

Refugee Contribution to Europe

A feasibility study on the establishment of a
Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE)
in the European Union

Sweden

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PART ONE - INTRODUCTORY NOTES AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is to clarify the conditions for a Swedish participation in the Fund for Refugee Employment and Education, FREE. It highlights the possibilities of such cooperation, and defines the obstacles and problems that this project might encounter. The report aims to present a fair picture of the situation in Sweden and contribute to the project as a whole.

The integration of refugees in Sweden with regard to work and education is traditionally an area in which the Swedish state acts unilaterally. Actors in the private sector, i.e. business companies and other professional agencies dealing with education, rarely take initiatives concerning the integration of refugees. If these actors contribute in any way, it is first and foremost through cooperation in education and employment programmes run by the state.

With the present world order, the traditional way of delegating responsibilities in integration issues might change. More and more refugees are coming to Europe at the same time as demographic studies are showing an increased need for foreign labour in order to create economic growth. The fact that the situation for refugees in Europe has become an important issue within the EU, being frequently discussed and prioritised, ought to lead to an increased awareness among the actors on the labour and education markets. In this way, the question to ask is whether the increase in information and awareness has created a will among the actors on the labour and education markets to participate in the integration process.

2. METHOD

To identify potential partners, relevant information was gathered about how many there might be and which should be contacted and informed about the project. All together 72 potential donors were contacted. Those consisted of 38 business companies, 18 educational institutes, 8 organisations, 5 charitable foundations and 3 governmental institutions. The potential donors were selected basically based on the variables shown in the table below.

Potential donor type	Basic variables
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Outspoken policy in corporate social responsibility- High annual turnover- High percentage of employees with foreign background- Active in a sector with documented recruitment problems
Educational institutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Active on a university or college level- Education programmes for sectors which suffer from shortage of work and recruitment problems- Engagement in different kinds of project that aim to increase ethnic diversity

Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement in issues corresponding to the project, such as integration, education and employment - Experience of cooperating with and contributing to different kinds of project - High percentage of members with a foreign background
Charitable foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute, or have contributed, to students with a foreign background who want to study in Sweden - Involvement in issues corresponding to the project, such as integration, education and employment - Contribute, or have contributed, to students and/or projects in sectors with work shortage and recruitment problems
Governmental institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsibility for the reception and integration of refugees

Of the 72 potential donors contacted, not all were willing to discuss the project. The most commonly stated reasons for this were lack of time, lack of knowledge about refugee questions or that the responsible person for these kinds of issues was on vacation. Some other stated reasons that occurred less frequently were lack of interest or lack of financial means. Some of the potential donors also stated that they were already involved in a sufficient amount of project and others that the decisions whether or not they should discuss questions of contribution had to be made by the board. All in all the FREE project was discussed with 48 of the 72 potential donors (66%).

Of the 48 potential donors with whom the FREE project was discussed, 23 (47.9%) were business companies, 9 were educational institutes (18.7%), 7 were organisations (14.6%), 6 were charitable foundations (12.8%) and 3 (6.3%) were governmental institutions.

PART TWO - OVERVIEW OF THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN SWEDEN

1. KEY PLAYERS IN THE SWEDISH SYSTEM OF REFUGEE INTEGRATION

1.1 NGOs and refugee organisations

The Swedish Red Cross is Sweden's largest humanitarian and volunteer organisation. The organisation works with issues concerning refugees and asylum seekers in many different ways. It informs refugees and asylum seekers about the asylum process in Sweden, about Swedish society and about conditions in the local community. The Swedish Red Cross also offers legal help to refugees and asylum seekers during the asylum process. Red Cross workers visit the asylum seekers that are kept in detention and the organisation runs different social programmes aimed at helping the integration process. Even those refugees that return to their country of origin can receive help and information from the Red Cross.

Save the Children, Sweden is another important organisation that has over 85,000 members in Sweden. The organisation mainly acts by developing knowledge about children's conditions and needs, sponsoring practical development, supporting programmes and influencing public opinion and decision makers.

As in other countries, **Amnesty International** in Sweden works to improve human rights through the actions of ordinary people. Some of the areas that have been given priority in recent years are different projects for women's rights and work against torture and the death penalty.

Caritas Sweden is the Swedish section of a large international NGO, which gives important aid to refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden; it gives guidance and support to asylum seekers and refugees and provides help during the legal process. Caritas Sweden works together with other churches, associations and humanitarian organisations and receives support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to organise different development aid projects. Caritas also works with introduction programmes and other social programmes for return and integration as well as help and information to those asylum seekers that are kept in detention.

Caritas has, together with Save the children Sweden, Amnesty and the Church of Sweden, founded **The Swedish Refugee Advice Centre** which serves as a cooperative body for these organisations. It offers legal advice on asylum and other matters concerning the Swedish Aliens Act. Besides legal assistance, the association acts to improve the general situation for foreigners, especially asylum seekers and refugees. The organisation is asked to give its opinion as an expert on issues concerning the preparation of acts that influence the refugees situation in Sweden.

The **Church of Sweden** contributes in many important ways to different refugee organisations in Sweden. The Church of Sweden is engaged in church social welfare work beyond the boundaries of Sweden. Through the organisation "Church of Sweden Aid" much is done in working with long-term development and emergency relief.

There are voluntary workers who work with refugees within the Swedish Missionary Society, which has its own volunteer organisation, **The Social Mission**. This provides help to different kinds of people in exposed positions, among them refugees. The work for refugees consists of finding legal help during the asylum process, visiting the asylum seekers that are kept in detention, organising its own introduction programmes for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers and helping those refugees that wish to return to their country of origin.

An important centre for information about refugee organisations in Sweden is **The Immigrant Institute**. The institute's aim is to be a research and documentation centre about and for immigrants and refugees in Sweden. Apart from information about different refugee organisations, the institution also offers information in basically all areas concerning immigrant and refugee issues.¹

1.2 Governmental institutions

The Migration Board is Sweden's central authority for aliens' affairs in Sweden. It is responsible for taking decisions on work and residence permits, asylum and citizenship. The task of the Migration Board is also to ensure that the refugees who come to Sweden are properly received and given somewhere to live while their asylum claims are processed, both by the Board itself and by the **Aliens Appeals Board**. If an asylum seeker's application is turned down, the Migration Board is primarily responsible for helping him or her to return home in an orderly manner. Assisting with return migration is another part of the Migration Board's task and in this they often collaborate with voluntary organisations and aid bodies.

Closely linked to the Migration Board is the **Swedish Integration Board** that, since 1 June 1998, is responsible for ensuring that the Government's integration policy goals and approaches prove

¹ For more information about these organisations: www.redcross.se, www.raddabarnen.se, www.amnesty.se, www.caritas.se, www.ecre.org, www.immi.se, www.radgivningsbyran.org, www.svenskakyrkan.se, www.socialamissionen.a.se

effective in Swedish society. The Integration Board is responsible for ensuring that those who are granted a residence permit also find housing, municipal settlement and a place in an introductory programme. In particular, the Integration Board is required to follow up municipal introduction programmes for both refugees and other new immigrants. The Integration Board also works with preventing racism, xenophobia and ethnic discrimination, and follows, analyses and evaluates developments of the integration processes in society.

The **Swedish Labour Market Administration** has the task of translating Swedish labour market policy into practice. The central authority of the Swedish Labour Market Administration is the **National Labour Market Board**. In each of Sweden's 21 counties there is a county Labour Board, to which the Public Employment Services are responsible.

Both The Swedish Labour Market Board and the Swedish Integration Board report to the **Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication** while the Migration Board reports to the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**.

