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Governance and the Local Integration  
of Migrants and Europe's Refugees

# Language Education for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Sweden: Provision and Governance

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1. Introduction	1
2. Research Methodology	2
3. Contextualising ‘Language’ in Sweden	3
4. History of Swedish Language Education and Training	4
4.1 Sequential development	5
4.2 Enduring and contested issues	9
4.3 The role of civil society	10
5. Educational Practices in a Comparative Perspective	11
5.1 Admittance and financial allowance for new arrivals	12
5.2 Program and course curricula	12
5.3 Students, study hours and study results in a nation-wide perspective	14
5.3.1 Number of students	14
5.3.2 Study hours	15
5.3.3 Study results	16
5.4 National steering and local experiences of organisation and funding	17
5.4.1 National steering	17
5.4.2 Local experiences	18
5.5 Collaboration in a regional and local perspective	21
5.5.1 Regional collaboration	22
5.5.2 Vertical collaboration	23
5.5.3 Horizontal collaboration	24
5.6 Contested areas in the local implementation of Swedish for immigrants	26
5.6.1 Language education vs. labour market training	26
5.6.2 Study results	27
5.7 Gender dimensions	28
6. ‘Language Introduction’ in Upper Secondary Education	28
6.1 Admittance for newly arrived students with varying legal status	29
6.1.1 The upper secondary education act ( <i>Gymnasielagen</i> )	29
6.2 National regulation and local variation	30
6.3 The students	31
6.4 Local experiences of Language Introduction – the case of Malmö	32
7. Civil Society Initiatives	34
7.1 ‘Everyday Swedish’ and ‘Swedish from day one’	35
7.1.1 Collaboration in a regional perspective	36
7.2 ‘Early measures for asylum seekers’	36
7.2.1 Local experiences	37
8. Conclusive Discussion	38
8.1 Summary of measures	38
8.2 Conclusions	39
8.3 Discussion	41



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## I. Introduction

This report is about language training and education for adult asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden with a particular focus on the situation in the region of Scania. It responds to questions about the governance of language training and education with a particular focus on gender and the role of civil society. As a field of governance, language training and education is positioned at the intersection of integration policy, labour market policy and education policy, each being a complex and contested policy field. As an area of intervention, it embraces disparate organisations such as the Swedish Public Employment Service, various educational organisations at national and local levels, including folk high schools and study associations from the third sector as well as private enterprises. As this report will show, over time the steering and organisation of language training and education have changed significantly, but many contested issues have remained the same.

Language training and education for residents who do not have basic knowledge of Swedish has a history going back to the 1960s. Back then it was initiated as a measure to increase language proficiency among immigrant workers in the labour market, but also their accompanying non-working family members. Over time it has passed through numerous reforms of various kinds. Today this education is under the responsibility of municipal adult education and is accessible for all who resides in Sweden and who do not have basic knowledge of Swedish language.

The report answers to questions about the governance of and access to language training and education in a national and a local perspective, limited to the region of Scania and the municipalities of Malmö and Eslöv. The analysis builds on steering documents, statistics, secondary sources, and interviews with case workers and teachers. It sees to language training and education for adult, meaning from the age of 16 years, asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers refers to persons who have registered an asylum application in Sweden and refugees to the introduction period of two years after residence permit has been granted.

Young persons, aged 16–21 years, have rights to access upper secondary education, and access Swedish language education as part of this. Asylum seekers have no access the formal education system, but they might access language training provided on voluntary basis by the third sector. It is limited in outreach and geographical variation is blatant. In response to the prolonged waiting periods that followed on the increased numbers of registered asylum applications in the fall of 2015, the government established new economic incentives for voluntary initiatives to start with outreach to asylum seekers. Basically, all adult refugees and their adult family members, in administrative terminology jointly denoted new arrivals (*nyanlända*), participate in the Introduction Program (*Etableringsprogrammet*) and access language education, Swedish for immigrants (*svenska för invandrare, sfi*), as part of this. The Introduction Program is coordinated by the Swedish Public Employment Service and they assign new arrivals to the Swedish language education that is the responsibility of the municipal adult education. Swedish for immigrants is a nation-wide and comprehensive education, and it is the main focus of this report.

