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WEATHERING CRISIS, FORGING AHEAD: SWEDISH ASYLUM AND INTEGRATION POLICY

By Susan Fratzke

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Executive Summary

Swedish asylum, reception, and integration services faced an unprecedented challenge in the fall of 2015. As the number of refugees and migrants crossing into Sweden soared, all three systems began to buckle under stress. Backlogs mounted as processing times for asylum claims grew from several months to more than a year. At one point in November 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency found it could no longer provide housing for all new asylum applicants, and some were forced to seek shelter in churches and other private institutions. Schools struggled to enroll large numbers of new students with complex and poorly documented educational backgrounds. Different social service providers competed for scarce interpreters, translators, and social workers. Between January and December 2015, Sweden received more than 160,000 applications for asylum—the highest number per capita in the European Union—and the Swedish asylum system was changed in fundamental ways.

Swedish asylum, reception, and integration services faced an unprecedented challenge in the fall of 2015.

While the sheer number of people entering the Swedish protection system has posed an enormous challenge, several other factors have undermined the ability of asylum and social services to respond to demand:

- ***The pace at which arrivals occurred overwhelmed asylum and reception services.*** More than two-thirds of asylum applications in 2015 were filed in the last four months of the year. While the Swedish asylum and reception systems were well-resourced and designed to be efficient, the Migration Agency was not prepared to handle such a large number of arrivals in such a short span of time. Eventually, national policymakers and the agency were forced to adopt emergency measures for expediency, such as lowering housing standards and suspending elements of the process (e.g., preapplication interviews).
- ***Existing shortages hindered the capacity of social services to absorb newcomers.*** Many of the services that struggled most to deliver on their mandate, such as reception accommodations and child services, were already facing capacity problems. An incredibly tight housing market had already limited the options available to reception and settlement authorities, while schools and social services, particularly in rural areas, have long faced shortages of second language teachers and interpreters.
- ***The number of minors among arrivals meant that demand for youth services was acute.*** More than 40 percent of asylum applicants in 2015 were under the age of 18, with many having entered Sweden unaccompanied. As a result, the demands placed on the education system and child services were particularly intense. Moreover, families and children were unevenly distributed geographically, further intensifying the strain on schools and social care in certain areas.

The Swedish government responded to these challenges in two primary ways. First, policymakers sought to reduce flows by introducing checkpoints at the Swedish border with Denmark and, controversially, by temporarily lowering the level of benefits and rights offered to protection beneficiaries. Second, the government invested heavily in the early integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Central to these efforts were programs to provide early skills mapping, training, and work experience, beginning as soon as newcomers submit an asylum claim. Other policy changes have sought to address ongoing capacity



constraints in reception and integration services, by incentivizing new housing construction, changing regulatory standards, and embracing more innovative approaches to service provision (for example, support groups to supplement mental health care).

While it is too early to tell whether these extensive investments will all pay meaningful dividends, Sweden's experiences to date offer several lessons regarding the inherent challenges of responding to large-scale migration and refugee flows:

- ***Asylum systems and social services must be designed to withstand fluctuations in demand.*** It can be difficult to predict both asylum flows and the specific needs that accompany them, and maintaining capacity during periods of low demand can be financially and politically costly. Flexibility is thus critical. The Swedish system worked well when agencies were able to quickly scale up to meet demand and draw back when numbers fell. The Migration Agency, for example, rents apartments on the open market rather than maintaining its own facilities, allowing it to add or reduce capacity based on demand. Similarly, the use of online learning and teacher sharing between schools has been another way to increase flexibility in the service workforce to meet changing needs.
- ***There may be a tradeoff between individualized, high-quality care and the capacity to meet large-scale protection needs.*** The Swedish asylum system has historically presented itself as welcoming and open, providing a high-level of support and rights to protection applicants and beneficiaries. Such a resource-intensive approach became impossible to maintain, however, in the face of a five-fold increase in asylum claims. Ultimately, the government was forced to introduce policies, including border checks, to reduce the number of arrivals or risk completely overwhelming the system.
- ***Successful integration depends on more than employment services.*** While quick entry into the labor market has been a major focus of Swedish integration investments, other factors play an important role as well. Unstable housing situations, uncertain legal status, or untreated mental health conditions can all make finding and maintaining employment challenging, and ultimately undermine successful integration. Similarly, employment is not the only means of ensuring social inclusion, and other approaches may be more relevant for individuals who remain a long way from entering the labor market.

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Looking ahead, the full effects of the migration and asylum crisis in Sweden have yet to be determined. In a system predicated on long-term acceptance of refugee populations, successful integration will be critical. If the latest cohort of new arrivals is not rapidly and effectively integrated into Swedish society and institutions, it may call into question the sustainability of Sweden's protection efforts. Ultimately, the most significant impact may be on the protection and integration systems themselves. The legal and regulatory changes made in 2015 and 2016 have altered the country's approach to protection in fundamental ways. Critics of these changes have voiced concern that reducing the rights of refugees and other beneficiaries of protection will ultimately undermine integration without having a meaningful impact on asylum flows (and indeed, the drop in applications appears rather to be correlated with the introduction of border controls). Time will tell what the ultimate effect of these policies on integration and future flows will be, and whether the shift in the Swedish approach to protection will be temporary or more long-lasting.



I. Introduction

In November 2015, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson announced to assembled reporters that Sweden was no longer capable of receiving further asylum seekers. The government would be introducing more restrictive asylum and border control measures over the coming months in an effort to stem the flow of new arrivals to the country. As they made the announcement, Romson broke into tears, later calling the policy changes a “terrible decision.”¹

Sweden has long had one of the most efficient and generous asylum systems in the world. The country has been lauded for and taken great pride in the high quality of care it provides to refugees and others in need of protection. Yet when Sweden found itself a destination for a significant share of the nearly 1 million forced migrants and refugees who crossed the Mediterranean to Europe in 2015, its ability to live up to these high standards was forcefully called into question. Despite having a highly advanced system for managing the flow of asylum cases, assessing claims, and providing shelter, the nearly 163,000 asylum applications Sweden received in 2015 overwhelmed its capacity and, eventually, prompted significant legislative changes to reduce some of its expansive protection commitments. More than a year after the onset of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe, its effects continue to be felt throughout the Swedish asylum and integration systems.

Sweden’s efforts to build a robust asylum and integration system—and its struggles as that system was challenged by unprecedented refugee arrivals—provide valuable lessons on responding to and preparing for unpredictable surges in migration flows. This report explores the effects of the migration and refugee crisis on Swedish asylum, reception, and integration services. It traces the two primary policy responses—deterring new entries and integrating those who have already arrived—and identifies the key tensions and underlying difficulties authorities faced as they sought to keep up with rising demand. Finally, the analysis concludes by examining the challenges that may lie ahead and draws initial lessons from Swedish experiences.

II. The Evolution of the 2015–16 Crisis

The fall of 2015 brought a surge of refugees and migrants to Europe, the scale of which had not been seen in the post-World War II era. More than a million people arrived in Greece and Italy over the course of 2015 and early 2016. While Mediterranean Member States were the primary points of entry into the European Union (EU), most refugees and migrants had other destinations in mind and sought to travel onward to countries with more favorable asylum systems or labor markets.

The Swedish asylum system has long been heralded as one of the most progressive and technically advanced in the world. Asylum determinations are highly individualized and are driven by an in-depth assessment of each asylum case. For those granted status, the associated rights and benefits are usually quite high. Though far from the shores of Greece and Italy, Sweden quickly emerged as a primary destination for refugees and migrants in 2015. In all, Sweden received nearly 12 percent of asylum applications submitted in EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states in 2015.²

1 David Crouch, “Sweden Slams Shut Its Open-Door Policy towards Refugees,” *The Guardian*, November 24, 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/sweden-asylum-seekers-refugees-policy-reversal.

2 European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. See Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, “Asylum Applications in the EU/EFTA by Country, 2008–2016,” accessed June 20, 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/asylum-applications-euefta-country-2008-2016.

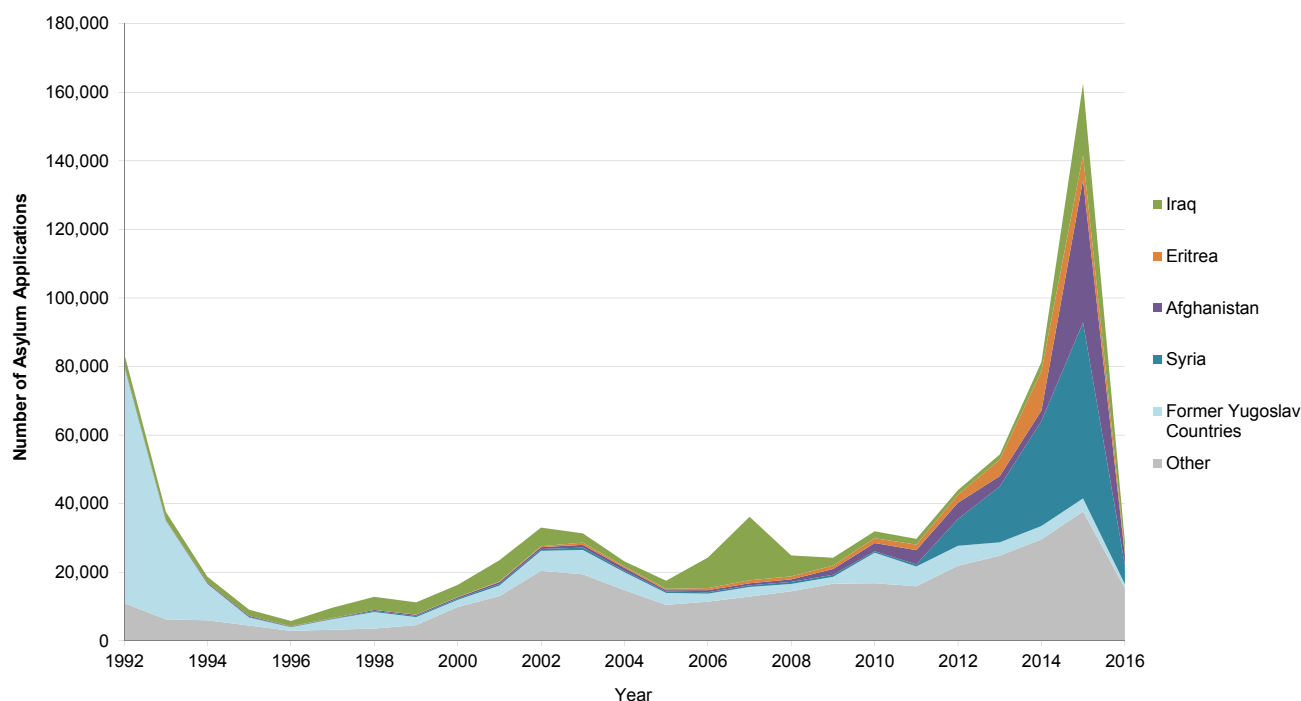


A. Trends in and Characteristics of Asylum Arrivals

The number of applications for protection Sweden received in 2015 was by far the highest on record, roughly double the previous high point during the Yugoslav civil war in 1992. In total, authorities received nearly 163,000 asylum applications before the end of the year (equivalent to approximately 1.7 percent of the Swedish population).³ Most of the applications (114,000) arrived between September and December of 2015,⁴ concentrating the demand for services and placing added strain on authorities. At the peak in early November 2015, more than 10,000 asylum seekers were arriving in Sweden each week,⁵ primarily via Denmark. Arrivals slowed again in early 2016 after Swedish authorities began checking passports at the border with Denmark.⁶