The different municipalities are, as stated above, responsible for the introduction programme for the refugees in their area while the overall responsibility for ensuring that the Government's integration policy goal and approaches prove effective in Swedish society lies on the Swedish Integration Board. There are 289 local authorities in Sweden and they are brought together in **The Swedish Association of Local Authorities**. This organisation has consequently an important assignment in coordinating the municipalities' work with the reception of refugees and improving the ways in which the municipalities can cooperate.²

1.3 Private companies

The companies that must be considered as key players for the refugee situation in Sweden are big companies that can demonstrate a corporate social responsibility. The companies show such responsibility in different ways. Some of the companies, such as **ABB** and **AkzoNobel**, are engaged as partners in civil society projects while others, like **IKEA** and **H&M** run their own projects. There are also many examples of companies that in some way are involved in the work of the NGOs mentioned above. Some companies contribute a certain amount of money every month to well-known NGOs such as Amnesty International and Save the Children, while others run different project together with NGOs of different scopes and sizes. Another way in which the companies sometimes carry out corporate social responsibility is by programmes or projects that aim to employ more people of foreign origin.³

1.4 Charitable foundations

Basically there are two kinds of foundation in Sweden. There are the foundations that work in the traditional sense as organisations or legal entities dedicated to charity, education or research that continue with and carry out their founders' will. There are also the company foundations that sponsor different kinds of project and programmes. Previously, almost all sponsoring was devoted to different sport and culture events. Over the last couple of years, however, companies have become a new driving force as regards social policies, and today the companies also sponsor different kinds of environmental and social projects and organisations.

² The Integration Board, "*The task of the Integration Board*". For more information about these institutions: www.migrationsverket.se, www.integrationsverket.se, www.ams.se, www.svekom.se

³ See above under: Part one - Introductory notes and methodological considerations 2. Method, and below under: Part three - Study on interest and investment conditions in FREE 1.1 Private companies.

There are no Swedish foundations that exclusively support projects or contribute financially to refugees that wish to start up their own businesses or get access to further or higher education. However, as mentioned above, big companies sometimes sponsor social projects and/or programmes and some of them aim at integrating immigrants and refugees into the Swedish labour market. There are also some charitable foundations that donate money to students with economic needs who wish to study at university or college. Both these types of foundations must be considered as key players.⁴

1.5 Educational institutes

The educational institutes that should be considered as key players are above all universities and colleges as they have an impact on higher education. The most interesting educational institutions for the purpose of FREE are those that educate students in labour market sectors with skills shortages. Some examples of professions and areas in which recruiting problems have occurred are technicians, scientists, civil engineers with CAD education, constructors, product developers, service riggers, turners, different kinds of craftsmen, restaurant workers and almost all kinds of Social Service occupations. The most important educational institutions are accordingly the universities of technology and the colleges and universities that give some kind of medical training.⁵

2. THE PROCESS OF ASYLUM

2.1 Asylum procedure and legal statuses for refugees⁶

The basic legal documents that regulate the Swedish refugee law are the *1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees (the Geneva Convention)* and the *Swedish Aliens Act from 1989*.

The definition of a refugee in the Aliens Act agrees with the definition given in the Geneva Convention. Apart from refugees, three other categories, defined in the Aliens Act as “others in need of protection”, have a right in principle to receive protection in Sweden. Others in need of protection are those who have left their native country and have good reason to fear capital punishment, torture, etc., those who need protection due to war or an environmental disaster in their native country or those who fear persecution due to their gender or homosexuality. People with strong humanitarian grounds may also be granted permission to stay in Sweden.

Anyone seeking asylum in Sweden must contact the Migration Board at the border or at some location in Sweden. If the asylum seeker has no travel documents, a first brief interview is conducted about his or her nationality, family circumstances, family ties in Sweden, travel routes and in which country the applicant has been staying recently. An interpreter always participates if necessary and the interview is recorded for reasons of legal certainty. If it is obvious that the applicant has no grounds for asylum, the Migration Board can decide to refuse the asylum seeker entry immediately. In other cases, the asylum seeker waits for the decision in Sweden and the Migration Board appoints a so-called public counsel, i.e. a lawyer who is to assist the applicant in the continued investigation.

⁴ See above under: Part one - Introductory notes and methodological considerations 2. Method, and below under: Part three - Study on interest and investment conditions in FREE 1. 3 Charitable foundations.

⁵ Confederation of Swedish enterprise, ”*Invandring för tillväxt och nya jobb*”. See above under: Part one - Introductory notes and methodological considerations 2. Method, and below under: Part three - Study on interest and investment conditions in FREE 1. 4 Educational institutions.

⁶ The information in this part is based on the Swedish Aliens Act and the commentary on the Swedish Aliens Act. for more information visit www.migrationsverket.se. See also 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*”.

The Migration Board handles all asylum investigation. One of the Migration Board's asylum officers makes a thorough investigation into the asylum seeker's reason for applying for residence. The interview is oral and, if necessary, with is done with the help of an interpreter. When all the documents in the asylum case are ready, all the relevant facts have been checked and the public legal counsel's petition has been completed, the Migration Board reaches a decision. If it is clear that the applicant has sufficient reason for asylum or a residence permit on other grounds, he or she receives a permanent residence permit. If the applicant does not have sufficient reason to receive a residence permit, the Migration Board refuses entry. The applicant may then appeal against the decision.

An asylum seeker wishing to appeal against a decision must do so in writing within 3 weeks of the date he or she received the decision. The appeal is sent to the Migration Board, which, after having examined the case, may change its decision. If the Migration Board does not alter its decision, the appealed case is handed over to the Aliens Appeals Board. An officer at the Board goes through the entire case and possibly requests further supplementary documents from the public legal counsel. If the Board considers that the applicant's reasons are sufficient to grant asylum or a residence permit on other grounds, the decision to refuse entry is cancelled. If the Aliens Appeals Board also concludes that there are insufficient grounds for asylum, it rejects the appeal and requires the applicant to leave Sweden.

In certain cases new circumstances in the case may emerge after the Aliens Appeals Board has reached its decision to refuse entry. The asylum seeker may then send in a new application. Such a circumstance might be that the political situation in the home country has changed.

It should be mentioned that Sweden also takes in refugees through organised resettlement as part of its special refugee quota programme. The size of the quota varies in accordance with the resettlement requirements of the UNHCR and with due regard to political considerations. All quota refugees travel directly to the local authority area in Sweden where they are to be resettled.⁷

Those refugees who have received a residence permit as a refugee or for other humanitarian reasons, or as part of the refugee quota, can apply for an allowance to move back to their native countries. Certain members of their families can also apply for an allowance if they received a residence permit for reasons of family ties to the refugee. If the refugee has received Swedish citizenship, it is impossible to receive this allowance. In order to receive an allowance, the refugee must prove that he or she is unable to pay for the travel expenses. When a refugee decides to move out of Sweden to live in his or her native country or anywhere else, the Migration Board revokes the permanent residence permit. If the refugee wants to get the permanent residence permit back, he or she must submit an application to the embassy in their native country.⁸

2.2 The reception process and facilities

As stated above, a person who comes to Sweden to seek asylum must contact the Migration Board as soon as possible. Until the Migration Board makes a decision, the asylum seeker is offered a place at one of the Migration Board's reception centres. At the centres, nuclear family members are kept together, and when nuclear family members arrive at different times, efforts are made to reunite them. The asylum seekers are also free to find private accommodation, for instance with family members or friends, and they also have the ability to switch between reception centres and independent accommodation throughout the asylum process.

Asylum seekers who are destitute are entitled to a cash allowance provided by the Migration Board. The allowance covers clothing, toiletries and leisure activities. It is also intended to cover the cost of medical treatment. When it comes to medical care, all children under 18 years of age are entitled to

⁷ Migration Board, "*Kvotflyktingar i Sverige*".

⁸ Migration Board, "*Fact sheet. Return Migration*".

free medical and dental care on the same basis as other children in Sweden. Adult asylum seekers are only entitled to receive emergency medical or dental treatment for free.