Below we first outline our research methodology. Following on this, we briefly contextualise the position of national and foreign languages in Swedish society to the international reader. We then provide the reader with a description of the national steering of language training and education as it has developed in Sweden. It shows how the development has entailed increased formalisation of the education as well as differentiation, both in terms of a levelled education for students with varying educational backgrounds as well as in terms of who can access the education and on what terms. The analysis of language training and education is divided into three parts, namely (i)



Swedish for immigrants as part of the Introduction Program for new arrivals, (ii) Language Introduction as part of upper secondary school, and (iii) civil society initiatives for language training. The unbalanced relation between these interventions is mirrored in this report, and the section on Swedish for immigrants as part the Introduction Program is both lengthier and more in-depth than the other sections. The report is wrapped up with a conclusion.

## 2. Research Methodology

This report responds to questions about the governance of language training and education for adult asylum seekers and refugees with a particular focus on gender dynamics and the role of civil society organisations. Depending on age and legal status, persons have different access to language training and education. Access to language training and education is limited for asylum seekers, and basically all adult refugees enter Swedish for immigrants as part of the Introduction Program, this education is of major focus in this report. However, and as the section on the historical background shows, for a long time asylum seekers did access Swedish for immigrants.

The analysis of the historical development of the language training and education builds on national steering documents, including government inquiries, government bills and legislation. The focus is here on content of policy with a particular focus on gender and the role of civil society.

The analysis of the governance in a multilevel perspective builds on several types of material collected from national, regional and local levels. It consists of steering documents, statistics, interviews with experts, case workers and teachers, field visits, and secondary material such as evaluations and reports. Twelve semi-structured interviews and visits to Swedish for immigrant classes were made in the region of Scania and the municipalities of Malmö and Eslöv from November 2018 to January 2019. The choice of interviewees is strategic and made to capture the organisational structure, and perspectives and experiences from different organisational positions within the local contexts of Malmö and Eslöv. We identified and approached four areas/levels of responsibility at the local level: (i) coordination/administration, (ii) teachers, (iii) directors/principals within municipal departments and (iv) heads of municipal adult education. The organisation of Swedish for immigrants varies between Malmö and Eslöv, but these functions and roles are similar. In addition, we have included material from Swedish for immigrants as operated by both municipal adult education and folk high schools.

The majority of the interviews were conducted through telephone. Informed consent was gained for all interviews. The interviews were carried out in Swedish and the translations of quotes into English have been made by our team. All interviews are anonymised. Whenever possible we have searched for an equal representation of gender among our interviewees.

In addition to interviews, numerous contacts were made with expertise on national, regional and local levels that facilitated our search for key interlocutors. These contacts also gave us insights into emergent issues in relation to Swedish for immigrants.



### 3. Contextualising ‘Language’ in Sweden

OECD has highlighted language acquisition as a particular challenge in the Swedish context, where few migrants speak Swedish when they arrive, while at the same time the level of language proficiency required on the labour market is high (OECD 2016). Sweden is, at least formally, what we could call a ‘multilingual-friendly’ country, but in practice it is significantly monolingual. In part, this explains why Sweden scores high in measures of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2015) while at the same time comparatively low when it comes to labour market integration of foreign born (OECD 2016, see also Brochmann & Hagelund 2011). While this report is focussed on language training and education for asylum seekers and refugees, this has developed within and is shaped by the broader field of language politics. We shall therefore here, as a brief background, describe the position of national and foreign languages in Swedish society, outlining the position of national minority languages in relation to Swedish, mother tongue education, and the position of Swedish in relation to naturalisation.

