



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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Speech

by

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Mt Billström unfortunately had to leave last night but he has asked me to say make a couple of points under this item of the agenda.

First of all, we find it extremely useful that the OECD in its country reviews publishes key findings on labour market integration of immigrants and their children. This is a good way for all of us to benefit from the experiences of others and to develop good practices in this important field.

Sweden was the first country – in 2007 I think it was - to be subject of this kind of thorough study and analysis. And I am pleased to note that a number of the measures that we have taken in recent years are in line with the recommendations contained in that report.

Let me just very briefly draw your attention to some of these measures that have either been taken or that the government is about to take to enhance the integration of immigrants and their children:

- The government has replaced many of the selective labour market schemes with a general subsidy of payroll costs for the long-term unemployed, as well as newly arrived immigrants. The foreign born constitute one-third of the beneficiaries of the scheme.

- A special team is available at the public employment service for immigrants who lack access to informal channels and who need individual support prior to employment and during the initial period in a new job.
- In 2007, we introduced special subsidised jobs which offer possibilities for new arrivals to combine language training with part-time employment
- Special money has been allocated for validation of foreign credentials.
- A number of universities and colleges have been mandated to arrange supplementary courses for immigrants with foreign university education.
- The government has launched an ambitious program to improve educational performance of children with foreign background. Special money has been allocated for efforts to help pupils at risk of not achieving learning objectives.
- A pilot project with performance-based bonus system will be introduced from 1st July 2009 for new arrivals who finish their Swedish language course with passing grades within 12 months

- the Government plans to present a bill to Parliament later this year with focus on measures aimed at a better utilization of the individuals skills of new arrivals.

As a result of the high economic activity in the years before the crisis, and of the government's "work-first" policy, we are seeing a clear improvement in the employment situation of the foreign-born population. Foreign-born people accounted for more than two thirds of the total increase in employment between 2007 and 2008.

In September 2008, the government presented a comprehensive strategy for integration for the years 2008-2010. The point of departure of the strategy is that education, employment and income are key factors for solving most other integration problems. Knowledge of the Swedish language and employment are obviously key factors. The integration process must start early – preferably directly upon arrival.

To sum up, OECD's country reviews have been a source of inspiration for many of the ongoing and planned measures to ensure a better integration of migrants and their children on the labour market.