All asylum seekers between 16 and 65 years old are required to participate in the organised activities arranged by the Migration Board. For instance, young people may attend and adults may receive instructions in Swedish. Other possible activities include furniture repair, supporting new arrivals from the same country or courses and training and local business. This activity is based on an individual's need and requirements and is of benefit to the individual regardless of the outcome of the asylum procedure. For the refugees that want to work during the asylum process, the right to work is dependent on the time taken to make a decision on the asylum claim. If the Migration Board believes that it will take more than four months to take a decision, they can exempt the asylum seeker from the work permit requirement and allow him or her to accept employment until a final ruling is made.⁹

2.3 Statistics and figures on the refugee status granted and asylum claims¹⁰

Altogether 23,500 people requested asylum in Sweden during 2001. The largest group consisted of citizens of Iraq (6206 people) and the second largest group consisted of citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (3102) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (2775). Of them, 6852 were granted residence permits as refugees or on other protective grounds and for humanitarian reasons and 1089 people were brought to Sweden within the refugee quota.¹¹

Table 1.1: Asylum seekers 2001

Iraq	6206
FR Yugoslavia	3102
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2775
Russian Federation	841
Iran	780
El Salvador	618
Afghanistan	593
Somalia	525
Bulgaria	461
Turkey	458
Other countries	7156
Total	23,515

⁹ Swedish Aliens Act, commentary on the Swedish Aliens Act, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Sweden in 2000 – A country of Migration". See below under: Part two 3. Refugees position regarding education and work in Sweden.

¹⁰ The Migration Board, "Facts and figures 2001".

¹¹ This information come from Statistics Sweden and The Migration Board. For more information visit: www.scb.se, www.migrationsverket.se

Table 1.2: Immigration 2001 (Registered residents of Sweden)

Asia	34%
Nordic countries	21%
EU excl. Denmark and Finland	17%
Rest of Europe	17%
America	7%
Africa	6%
Others	2%
Total: 43 045	100%

Table 1.3: Residence permits granted in 2001 (granted on refugee grounds etc.)

Refugees	4%
Others in need of protection	10%
Quota refugees	14%
Humanitarian grounds	72%
Total: 7941	100%

Table 1.4: Concluded asylum cases 2001 (Decisions by the Migration Board)

Citizenship	Concluded	Granted	Share granted (%)	Rejected	Cancelled/ other
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4398	261	6	3843	285
Iraq	3150	2663	85	376	111
FR Yugoslavia	2216	105	13	591	84
Iran	780	50	8	473	106
Russian Federation	558	17	3	476	65
Somalia	368	301	82	33	34
Bulgaria	366	0	0	265	101
Afghanistan	341	266	78	37	38
Stateless	327	73	22	227	27
Syria	287	23	8	250	24

3. REFUGEE POSITION REGARDING EDUCATION AND WORK IN SWEDEN

For those who receive a positive decision on their asylum application, there exists a thorough *integration programme*. The situation concerning education and work for refugees in Sweden must be analysed in the context of this introduction system. 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 that the newly arrived get information on change of careers and transferring of skills.

The asylum seekers that get a residence permit are allocated to a municipality, which is provided with state funding to ensure accommodation and support. The different municipalities are responsible for the introduction programme for the refugees in their area. The overall responsibility for ensuring that the Government's integration policy goal and approaches prove effective in Swedish society lies with the Swedish Integration Board. Generally speaking the introduction of people of employable age, or with professional training from their homeland, aims at actively supporting the individual's entrance to the labour market.¹²

The introduction period normally runs to at most 2 years. The introduction is required to 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 orally in his or her mother tongue. The introduction is planned with a refugee official, a 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. The Employment Services provide individuals with counselling such that the introduction programme is work oriented, and finance the programmes and support that are available and that can help to facilitate an individual's entrance to the labour market. The municipality offers a workplace-based introduction as an alternative for people trained in a profession. The municipality and Employment Services work together and offer people with difficulty learning Swedish through language courses, the possibility of participating in combined employment-language programmes.¹³

It is very important that the introduction programme is always based on the individual's own needs and requirements. This means that an individual with professional training and/or previous occupational experience receives an introduction that is work-oriented, e.g., workplace-based within his/her professional area where possible.

People lacking previous occupational training and experience, as well as children and elderly and functionally disabled people are offered individualised introduction programmes geared to enabling them to participate in society based on their requirements and conditions.

Upon completion of the introduction, a recent immigrant has knowledge of Swedish conditions, as well as a general proficiency in Swedish and specific linguistic knowledge related to his/her area of competence, requirements and conditions. During the introduction period, municipalities strive to secure financial support for the individual by way of an introduction allowance. The goal is that, upon completion of the introduction, 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 is for individuals to support themselves.¹⁴

¹² The Integration Board, "*Introduction programmemes for new immigrants*". See above under: 1.2 Governmental institutions, The Integration Board, "*Mål för integrationen*".

¹³ The Integration Board, "*Mål för integrationen*" The Integration Board, "*Introduction programmemes for new immigrants*", 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*".

¹⁴ 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.

In 2001 the Government commissioned the Integration Board to look over the introduction programme for the newly arrived. This resulted in a *programme for increasing employment among immigrants* and within the framework of this programme, many different kinds of cooperation have been initiated, at central, regional and local levels, aimed at rendering the introduction programme more effective. The programme also has as an additional aim to prevent the expected labour market shortage in some sectors by rapidly educating and finding jobs for immigrants in these sectors, especially within the sectors of nursing and care.¹⁵

3.1 Education

3.1.1 Educational system in Sweden

The Swedish Education Act regulates the Swedish educational system. Basic education constitutes of primary school (6 years) and upper secondary school (3 years). Both are compulsory and free of charge.

Almost all of the pupils attending compulsory basic school continue directly to upper secondary school. Upper secondary school is divided into 17 3-year national programmes, all of which are intended to provide a broad-based education and confer general eligibility for further studies in higher education. Almost a quarter of all students go on to higher education within 3 years of leaving upper secondary school.

At university and college the students can either take individual courses or a specified study programme. Most universities and colleges in Sweden are state run. There are universities and colleges at more than twenty centres around the country.

The extent of a programme of education or a course at a university or college is measured in credits. One credit corresponds to 1 week's full-time study. An academic year normally consists of 40 credits, and is usually divided into an autumn term and a spring term. In addition, certain institutions of higher education give courses during the summer. One credit corresponds to 1.5 ECTS (the European Credit Transfer System). In the Degree Ordinance, the Government lays down which degrees may be awarded and the objectives for these degrees. Every course and programme of education has a plan decided by the institution of higher education in question. Degrees in undergraduate education are divided into general degrees and professional degrees.

Adult education in Sweden is provided in many different forms and under many different auspices, ranging from national or municipal adult education to labour market and staff training and competence development at work. The state school system for adults includes municipal adult education, adult education for the mentally handicapped, Swedish language teaching for immigrants and the National School for Adults. Municipal adult education is for adults lacking the equivalent of basic or upper secondary schooling.

3.1.2 Refugees' and asylum seekers' entitlement to education and training

Asylum seekers' access to the educational system is different depending on whether the asylum seeker is a child or an adult. During the legal process, the children and young people seeking asylum are not required to attend school but the municipality in which they are living must offer them education on the same terms as the rest of the population. For adult asylum seekers the opportunity to get education and training lies in the framework of the compulsory activities arranged by the Swedish Migration Board. Some of the activities are given in the form of different educational programmes.

¹⁵ Report to the Government from the Integration Board, "*Förbättrad introduktion för nyanlända invandrare*", Report to the Government from the Integration Board, "*Etnisk mångfald på frammarsch*"

For those asylum seekers who get a residence permit, the initial entitlement to education and training lies within the introduction programme. The introduction programme says that immigrants of working age lacking the equivalent of a Swedish basic education shall begin supplementary studies/occupational work in accordance with their individual capabilities. After the introduction programme the refugees are free to apply to any education they want. Normally refugees have to attend the programmes for adult education before applying to universities and colleges.¹⁶

3.1.3 Information on language training provisions

All immigrants arriving in Sweden are offered Swedish language instruction *Swedish for Immigrants, Sfi*. Swedish language instruction is part of the introduction for refugees. A less than adequate command of Swedish is considered as one of the underlying causes of difficulties in finding employment.