The multilingual-friendly approach has its roots in how integration policy was institutionalised in the 1970s. As this was laid down, at the time named immigrant and minority policy, it was emphasised that it should strive towards equal opportunities among Swedes and immigrants. Moreover, it should be the decision of the immigrants and minorities to what extent they wish to become part of the Swedish cultural identity (see Government Bill, Prop. 1975:26). Even though this policy area has passed through several passages of change, the aim of equal opportunity has overall remained. In effect this has, among many other things, meant that minority languages, as well as mother tongue education of children, are protected by national law.

Swedish is, as regulated by the Language Act (SFS 2009:600 Språklag) the main language in Sweden (Swe. *huvudspråk*). Swedish itself has regional dialects, but in everyday life these are more or less insignificant, meaning that if you as a newcomer learn Swedish as a second language you are able to practice this around Sweden. The Language Act also stipulates that the public has a special responsibility in relation to the national minority languages and sign language. Five languages are recognised as minority language by this law: Finnish, Jiddisch, Meänkieli (Finnish dialects spoken in regions of Northern Sweden), Romani Chib and Sami (all dialects). The protection and status of minority languages is regulated by another law, the Act about national minorities and minority languages (SFS 2009:724 Lag om nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk). All national minority languages shall be protected and strengthen across Sweden. In certain geographical regions, Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami have a special status, meaning that authorities are obliged to communicate in this language if requested by a resident (this right was stipulated by law already in 1999, see SFS 1999:1175; SFS 1999:1176). However, while strong protection and authorities’ obligations are stipulated by law, evaluations indicate that progress in practice is slow. In particular, the situation for the Romani speaking minority is lagging behind, being characterised by, for instance, numerous cases of discrimination, lack of minority language education for children and authorised interpreters and translations are not in place as they should (Språkrådet 2011).

Mother tongue education for pupils in schools became a politicised issue from the 1960s. It was politically contentious to what extent the education system should be unitary (‘one school for all’) vs. respond to immigrant children’s educational needs as based in a multicultural understanding of society. While mother tongue education was first established in 1968 as a voluntary measure for the municipalities, in 1977 a major reform was implemented. This reform stipulated that the education system should support multilingualism in pre-, primary and secondary school. From now the municipalities were obliged to offer mother tongue education (for a detailed review, see Skolverket 2002, part 3).



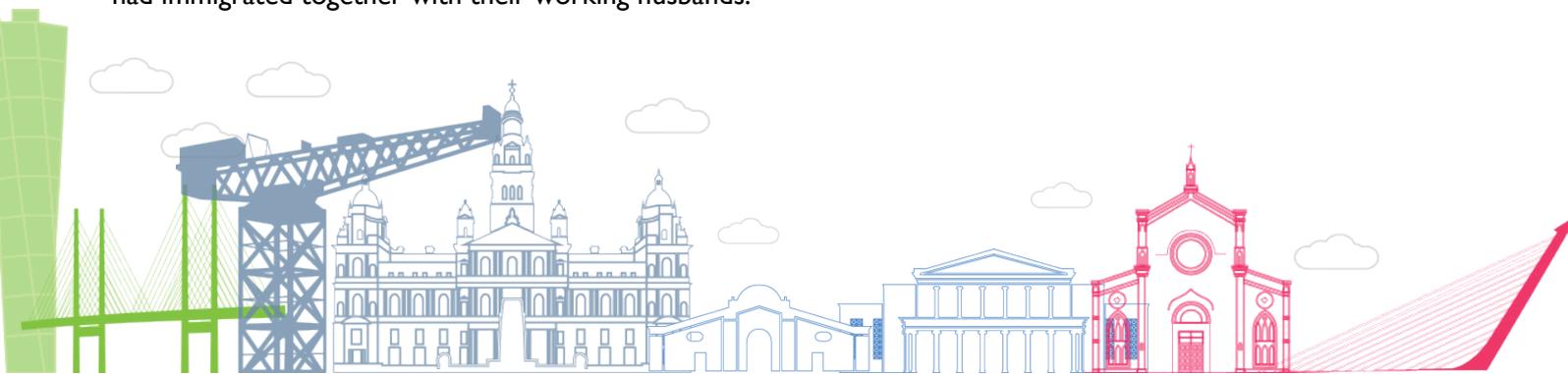
However, mother tongue education has remained a contentious issue over time. In the 1970s and 1980s the debate was, at least in part, biased towards Finnish speaking pupils in school, both as an immigrated and national minority, with a particular focus on schools in the Stockholm area using Finnish as an instruction language. Later the debate has broadened to regard mother tongue education in general. Evaluations have been plenty and indicate that there is a gap between the intentions of the regulation and the practice; there are extensive organisational problems and that the variation between schools and teachers are far-reaching (Skolverket 2002).