While individuals from a number of countries have sought asylum in Sweden over the past three decades, applications from Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans comprised more than two-thirds of claims in 2015 (see Figure 1).⁷ Existing communities of nationals from these countries in Sweden may have had something of a “pull” effect. Sweden’s long history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers has meant that large diaspora populations exist in the country among all three national groups.

Figure 1. Asylum Applications Made in Sweden, by Year and Select Nationalities, 1992–2016



Sources: Swedish Migration Agency, “Overview and Time Series—Application for Asylum Received 1984–1999,” accessed March 28, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics/Overview-and-time-series.html; Swedish Migration Agency, “Overview and Time Series—Application for Asylum Received 2000–2016,” accessed March 28, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics/Overview-and-time-series.html.

3 Ibid.

4 Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex Monthly Data (Rounded) [migr_asyappctzm],” updated May 17, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asyappctzm.

5 Swedish Migration Agency, “Antal asylsökande – aktuell statistik,” updated May 22, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Statistik.html.

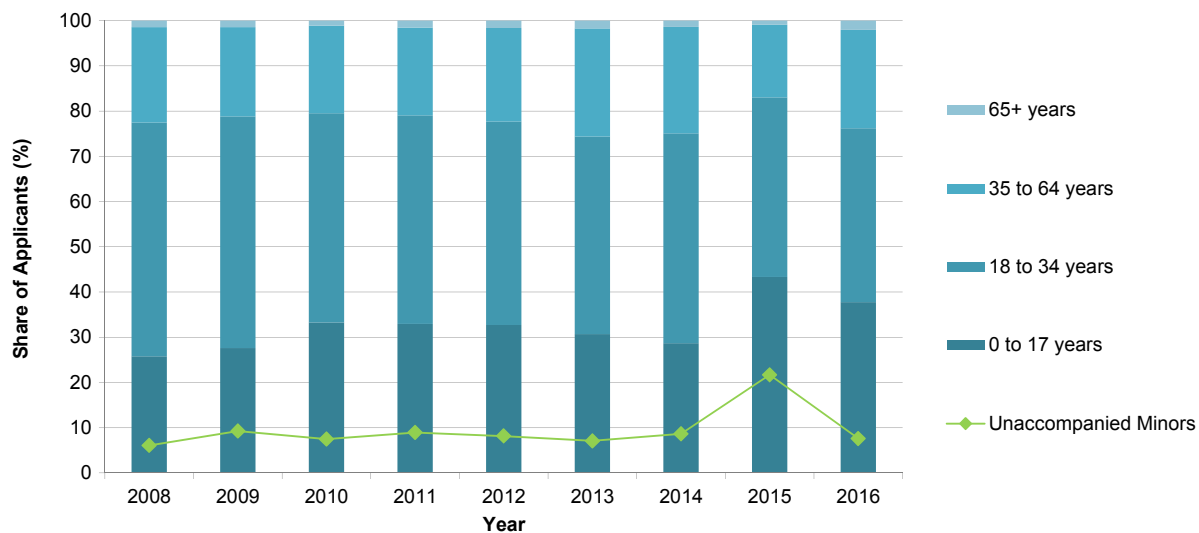
6 Dan Bilefsky, “Sweden and Denmark Add Border Checks to Stem Flow of Migrants,” *New York Times*, January 4, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/01/05/world/europe/sweden-denmark-border-check-migrants.html.

7 MPI Data Hub, “Asylum Applications in the EU/EFTA by Country.”



The demographic characteristics of arrivals are also worth noting as they determine the types of assistance needed. Recent asylum applicants in Sweden are disproportionately male: in each year between 2011 and 2015, at least two-thirds of asylum claims were filed by men.⁸ Applicants also tended to be relatively young. Since 2008, at least three-quarters of applicants have been below the age of 35 (see Figure 2). A growing number are children younger than 18, many of whom have traveled to Sweden alone; in 2015, more than 20 percent (35,250) of asylum claims were filed by unaccompanied children.⁹ In Sweden, unaccompanied children fall under special protection rules and are entitled to special care arrangements (see Sections III and IV); the large number of minors to arrive alone in the country in 2015 thus further exacerbated the strain felt by asylum and local authorities.

Figure 2. Asylum Applications, Share by Age Group, 2008–16



Sources: Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded) [migr_asyappctza],” updated March 13, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asyappctza; Eurostat, “Asylum Applicants Considered to Be Unaccompanied Minors by Citizenship, Age and Sex Annual Data (Rounded) [migr_asyunaa],” updated March 24, 2017, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyunaa&lang=en.

B. Implications for the Asylum System

A large share of the newcomers who applied for asylum in the final months of 2015 is likely to receive some form of protection. Rates of approval for asylum claims in Sweden have been rising for a number

⁸ Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded) [migr_asyappctza],” updated March 13, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asyappctza.

⁹ The large number of applications by minors has several underlying causes. First, more than two-thirds of unaccompanied minors who arrived in 2015 were Afghan, many of whom may have been drawn to Sweden by friends or extended family members within the substantial existing Afghan communities in the country. Officials in Sweden believe that for Afghan children and families, migration has become something of a development strategy. Faced with ongoing violence and a lack of economic opportunities at home, families may choose to send an older child to find employment in Europe, and particularly Sweden, in the hopes he or she will be able to support family at home with remittances. Strong protection frameworks for minors in Sweden mean that unaccompanied children are more likely to be allowed to stay in the country making them a better investment for families choosing who to send abroad. See Eurostat, “Asylum Applicants Considered to Be Unaccompanied Minors by Citizenship, Age and Sex Annual Data (Rounded) [migr_asyunaa],” updated March 24, 2017, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyunaa&lang=en; Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex”; author interview with Henry Mårtensson, Deputy Director, Division for Migration and Asylum Policy, Swedish Ministry of Justice, in Stockholm, April 11, 2016.



of years, and since 2013, more than half of applicants have been granted protection.¹⁰ In 2015, this share rose to more than 70 percent.¹¹ The likelihood of receiving protection does, however, vary substantially depending on the nationality and other characteristics of the individual making the claim. Changing protection policies in Sweden (see Section III) and a decline in the recognition rates of applicants from some major source countries, such as Afghanistan, may again lower this share among the most recent arrivals.¹²

Protection in Sweden can be granted on the basis of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (refugee status) or to individuals fleeing torture or indiscriminant conflict (subsidiary protection). Applicants who do not meet either of these standards may still be eligible for temporary protection if humanitarian considerations prevent the individual from returning to their country of origin (see Box 1).

Box 1. Legal Basis for Protection in Sweden

The 2005 *Aliens Act* provides for two primary forms of protection in Sweden: (1) refugee protection for individuals fleeing persecution as defined by the 1951 United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention and the 2011 European Union (EU) Qualification Directive, with the addition of a national provision recognizing persecution on the basis of an applicant's gender or sexual orientation; and (2) subsidiary protection for those fleeing "serious harm" such as torture or indiscriminant violence, in line with the EU Qualification Directive. Applicants who are "unable to return to the country of origin because of an environmental disaster" may also receive protection, though this provision has never been used.

The *Aliens Act* allows for two additional forms of protection, known as humanitarian protection. First, persons who otherwise would not qualify for refugee or subsidiary protection can be granted residence permits if there are "exceptionally distressing circumstances," such as a serious health condition, that require them to stay in Sweden. Temporary protection and residence can also be granted to individuals who are subject to a removal order but who cannot, at least in the short term, be returned to their country of origin. This last status is most often used for unaccompanied children who cannot be returned because their families cannot be identified or because guardianship arrangements in the home country are insufficient.

Sources: Government of Sweden, *Aliens Act*, SFS 2005:716 (September 29, 2005), www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/20050716.htm; "Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on Standards for the Qualification of Third-Country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Beneficiaries of International Protection, for a Uniform Status for Refugees or for Persons Eligible for Subsidiary Protection, and for the Content of the Protection Granted," *Official Journal of the European Union* 2011 L 337/9, December 20, 2011, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0095>; United Nations, "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," July 28, 1951, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&lang=en; author interview with Helene Hedebris, Legal Affairs Expert, Region South, Swedish Migration Agency, in Malmö, April 15, 2016.

In recent years, subsidiary protection beneficiaries have comprised a large share of the individuals granted protection in Sweden (see Figure 3). Sweden has tended to rely more heavily on subsidiary status than other EU countries; across the European Union, 42 percent of positive decisions conferred subsidiary

10 Eurostat, "First Instance Decisions on Applications by Citizenship, Age and Sex Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded) [migr_asydcfststa]," updated March 13, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asydcfststa.