The language instruction should be combined with work experience, to give the participants an opportunity of practising their Swedish. For those people who have difficulty learning Swedish through language studies, local authorities and employment offices join in offering the alternative of taking part in employment and language programmes.

The aim with Sfi is that the students attain the “Sfi-standard”. Attaining the Sfi standard means that the student has passed a standardised national Swedish test. The results achieved differ according to the student’s mother tongue. In addition, there are of course differences in students’ achievement within each mother tongue group, depending on educational background etc. The students with a European mother tongue attain the sfi standard to a greater extent than others. Students with the very shortest previous education generally have to receive reading and writing instruction (included in basic adult education) before or parallel to their Swedish language tuition.

During the last couple of years, the Government has taken initiatives to make language tuition more adapted to the needs and preferences of the individual. It has underlined that those studying Sfi are a heterogeneous group with widely varying educational backgrounds and that the Sfi course must be shaped according to these conditions. Therefore the most recent educational plan for Sfi has a more differentiated and individualised system where the students are placed in different study groups depending on their educational background.¹⁷

3.1.4 Possibilities for refugees to follow vocational training

There exist many different possibilities for refugees in Sweden to follow vocational training. As part of the introduction programme, the employment offices make available and pay for different workplace based programmes and support measures which aim at facilitating the entry of the refugees into the labour market.¹⁸

After the introduction programme the immigrants/refugees are treated like Swedish citizens, as far as education and work is concerned; refugees then have the same opportunities to follow vocational

¹⁶ The information in this part is gathered from 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*”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs “*Sweden in 2000 – A Country of Migration*”. For more information, visit: www.migrationsverket.se, www.integrationsverket.se, www.skolverket.se, www.högskoleverket.se, www.utbildningsdepartementet.se

¹⁷ The Swedish School Board, “*Ny kursplan för Svenska för invandrare*”.

¹⁸ See above under: 3. Refugees position regarding education and work in Sweden, and: 3.1.3 Information on language training provisions.

training as Swedish people. Different vocational training programmes exist in different forms at upper secondary school, university/college, along with adult education programmes and different governmental programmes for the unemployed.

As far as the unemployed are concerned, there exists a special vocational training programme called the *Work experience programme*. The purpose of work experience is to strengthen the individual person's job prospects. A jobseeker can be referred to work experience at a workplace as a means of vocational orientation, vocational practice or experience of working life. It should also be possible for supervised work experience to be used in connection with preparations for entrepreneurial start-ups.

An employer that accepts a trainee through the work-experience programme does not pay anything to the trainee but instead pays a state funding contribution. Instead of a salary, the trainee receives a subsidy called *activity support*¹⁹. Entitlement to activity support can be challenged in cases where a jobseeker declines the offer of a work experience opportunity or discontinues the work experience without acceptable reason. Before a person is referred for work experience, the provider promises, in written agreement with the Employment Service, to pay the state funding contribution. If the trainee is an immigrant, the employment office may provide work experience without any agreement on a funding contribution.²⁰

It should also be noted that part of the *programme for increasing employment among immigrants*²¹ is devoted to labour market training for use in specially directed education-related programmes for people with foreign post-secondary education in areas in which there is a shortage of manpower. These areas are, in the first place, health and medical care, teaching, technology, science and nurse's training for unemployed immigrants. The purpose is to meet the need for bilingual workers in primary care and care of the elderly. The National Labour Market Board, together with the relevant health care leaders, customises training programmes for people with the required linguistic abilities.²²

3.1.5 Government funded training schemes

The Swedish government directly or indirectly funds most kinds of Swedish education and training. The Government pays for basic education indirectly by subsidising the municipalities which have as their duty the organisation of basic education, education at the upper secondary school level and other forms of education. Most of the adult education and education at universities and colleges are also state-owned and free of charge. Universities and university colleges in Sweden receive public funding, on the basis of the number of registered students and their results. The government also finances the different kinds of programmes for the unemployed.²³

3.1.6 Access to higher education

To be entitled to study at a Swedish university or university college, a student must meet certain *basic knowledge requirements*. These requirements are divided into *basic eligibility*, which is the same for all higher education courses, and *specific eligibility* if a particular course requires further prior knowledge.

When the number of applicants exceeds the number of places, a selection process is performed amongst the applicants. This selection is based on the applicants' grades from upper secondary school

¹⁹ See above under: 3.2.8 Government job schemes for unemployed.

²⁰ The Swedish National Labour Market Board, "*Fakta om arbetspraktik*".

²¹ See above under: 3. Refugees position regarding education and work in Sweden.

²² Report to the Government from the Integration Board, "*Förbättrad introduktion för nyanlända invandrare*".

²³ The government assignment as the primary financier of education and training is evident from the different sections in this part of the study.

or an equivalent education, or the applicants' results from the National University aptitude test, a voluntary exam measuring the examinee's level of knowledge and skills required for studying at an institute of higher education, sometimes in combination with practical work experience.

Certain courses of study also organise special entrance examinations, subject to the approval of the National Agency for Higher Education. These courses include medical training and certain artistic training.²⁴

3.1.7 Recognition of qualifications for education

Refugees who want to study in Sweden first have to go through the Swedish language instruction (Sfi). The language instruction is, as noted above, part of the introduction for refugees after which the refugees are expected to be able to support themselves and are free to apply for any education they want.

Refugees who wish to apply for higher education must first have their foreign upper secondary school degree validated. It is the *National Administration for Higher Education* which evaluates foreign upper secondary education. To get a degree validated the applicant must hand in all the original documents proving that he or she graduated from upper secondary school. Only those exams that are finished and documented can be validated. Those who have not graduated, or cannot prove that they have, are referred to adult education. The problem for the refugees who get their exams validated is that not many of them meet the basic knowledge requirements that are needed for studies at universities or colleges in Sweden and therefore they have to go through several years of adult education before beginning their studies.²⁵

3.1.8 Tuition/fees

Basic education, and most other kinds of education are, as mentioned above²⁶ practically feeless. For studies at universities or colleges, there is a small fee (around €20) for administrative costs that is charged each semester.

3.1.9 Study support²⁷

There are three different kinds of study support in Sweden: *student aid*, *study assistance* and *special adult study support training grant*.

Student aid is granted to those between 16 and 20 years old who study at upper secondary level, folk high school, and municipal or national adult education school. The student aid consists of a study grant and an additional study grant. The former is given to all students, independent of their income, while the latter depends on the financial situation in the family.

Study assistance can be granted for studies at university or college or certain other types of post-secondary education. This support consists of study grants and study loans in combination. Study assistance cannot generally be awarded after the year of the student's 50th birthday; it may be awarded to people over 50 only for vocationally oriented studies in areas in which there is a shortage of labour.

²⁴ The National School Board, "*Det svenska skolsystemet*", "*Vuxenutbildning*".

²⁵ See above under: 3.1.4 Access to higher education, The National School Board, "*Vuxenutbildning*".

²⁶ 3.1.5 Government funded training schemes.

²⁷ The information in this part is taken from National Board of Student Aid "*Svenskt studiestöd för den som inte är svensk medborgare*", "*Svenskt studiestöd*", "*Home Equipment loans*", for more information visit www.csn.se

Decisions on study courses qualifying for such assistance are made by the government. Entitlements to loans are reduced as of the year of the student's 41st birthday.

Study assistance for post-secondary education is payable for a maximum of 240 weeks. To receive study assistance over a period of years, students must pursue their studies with some success. The student starts repaying the loan 6 months after last receiving any form of study assistance. The student can apply for reduction of the repayment of earlier study loans as long as he or she continues their studies. Usually a full reduction is granted.

The Special adult study support training grant is a form of study support payable to people between the ages of 25 and 55 years without qualifications corresponding to upper secondary school. The special training grant is equivalent to the benefits payable during periods of unemployment. This type of grant can be awarded for studies at compulsory school and upper secondary school and for introductory courses and may be applied for by both the employed and the unemployed. The unemployed may qualify for a special training grant on condition that he or she has been registered as a job-seeker by the Employment Service and qualifies for unemployment benefits. If the person is employed, the employer must undertake to hire someone who has been unemployed long-term to take his or her place.