Today school-support to multilingual pupils consists of primarily three measures: mother tongue education, study tutorials in mother tongue, and Swedish as a second language education. Still today, the implementation of these measures is not straightforward. It is obstructed by, for instance, political ideologies, economic factors of individual schools, and lack of teachers' training, including in the university Teachers Program (Otterup 2012). The right to mother tongue and Swedish as a second language education in primary and secondary school is regulated by the School Act (SFS 2010:800 Skollagen). The right to study tutorials is regulated by the School Ordinance (SFS 2011:185 Skolförordningen) and Upper Secondary School Ordinance (SFS 2010:2039 Gymnasieförordningen). Children in preschool have no education, but the preschool is expected to support language development of the children, including Swedish as a second language and foreign mother tongue languages. How this is practiced, is at the decision of the school principal. However, in spite of all regulations, it is noted that at the end of the day, it is the accomplishment of individual teachers and schools that determine the result of the education (Otterup 2012).

The debate about language education is disconnected from debates about language proficiency in regard to naturalisation. In contrast to most other European countries, in Sweden there are no requirements of language proficiency for naturalisation. According to the Citizenship Act (SFS 2001:82 Lag om svenskt medborgarskap, §11), foreigners can, after an application, be naturalised if they can show their identity, have permanent residence permit, have resided in the country since five years (four years for stateless, and two years for Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, or Norwegian citizens), and have had and can be assumed to continue a honest living. But this has not always been the case. In relation to the previous Citizenship Act of 1950 (SFS 1950:382 Lag om svenskt medborgarskap), the Ordinance about certain rules regarding how to practice the citizenship act (SFS 1950:2017 Kungörelse med vissa bestämmelser rörande tillämpningen av medborgarskapslagen) stipulated that an application of naturalisation should be accompanied by a certificate signed by a teacher, priest or otherwise competent person granting that the applicant could speak, read and write in Swedish. Specification of what this meant in practice was not included. This language requirement was gradually dissolved and fully abolished in the early 1980s (SOU 1999:34, p. 307–308). However, while there is no formalised requirement of language proficiency, the issue is contentious and has been raised in political and popular debates repeatedly, in the 1980s and 1990s (SOU 1999:34, p. 308), as well as in contemporary debates about social cohesion, immigrant integration and naturalisation.

#### 4. History of Swedish Language Education and Training

In Sweden, language was always central to integration policy. In fact, it was the first policy instrument to be implemented, even before integration was established as a policy area itself in the late 1960s (Dahlström 2004). The early post-war immigration to Sweden was dominated by labour immigration; the borders were in practice open for spontaneous immigration and there was a need for labour. Hence the first initiatives did not consider asylum seekers or refugees, but the adaption of labour migrants, including migrant women outside the labour market who had immigrated together with their working husbands.



The governance of language education and training for asylum seekers and refugees spans across several policy fields, including education, labour market, and immigration and integration, all of which are extensive and complex policy fields by themselves. The policy development of language education and training for asylum seekers and refugees must be understood in relation to the intersecting and sometimes conflicting dynamics in these broad and partly overlapping policy fields. While, in the view of this, it is unsurprising that language education and training for foreigners is a contested field of intervention, it is also marked by a strong common understanding of Swedish language acquisition as fundamental to integration in Sweden, not least for labour market integration. An elevator pitch of Swedish integration policy could well be: ‘Language comes first’.

