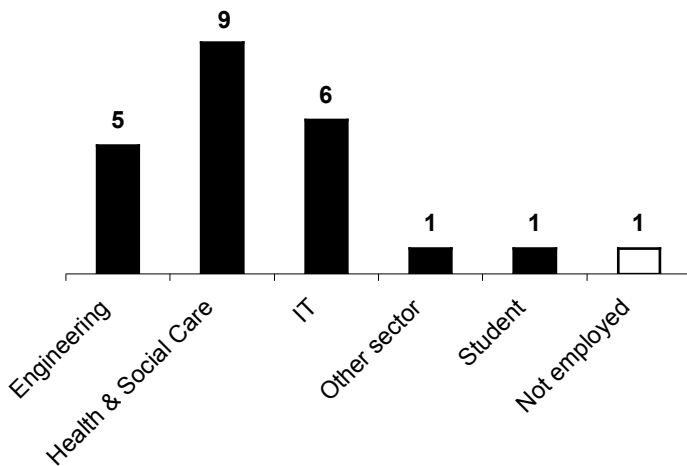


4c **Number of refugees who followed practical training in Sweden (per sector)**



(Total people: 16)

4d **Number of refugees employed in Sweden (per sector)**



5 **To what extent do refugees' current jobs reflect the level of their skills, abilities and knowledge acquired before arrival in Sweden (per sector)**