Special rules apply to students who are not Swedish citizens. First time applications by non-Swedish nationals for Swedish study assistance are assessed in two stages. First, the National Board of Student Aid determines the applicant's basic entitlement, i.e. whether he or she is entitled to Swedish study assistance generally. If the National Board of Student Aid grants the applicant basic entitlement to study assistance, the board proceeds with stage two of the assessment, in which they consider whether the applicant meets the requirements for the type of assistance he or she has applied for.

An applicant is considered to have basic entitlement to study assistance if he or she moved to Sweden for a purpose other than that of obtaining an education. The applicant must also be a registered resident and plan to remain in Sweden. A decision on basic entitlement remains in force for as long as the person remains resident in Sweden and applies regardless of the type of support-entitled education for which he or she seeks assistance.

As a general rule, an applicant must be granted basic entitlement to assistance if he or she has lived and worked in Sweden for at least 2 years counted from the day on which he or she entered Sweden with a view to taking up residence. The applicant must also have been granted permission by the Migration Board to take up residence in Sweden. The applicant must have worked at least on a half-time basis. For the purposes of study assistance, the following activities are also counted as work: care of the applicant's own child aged under ten, care of a close relative, registered unemployment and participating in labour market training and Swedish for immigrants (sfi) courses.

The asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status by the Migration Board, or are considered as "others in need of protection" will in most cases qualify for basic entitlement to study assistance, while the asylum seekers who receive their residence permit on humanitarian grounds are dealt with according to the general regulations. If the applicant leaves Sweden for more than 3 months, his or her basic entitlement to Swedish study assistance is subject to reconsideration by the National Board of Student Aid.

The National Board of Student Aid also provides *home equipment loans* to refugees and certain other aliens setting up homes. One requirement is that the applicant must be included in the municipal refugee resettlement undertaking and must have been at least 18 years old when first received by a municipality. A person can be granted a loan if he or she moves into a furnished or unfurnished home or if the person is in lodgings. The loan is intended to pay for the purchase of kitchen equipment and furniture, for example. It is not intended for normal living expenses like food and rent. A person can apply for a home equipment loan within 2 years of first being received at a municipality. Repayment of the loan begins in the month that comes 2 years after the person received his or her first payment.

The government fixes the rate of interest annually. Interest accrues from the day on which the first loan was disbursed. The total interest of the first 2 years before a person starts repaying the loan is added to the debt when the time comes for repayment. After that the accrued interest is charged on the new total amount.

3.1.10 Private sponsorship

Private sponsorship for studies at a university or college in Sweden is unusual. There are, however, some possibilities to get grants from different funds and foundations of certain private companies. These grants are usually reserved for postgraduate students for writing a dissertation and it is rare that they can be used for undergraduate studies at universities. There are usually specific requirements for the different grants. There are also companies that have their own educational programmes where the education is paid for.

3.1.11 Studying on benefit

Since the study support system in Sweden usually covers the need for financial aid for those that wish to study, social aid can rarely be received for studies. In exceptional cases, however, the Social Services can grant assistance towards the cost of education. Even if the person is not entitled to financial assistance from the Social Services, they can still be granted assistance if there are grounds for it. This may be assistance towards the cost of education that falls outside the Government grant system. It is not possible to receive both study support and social aid at the same time.²⁸

3.2 Labour market

3.2.1 Labour market needs

The current areas with the highest shortages of trained manpower 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 and teaching professions.

According to a recent study on labour market needs and shortages, Swedish companies have difficulties in finding qualified personnel with proper education and work experience. According to the study, three out of four companies having tried to recruit in 2001 experienced recruiting difficulties. Almost a quarter of the companies which tried to recruit during the first 6 months of 2001 did not manage to fill the quotas they were aiming for. For the economy as a whole this means at least 25,000 job vacancies.

The companies have identified a shortage in personnel of higher education with good qualifications as well as in duties requiring little prior knowledge. Some examples of professions and areas where recruiting problems have occurred are: technicians/scientists at all levels, civil engineers, engineers with CAD-education, constructors, product developers, service riggers, turners etc. Other professional categories where recruitment difficulties have been encountered are machine workers 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 the employers do not receive enough applications for their job vacancies. According to the Swedish Labour Market Board, this goes for professions requiring a shorter time of university studies (2 to 3 years) such as salesmen, miners, construction workers, craftsmen within construction and manufacturing, transport, machine workers, service and health care, technicians and engineers, service and security, physiotherapists, nurses etc.

²⁸ Social Services Act.

The recruiting problems in some sectors originate from a rapid increase in demand and temporarily overheated labour markets. 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 the unemployed and the imbalances in the labour market. According to recent studies, in a few years demographic issues will worsen these recruitment problems. Due to the age structure, there will also be a great need to recruit within the public sector. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities estimated a couple of years ago 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 2015.²⁹

3.2.2 Refugees' and asylum seekers' entitlements to work

During the wait for a decision all asylum seekers, including those who have arranged their own accommodation, are required to take part in some form of organised activity. Such activities may include Swedish lessons, repairing broken furniture or helping fellow countrymen to settle in. As mentioned earlier, asylum seekers are allowed to hold ordinary jobs if their waiting period is expected to be longer than 4 months. Unfortunately the information on this matter has been poorly spread and with a few exceptions people have not been able to make use of this opportunity. It is also difficult for the refugees to find work when the potential employer knows that he or she is likely to lose his or her staff in a couple of months.³⁰

When a refugee receives a residence permit and starts following the introduction programme, different Swedish authorities work together to find the refugee a job. The Migration Board, in consultation with Employment Services, conducts a preliminary assessment of whether the people can be given work immediately. One of the thoughts behind the introduction programme is that the newly arrived immigrants quickly establish contacts of a relevant nature with Swedish working life and with locally organised voluntary activities. The employment offices provide individualised guidance, so that the emphasis in the introduction programme is on working life.³¹ In order to develop activities in this area, the National Labour Market Board, the Swedish Integration Board, the Swedish Migration Board, the National Agency for Education and the Swedish Association of local authorities have reached an agreement concerning the development of the introduction for refugees and other immigrants. The agreement requires a mapping of the educational and occupational background of the individual asylum seeker during the asylum period and that asylum seekers with professional experience are given access to Employment Service counselling during the asylum period.³²

After completion of the introduction programme, The National Labour Market Administration is responsible for the labour market policy programmes and support required to enable individuals who are capable of working to enter the work market and begin to support themselves. The municipality has a particular responsibility for initiating cooperation between the local actors, ensuring that the introduction programmes begin without delay. It can also be noted that the introduction period can be extended, however, if necessary, with respect to the needs of the individual. Generally speaking, the

²⁹ The information in this sector was taken from 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"*.

³⁰ See above under: 2.2 The reception process and facilities. 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"*.

³¹ The Integration Board, *"Introduction programmets för nya immigranter"*, Report from the Integration Board to the Swedish government: *"Förbättrad introduktion för nyanlända"*.

³² The Swedish National Audit Swedish National Audit Office, *"Att etablera sig i Sverige. En granskning av introduktionsverksamheten för flyktingar och deras anhöriga"*.

introduction of people of employable age, or with professional training from their homeland, aims at actively supporting the individual's entrance to the labour market.³³

3.2.3. Unemployment rates among refugees

During the 1990s all groups in the labour market experienced a growth in unemployment, but especially non-Nordic citizens and people born outside Sweden. The trend peaked 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 Adult Educational Initiative and the expansion of higher education.