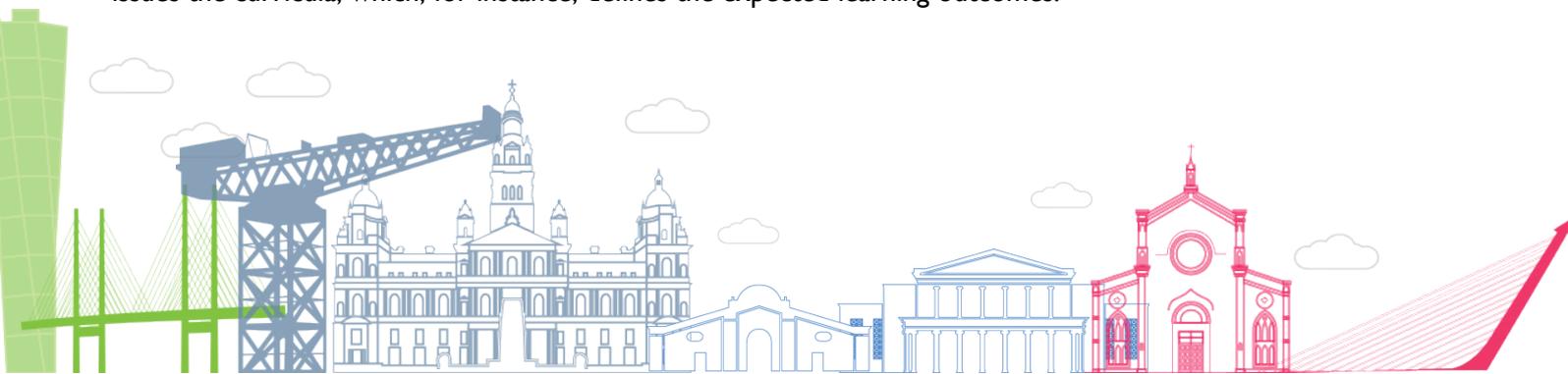
Over time, one evaluation after another has shown that the performance of language education and training does not live up to its aim. These critiques, which have been of various kinds, have constituted a fertile ground for numerous reforms. However, a recent research review of Swedish for immigrants concludes that the education often suffers from unfounded criticism (Lundberg, Rosén & Jahnke 2017). More specific criticism towards the education highlight, among other things, that the teachers are not adequately trained and that the students are not given the opportunity to develop their personal and professional needs. An explanation for this criticism is that the education is at the intersection of different political goals in terms of education, integration, migration, economics, social, culture and language. The integration policy see Swedish for immigrants as a prerequisite for integration and participation in Swedish society, the labour market policy as a tool for employability and a rapid entry into the labour market and self-sufficiency, the education policy as a qualified language education, and the language policy view Swedish for immigrants as a right to the opportunity to learn, develop and use Swedish. The research review also notes that the pedagogical perspective in the Swedish for immigrants education is varied and have changed from a cognitive linguistic education to an education where functional communication is prioritized (Lundberg, Rosén & Jahnke 2017).

While language education and training initially was less formalised and less differentiated, over time it has become increasingly formalised and diversified, and access for varying categories of foreigners has become differentiated. Most significantly, asylum seekers lost access to formal language education in 1991, and it is only recently that the government allocated resources to create access to language training for this group.

Below we first outline the development of Swedish for immigrants in a sequential order, and then we discuss some tensions, including the development towards a unitary and formal education, the development towards a differentiated education and the role of civil society in the education.