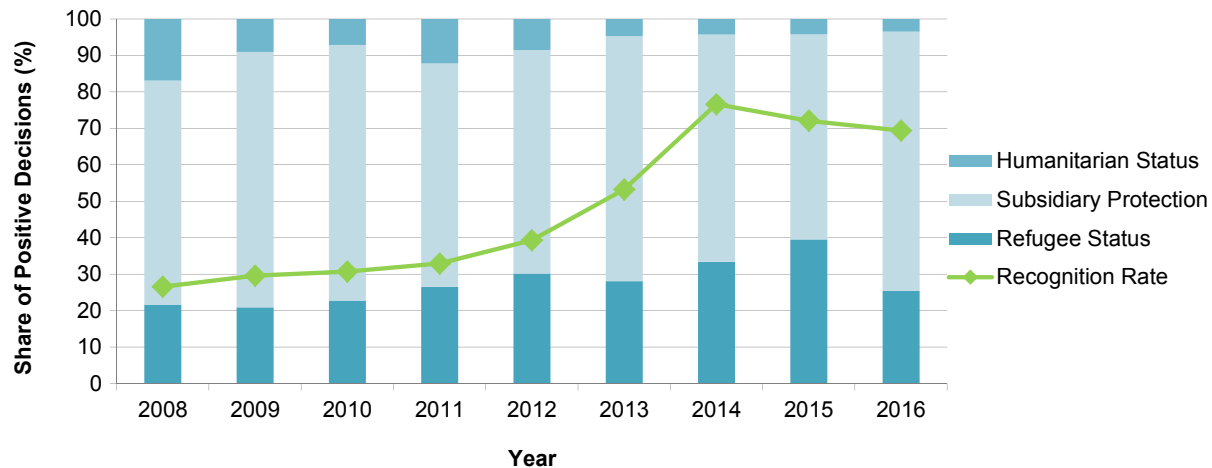
11 Ibid.

12 Recognition rates for Afghans in Sweden, for example, have fallen from 74 percent in 2014 to 37 percent in 2016. See MPI Data Hub, "Asylum Applications in the EU/EFTA by Country."



status in 2015, while 56 percent did so in Sweden.¹³ Again, though, the type of protection granted varies based on the nationality and circumstances of the individual, with certain nationalities, such as Eritreans, more likely to receive refugee status than others.¹⁴

Figure 3. First Instance Positive Decisions on Asylum Applications in Sweden, by Status Granted, 2008–16



Note: Humanitarian status includes temporary status provided under Chapter 5 of the *Aliens Act*.

Source: Eurostat, “First Instance Decisions on Applications by Citizenship, Age and Sex Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded) [migr_asydcfsta],” updated March 13, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asydcfsta.

Because each application for asylum in Sweden is assessed individually by a specially trained asylum adjudicator, the process for determining claims is time and resource intensive—and difficult to accelerate in the face of growing demand. As the number of asylum claims rose in 2014 and 2015, backlogs and processing times for individual claims also began to grow. As of mid-2015, the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket), the authority responsible for processing asylum applications, estimated that it would take approximately 8 months to process an application. By early 2016, processing times had reportedly stretched past the one-year mark, though the Migration Agency had stopped issuing official estimates.¹⁵ In response, the Migration Agency devoted significant resources in 2016 to processing asylum claims and streamlining the adjudication process, at times scaling back operations in other areas, such as work or family visas. By the end of 2016, the agency announced that it had processed a record number of asylum claims during the year (111,979 in total, double the previous year), though backlogs and delays remained.¹⁶

13 Eurostat, “First Instance Decisions on Applications by Citizenship, Age and Sex.” Until 2016, the rights and benefits afforded to subsidiary and refugee protection holders were the same. Swedish authorities thus had less of an incentive to investigate the more complex grounds that refugee status requires when subsidiary protection granted the same status. See author interview with Helene Hedebris, Legal Affairs Expert, Region South, Swedish Migration Agency, in Stockholm, April 15, 2016.

14 In 2015, 40 percent of all applicants in Sweden received refugee status, while 97 percent of Eritreans did. See MPI Data Hub, “Asylum Applications in the EU/EFTA by Country.”

15 Author interview with Andre Nilen, Head of Staff, Region South, and Asa Evrensel, Protection Process Specialist, Operational Department, Swedish Migration Agency, in Malmö, April 14, 2016.

16 Swedish Migration Agency, “Högsta antalet asylbeslut hittills,” updated January 1, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Nyhetsarkiv/Nyhetsarkiv-2017/2017-01-01-Hogsta-antalet-asylbeslut-hittills.html.



III. Policy Responses Intended to Reduce Flows

The drastic rise in asylum applications filed in Sweden during the fall of 2015 not only created processing backlogs, it also strained the ability of asylum and refugee reception systems to house and provide for the needs of the newest arrivals. As a result, the government was forced to seek measures to reduce or slow the number of refugees and migrants arriving in the country. In October 2015, the government outlined a broad set of legislative and regulatory changes with the dual aims of helping authorities cope with the rising demands placed on social services and of deterring further asylum flows. These efforts occurred along two primary lines: the tightening of border controls and the reduction of benefits offered to protection beneficiaries.¹⁷ Collectively, these changes mark a substantial departure from traditional Swedish policy approaches to asylum, which have typically emphasized the welfare and inclusion of asylum applicants and protection beneficiaries over migration management concerns.

A. Border Closures to Regulate Entries

On November 12, 2015, the Swedish government introduced document checks at its border with Denmark, with the goal of slowing and potentially reducing the number of crossings.¹⁸ Individuals arriving at the border were required to present a passport or other travel document. Asylum seekers could still submit claims for protection, but individuals without documentation who sought entry without submitting such a claim were turned away. A few months later, in January 2016, Denmark announced it would introduce controls on its southern border with Germany—the primary entry point for individuals seeking asylum in Denmark or transit north to Sweden.¹⁹ Sweden lifted border checks with Denmark in May 2017, but checks at the Denmark–Germany border have remained in place.²⁰

The effect of the border controls on asylum claims in Sweden was almost immediate.

Collectively, the closure of the Swedish and Danish borders—and of borders further up the line in Germany, Austria, and the Balkans—limited the possibilities for would-be asylum seekers to reach Swedish territory unassisted (i.e., without the aid of smugglers). The effect of the border controls on asylum claims in Sweden was almost immediate: the number of monthly applications fell from a high of 39,000 in October 2015 to 14,000 in December 2015, sinking further to 4,000 in January 2016.²¹ Application rates have remained low since, at approximately 2,000 a month through the rest of 2016.

B. Asylum Policy Changes to Deter New Arrivals

In parallel to the border closures, the government announced sweeping reforms to the Swedish asylum and reception systems. These changes were designed to bring Sweden into line with minimum EU standards

17 Government of Sweden, “Government Presented Measures in Response to Refugee Situation,” updated October 8, 2015, www.government.se/articles/2015/10/government-presented-measures-in-response-to-refugee-situation/.

18 Patrick Kingsley, Matthew Weaver, and Ashifa Kassam, “Sweden Introduces Border Checks as Refugee Crisis Grows,” *The Guardian*, November 12, 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/12/refugee-crisis-sweden-introduces-border-checks.

19 Henriette Jacobsen, “Denmark to Introduce Border Controls,” EURACTIV, December 15, 2015, www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/denmark-to-introduce-border-controls/.

20 Reuters, “Denmark May Extend Border Controls beyond Six More Months, Defying EU,” Reuters, May 16, 2017, www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-denmark-border-idUSKCN18C1V1.

21 Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex.”



and, in doing so, reduce any “pull” asylum seekers might feel to submit their claims in Sweden instead of in another Member States.²² Policies under the old Swedish asylum system were generous—recipients of international protection, whether refugee or subsidiary protection, were normally granted permanent residence status.²³ This policy was guided by a belief among Swedish authorities that permanent residency facilitates integration into Swedish society by providing beneficiaries with greater certainty about their future.²⁴

In June 2016, the government adopted a highly controversial law that suspended the normal asylum provisions of the *Aliens Act* for three years, beginning on July 20, 2016. The changes apply to all asylum applicants who submitted claims in Sweden after November 24, 2015.

Three of the most significant changes in the June 2016 law are:

- ***Shift from permanent to temporary residency for protection beneficiaries.*** The law has temporarily suspended the policy of granting permanent residency to all protection beneficiaries. Instead, recognized refugees receive a three-year residency permit and subsidiary protection beneficiaries receive a permit valid for 13 months.²⁵ Both permits are renewable, pending a review of conditions in the holder’s home country to assess whether protection is still needed. In both cases, permit holders can convert to permanent residency once their permit expires only if they can prove they are self-supporting through employment-related income. The effects of the law have been noticeable. Compared to the asylum decisions taken in the first half of 2016, in which nearly all successful applicants received permanent residency, between July 20, 2016 and the end of the year, approximately half received temporary rather than permanent residence permits (22,757 of 44,806 permits issued).²⁶
- ***Removal of status for persons “otherwise in need of protection” and those protected on other humanitarian grounds.*** Protection on grounds other than refugee or subsidiary protection status will no longer be granted, except in exceptional circumstances or in cases that would violate Swedish obligations under international law. The effects this policy change will have in practice remain unclear. Currently, most individuals benefiting from the “otherwise in need of protection” clause in the *Aliens Act* are unaccompanied minors. Returning these minors might still prove difficult, despite the new law, if such returns would violate Swedish commitments under EU law to act in the best interest of the child. Fewer people were given special humanitarian protection during the second half of 2016—1,235 received this status between January and July 2016, while 933 were granted it between July and the end of the year, despite the higher number of decisions taken in the latter period.²⁷ Pinpointing the effects of this legal change on cases involving minors has proven particularly difficult as many of the claims processed in 2016 were submitted before the November deadline.
- ***Limitations placed on family reunification.*** The 2016 law reduces access to family reunification for recognized refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries. Since its introduction, refugees must submit reunification claims within three months after they receive status or they become subject to the same financial support requirements as other immigrant groups.

22 Crouch, “Sweden Slams Shut its Open-Door Policy towards Refugees.”

23 In practice, however, decisions about residency were made on an individual basis and depended on the circumstances of individual applicants and the conditions in their countries of origin.

24 Author interview with Helene Hedebris.

25 The proposed permit length for subsidiary protection beneficiaries was raised from one year to 13 months during the legislative review process after commenters pointed out that foreign nationals must hold a permit valid for longer than 12 months to be able to register in the social registry, which is required to access most social services.

26 Most if not all of those who were granted permanent residency applied prior to the cutoff date specified in the 2016 law. See Swedish Migration Agency, “Tillfälliga lagen ger avtryck i statistiken,” updated January 20, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Nyhetsarkiv/Nyhetsarkiv-2017/2017-01-20-Tillfalliga-lagen-ger-avtryck-i-statistiken.html.