The latest available figures concerning the unemployment rates among refugees come from 2001. Among those born in a foreign country, the unemployment in the age group 16–64 years was 9.4%. The unemployment among those who had immigrated during the last 5 years was 17.2% and those that had immigrated before 1997 was 8.5%.³⁴

3.2.4. Recognition of qualifications for employment

Foreign higher education is evaluated by *The National Agency for Higher Education*. Only university and higher education programmes with a completed degree are evaluated. The assessment works in such a way that The National Agency for Higher Education compares 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 any award 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.³⁵

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. Those refugees that have not completed, or cannot prove that they have completed, their education in upper secondary school, university or college can not get their education evaluated.³⁶

Some unions also issue certificates so that their members can use a certain title in working life, for example, bachelor of economic science, trained social worker etc. Such a certificate works as information to an employer but has no formal meaning.³⁷

3.2.5 Regulation and funding (loans) for setting up business

A person who is unemployed or in danger of becoming unemployed, is registered with the Employment Service as a job-seeker and those over 20 years old can be given support³⁸ to start up their own business. The support 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

³³ The Integration Board, "*Mål för integrationen*". The Integration Board, "*Introduction programmes for new immigrants*".

³⁴ Källa: SCB, Arbetskraftsundersökningarna 2001.

³⁵ The National Agency for Higher Education, "Validering av utländsk högskoleexamen".

³⁶ The National Administration for higher Education, "Ansökan om bedömning av utländsk gymnasieutbildning".

³⁷ For more information, visit www.hsv.se

³⁸ Activity support, see 3.2.8 Government job schemes for unemployed

activities. To obtain the support 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.³⁹

There are many other agencies besides the Employment Service which can provide support and advice in connection with start-up loans, for example, municipal business development offices, The foundation for Swedish Jobs & Societies, the local development centre, the Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development (NUTEK) and, of course, banks.⁴⁰

3.2.6 Government job schemes for the unemployed

In Sweden there are many different kinds of government job schemes for the unemployed. The unemployed taking part in these different schemes often get financial support through the system of the *activity guarantee for the unemployed*.

The activity guarantee for the unemployed was instigated on 1 August 2000 and functions as an employment policy programme run by the job centre. It was initiated to help people that have been unemployed for a long time and find it difficult to return to the regular labour market. The activity guarantee is for people over 20 who are looking for work through the job centres and who are or risk becoming long-term unemployed. The system is thought to help employers to find personnel with the right skills and provides the unemployed with better equipment with which to find work. Each participant receives the support of a job centre supervisor in groups of 10–15 people while having access to all the standard employment policy programmes simultaneously. When starting the activity guarantee programme the supervisor and the seekers of employment work out a job action plan. The plan specifies what the job centre can offer and what is required of the participants. The difference from participation in a single employment policy programme is that all the programmes available are collected under the same roof and the individual job action plan runs like a main thread throughout all activities. One of the important foundation stones of the activity guarantee is that work shall be conducted in close cooperation with the Government, municipalities, companies and parties on the labour market. Another important task is to work on finding jobs together with employers from both public and private sectors. Jobs can be eligible for government subsidising and serve as a means of reaching the regular labour market. Reimbursement of a maximum of SEK 150 (around €16) per day is payable to companies such as staffing companies and organisations and municipality organisations within the activity guarantee plan for administration and associated costs and is based on agreements between the job centre and working partners.⁴¹

The people who participate in an unemployment programme often receive *activity support* or *training grants*. Those entitled to benefits from an unemployment benefit fund receive a training grant equal to these benefits. Those not receiving such benefits receive a training grant. These payments are made by the social insurance office and are subject to the training organiser giving in an attendance report. Those receiving employment training within the regular education system give in such a report to the social insurance office themselves each month.⁴²

Besides the activity support and training grant, another way to finance the unemployment programmes is the system of *employment subsidies*. Both private and public employers qualify for employment

³⁹ The labour Market Policy Programmemes Act, The Labour Market Policy Programmemes Ordinance, The Activity Support Ordinance.

⁴⁰ For more information visit; www.almi.se, www.nyforetagarcentrum.se, www.ams.se, www.nutek.se

⁴¹ The employment policy programme act, The employment policy programme statute, The activity support statute.

⁴² The employment policy programme act, The employment policy programme statute, The activity support statute, The national Labour Board, "Fakta om arbetsträning".

subsidies. There are three types of subsidy, *general employment subsidies*, *reinforced employment subsidies* and *special employment subsidies*. General employment subsidies can be granted for the employment of a person who has been unemployed for a long period of time and who, for a period of at least 12 months prior to the start of employment, has been looking for work at a public job centre. General employment subsidies are granted for 6 months and amount to 50% of wages paid. Reinforced employment subsidies can apply to people who have been unemployed for 24 to 48 months and who have been registered as looking for work at a public job centre for this same period of time. Those who have been employed for a shorter period, been ill, or on parental leave etc. can qualify for this kind of subsidy. Reinforced subsidies can be paid out for 24 months and are paid at 75% of wage costs for the first 6 months and at 25% of wage cost for the following 18 months. For those who have been unemployed for 48 months, the subsidies are 75% of the wage cost for 12 months and at 50% of wage costs for the following 12 months. Special employment support can be granted for people over 57 years of age and who have been unemployed for 24 months. In addition, these people must have been registered as looking for work with the job centre for this period of time and have been taking advantage of the activity guarantee for at least 3 months.⁴³

A last programme for the unemployed in Sweden that should be mentioned is *employment training*. The programme can be used for those who are unemployed or risk unemployment and apply for work at a job centre as from 20 years of age. The purpose is to improve the chances of those seeking employment to obtain a job and to make it easier for employers to find labour with suitable skills. Employment training is provided primarily by courses purchased from various training organisers, such as education companies, universities or municipal consultancy operations, by the county employment board or job centre. Training courses are to result in employment and are therefore vocational. Additionally, employment training can be provided for a place in the regular educational system, i.e. adult education centres and universities. Education in upper secondary school is available only for disabled and long-term unemployed immigrants. University education courses are for a maximum of 40 weeks and are not classified as part of a post-upper secondary education. In recent years courses in technical/computer science, manufacturing, services and medical health care have dominated. However, employment training is notable for its rapid mobility between areas and keeping pace with changes on the labour market. Training time depends on the employment seeker's background and the type of training. At present the average time is about 6 months. The job centre maintains a register of current employment training courses. The people who participate in the employment training receive the activity support or the training grant.⁴⁴

It should finally be noted that in 2001, the Swedish parliament took a decision to allocate 100 million SEK (€10 million) per year for the years 2001–2003 aimed at increasing employment among immigrants. Investment includes the areas of:

- Supplementary training for immigrants with foreign education in health and medical care, teaching, technology and science.
- Validation of foreign occupational qualifications.
- Nurse's training in primary care and care of the elderly for unemployed immigrants.
- Improvement of the introduction and Swedish language instruction for recent immigrants.
- Pilot programmes with alternative job placement for immigrants.
- Encouraging ethnic and cultural diversity in public administration and public businesses, foremost in the areas of social science, computers, law and economics.
- Advisory service for immigrants opening and operating small businesses.

The main purpose of the programme is to adjust the introduction process to the needs and conditions of the individual. To manage reaching the goals of the project, all the authorities involved cooperate to make the introduction process as differentiated and individualised as possible. The more

⁴³ The national Labour Board, "*Fakta om arbetsmarknadsunderstöd*"

⁴⁴ The employment policy programme act, The employment policy programme statute, The activity support statute, The national Labour Board, "*Fakta om arbetsträning*"

individualised the introduction process is, the sooner the refugee or the newly arrived immigrant starts earning their living and participating in society. The government has announced that some of the most important measures that have to be taken to improve the introduction process are creating work and work-placed introduction for refugees and newly arrived immigrants.

Each year there will be an evaluation of this reform. The results of the first evaluation showed that improvements had been realised and the evaluators were positive about the results so far.⁴⁵

3.2.7 Social benefit system

The Social Service Act governs the Social Services and a variety of committees within the municipality may be responsible. According to the Social Service Act, the municipal authorities are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the residents of a municipality receive the support and assistance that they need.

Everyone who lives in Sweden has the possibility to turn to the Social Services in his or her home municipality for support and assistance. Under the Social Services Act, each municipality is free to organise the work of the Social Services according to local conditions. However, each citizen is guaranteed a reasonable standard of living under the Social Services Act's provision regarding the right to assistance.

