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**Ministry of Integration and Gender  
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**Update on policy developments**

**Recent active labour market policy initiatives with impact on  
immigrants' labour market integration which are relating to  
OECD recommendations**

*“Re-entry Jobs” (New start jobs)*

The Government has replaced many of the selective labour market schemes with a general subsidy of payroll costs for employers. The long-term unemployed and newly arrived immigrants are among the groups that are eligible for ‘Re-entry Jobs’, which are exempt from payroll taxes and social security contributions for the same period as the individual employee has been absent from working life, up to a maximum of five years. The scheme was launched in January 2007 and in October 2008 there were around 17 000 people who had a “New Start-Job. The foreign born constitute about one-third of the beneficiaries of the scheme. A follow-up of the situation 90 days after a New-Start-Job has been finished shows that half of the foreign born have a job. The results for Swedish born were 58 percent.

*“Trial opportunity”*

Experience shows that early contact with the labour market is crucial for a successful integration. Hence, an additional form of job practice called "Trial opportunity" was launched in 2004 for individuals who lack work experience in Sweden. The purpose of the programme is to give immigrants an opportunity, at an early stage, to demonstrate their knowledge and competence in an authentic working atmosphere at a private company, public institution or non profit organization. The trial opportunity is either followed by a job offer or the individual receives a certificate from the company. The scheme can be combined with an assessment of professional skills.

The programme was initiated by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises and the Swedish authorities to improve the labour market participation of immigrants. In 2007, immigrants accounted for 65 percent of the participants. According to the public employment service, 41 percent of the participating immigrants had a job three months after participating in the scheme, compared to 49 percent for those born in Sweden.

#### *Work-Place Induction (WPI)*

Many of the jobs in the Swedish labour market are filled through informal channels. This is a problem for immigrants who lack access to Swedish networks. A special team has been available at the employment office since 2003 for job-seekers who need individual support prior to employment and during the initial period in a new job. The scheme which is designed to compensate for the lack of contacts and networks has been made permanent from 2007.

In 2007, supported employment was offered to about 4 000 job-seekers, 95% of whom were immigrants. 71 per cent of the participants had found permanent work 3 months after the scheme. An evaluation of the effects of the program has been carried out by the Institute for Labour Market Evaluation. According to this evaluation, WPI increases the likelihood of getting a job by 15 per cent.

#### *Measures for new arrivals*

A pilot project for newly arrived immigrants started 1 July 2006, for which the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) is the responsible agency. The three pillars of the pilot project are early contact with the labour market, rapid assessment of education and experience and Swedish language instruction combined with job-oriented initiatives.

#### *“Step-in” -jobs*

A special labour market scheme called “Step-in” jobs has been introduced as of 1 July 2007 to promote the integration of newly arrived immigrants in to the labour market. Step-in jobs are subsidised jobs in the public or the private sector which offers possibilities for new arrivals to combine language training with part time employment. The wage subsidy amounts to 75 percent of the gross salary (max. 750 SEK/day). The salary is fixed in accordance with collective agreements in the labour market. According to a follow-up by the PES, in nearly half of the cases the scheme has resulted in regular employment.

#### *Resources for skills and professional assessment*

Many employers lack adequate knowledge with regard to the comparability of foreign educational qualification and work experience particularly if such qualifications have been acquired in developing

countries. The Public Employment Service has received additional resources for the period of 2007- 2010 in order to ensure that newly arrived immigrants are offered a speedy and efficient assessment of their foreign credentials, individual skills and work experience from abroad.

#### *Incentives for Swedish language acquisition*

The Government intends to introduce a pilot project with a special bonus system for newly arrived immigrants who meet the target for Swedish language acquisition in a stipulated time. The language bonus will be based on individual performance and will be available at different levels of language proficiency. The bonus system is expected to strengthen the incentives for language take-up among immigrants, as well as to speed up their entry into the labour market. There will be an evaluation of the pilot project.

In early 2008, measures were announced to improve the “Swedish for Immigrants” (SFI) programme. This includes skills-enhancement for teachers (61 million Swedish Crowns additional funds), clearer goals for the SFI, and a three-year time limit for SFI education. The government has also charged the National Agency for Education with the task of developing national tests.

#### *Measures to facilitate the reception of refugees*

Swedish municipalities are encouraged to improve the progress of newly arrived refugees in becoming self-sustaining through a special bonus system. Municipalities can receive about 2 100 Euro for each person who successfully completes a Swedish language course (SFI) or acquires a job/work practice within the first 12 months after resettlement.

#### *Strengthening regional cooperation*

To strengthen regional cooperation, the responsibility for negotiations regarding the introduction of refugees in municipalities was devolved to the regional county councils as of 1 July 2007. These changes were introduced following the abolition of the Swedish Integration Board. The primary aim is to have agreements with municipalities that have a favourable labour market within commuting distance. The experiences so far of this change are positive.