27 Ibid.



Subsidiary protection beneficiaries are no longer eligible for reunification, except in exceptional circumstances. As a result, the number of applications for family reunification that were denied due to insufficient means of support has jumped substantially since July 2016—from 112 rejections between January and July, to 2,328 between July and December.²⁸

Service providers and civil society groups have expressed deep concerns that these policies will affect the ability of protection beneficiaries to integrate into Swedish society and become self-sufficient—goals that previously stood central to the Swedish asylum reception and integration systems.²⁹ The switch from permanent to temporary status has been a point of particular concern. Without the prospect of staying in Sweden permanently, some stakeholders fear that these newcomers may be less willing to invest in integrating into local communities and learning Swedish, and that employers might hesitate to hire them, if there is a chance they may later be required to leave the country. The requirement to demonstrate self-sufficiency in order to access permanent residency and reunification with family has also come under criticism. Refugee advocacy groups and local authorities have expressed concerns that refugees may feel pressure to take any job, rather than investing in learning Swedish or waiting for their previously earned academic or professional credentials to be recognized (a process that currently can take more than a year). The self-sufficiency requirements also have the potential to increase the dependence of protection beneficiaries on employers, creating the risk of exploitation.

Without the prospect of staying in Sweden permanently, some stakeholders fear that these newcomers may be less willing to invest in integrating ... and that employers might hesitate to hire them.

Separately, the new policies may affect the efficiency of the Swedish asylum system itself by increasing the processing and adjudication demands placed on asylum authorities. The switch to temporary residency is of particular concern in this regard. For subsidiary protection beneficiaries especially, asylum authorities will now be required to reassess each claim every 13 months, whereas under the old permanent residency system, claims were only assessed once. The fact that the law only applies to applications made after November 2015 also complicates procedures as asylum authorities must now assess claims according to two different standards, making it more difficult to streamline procedures and potentially increasing processing times.³⁰ In addition to the demands this places on authorities, longer processing times can create hardship for asylum seekers by prolonging uncertainty about the future and delaying their integration into Swedish society.

28 Ibid.

29 Author interview with Jennie K. Larsson, Integration Researcher, Swedish Employment Service, in Stockholm, April 13, 2016; author interview with Ewa Jonsson, Senior Advisor on Migration, and Alexandra Segenstedt, Expert on Family Reunification, Swedish Red Cross, in Stockholm, April 12, 2016; author interview with George Joseph, Director for Migration, Caritas Sweden, in Stockholm, April 13, 2016; author interview with Samarie Löfvendahl, Associate Legal Officer, and Gisela Thater, Senior Legal Officer, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Regional Representation for Northern Europe, in Stockholm, April 11, 2016.

30 Swedish Migration Agency, *Remissvar på utkastet till lagrådsremiss Begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppehållstillstånd i Sverige* (Stockholm: Swedish Migration Agency, 2016), www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.2d998ffc151ac387159577c/1485556051883/Remissvar+gällande+Begränsningar+av+möjligheten+att+få+uppehållstillstånd+i+Sverige.pdf.



IV. Policies to Support Success in Sweden

In parallel with efforts to reduce inflows, Swedish authorities have doubled down on investments to ensure the success of those who are granted permission to stay. The existing integration and reception systems in the country were comprehensive and advanced even prior to the 2015–16 crisis. The reception system provided immediate shelter and social assistance for asylum applicants, while also seeking to place new arrivals on a path to integration by granting almost immediate work authorization and promoting self-sufficiency. Individuals who received status were given comprehensive support finding a job, securing more long-term housing, and learning the language. The heightened demand for social services in the wake of the crisis, however, has strained both the reception and integration policy fields, forcing authorities to confront urgent capacity constraints as well as long-standing challenges to the efficiency and efficacy of service delivery.

This section details the resources and supports provided to asylum applicants and protection beneficiaries to facilitate their effective inclusion in local communities and labor markets. It examines the underlying challenges as well as the new obstacles that have emerged with increased demand, and considers the adaptations and innovations authorities have made in response to both.

A. Assistance for Housing and Permanent Settlement

Finding safe and appropriate housing can be one of the most critical challenges newcomers face. Asylum seekers who arrive with little money, few local connections, and no knowledge of the language are likely to find the search for shelter nearly impossible. For families and children traveling alone, the stakes are particularly high.

Finding safe and appropriate housing can be one of the most critical challenges newcomers face.

To mitigate these risks, and to meet EU reception standards, the Swedish Migration Agency provides asylum seekers the option of receiving housing assistance while their applications are processed (see Box 2). As of March 2017, slightly more than half of asylum applicants (56,435) were living in assisted housing facilities (called ABO³¹ accommodation), while nearly 30 percent had found their own accommodation (32,787).³² Asylum applicants who initially find their own housing but become unable to house themselves at a later date can request placement in ABO housing throughout the application process.³³ Special support and housing is provided for particularly vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors.³⁴

31 Known in full as Anläggnings-boende (ABO).

32 The remaining 20 percent, which primarily includes unaccompanied minors, were housed in other types of facilities. See Swedish Migration Agency, “Statistics—Persons with Accommodation in the Swedish Migration Agency’s Reception System,” updated March 1, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics.html.

33 Swedish Migration Agency, “Accommodation,” updated June 1, 2016, www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-and-asylum-in-Sweden/While-you-are-waiting-for-a-decision/Accommodation.html.

34 Municipalities have primary responsibility for unaccompanied children and provide emergency shelter immediately after minors express an intention to claim asylum until they receive a permanent housing assignment, usually two or three days after entering the system. Once minors are permanently assigned to a municipality, they are typically housed in structured group homes or foster care (called Hem för Vård eller Boende or HVB accommodation) with trained staff on hand to provide counseling and activities. See author interview with Christina Grönberg, Social Development Unit, and Anna Mattsson, Stockholm Municipal Government, in Stockholm, April 13, 2016; author interview with Ulrika Wickman, Head of the Social Welfare Department; Lene Cordes, Head of Unit for Children and Families; and Tarek Borg, Head of Unit for Unaccompanied Minors, Malmö Municipal Government, in Malmö, April 14, 2016.

**Box 2. Building Flexibility into the Reception System**

The Swedish Migration Agency's housing system (see Appendix) is designed to be able to scale up quickly in response to growing needs or downsize if demand falls. In order to maintain this flexibility, the agency obtains facilities through a combination of standing contracts with landlords and housing providers and public procurement calls, rather than maintaining its own properties. If apartments or similar housing options are unavailable, the Migration Agency has made arrangements to house asylum applicants in temporary accommodation, such as hotels or resorts. During the surge of arrivals in the fall of 2015, the Migration Agency also utilized emergency shelters and facilities provided by the municipalities (such as school gyms or unused buildings). These temporary arrangements allowed the agency to house between 10,000 and 20,000 additional people for brief periods until regular accommodation places could be found. As the number of arrivals slowed, the Migration Agency has scaled down use of temporary housing arrangements such as hotels.

Source: Author interview with Fredrik Nilsson, Specialist, Accommodation Unit, Operational Department, Swedish Migration Agency, in Malmö, April 15, 2016; Swedish Migration Agency, "Planering klar för att stänga 183 boenden," updated January 18, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Nyhetsarkiv/Nyhetsarkiv-2017/2017-01-18-Planering-klar-for-att-stanga-183-boenden.html.

Once a residence permit is granted, beneficiaries can choose to receive assistance finding permanent housing. The Migration Agency coordinates with counties and municipalities to identify suitable accommodations, with all municipalities required to make housing available for this purpose starting in March 2016. Beginning in 2017, a formula negotiated by the Migration Agency, the Association of Local Authorities and Regions (a national body representing municipal- and county-level governments), and the Public Employment Service assigns protection beneficiaries to each of the 21 counties in Sweden based on total population, the existing number of protection beneficiaries in the county, and labor market conditions. Applicants who elect to receive housing assistance are not given a say in this decision and must either accept the assignment they are given or find their own housing.

A severe housing shortage in Sweden has, however, meant that finding suitable housing has been a major challenge at both the reception and settlement stages—a situation that was exacerbated by the 2015 surge in arrivals. Authorities face two particular challenges: 1) managing a limited housing supply and 2) ensuring housing decisions help, rather than hinder, integration.

I. Lack of Housing Capacity in the Face of New Demand

Even before asylum flows rose in 2015, a combination of low construction rates and strict rent regulations resulted in limited availability of housing across Sweden. This shortage had long been felt in the reception accommodation system, but the sudden influx of newcomers amplified pressures. While the Migration Agency reception system allows for flexibility in scaling accommodation places to fit demand (see Box 2), the agency is dependent on local housing supply. In one high-profile incident in November 2015, the Migration Agency ran out of places of any kind for new arrivals, forcing many to look elsewhere for shelter, including to community and religious groups.³⁵ The lack of housing capacity has created challenges in other areas. For many asylum seekers, the temporary nature of some accommodation (such as holiday resorts) has resulted in the need to move several times as new or more permanent accommodation becomes available. Frequent moves can be hard on families in particular as children must move in and out of schools.

³⁵ The Local, "Sweden Refugees Sleep Outside for Second Night," updated November 21, 2015, www.thelocal.se/20151121/sweden-refugees-sleep-outside-for-second-night.



Limited throughput from the reception system to the settlement system has been as much of a challenge as initial capacity. Unless individuals whose claims are granted or denied are quickly moved out of reception facilities, reception authorities find it difficult to keep up with new demands. Backlogs and delays in processing asylum claims thus have significant consequences for the reception system. The housing of unaccompanied minors provides an acute example: during the peak of the surge, limited permanent placement options meant that some children remained in emergency shelters for as long as a month while they waited for space at a children's home or with a foster family to become available.³⁶

Within the settlement system, municipalities charged with finding places for recognized refugees have faced the same capacity constraints as the Migration Agency in finding suitable housing. As of March 2017, nearly 20 percent (20,461) of residents in reception facilities were protection beneficiaries waiting for permanent housing assignments.³⁷ The National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning (Boverket) estimated that in 2016, 94 percent of municipalities were facing a shortage of housing for new arrivals,³⁸ and housing prices in the last quarter of 2015 were 14 percent higher than they were a year earlier.³⁹ In Stockholm alone, more than 500,000 people were on the waiting list for public housing as of April 2015, with the wait estimated to be more than five years long.⁴⁰

In 2016, 94 percent of municipalities were facing a shortage of housing for new arrivals.

