

# Swedish integration policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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In its report *Integration Policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2001/02:129)*, the Swedish Government gives an account of the development of integration policy and its future direction. There is greater awareness in today's society of integration policy goals such as equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all. In a number of areas, however, the disparities between immigrants and Swedish-born citizens are still too large.

The Government will therefore continue to implement an extensive programme of measures aimed at reducing these inequalities of condition and opportunity.

### Integration policy

The Swedish Riksdag decided on integration policy in 1997. This decision was based on the Government bill Sweden, the future and diversity – from immigration policy to integration policy (1997/98:16). The point of departure for integration policy is that general policy should be based on society's ethnic and cultural diversity. It should encourage individuals to support themselves and take part in society, safeguard fundamental democratic values, contribute to equal rights and opportunities for women and men and prevent and combat ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism. Integration is a process occurring at both individual and community levels. The integration process is mutual in the sense that everyone is involved and must make a contribution. It is conditional, for example, on mutual respect for cultural differences, so long as these do not conflict with the fundamental democratic values of society.

The Swedish Integration Board was set up in 1998 with the task of developing introductory procedures for new refugee arrivals, of promoting integration and monitoring the situation and progress of integration policy objectives within the various sectors of the Swedish society.

*As instructed by the Government, the Swedish Integration Board has described and analysed developments in society from an integra-*

*tion perspective. The Integration 2001 Report may be ordered from the Swedish Integration Board, tel:+46 11 - 15 63 77 or from the website [www.integrationsverket.se](http://www.integrationsverket.se)*

### Sweden transformed

- ✓ More than one in ten inhabitants of Sweden were born abroad.
- ✓ A further 800 000 persons born in Sweden have one or both parents who were born abroad.
- ✓ Sweden has inhabitants from 203 countries.
- ✓ The majority of Sweden's immigrants have been here at least ten years.
- ✓ More than 60 per cent of those who have migrated to Sweden have Swedish citizenship.

### The objectives of integration policy are

- Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background
- A community based on diversity
- A society characterised by mutual respect and tolerance, in which every one can take an active and responsible part, irrespective of background.

The needs of immigrants, like those of everyone else, must be taken into account in the context of general policies. Integration policy will be focused on the conditions and mechanisms in play throughout society. The introduction process for newly arrived refugees will be more effectively based on the background and conditions of the individual immigrant.

The concept of *immigrant* refers to those migrating to Sweden themselves. The expression *people of foreign extraction* refers both to persons who have migrated to Sweden themselves and to those who were born in Sweden and have at least one parent who has migrated to Sweden.

## Introduction for refugees

The introduction provided by society for refugees aims at enabling them as soon as possible to obtain housing, employment in which they are able to support themselves independently, a good knowledge of Swedish and the ability to take part in the life of society. The municipalities are responsible for training in Swedish and other introduction programmes. For this, the municipalities receive government funding.

Together with the person involved, the municipality is obliged to draw up an individual introduction plan.

## Ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism

To achieve the objective of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for everyone, violations taking place in this country of the concept of the equal value of all people must be combated at all levels and within all sectors of society. Preventing and counteracting ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism are therefore issues of high priority in integration policy.

Ethnic discrimination refers to unjust or abusive treatment because of race, the colour of one's skin, national or ethnic origin or religious belief.

*For information on ethnic discrimination, contact the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO), tel:+46 8 – 556 095 00, or visit the website [www.do.se](http://www.do.se)*

### Legislation against ethnic discrimination

The law combating ethnic discrimination in working life was made more stringent in 1999, when the Act Concerning Measures to Counteract Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life (1999:130) entered into force.

On 1 March 2002, a new law entered into force on the equal treatment of students in higher education (2001:1286). The law aims, *inter alia*, to combat ethnic discrimination.

The Committee on Discrimination (Diskrimineringsutredningen 2001) has presented its report Extended protection against discrimination (Ett utvidgat skydd mot diskriminering)(SOU 2002:43). Among its proposals was a new law against ethnic discrimination, planned to enter into force in July 2003.

A parliamentary committee has been appointed to consider coordinating legislation against discrimination (Dir 2002:11) This committee is to submit its report no later than 1 December 2004.

## Integration policy shall permeate all areas of society

The Government is working systematically to ensure that integration policy permeates all policy areas. This method is called mainstreaming. It means that the ethnical and cultural composition of society is seen as the basis for all measures at all levels and in all sectors of society and that integration should be implemented in the everyday operations of all sectors.

Examples of this systematic work are more stringent legislation in the field of discrimination, the establishment of the Swedish Integration Board, development initiatives in the metropolitan regions, action plans for strategically important areas such as racism and discrimination, and more defined responsibility for the operations of a number of government agencies.