#### *Government inquiry regarding the reception of refugees*

The Inquiry Chair has submitted a proposal regarding responsibilities and financing for the reception of refugees and measures for newly arrived immigrants. The government is planning to present a new bill on the reception of new arrivals in the spring of 2009. Key elements in the bill will be measures to reinforce the incentives of individuals,

government agencies and other relevant stake holders to work for a rapid entry of the newly arrived into the labour market.

### *Complementary education*

The government has assigned a number of universities and colleges to arrange supplementary courses for people with foreign university degree in law, education, the health sector and high-level practical training in public administration in a foreign country. Providing an opportunity to supplement foreign training is seen as an important measure for facilitating the integration of foreign-born jobseekers.

### *Fair and effective procedure for recognition of health-care training from countries outside the EU/EEA*

An Inquiry has proposed a fair and effective procedure for recognition of health-care training from countries outside the EU/EEA, which is subject to authorisation by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The reformed procedure will cover the whole authorisation system, from the application for an assessment of the foreign training to the issuance of the authorisation.

### ***Measures to promote diversity in the public sector***

Since October 1999, all government agencies (including their branch organisations) have to work out action plans to promote ethnic and cultural diversity among their employees as well as set a good example in their recruitment behaviour.

To reduce the risk for unfair treatment, recruitment on the basis of anonymous job applications is applied on a trial basis in the public sector.

### ***Anti-discrimination***

Having a vigorous and effective legal framework is of vital importance in combating discrimination. Current discrimination legislation is a patchwork of laws and statutes, developed over the years.

The Government Bill “Stronger safeguards against discrimination” (2007/08:95) was passed by the Swedish Parliament in June 2008. A new, comprehensive and single Anti-Discrimination Act is to supersede the current Equal Opportunities Act and six other civil law enactments. The purpose of the Anti-Discrimination Act is to counteract discrimination and also to promote equality of rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. Two new grounds for discrimination are being introduced, namely transsexual identity or expression and age, both of which have not previously been explicitly covered by non-discrimination legislation.

The Act will apply to most areas of society, such as working life, education, goods, services and housing, social services, the social insurance system, health care, national military and civilian service and public appointments. Age discrimination, however, is prohibited in working life in the broad sense and in education. The new Act will enter into force on 1st January 2009.

In line with the legislative changes, the current four Ombudsmen (the Equality Ombudsman, the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the Disability Ombudsman and the Ombudsman against Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation) will be merged into a single national authority, the so-called Equality Ombudsman. The new Ombudsman will exercise supervision over all anti-discrimination legislation. This is expected to ensure more effective and powerful monitoring of compliance with the Act.

#### *Strengthened protection against discrimination in the labour market*

The present anti-discrimination labour laws do not contain any safeguard against discrimination for a person addressing an enquiry to an employer concerning the existence of a job vacancy or a person taking part in employment training, work experience or undergoing practical labour market orientation (PRAO). Nor is there any ban on discrimination which can be invoked by outsourced personnel.

The new Discrimination Act which enters into force on 1st January 2009 enlarges the population that is protected against discrimination in the workplace. In addition to employees and jobseekers, persons making enquiries will be included, as well as persons applying for – or undergoing – work experience (not only vocational training practice). For example, persons taking part in employment training work experience schemes or undergoing PRAO will also be covered by anti-discrimination safeguards, as will be outsourced manpower.

#### **Developments in the labour market outcomes of the foreign-born**

There has been a remarkable improvement with regard to the labour market outcome among the foreign-born population as well as other marginalized groups.

Many immigrants are today gainfully employed in the private and public sectors through the subsidies of payroll costs which has made hiring of immigrants easier and reduced the risk for wrong recruitment. The government intends to continue along these lines.

Since the summer of 2006, there has been a significant increase in the number of employed among the foreign-born. During the first six months of 2008 the number of employed immigrants in the age group 15 – 75 has increased by over 73 000 persons compared to the same

period in 2006. This is about 36 percent of the total increase in the number of employed persons during the same period.

Despite a substantial increase in the number of employed among the foreign-born population, the employment rate has increased by only 2 percentage points owing to the considerable increase (87 000) of the foreign-born population during the same period. The gap in employment rates between the native- and foreign-born remains large (11 percent points).

### ***A strategy for Integration***

In September 2008, the government presented a cohesive strategy for integration for the years 2008-2010. The strategy is based on an analysis of contemporary problems regarding integration and measures to tackle them. The point of departure for the strategy is that education, employment and income are key factors for solving most other so-called “integration problems”. The relatively poor performance of immigrants in the labour market and in the education system is the result of a complex interaction between many different factors. The most important factors have been identified as: the general level of supply and demand of labour, immigrants’ language skills, employers’ ability to correctly value qualifications and vocational skills acquired abroad, discrimination, the overall performance of the education system, and the supply of complementary education for highly-educated immigrants .

The strategy covers seven areas:

- Effective reception and introduction of new arrivals
- Employment and entrepreneurship
- Better educational performance and equivalence in schools
- Language and education for adults
- Discrimination
- Local development in urban districts characterised by exclusion
- Shared values