In an effort to make more housing available, beginning in March 2016 all municipalities are now required to settle a certain share of protection beneficiaries through the assisted housing system.⁴¹ This change represents a major departure from previous policy; under the old system, municipalities were able to choose whether or not to participate in the settlement system. The fact that many municipalities opted not to take part further exacerbated existing housing shortage.

The October 2015 government response plan also included promises to ease some building restrictions that limited new construction, though progress on reforms has since stalled.⁴² Regardless, the pressure on the housing market appears likely to encourage a building boom; residential construction, particularly of multifamily homes, increased by nearly 50 percent in the first quarter of 2017 compared to the same quarter of 2016.⁴³ And in April 2016, the government announced a further SEK 1.85 billion in grants

36 Author interview with Christina Grönberg and Anna Mattsson; author interview with Ulrika Wickman, Lene Cordes, and Tarek Borg.

37 Author interview with Andre Nilen.

38 National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, "Bostadsmarknadsenkäten 2016 i korthet," updated May 9, 2016, www.boverket.se/sv/samhallsplanering/bostadsplanering/bostadsmarknaden/bostadsmarknadsenkaten-i-korthet/.

39 Eurostat, "House Price Index – Quarterly and Annual Rates of Change Update," updated April 12, 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:House_Price_Index_-_Quarterly_and_annual_rates_of_change_update.png.

40 Author interview with Fredrik Jurdell, Chief Executive Officer, SHIS Bostaeder, in Stockholm, April 11, 2016.

41 The government put a new housing distribution scheme into place early in 2016 as part of broader asylum reform efforts. See Swedish Parliament, *Förordning om mottagande av vissa nyanlända invandrare för bosättning*, SFS 2016:39 (February 4, 2016), www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-201639-om-mottagande-av-vissa-sfs-2016-39.

42 Johan Sennero, "Sweden Faces Housing Crunch Despite Government Building Plan," Reuters, July 4, 2016, www.reuters.com/article/sweden-housing-idUSL8N19N3CT.

43 Statistics Sweden, "Increase in Construction of Dwellings," updated May 18, 2017, www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/housing-construction-and-building/housing-construction-and-conversion/new-construction-of-residential-buildings/pong/statistical-news/new-construction-of-residential-buildings-started-dwellings-1st-quarter-2017/.



(approximately USD 225 million) to municipalities to support the building of new homes in cities that have taken in large numbers of refugees.⁴⁴

2. Policy Adjustments to Ensure Settlement Decisions Facilitate Integration

Alongside basic capacity issues, finding quality housing placements has been difficult. Of particular concern is the fact that housing tends to be most difficult to find in large, densely populated municipalities where strong economies would give newcomers the best chances of finding employment. A report commissioned by the National Audit Office indicates that 85 percent of employment growth in Sweden from 2010 to 2013 occurred in or near major cities.⁴⁵ Yet these same urban areas are also more likely than suburban or rural municipalities to report housing shortages and, until 2015, few large municipalities opted to receive recognized refugees through the assigned settlement system.⁴⁶

Housing tends to be most difficult to find in large, densely populated municipalities where strong economies would give newcomers the best chances of finding employment.

A recent policy change illustrates how difficult it can be to resolve the tension between available housing and employment opportunities. Until January 2017, the Public Employment Service was responsible for matching protection beneficiaries with housing offers in areas where their skills and employment backgrounds would most likely lead to employment. In practice, however, this goal has been difficult to adhere to and the severely limited housing stock in many municipalities has tended to determine a majority of placements.⁴⁷ In January 2017, the Migration Agency took over the placement function from the Public Employment Service, an acknowledgement that practical difficulties had limited the added value of having the latter manage the process.⁴⁸

Anxious to move to locations with better economic prospects, many refugees opt to find their own housing rather than using the services of the Migration Agency—55 percent of protection beneficiaries who received status in 2014 were settled without assistance.⁴⁹ But there are risks to self-settlement. The extremely tight rental market often forces those who settle on their own into the secondary housing market,⁵⁰ where they are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous landlords (who may charge exorbitant rent prices) and may live in cramped or uncomfortable conditions.⁵¹ Inadequate housing can contribute to other problems, such as poor performance in school or training, mental and psychological stress, and in some cases even negative physical health consequences. Moreover, protection beneficiaries who seek to manage their own housing often have difficulty finding long-term housing solutions, and many

44 Government of Sweden, “Regeringen ger kommuner byggbonus för bostadsbyggande,” updated April 21, 2016, www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2016/04/regeringen-ger-kommuner-byggbonus-for-bostadsbyggande/.

45 Swedish National Audit Office, *Nyanländas etablering: är statens insatser effektiva?* (Stockholm: Swedish National Audit Office, 2015), www.riksrevisionen.se/sv/rapporter/Rapporter/EFF/2015/Nyanlandas-etablering-ar-statens-insatser-effektiva/.

46 National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, *Boendesituationen för nyanlända: Slutrapport* (Karlskrona, Sweden: National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, 2015), www.boverket.se/globalassets/publikationer/dokument/2015/boendesituationen-for-nyanlanda.pdf.

47 Author interview with Jennie K. Larsson.

48 Swedish Migration Agency, “Sedan 1 januari har Migrationsverket hela ansvaret att anvisa kommuner nyanlända för bosättning,” updated January 2, 2017, www.migrationsverket.se/Andra-aktorer/Kommuner/Nyhetsarkiv/Nyhetsarkiv-for-kommuner/2017-01-02-Sedan-1-januari-har-Migrationsverket-hela-ansvaret-att-anvisa-kommuner-nyanlanda-for-bosattning.html.

49 National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, *Boendesituationen för nyanlända*.

50 This includes the sublet market and renting from individual owners, rather than public/licensed landlords.

51 National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, *Boendesituationen för nyanlända*; Swedish National Audit Office, *Nyanländas etablering*.



live at least temporarily with friends and relatives; self-settlers thus tend to move more frequently and are at a higher risk of homelessness, which can contribute to difficulties accessing services. And while protection beneficiaries can receive housing subsidies, individuals without a verifiable housing contract can find it difficult to access this rent assistance.⁵²

City authorities have also expressed concern that self-settlement contributes to residential segregation and social isolation, as refugees tend to move to neighborhoods with large existing immigrant and minority populations.⁵³ Both Migration Agency officials and municipal authorities have suggested that asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries outside of the assisted housing system can be difficult to reach with social services.⁵⁴ Asylum applicants in the self-arranged reception (EBO)⁵⁵ system are somewhat less likely to attend official information sessions, often relying instead on information from family and friends. In surveys, protection beneficiaries themselves are also more likely to report contact with the Public Employment Service and introduction case workers if they are in municipality-arranged housing.⁵⁶ City authorities in Malmö and Stockholm have tried to bridge this service gap by creating special contact points and mobile units to reach out to refugee populations and neighborhoods.⁵⁷

Asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries outside of the assisted housing system can be difficult to reach with social services.

The government hopes that requiring all municipalities, including urban areas, to participate in the assisted housing system will reduce the incentives for protection beneficiaries to find their own housing. Coupled with support for new construction to increase the housing supply, these efforts aim to speed up settlement and provide settlement options in more desirable areas.

B. Labor Market Entry and Employment

Newcomer integration into the Swedish labor market is another area that has seen both increased pressures and policy activity as a result of the 2015–16 crisis. Concerns about the potential social and economic costs of dependency, as well as difficulties integrating earlier immigrant groups into the labor market, have made supporting self-sufficiency and employment a major priority of the Swedish government. Both asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries have broad and unrestricted access to the labor market, including the right to work immediately after arrival.⁵⁸

Authorities offer extensive assistance programs designed to connect asylum seekers and recognized refugees with employment opportunities. During the application phase, asylum seekers are given

⁵² National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, *Boendesituationen för nyanlännda*.

⁵³ Author interview with Anne Öster and Annelie Rostedt, Development Managers for Integration, Work and Social Affairs Office, Stockholm County Administrative Board, in Stockholm, April 12, 2016.

⁵⁴ Author interview with Christina Grönberg and Anna Mattsson; author interview with Marten Martensson, Operations Specialist, Reception Unit, Region South, Swedish Migration Agency, in Malmö, April 15, 2016.

⁵⁵ Eget boende (EBO) in full.

⁵⁶ National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, *Boendesituationen för nyanlännda*.

⁵⁷ Author interview with Ulrika Wickman, Lene Cordes, and Tarek Borg; author interview with Christina Grönberg and Anna Mattsson.

⁵⁸ Permanent residents in Sweden are exempt from the requirement to hold a work permit under Chapter 2 (8) of the *Aliens Act*. The *Aliens Ordinance* also exempts asylum seekers from obtaining a work permit under Chapter 5(4). See Government of Sweden, *Aliens Ordinance*, SFS 2006:97 (February 23, 2006), www.government.se/government-policy/migration/aliens-ordinance/.



opportunities to undertake training activities, including language classes and internships.⁵⁹ Once an asylum seeker's application for international protection is approved, the Public Employment Service works with him or her to develop an individual "introduction plan" designed to facilitate entry into the labor market within two years.⁶⁰ The plan can include Swedish and civic orientation courses, skills trainings, professional courses, internships, or adult education classes.⁶¹

While employment services were not immediately affected by the crisis, as more asylum applicants transition to legal status demand for services to facilitate labor market integration and self-sufficiency will increase. As with housing services, this greater demand for employment support comes on top of existing capacity limitations. Concerns over the effectiveness of the introduction system in moving newcomers, particularly those with challenging profiles, into work existed long before the surge in arrivals.

