

Sweden

The rise in inflows of foreigners to Sweden, which began in 2006, continued throughout 2007, reaching record highs (just under 100 000 entries). The number of permanent immigrants, however, was stable, at 74 200. The increase in total immigration is largely due to a temporary change in the 2005 Foreigners Law, allowing asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected but who have been in Sweden for a long time to have their cases reviewed.

Family reunification rose by about 7%; the main nationalities were Iraq, Thailand, Serbia and Somalia. The number of worker permits (8 600) fell 8% from the previous year and were mainly issued to non-Nordic EU citizens. Permanent migration from non-EEA countries was relatively low, at 400 entries.

Since 1997, entries by international students (from non-EEA countries) have increased at an annual rate of 14%. 2007 saw an even greater increase, 22%, with 8 900 students entering. No data is available on the number remaining in Sweden after graduation.

The number of applicants for asylum declined between 2002 and 2005 before rising again in 2006 and 2007, when it rose 48% to 36 200. Just over half of applications were from Iraqis, for whom Sweden is the main asylum destination. Applications from Iraqis and Somalis rose sharply in 2006 and 2007, while Bosnia-Herzegovina and Russia decline in importance.

A number of specific active labour market policies were replaced in 2007 with a general wage subsidy for those outside the labour force, and immigrants account for a third of the beneficiaries of this measure. Employers hiring workers from outside the labour force are exempt from salary levies and social contributions for at least one year. A new employment programme, "Step-In Jobs", began in July 2007, offering new arrivals the opportunity to combine Swedish language training with a part-time job in their area of skills or the occupation for which they studied.

At the end of 2008, Sweden implemented a major reform of its labour migration policy, allowing employers to recruit from abroad with fewer restrictions. The main change lies in the authorisation of employer requests. While employers are still required to offer the job through the Swedish Public Employment Service and through EURES, the EEA job-seeker service, the trade unions no longer have veto power over the request, and their role is only to ensure that contracts conform to prevailing Swedish standards. The Swedish Migration Board, rather than the Public Employment Service, now handles employer applications, accelerating the procedure.

In June 2008, a new Anti-Discrimination Act was passed by the Swedish Parliament, replacing a number of prior anti-discrimination and equal-opportunity laws. The Act addresses discrimination of various forms in social life, strengthening measures against workplace discrimination. In addition to covering employees and job-seekers, it also covers job offers, professional and vocational training, and subcontracting. A single Equality Ombudsman exercises supervision of all anti-discrimination legislation monitoring compliance.

In September 2008, the government presented a cohesive strategy for integration for the years 2008-2010. The Strategy identifies seven areas of intervention to improve integration: reception and introduction of new arrivals; employment and entrepreneurship; educational performance and equality in schools; language and education for adults; discrimination; local development in urban districts with wide-spread exclusion; and shared values.

For more information:

<http://www.migrationsverket.se/english.html>