All services provided under the Social Services Act are based on free choice and autonomy. These services must be adapted to the individual's special circumstances and the desire to change his or her social situation.

The Swedish Parliament has decided that financial assistance (also known as social security or income support) shall be granted for reasonable expenses for food, clothes, shoes, play and leisure time, consumable goods, health and hygiene, daily newspaper, telephone costs and television license. Each year, the Government establishes standard levels for these costs, which apply throughout Sweden. These cost levels are referred to as the national standard. The Government then decides how much money each household is entitled to according to the national standard. A larger sum may be granted if there are special grounds, for instance if there are special dietary requirements for medical reasons. The Social Services may also grant a sum that is below the national standard, if there are special grounds for doing so. The right to financial assistance also covers reasonable costs for accommodation, household electricity, work-related travel, home insurance and membership in trade unions and unemployment benefit funds. No national standards have been defined for these costs. Instead, the Social Services must evaluate individual needs and costs, taking into account actual costs in comparison to what a low-income earner would normally be able to afford. The general level of costs for accommodation, household electricity and work related travel in a person's home municipality should also be taken into account in this evaluation. It is also possible to apply for financial assistance for other long- or short-term needs, such as dental care, medical care, glasses, travel or funeral expenses. The rejection of applications for such financial assistance may be appealed through an administrative appeal process.

According to the provisions of the Social Services Act regarding the right to assistance, the Social Services may impose requirements. If the applicant is fit to work, he or she must seek employment. If he or she turns down an offer of work or other initiatives proposed by the Employment Services or the municipal authorities, he or she may lose the right to financial assistance. If the applicant has savings in the bank or other financial assets, he or she must use these resources before receiving financial assistance.

⁴⁵ Report from the Integration Board to the Swedish government: "*Förbättrad introduktion för nyanlända*".

The Social Services also have additional requirements for three groups of social security recipients: people under 25 years of age, people over 25 years of age who need to improve their skills for specific reasons, and students who are enrolled in educational programmes financed through study allowance etc. and who require social security during a break in their studies. People belonging to these groups may be asked by the Social Services to take part in occupational schemes or other skills-enhancing activities. If they refuse, they might lose their entitlement to financial assistance, or the sum they receive may be reduced. However, the Social Services must consult with the employment office before deciding this. Such a decision may also be appealed through an administrative appeal.⁴⁶

PART THREE - STUDY ON INTEREST AND INVESTMENT CONDITIONS IN FREE

1. GENERAL NOTES

The results of the dialogue undertaken with potential cooperation partners will now be analysed. First, an overall picture of the study will be presented and later the sectors will be dealt with on a sector-by-sector basis.

100% of those interviewed claimed to have some or good knowledge of the difficulties facing refugees on the labour and education markets in Sweden. References were frequently made to the ongoing pre-electoral debates treating such matters. Many said it was impossible not to become informed of these problems due to the intensity and frequency of these debates.

44% of those interviewed mentioned specific examples of the difficulties facing refugees on the labour and education markets in their new home countries.

On inquiry on the expected benefits of FREE 56% mentioned that they saw obvious benefits in participating in FREE. The most mentioned benefits were fulfilment of social responsibility, promotion of corporation culture, improvement of staff loyalty and visibility of the organisation through a logo in the publications related to the project.

Concerning the conditions for participating, the need for more information before taking the decision whether or not to participate in FREE was frequently mentioned. 59% stated the need for more information about the fund. Only half of those that mentioned conditions for participating were willing to name other conditions than the need for more information about the fund. Those who would not mention further conditions motivated their decision by arguing that they knew too little about the fund even to name conditions for participating. The conditions that were mentioned in 30% of the cases were the absence of another company in the same line of business, mutual exchange of information and services between the potential partner and FREE, the publication of the potential partners' names in all material relating to FREE, continuous information about the progress of FREE and thorough follow-up on the result of the feasibility studies and the project's advancement.

When it comes to the geographical structure of the fund, most of the potential partners stated that they did not consider themselves as having enough information about the fund to decide what geographical structure they would prefer. Only 35% answered the question and half of them preferred that the fund should be at a state level, while the other half preferred the option of a joint structure where responsibilities would be shared at European and state levels. Also regarding the management of the fund, the option of a fund at a state level or the option of a joint model was preferred. The option of a state-run fund was the most popular among the companies that were contacted and questioned.

⁴⁶ Social Services Act .

Those potential partners that answered the question about the structure of the fund also stated that they supported all the planned activities of FREE. In general the potential partners were more positively disposed to the thought of a fund that would provide grants and loans for refugee education than business start-up loans.

According to all contacted potential partners, the activities that would have the most support would be scholarships to start and to continue studies.

49% of the contacted potential partners had a tradition of donating money and were already involved with different projects and/or programmes where a financial contribution was one part of the cooperation. All of these 49% stated that they have very strict rules that regulate their donations and sponsoring of projects. In all cases it is up to the board of the organisation, foundation or company to decide whether or not they can and will contribute to a project or programme and different options for investment are thoroughly analysed before making a decision.

2. POLICIES AND CONDITIONS

2.1 Private companies

It is clear that, over the last couple of years, companies have become a new driving force as regards social policies. All of the large, multinational companies that were questioned underlined their awareness that a global responsibility comes with a global business and that they aimed to set, promote and maintain high standards of corporate social responsibility. The companies are also keen to point out that they do not consider CSR to be an optional activity but an integral part of all that they do. It is also clear that the companies aim to be in tune with the changing expectations of society and to conduct their business in a way that meets with widespread approval.

73% of the questioned companies have a clear engagement in various social projects and/or programmes; some companies just show their corporate social responsibility in a regular contribution to Amnesty International, while others run advanced programmes in different parts of the world. It is common among the largest companies to concentrate their corporate contributions on a few selected causes. The projects that the companies contribute to are often closely linked to their business.

The largest multinational companies distinguish themselves as a group that is very aware of their corporate social responsibility. According to the survey 40% of the questioned companies have a well developed and advanced programme for the company's engagement in different social questions. 33% of the companies do not run their own projects but are engaged in other ways, for example, through sponsoring children in different countries, contributing to the cancer foundation or sponsoring some kind of social event. Those 27% that do not have any outspoken Corporate Social Responsibility policy are sometimes just engaged in sports events and others run different kinds of environmental programmes. The occasional company runs its own educational programmes.

The knowledge of the refugee situation differs a lot from company to company. In general there is an awareness of the segregated labour market and the occurrence of discrimination. There was also a general agreement with the need to help refugees to qualify for the labour market of the host country. When it comes to more specific questions about the refugee situation a clear lack of knowledge can be noted. Some of the companies' representatives cannot tell the difference between an immigrant and a refugee and there were even examples of representatives that believed that Sweden accepts economic refugees. By far the most common attitude shown by the people with whom FREE was discussed was that the refugees in need of help and support should turn to the Swedish authorities and not to the private sector.

The benefits that were mentioned for participating in FREE were the companies' fulfilment of corporate social responsibility, promotion of the corporate culture and improvement of staff loyalty.

The most commonly stated conditions were visibility of the organisation through a logo in publications related to the project, and, above all, the need for more information about the fund.

For the geographical structure of the fund, the companies in general preferred that the structure of the fund should be at a state level, followed by the option of a joint structure with responsibilities shared at European and state levels. Also regarding the management of the fund, the option of a fund at a state level was preferred, followed by the option of a joint model.

Regarding the activities that would have most support, the questioned companies mentioned donation of materials for fund programme management, creation of workplace based introduction, trainee posts and work programmes, creation of personal networks for better relations between organisations and educational institutions and creation of educational programmes to meet the needs of the newly arrived refugees.