I. Increased Demand for Services Meets Existing Challenges

Despite extensive assistance and broad work rights, protection beneficiaries and asylum seekers often find it extremely difficult to establish themselves in the Swedish labor market. Few asylum seekers enter work during the processing and reception period. As of April 2016, the Migration Agency registered 530 of 169,000 asylum seekers as employed, and half of those employed were in Stockholm.⁶² Outcomes are somewhat better for recognized refugees. In 2015, 31 percent of adults who had completed a two-year refugee introduction program run by the Public Employment Service were in full-time work or education, though most of these were subsidized jobs.⁶³ Incomes remain low. A review of data from the Swedish Tax Authority and the National Board of Health and Welfare found that among refugees who arrived in 2004 and had been in the country for 10 years, the median income for adults was SEK 13,000 (approximately USD 1,600) per month compared to SEK 23,700 (USD 2,732) for the general population.⁶⁴

The reasons refugees struggle to enter the Swedish labor market are numerous and complex.⁶⁵ Chief among these may be the lower average education levels of refugees relative to the positions available in Sweden's high-skilled labor market. Of those enrolled in the Public Employment Service introduction program in March 2016, 46 percent had a lower secondary education or less.⁶⁶ By comparison, 18 percent of Swedish adults had less than an upper secondary education in 2014.⁶⁷ Employment rates in Sweden, as in other EU countries, are highest for those with at least an upper secondary diploma.⁶⁸ Outcomes data illustrate the impact education levels have had on refugee labor market entry. After two years in the

59 According to Chapter 4 of the *Law on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others*. See Government of Sweden, *Lag om mottagande av asylsökande*, SFS 1994:137 (March 30, 1994), www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19940137.htm.

60 Data provided to the author by the Swedish Employment Service upon request.

61 For more information on the types of support recognized protection beneficiaries receive, see Henrik Emilsson, *No Quick Fix: Policies to Support the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Sweden* (Washington, DC and Geneva: MPI and International Labor Office, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/no-quick-fix-policies-support-labor-market-integration-new-arrivals-sweden.

62 Author interview with Marten Martensson.

63 Data provided to the author by the Swedish Employment Service upon request.

64 Kristoffer Örstadius, "Ten Years Later and Every Other Person Earns Less than 13,000 SEK per Month," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 4, 2015, www.dn.se/nyheter/ten-years-later-and-every-other-person-earns-less-than-13000-sek-per-month/.

65 For an in-depth assessment of the barriers to labor-market integration facing immigrants in Sweden, see Pieter Bevelander and Nahikari Irastorza, *Catching Up: The Labor Market Outcomes of New Immigrants in Sweden* (Washington, DC and Geneva: MPI and International Labor Office, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/catching-labor-market-outcomes-new-immigrants-sweden; Emilsson, *No Quick Fix*.

66 Data provided to the author by the Swedish Employment Service upon request.

67 This figure includes adults between the ages of 25 and 64. See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Adult Education Level," accessed June 7, 2016, <https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/adult-education-level.htm>.

68 Eurostat, "Employment Rate by Highest Level of Education, Age Group 25–64, 2014 (%) YB16," updated August 11, 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Employment_rate_by_highest_level_of_education_age_group_25%E2%80%9364_2014_\(%25\)_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Employment_rate_by_highest_level_of_education_age_group_25%E2%80%9364_2014_(%25)_YB16.png).



introduction program, 42 percent of refugees with a postsecondary education were in work or further education, compared to 25 percent of those with less than a secondary degree, as of 2015.⁶⁹

Reception service providers and the Public Employment Service have both struggled to find ways to effectively connect newcomers with lower skill levels, many of whom are women, to the labor market.⁷⁰ In some municipalities, low-skilled individuals end up simply attending language courses during their two-year introduction program as no education or employment programs are available that are suited to their needs.⁷¹ The question of how to assist refugees with limited skills is only likely to become more urgent; according to the Public Employment Service, refugees with less than 9 years of formal education are the fastest growing group of introduction service users among new arrivals.⁷²

The question of how to assist refugees with limited skills is only likely to become more urgent.

Rising demand for services has exacerbated these existing challenges. During the fall of 2015, for example, the Migration Agency had to cut short reception-phase interviews with new arrivals, which were intended to create an initial mapping of their backgrounds, in order to speed up the registration of new asylum applicants. As a result, the Migration Agency had no data on these individuals (estimated to be about 100,000 people as of April 2015) that could be used to match them with appropriate work experience placements or other opportunities during the asylum processing phase.⁷³ Within the Public Employment Service, rising demand is likely to exacerbate existing shortages of qualified case workers and, especially, interpreters, particularly for specialized programs such as the evaluation and recognition of professional credentials.⁷⁴

2. Labor-Market Policy Responses

Since 2015, Swedish authorities and policymakers have made a number of investments to improve opportunities for protection beneficiaries to quickly access the labor market and forestall future challenges. Much of the focus has been on making the most of the adjudication phase of the asylum process,⁷⁵ particularly as the amount of time applicants spent waiting for a decision rose during 2015 and 2016. In late 2015, the Migration Agency began working with civil society organizations devoted to adult education to coordinate study groups in reception centers. The study groups provide basic Swedish language education and general orientation courses that introduce asylum seekers to Swedish culture and society.

In December 2016, the government transferred full responsibility for the coordination of interventions during the asylum period from the Migration Agency to county administrative boards, with the aim of

⁶⁹ Data provided to the author by the Swedish Employment Service upon request.

⁷⁰ Author interview with Marten Martensson; author interview with Jennie K. Larsson.

⁷¹ Author interview with Jennie K. Larsson. See also Jennie K. Larsson, "Integrationen och arbetets marknad: Hur jämställdhet, arbete och annat 'svenskt' görs av arbetsförmedlare och privata aktörer" (PhD dissertation, Linköping University, Stockholm, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.3384/diss.diva-122907>.

⁷² Author interview with Jennie K. Larsson.

⁷³ Author interview with Marten Martensson.

⁷⁴ For example, the Employment Service indicated that as of April 2016, just two interpreters were authorized to translate documents from Arabic for credential recognition procedures. Translating documents can thus take up to a year. See author interview with Jennie K. Larsson.

⁷⁵ Early intervention was a priority of the government's October 2015 action plan. See Government of Sweden, "Measures to Tackle the Refugee Crisis," updated October 23, 2015, www.government.se/information-material/2015/10/measures-to-tackle-the-refugee-crisis/.



taking greater advantage of local capabilities and innovation.⁷⁶ Beginning in February 2017, county authorities became responsible for coordinating language and orientation programs for asylum seekers, supported by funding from the national government. In addition, the government decided to permanently allocate responsibility for the skills evaluation and mapping of asylum seekers to the Public Employment Service.

For recognized refugees, the government introduced several fast-track programs designed to move refugees with in-demand professional education or work experience quickly into similar jobs in Sweden.⁷⁷ As of March 2017, fast tracks were in place for social scientists, social workers, teachers, health-care workers, construction workers, wood workers, electricians, butchers, and chefs.⁷⁸ These fast tracks are intended to expedite the process for receiving certification in these fields and provide relevant language education and vocational training to fill any gaps in the applicant's credentials.

While such innovative efforts are promising, several underlying challenges to the effectiveness of introduction and employment programs remain unaddressed. Despite renewed urgency, few within the policy or service communities have found compelling answers to the question of how to support new arrivals with few skills suited to the Swedish labor market. And staff and interpreter shortages are likely to grow more severe in the next several years.

Moreover, unaddressed issues that stretch beyond the labor market have the potential to significantly affect the economic outcomes of new arrivals. Local authorities have, for example, raised concerns that the priority recent policies place on self-sufficiency over other needs, such as social engagement or care needs within families, may have detrimental effects for long-term integration.⁷⁹ Restrictions on the duration of residence permits and financial support requirements for family reunification have also prompted concerns about the effects of such policies on integration. The temporary nature of residence permits granted to subsidiary protection beneficiaries, for example, may pose a barrier as employers often look for more stability when hiring; moreover, the proliferation of different legal statuses may cause confusion among employers regarding working rights and regulations.⁸⁰ The requirement that protection beneficiaries be able to prove self-sufficiency in order to qualify for permanent residency or family reunion could also pressure refugees, including those with higher education, to accept lower skilled work rather than waiting for their credentials to be recognized or investing in the development of their language skills.⁸¹ The actual effects of these policies, however, remain to be seen over the coming months and years.

C. Accessing and Benefiting from Education Opportunities

For young newcomers, access to education is one of the most pressing needs. Asylum seeking and refugee children have the right to attend school in Sweden, and schools are required to attempt to enroll newly arrived children, including asylum seekers, within one month of their arrival. In addition, the Swedish school system has implemented measures designed to ensure that refugee children benefit from and succeed in their classes. Schools are required to provide all students with any instructional support needed to enable them to complete school. For refugee children, this can include a tutor in their mother tongue to ensure they have sufficiently grasped their coursework. In

76 Government of Sweden, "Tidiga insatser för asylsökande," updated February 1, 2017, www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2017/01/tidiga-insatser-for-asylsokande/.

77 Government of Sweden, "Fast Track – A Quicker Introduction of Newly Arrived Immigrants," updated June 10, 2016, www.government.se/articles/2015/12/fast-track--a-quicker-introduction-of-newly-arrived-immigrants/.

78 Arbetsförmedlingen, "Snabbspår – en snabbare väg in på arbetsmarknaden," accessed March 31, 2017, www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Om-Arbetsformedlingen/Etablering-av-nyanlanda/Snabbspår.html.

79 Author interview with Anne Öster and Annelie Rostedt; author interview with Ulrika Wickman, Lene Cordes, and Tarek Borg; author interview with Karin Perols, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, in Stockholm, April 12, 2016.

80 Author interview with Jennie K. Larsson.

81 Ibid.



addition, regulations adopted in 2016 require schools to formally assess the educational background of children when enrolling them to ensure they are placed in the appropriate grade level.⁸² Beginning in January 2016, the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) prepared standard guidelines and materials for school authorities to use when assessing a child’s general and subject-specific knowledge.⁸³

The high proportion of youth and children among recent asylum applicants—more than 40 percent of applicants in 2015 were under the age of 18—suggests the primary and secondary education systems will be critical to the success of integration efforts. The effect this increase in the school-age population has had on schools has been immediately observable, unlike in some other service sectors, such as employment, where the effects of the increase in arrivals have been more delayed.