## Greater awareness...

Compared with 1997, when the Riksdag took the decision on integration policy there is now much greater awareness in organisations and public authorities of the integration policy objectives for everyone living in Sweden to have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Ethnic diversity has affected social development and there is much greater openness towards differences in today's

society. Unemployment among persons of foreign extraction has also shown a marked decline during the latter half of the 1990s. More new immigrant arrivals are able to support themselves and local authority social welfare costs have been reduced.

### ...but much remains to be done

Despite extensive initiatives to give everyone the same opportunities in society, the disparities between immigrants and Swedish-born citizens remain large. This applies mainly to working life, but there are also clear differences within the educational and housing sectors. Children and young people who have migrated to this country have fewer opportunities than their Swedish peers. The health situation for immigrants is also worse than for Swedish-born citizens.

One of the most important reasons for the feeling of some immigrants that they are excluded is that they lack employment and a role in their new society.

### A labour market for all

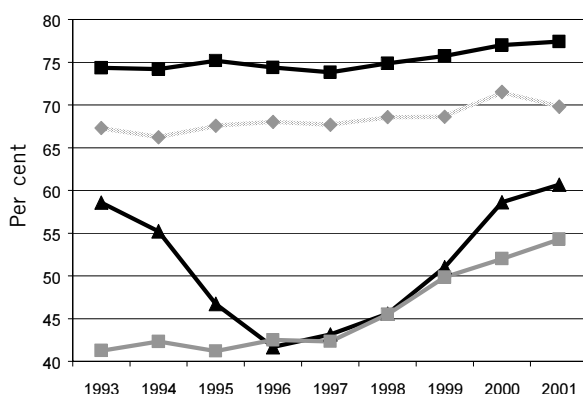
The task of creating a labour market, in which individual merits are valued and people with different backgrounds work, develop and meet each other, is one of the Government's main priorities. Unfortunately, although the status of immigrants in the labour market has shown a marked improve-

ment during the late 1990s, the disparities between immigrants and Swedish-born citizens are large, both as regards employment levels, and unemployment and participation in the work force. Reasons for the generally weaker position of immigrants in the labour market are multiple and complex. They may be related to the personal situation of the individual or they may be more structural. Among these are the importance of knowledge of Swedish, education, lack of networks, the occurrence of discrimination and length of time the immigrant has lived in this country. The longer immigrants have lived in Sweden, the higher their rates of employment while unemployment levels decline markedly.

#### The labour market of the future

- ✓ It is estimated that people of foreign extraction will represent 27 per cent of the working-age population in 2015 and from a labour market perspective will have a more favourable age structure than the rest of the population.
- ✓ The Government is working for greater ethnic and cultural diversity in working life. It is of utmost importance that the skills of the entire labour force are put to use.

Employment rate, both sexes, in per cent, second half-year 2001, 16-64 year



### The future direction of integration policy

Even in the future, integration policy will continue to be directed at creating the conditions to enable people to support themselves

and take part in the life of society, at safeguarding fundamental values and working to ensure that women and men have equal rights. However, to increase the impact of integration policy objectives in society, the implementation of this policy will be made more efficient and streamlined in the different social sectors and policy areas.

- Priority will be given to conditions for children and young people of foreign extraction while they are growing up. Equality between women and men and issues involving common basic values in society will be more extensively focused upon.
- The objectives of integration policy will be more clearly defined. The integration process should be permeated by the equal rights, obligations and opportunities of all people and by mutual respect for cultural differences so long as these do not conflict with the basic values of society. The Government will propose a revision of the integration policy objectives so that the word *tolerance* is replaced by that of *respect*.
- Public authorities' responsibility for integration policy within their fields of operation will be more clearly defined and the proactive role of the Swedish Integration Board and as an instrument for follow up and evaluation will be facilitated.

### **Special efforts to increase the impact of integration policy**

#### ***Better introduction for new arrivals***

The introduction of new arrivals must be improved. Extensive efforts to revitalise municipal introduction work are already in progress in order to develop an introduction to this country that is more flexible and better adapted to the individual. An inquiry is ongoing to analyse whether or not additional

measures are needed to develop a better and more individually adapted introduction.

*Information about the committee of inquiry into reform of the reception and introduction of refugees and its terms of reference is available at the website: [www.sou.gov.se/flyktingmottag/](http://www.sou.gov.se/flyktingmottag/)*

*Documents describing national goals for the introduction of new refugee arrivals is available at the Swedish Integration Board and may be downloaded from: [www.integrationsverket.se/ny\\_start\\_i\\_Sverige](http://www.integrationsverket.se/ny_start_i_Sverige)*

#### ***Putting immigrants' skills and qualifications to use in the labour market***

The skills and qualifications of immigrants must be put to use in the labour market. This is to be achieved, *inter alia*, by basing labour market policy measures to a greater extent than has been the case up to now on the needs of the individual and increasing flexibility in the service and measures offered to applicants at employment offices. The Government's investment in supplementary training for people with foreign academic qualifications will continue. Endeavours to increase the labour supply *inter alia* by combating discrimination and promoting diversity in working life will be intensified.