2.2 Charitable foundations

As stated above, there are two basic kinds of foundation in Sweden. There are the charitable foundations and the foundations of private companies. It is clear that FREE does not quite fit into the scope of these foundations. In almost all of the examined cases, there is only a possibility for individuals to seek contribution from the charitable foundations. This means that the people that the FREE aims to help can apply for contribution from some of the different charitable foundations but FREE as a whole cannot.

For those few charitable foundations that stated that it could be possible for the FREE to apply for contribution, the foundations required more information about the structure of the fund.

2.3 Organisations

In general, the analysed organisations were very positive about the project and declared themselves willing to contribute to and cooperate with FREE. The clearest positive response came from organisations that worked with immigration and integration issues and that were already involved in similar projects. None of the organisations that stated themselves willing to contribute to FREE could do so financially. The contribution they could give was instead in the form of participating as an awareness-raising mechanism for companies and other business networks by organising seminars, writing articles and in other ways lobbying for FREE.

2.4 Educational institutes

The educational institutes which were contacted and questioned often mentioned degree recognition as one of the main problems that refugees face if they want to continue with their studies or begin to work in Sweden. According to the educational institutes, the bureaucratic steps required are long and do not make it easy for the refugees to get access to higher education or the relevant labour market.

Most of the educational institutions interviewed consider the FREE project to be a good idea. Some of the universities and colleges run different programmes for ethnic diversity and a broadened recruitment. However, it proved difficult to get actual support from the educational institutions. Most of them are more willing to inform about their different programmes and projects than discuss FREE.

The most common way in which the educational institutions could contribute to FREE would be by creating educational programmes to meet the needs of newly arrived refugees.

2.5 Governmental institutions

The direction taken in the integration policy of Swedish government is characterised to a high degree by a holistic approach. This means that the different efforts expended by society are coordinated, and are based on the individual needs of the individual recent immigrants. The Swedish Government stresses in particular that a recent immigrant's needs for support must be attended to during his or her first years in Sweden.⁴⁷ The governmental institutions that were analysed all referred to all the initiatives that are taken within the framework of the Government's programme for increasing occupations among immigrants.⁴⁸ Since the programme is specifically aimed at improving the introduction programme for refugees and other newly arrived immigrants, the governmental institutions focus on this programme for now and have no intentions of participating in other projects.

PART FOUR - REFUGEE BARRIERS AND NEEDS

It is clear that the barriers refugees meet can be divided into two different kinds, individual barriers and structural barriers. Individual barriers are those relating to the qualifications of the refugee or immigrant. Structural barriers are shaped by society.

1. Language learning

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Far from all of the refugees taking Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) courses actually attain the "Sfi-standard"- Lack of methodology adapted to the individual, concrete needs of refugees and asylum seekers- Far too long period of waiting before the refugees can begin their language tuition- No possibilities for newly arrived refugees with a higher degree to study Swedish at a university or college	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Swedish language tuition for asylum seekers- Better financial system for those who study Swedish for immigrants- A more individually adapted language programme- Shorter periods of waiting- Higher differentiation and effectiveness- Methods development and introduction efforts tailored to the individual's different needs and occupational background- Professional development of teachers in Swedish language instruction

⁴⁷ Government bill 1997/98:16 Sweden, the Future and Diversity.

⁴⁸ See above under: 3.2.6 Government schemes for unemployed.

2. Access to higher education

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mandatory knowledge in Swedish- Difficult and time-consuming to acquire basic knowledge requirements- Only completed high school grades are validated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The documentation required for validation to be less strict- Better financial conditions as an incentive for certain groups to educate themselves further- Courses where knowledge in Swedish is not mandatory

3. Access to vocational training

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hard to find internships- Refugees are easily isolated at their place of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increased cooperation between educational agencies and industry- Change the attitude among employers

4. Recognition of qualification for education

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Agencies evaluating foreign university degrees only take into account those having been pursued (and finished) for at least 3 years and ignore work experience- Getting grades evaluated is time consuming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Agencies should be granted the competence to validate working experience in professional life and not just to evaluate documents- Evaluation of documents has to be done immediately- Refugees missing their documents should, without further delay, undergo a validation of their real competence

5. Educational system

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The financial support of the students during the time of their education - Many universities are strict on the basic knowledge requirements when accepting students to their courses - The demand of a certain knowledge level in Swedish and English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminate the general qualifications for some educational programmes - Revise the present requirements - Educational programmes undertaken exclusively in English or Swedish with no need for the applicants to know both languages. - Paid education

6. Government funded training schemes

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The municipalities are not prepared when refugees arrive - People with university degrees working at an inferior level compared to the nature of their studies are excluded from government action programmes since they are not listed as unemployed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities need to know well in advance what refugees are coming as well as their education/profession in order to take suitable plans as soon as possible - Possibilities for refugees with post-secondary education or other professional training to receive complementary labour market training in areas where there is a shortage of manpower

7. Entitlements to work

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of knowledge in Swedish - Employers who do not want to employ people from a foreign origin use the 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 business and professional organisations are absent during the introduction periods - The introductions itself lacks business knowledge; such knowledge would benefit skilled people's prospects to find work or further education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More developed language tuition - Awareness raising among the employers on the refugee situation and on how employers can assist them - Much more cooperation between the private sector and the authorities that work with refugees education and work

8. Recognition of qualification for employment

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employers look to hire people with Swedish work experience - Employers require a Swedish degree and have difficulties accepting those acquired in a foreign country - There is a considerable shortage of complementary education in sectors other than those where labour is demanded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with the attitudes of the employers concerning foreign education programmes - A well developed programme of internship for refugees - More possibilities for refugees to follow complementary education programmes

9. The recruitment process and job searching

Barriers	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inefficient employment offices - Employment offices which adjust their work to the needs of the employers and not so much to the needs of the people looking for a job - Absence of participation on behalf of business and professional organisations - The universities' lack of contact with industry - Cut-backs within the municipalities have lead to the withdrawal of guidance counsellors in adult education, making the step from Sfi to other educational programmes difficult for the newly arrived - Re-organisations within the municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase of cooperation between the private sector, the universities and the employment offices. - Improvement of the employment offices

PART FIVE - CONCLUSION

Immigrants are an important potential source of labour supply since they have a more favourable age composition, in a labour market perspective, than the rest of the population. The employment rate is lower and the unemployment rate is higher within this group than for those born in Sweden. Moreover, immigrants with professional training are often under-employed. Many immigrants in occupations in which there is a scarcity of labour get stuck in unqualified, poorly paid occupations with limited opportunities. Initiatives to increase the employment rate among those born abroad are of key importance to increasing the total labour supply.

It is evident that something has to be done in order to improve the situation for refugees during the asylum process itself in Sweden. If FREE is to act within this area, there will be demands for FREE to intervene in issues that might not had been planned from the very beginning. For example, juridical help to get a work permit is unavoidable in order for the refugees to find work during the asylum process.

The study also shows that it is important to provide better financial conditions as an incentive for certain groups to educate refugees further. This applies to short-term educated people, but also to those with long-term education who may need to supplement the education received in their country of origin before they can practise their profession in Sweden. There are indications that many people are working in quite different sectors from the ones that are trained to work in and, at a time when manpower shortages are growing in certain occupations, it is vital that this competence should be utilised.

As a European asylum policy is about to materialise, it becomes more and more urgent to coordinate asylum and integration policies within Europe. For the European refugee policy to be credible, the refugees demanding asylum in the different member states have to be treated and evaluated in the same way. If the conditions for refugees in Europe are more or less the same in the different member states, smuggling of refugees will diminish as will the intra-European refugee streams. In this context, FREE will function as an important forum for information and coordination of European refugee related matters.

What real support FREE could get from potential donors in Sweden is, at this stage, uncertain. The potential donors in general welcome the idea of the fund but are in general not willing to make any kind of commitment. A major obstacle is the companies' constant need for more information about the fund before discussing it any further. The experiences from the survey show that it is important to take a holistic approach when informing about FREE. The best chance to succeed with FREE is to engage the potential donors in each step of the project so that they really feel involved. This includes not just more information about the structure of the fund but also information about the actual situation of refugees and asylum seekers.

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