I. Increasing Enrollment and Diversifying Needs

As of November 2015, more than 7 percent of school students in Sweden were refugees and asylum seekers, up from 4.5 percent two years before.⁸⁴ The uneven distribution of these young asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries across Sweden means that some school systems are more affected than others. Nearly half of newly arrived children were received by 10 percent of municipalities in 2015, many of which were small to mid-sized cities.⁸⁵ In other localities, schools are receiving refugee students for the first time and, while the number of new arrivals may be small, teachers and school administrators often lack knowledge of how to best accommodate students with diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds.⁸⁶

In many schools, the most pronounced effect of the surge in arrivals has been a teacher shortage. This is particularly the case in smaller and more rural municipalities that have taken the largest share of newly arrived children relative to their population. Finding qualified teachers to provide both Swedish language instruction and, especially, mother-tongue instructional assistance has been particularly difficult.⁸⁷

The growth of the refugee student population has also exacerbated some existing challenges, such as communication difficulties between schools and the Swedish Migration Agency. Municipalities often receive little notice before a reception center is opened—in the fall of 2015, some cities received less than a week’s notice⁸⁸—and the law does not make clear whose responsibility it is to inform families of the right to enroll their children in school.⁸⁹ While the Migration Agency says it provides this information to families,⁹⁰ municipalities have complained this isn’t always done.⁹¹ Communication can break down further when families move, which has occurred with greater frequency due to the use of temporary accommodation. As a result, students’ records may not be transferred between schools, and

82 Author phone interview with Anna Österlund, Head of Unit for Newly Arrived Pupils, Swedish National Agency for Education, May 12, 2016.

83 Ibid. Previously, each school conducted its own assessment, leading to substantial variation in the quality of the assessments (i.e., some simply asked children or families how many years of school the child had attended). See author interview with Anna Sandell, Researcher, Swedish Schools Inspectorate, in Malmö, April 15, 2016.

84 Swedish National Agency for Education, “Tio procent av skolorna har tagit emot hälften av de nyanlända eleverna” (press release, May 10, 2016), www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/press/pressmeddelanden/2016/pressmeddelanden-2016-1.244816/tio-procent-av-skolorna-har-tagit-emot-halften-av-de-nyanlanda-eleverna-1.250083.

85 Ibid.

86 Author phone interview with Anna Österlund.

87 Author interview with Anna Sandell; author interview with Tony Mufic, Director of Education, Education Directorate, Stockholm Municipal Government, in Stockholm, April 11, 2016; author phone interview with Anna Österlund; author interview with Ulrika Wickman, Lene Cordes, and Tarek Borg. The Swedish Schools Agency estimates at least 44,000 teachers will be needed by 2020. See Swedish National Agency for Education, *Skolverkets lägesbedömning 2015* (Stockholm: Swedish National Agency for Education, 2015), www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3432.

88 Author interview with Karin Perols.

89 Author interview with Anna Sandell.

90 Author interview with Marten Martensson.

91 Author interview with Anna Sandell.



school authorities may have to start from scratch in determining a student’s educational background and needs.⁹²

Moreover, schools are not always prepared to identify and engage students who do not enroll themselves. Audits by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, an independent agency tasked with evaluating schools, suggest that most municipalities do not have formal systems in place to seek out children who are not enrolled in schools—let alone identify them within one month of arrival.⁹³ As of April 2016, the Migration Agency estimated it could take between 30 and 70 days for children to start school, depending on the municipality in which they lived.⁹⁴

While educational outcomes for children who arrive before the age of 12 are typically good, many older arrivals struggle to catch up.

The age of many asylum seeking children is also likely to prove a challenge in the coming years. The average age of students at arrival has increased since 2007, and while educational outcomes for children who arrive before the age of 12 are typically good,⁹⁵ many older arrivals struggle to catch up with their peers.⁹⁶ Children who arrive after the end of lower secondary school are usually placed in a language introduction program until they can meet the qualification requirements for one of 18 nationally recognized courses of upper secondary study.⁹⁷ Students may remain in an introduction program until age 20, when they must transition into the adult education system. For refugee students who arrive at age 16 or 17, meeting the requirements to enter an upper secondary program before turning 20 can be extremely difficult, if not impossible. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, 20 percent of late-arriving students were able to enter an upper secondary program in 2013, and this share has dropped further since then.⁹⁸ Having an upper secondary school certificate is critical to labor-market success in Sweden. Refugee youth who leave school without a diploma are thus likely to be at a significant disadvantage when looking for employment.

2. Adaptations in Educational Policy and Practice

Schools have, in many cases, responded creatively to the new demands the increase in refugee and asylum seeking students has placed upon them. The fast-track programs introduced by the Public Employment Service include a track for teachers, which may help to ease staffing shortages by quickly moving asylum seekers with teaching experience into schools. Some larger districts, including Stockholm and Malmö, have created “sprint” and “startup” schools, so called because they are designed to serve students who don’t speak Swedish during the first year or two after they arrive.⁹⁹ The schools generally offer intensive Swedish-language instruction alongside core subjects taught in students’ mother tongue. In Stockholm, courses are taught in six week increments and students are assessed at each stage, making it possible to adjust their course loads and assess whether they are ready to move

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Author interview with Marten Martensson.

95 Author phone interview with Anna Österlund; Swedish National Agency for Education, *Skolverkets lägesbedömning 2015*.

96 Swedish National Agency for Education, *Invandringens betydelse för skolresultaten* (Stockholm: Swedish National Agency for Education, 2016), www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3604.

97 Swedish National Agency for Education, *Språkintröduktion* (Stockholm: Swedish National Agency for Education, 2016), www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3622.

98 Author phone interview with Anna Österlund.

99 Author interview with Tony Mufic; author interview with Ulrika Wickman, Lene Cordes, and Tarek Borg.



into mainstream schools. Students are expected to transition into mainstream classrooms after two years at most.

Schools in smaller districts have also experimented with online learning or sharing services across district lines. Swedish school and data protection regulations limit the extent to which services can be shared legally,¹⁰⁰ though following a regulatory change in August 2016 schools are now allowed to contract with digital providers or other schools for mother-tongue instructional services.¹⁰¹ The National Agency for Education is also exploring the possibility of using online learning to supplement instructional capacity in other subjects.¹⁰²

D. Health Care

The lengthy and dangerous journeys many asylum seekers undertake to reach Sweden often expose them to trauma, physical injury, or illness. Untreated mental and physical health conditions can interfere with an individual's ability to participate in work and education programs and acclimate to their new communities.

All asylum applicants in Sweden are entitled to a free, voluntary health check after they file their protection claims.¹⁰³ The health checks are intended to help authorities identify particular needs or health concerns that may require special treatment. In practice, however, it can be difficult to reach everyone who is eligible to receive a check. In 2014, the Association of Local Authorities and Regions reported that 44 percent of new arrivals completed the health checks, although this rate varied by municipality.¹⁰⁴ Urban areas tended to have better participation than rural regions; in Stockholm, for example, authorities estimated that about half of asylum seekers received a health check in 2015,¹⁰⁵ and in Skåne County (where the city of Malmö is located) the share was even higher, at about 70 percent in 2014.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the health checks, adult asylum seekers have the right to emergency care and treatment for chronic conditions that “cannot wait.”¹⁰⁷ Protection beneficiaries have access to health care on the same terms as all other residents. Health care in Sweden is managed by county authorities; fully private providers also operate in the country, although service fees for private providers are set independently. Asylum seekers who seek care are charged a subsidized fee, and protection beneficiaries are generally charged the same fee as other residents. Children, regardless of their status, receive full access to the health-care system, including preventative care, and in most counties medical care for children is free.

100 Some schools still pooled services or used online tools, despite regulations prohibiting this.

101 Government of Sweden, “Fjärrundervisning och entreprenad – nya möjligheter för undervisning och studiehandledning på modersmål,” updated August 1, 2016, www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2016/08/fjarrundervisning-och-entreprenad--nya-mojligheter-for-undervisning-och-studiehandledning-pa-modersmal.

102 Swedish National Agency for Education, “Försöksverksamhet med fjärrundervisning,” updated March 20, 2017, www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/lorande/forsoksverksamhet-med-fjarrundervisning-1.239956.

103 1177 Vårdguiden, “Healthcare in Sweden for Asylum-Seekers, People with No Papers and People in Hiding,” updated November 11, 2016, www.1177.se/Other-languages/Engelska/Regler-och-rattigheter/Vard-i-Sverige-om-man-ar-asylsokande-gomd-eller-papperslos/.

104 Olle Olsson and Jonas Eriksson, *Hälsa- och sjukvård åt asylsökande under år 2014* (Stockholm: Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2015), <http://skl.se/download/18.e79aa5215143dd034b46c84/1449741394836/SKL-asyluppfoljning-2015.pdf>.

105 Author interview with Anne Öster and Annelie Rostedt.

106 Author interview with Christina Ståhl, Head of Unit, Department of Health-Care Governance, Skåne Regional Council, in Malmö, April 14, 2016; 1177 Vårdguiden, “Healthcare in Sweden for Asylum-Seekers, People with No Papers and People in Hiding.”

107 Ibid.



I. Growing and Varied Demand for Medical Services

While the sheer number of new arrivals has created capacity issues, more challenging still is the diverse and complex set of medical needs asylum seekers bring with them.¹⁰⁸ Some of the conditions and illnesses health-care providers have seen among asylum-seeking populations are unusual in Sweden or have reached more advanced stages due to irregular treatment; reports of tuberculosis and antibiotic-resistant infections have increased, for example.¹⁰⁹ Demand has been particularly acute for certain health services, such as dental and psychological care as well as obstetrics.¹¹⁰ Some counties have reported longer wait times for routine dental and gynecological treatment, though major impacts on wait times across health services have not been seen.¹¹¹

Some of the conditions and illnesses health-care providers have seen among asylum-seeking populations are unusual in Sweden.

Health-care providers have also faced a range of underlying operational and practical issues that can create obstacles for asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries seeking care. The prevalence of inaccurate or inadequate information about health services among newcomers is perhaps the biggest challenge. The Swedish Red Cross has suggested asylum seekers may not always fully understand the purpose of the checks, for example, with some falling victim to rumors that the results of the checks will influence asylum procedures.¹¹² Health-care providers can also find it difficult to communicate with asylum seekers regarding their health-care rights and benefits. As with the arrival of new school age children, county authorities have complained that they are not always notified by the Migration Agency when new asylum seekers are to arrive, making it difficult to contact them and inform them of their rights and the services available. This has particularly been the case for those who arrive through family reunification channels.¹¹³ Moreover, according to the Association of Local Authorities and Regions, prior to the fall of 2015, the Migration Agency only provided counties with the names and mailing addresses of new arrivals, which quickly became useless if individuals moved during the reception process. In early 2016, the Migration Agency began to provide counties with email addresses and phone numbers as well, with the aim of facilitating better communication with new arrivals.¹¹⁴

Language is one of the most significant barriers to communication. Patients who do not understand Swedish are to be provided with an interpreter free of charge,¹¹⁵ but many municipalities struggle

108 Ibid.

109 An official from the Skåne County health board, for example, stated that providers there are facing medical conditions they haven't seen since the 1970s; high quality preventative care in Sweden generally catches many of these conditions before they become severe. See author interview with Christina Ståhl.