#### ***A greater integration perspective within the educational system***

A number of measures are under way to strengthen the Swedish language and improve Swedish language instruction for immigrants. These efforts will continue. In both the school system and in adult education, investments are being made to increase teacher competence and to improve immigrants' chances of benefiting from the training offered. The mother tongue is important if a child or young person is to be able to develop his/her cultural identity and enjoy successful schooling. The Government intends to strengthen this area. A bill on the forms and methods for validating adult knowledge and qualifications will be presented to the Riksdag in the autumn of 2002.

### ***A positive development in segregated housing areas***

Long-term programmes to bring about a more positive development in segregated housing areas in metropolitan regions are under way within the framework of the Government's urban policy. These efforts focus on growth, employment and language development. It is essential to utilise the methods and experience that have evolved in connection with work on urban policy in integration policy.

*More information on the Government's urban policy is available at the Commission on Metropolitan Areas website: [www.storstad.gov.se/english/](http://www.storstad.gov.se/english/)*

### ***Increased influence and participation***

In order to increase opportunities for people of foreign extraction to exert influence and to participate in the life of society, the Government is taking measures in general policies as well as in policies on democracy and popular movements. By combating exclusion and marginalisation the Government is creating better opportunities for immigrants to participate. The Government will also look into support to immigrant organisations so that this can contribute to more active support for the integration process.

*The Government has set up a one-man committee to analyse the distribution of power and influence in different sectors of society from the perspective of integration policy. You can read about the inquiry at the website: <http://integration.statsvet.uu.se>*

### ***Culture for everyone and a dialogue with religious communities***

The Government intends to further intensify its efforts in the cultural sphere so that everyone will have an opportunity to perform or experience a variety of multicultural expressions. Regional consultants responsible for stimulating multicultural activities will be established for this purpose. The dialogue with religious communities on issues con-

cerning the rights of women and children will be intensified.

### ***Focus on public health work***

The integration aspect will be given a more prominent position in public health work. The Government intends to present a public health bill in the autumn of 2002, proposing a new and clearer structure for this work.

### ***Continued intensive efforts to counter ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism***

Measures to prevent and counter ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism are in progress in accordance with the action plan previously adopted by the Government (A national action plan to counter racism, xenophobia, homophobia and discrimination, 2000/2001:59). Legislation relating to discrimination will be strengthened and work to counter racism intensified.

*The full text or a popular version of the action plan in Swedish may be ordered from the Government. It may also be downloaded from the Government's website:*

*[http://www.naring.regeringen.se/fragor/integration/las\\_mer.htm](http://www.naring.regeringen.se/fragor/integration/las_mer.htm)*

*A shorter version translated into English may be ordered from the Government Office.*

*As part of its action plan the Government took a decision to allocate SEK 30 million during the period 2001-2003 for development of youth organisations' local activities to counter racism, xenophobia, homophobia and discrimination.*

*Information about work in progress is available at [www.arvsfonden.nu](http://www.arvsfonden.nu)*

On the internet there is a bank of knowledge Sverige mot rasism (Sweden against racism) which gives a comprehensive picture, national and international, of efforts to counter racism, xenophobia and ethnic discrimination ongoing in all sectors of society and at different levels. The Swedish Integration Board is responsible for the website [www.sverigemotrasism.nu](http://www.sverigemotrasism.nu)

### ***Concentration of efforts for gender equality***

Extra effort will be made to ensure that gender equality policy goals have a greater impact on the integration process. Gender equality will be a priority area when support is allocated to organisations that have been established on an ethnic basis. A group of experts will be linked to the Government and instructed to present proposals for measures that can protect and support girls at risk.

These measures will also be directed at boys and adults in families with patriarchal values.

*Information about the Government's efforts for girls at risk in patriarchal families may be ordered from the Government Offices or downloaded from the Government's website, please see details below.*

*Information is available in both Swedish and English versions.*

### **For further information:**

A printed version of the Government's paper Integrationspolitik för 2000-talet (Integration Policy for the 2000s) (2001/02:129) may be ordered from the Printing Works of the Riksdag, tel: + 46 8 – 786 58 10. The full text of the communication is also available at the Government's website: [www.naring.regeringen.se/fragor/integration/index.htm](http://www.naring.regeringen.se/fragor/integration/index.htm).

For further information about the Swedish Integration Board, call +46 11 – 36 13 00 or visit its website [www.integrationsverket.se](http://www.integrationsverket.se)

Where no other information is given, references in this fact sheet are to documents and websites in Swedish. In several cases, a certain amount of information on these websites is given in English.



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