110 Because many pregnant women who arrive as asylum seekers have not had adequate care during their pregnancies, their babies are more likely to be premature or to have a low birth weight, according to the National Health Board. See National Board of Health and Welfare, *Hälsa- och sjukvård och tandvård till asylsökande och nyanlända* (Stockholm: National Board of Health and Welfare, 2016), www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2016/2016-10-13.

111 Ibid.

112 The Red Cross has encountered rumors that, for example, the checks are intended to weed out those with poor health or, conversely, that the checks were mandatory, which caused a great deal of concern among those who had chosen not to complete a check. See author interview with Ewa Jonsson and Alexandra Segenstedt.

113 Author interview with Anne Öster and Annelie Rostedt.

114 Author interview with Karin Perols.

115 While the right to an interpreter is not stipulated by law, health-care regulations do require that information be provided to patients in a manner appropriate for their age, maturity, and linguistic background. This provision has generally been interpreted to mean that patients should be provided with an interpreter when needed. See National Board of Health and Welfare, *Tolkar för hälso- och sjukvården och tandvården: Kartläggning våren 2016* (Stockholm: National Board of Health and Welfare, 2016), www.socialstyrelsen.se/Lists/Artikelkatalog/Attachments/20184/2016-5-7.pdf.



to maintain a sufficient supply of qualified individuals, particularly as they compete with other agencies, such as the Public Employment Service, for the same pool of interpreters.¹¹⁶ A lack of quality interpretation can be dangerous for patients who may, as a result, be unable to understand questions or instructions from care providers. Arabic interpreters are most in demand, but county authorities often report having even more difficulty finding interpreters for less frequently spoken languages, such as Dari, Somali, and Tigrinya.¹¹⁷ Moreover, quality of interpretation is highly varied as no common standards or certification requirements exist for interpreters.¹¹⁸ Dental and emergency care are the health fields most affected by the shortage of interpreters, and rural health services are affected more acutely than those in urban centers.¹¹⁹

2. New Practices and Adaptations

As with school systems, counties have demonstrated creativity in responding to demand for expanded and more varied health services. Many have experimented with innovative ways to make their services more accessible to asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries. These efforts have focused, in particular, on gaps in communication and other access issues. Authorities in some counties have invested in efforts to better inform protection beneficiaries of their rights. For example, Stockholm offers 12 hours of instruction on the Swedish health-care system as part of its civic introduction course for recognized refugees. Stockholm and Skåne County also employ health-care communicators/coordinators who are responsible for visiting civics courses and reception centers to inform refugees and asylum seekers of their rights.¹²⁰

Additionally, authorities have made efforts to think creatively about providing services in ways that relieve pressures on their systems. In Malmö, for example, county authorities are expanding cooperation with nonprofit and community groups that provide group therapy and support sessions for individuals with trauma or other mental health needs. By providing support networks in other ways, officials hope to provide an additional resource for newcomers.¹²¹

A final and significant challenge, particularly in rural areas, is access to transportation. County authorities provide reimbursements for transportation costs, but some individuals may simply not have the money to pay up front.¹²² To counteract this barrier, Skåne County has created mobile health units that travel to reception centers and rural towns to provide health checks, though these units are limited in the types of care they can provide and are often unable to deal with more complicated conditions.¹²³

V. Conclusions and Looking Ahead

The ultimate consequences of the migration crisis for the Swedish asylum and integration systems may take years to assess. Still, some short-term effects have already become clear, including asylum processing delays and significant shortages of housing and teachers. In some cases, these challenges are concentrated in specific localities, such as urban centers seen as more desirable for voluntary

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 Author interview with Anne Öster and Annelie Rostedt; author interview with Christina Ståhl.

121 Author interview with Christina Ståhl.

122 Skåne County authorities reported seeing cases where people don't show up because they cannot pay for transportation. See author interview with Christina Ståhl.

123 Ibid.



settlement, or municipalities that voluntarily took a disproportionate share of refugees through the assisted settlement program.

Other shifts, such as changes to the composition of the labor market and national demographics, will take time to fully be understood. At the moment, most asylum seekers who arrived in late 2015 are still receiving support and housing from the Migration Agency. As their claims are assessed, responsibility for their care and integration will shift to the Public Employment Service, municipalities, and the social insurance system.¹²⁴ The most significant effects on these agencies are just beginning to be felt.

One of the most pronounced effects of the crisis may be on Swedish asylum and migration policies themselves.

The long-term consequences of the increased asylum flows will thus depend to a large extent on how well newcomers are able to find their footing in the Swedish labor market and become self-supporting. And while much has been made of the costs of integration, there is also the potential for positive economic and fiscal effects. Newly arrived asylum seekers have in recent years been very young, and most will have many working and tax-paying years ahead of them if they are successfully brought into the labor force. But protection beneficiaries have long struggled to integrate into the Swedish labor market. Time will tell whether the substantial investments policymakers are making in facilitating economic self-sufficiency will pay meaningful dividends.

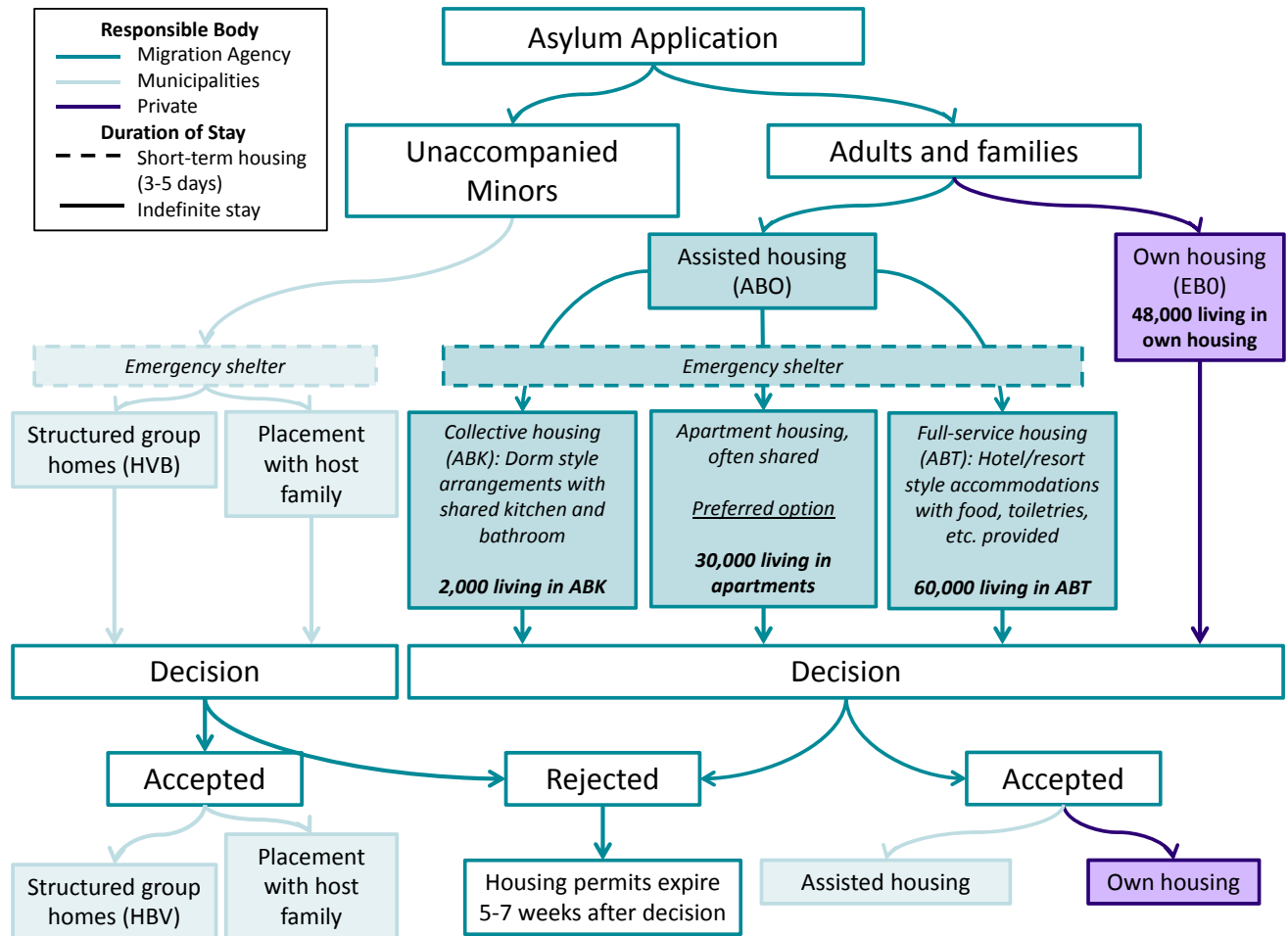
Ultimately, one of the most pronounced effects of the crisis may be on Swedish asylum and migration policies themselves. The raft of policy changes proposed and adopted between October 2015 and July 2016 amounts to a significant departure from traditional approaches in some areas. The move toward the EU-determined minimum level of benefits and rights for protection beneficiaries is particularly striking. This and related changes mark a shift in the Swedish approach to asylum and integration policy, from one that prioritizes long-term settlement and inclusion to one that seeks to balance integration priorities with the risk that certain investments may actually encourage more migration. While the asylum policies adopted in July 2016 are intended to be temporary, their effects on the design and psychology of Swedish asylum policy may be much more long-lasting.

¹²⁴ Author interview with Jennie K. Larsson.



Appendix

Housing Assignment Process for Asylum Applicants and for Beneficiaries of International Protection



Note: Figures given for numbers living in their own housing (EBO), collective housing (ABK), apartment, and full-service housing (ABT) are as of May 2016.

Source: Compilation by the author based on an interview with Marten Martensson, Operations Specialist, Reception Unit, Region South, Swedish Migration Agency, in Malmö, April 15, 2016; Swedish Migration Agency, "Accommodation," updated June 1, 2016, www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-and-asylum-in-Sweden/While-you-are-waiting-for-a-decision/Accommodation.html.



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The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

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