#### 4.1 Sequential development

In Sweden, the government governs through acts and ordinances. The establishment of new and amendments to existing acts is preceded by inquiry work. This inquiry work can be extensive, conducted by a parliamentary or expert group working over several years, and reporting their work in reports, published as public inquiry reports (statens offentliga utredningar, SOU). After the inquiry work is finished, the government issue a government bill (*proposition, Prop.*) that is presented to the parliament that makes a decision. The government also governs through ordinances. Ordinances are decided by the government and do not have to be supported by parliament. Ordinances can therefore be changed quicker and easier than acts, such as the school act. Ordinances can specify many details, including that educations shall have program and course curricula. The Swedish National Agency for Education issues the curricula, which, for instance, defines the expected learning outcomes.



## 1960s – The early initiatives

The adaptation of (labour) immigrants to the Swedish society began to be debated starting in the mid-1960s. In the policy discourse this was, at least partly, due to the changing nature of immigrants “coming from countries with languages, cultures and religions that increasingly diverge from our country” (Prop. 1968:142, p. 35, see also pp. 59 and 70). The first tools for adaptation were developed within a governmental inquiry, the Foreigner Inquiry (*Utlänningsutredningen*), working in 1961–1968. ‘Adaptation’ was not the focus of the inquiry, but it concluded that immigrant adaptation was an important issue in need of more investigation, which soon happened, in the Immigrant Inquiry (*Invandrarutredningen*) working in 1968–1974.

Nevertheless, the Foreigner Inquiry contributed with the first steps towards an integration policy. In January 1966, following a decision of the Parliament, this inquiry appointed a special working group to “map the social, cultural and other problems, foreigners who have immigrated to Sweden meet, and to consider which measures that should be taken to facilitate their adaptation into Swedish society” (SOU 1967:18, p. 17). The persons involved in this working group, named the Working Group for Immigrant Issues (*Arbetsgruppen för invandrarfrågor*), were central to the development of the integration policy in Sweden. The group never issued formal proposals, but initiated measures experimentally, including counsellors and activities at the public libraries for immigrants. In 1969 the tasks of the working group were handed over to the newly established Swedish Immigrant Authority (*Statens Invandrarverk, SIV*) with one of its members as a director (SOU 1971:51, p. 15–20).

However, already in 1965, in the context of the ongoing problematisation of ‘adaptation’, but also the increased immigration in 1964 and 1965, the Swedish Public Employment Service (at the time, in Swedish: *Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen, AMS*) and the National Agency for Education (at the time, in Swedish: *Skolöverstyrelsen, SÖ*) had jointly requested economic resources to establish Swedish classes free of charge. This was approved and from 1965 the National Agency for Education arranged Swedish classes for immigrants free of charge through the organisation of Study Associations (*studieförbund*) (SOU 1971:51, p. 66). The content of the Swedish teaching, or the qualification of the teachers were not regulated, instead this was at the judgement of the study associations.

Following on the Foreigner Inquiry’s government bill (Prop. 1968:142), the Immigrant Inquiry was initiated and started its work in 1968. In the directives it is stated that the inquiry should regard all adaptation problems immigrants have upon immigration to Sweden; problems of tourists and temporary labour migrants should be disregarded, and the problems of various groups of immigrants should be differentiated, such as differences between immigrants from the Nordic countries and from countries more far off. According to the directives, the situation of minority groups, but not the Sami, whom should be attended to in another inquiry of noted that while some measures have already been taken (SOU 1971:51, p. 13–17). The first committee report from the Immigrant Inquiry was about the educational situation for immigrants and it made proposals of Swedish language education for both children and adults, (SOU 1971:51), but in this report we limit our interest to adult education.

The report discusses the differentiated need of language education in relation to various categories of immigrants. With regard to young adults aged 16–20 years, the report concludes that even though many immigrant youths have passed through the Swedish school system, with varying number of years, the majority have come here to work. To the extent that immigrant youths have problems entering the labour market, vocational training should be offered. It is also proposed that immigrant youth, who wants to conclude Swedish secondary education, should be given the opportunity to do so, with extra support that is needed to enable it, on equal footing with Swedish youths.



With regard to adult immigrants, which have varying educational backgrounds, all adults from the age of 16 years should be offered a basic education in Swedish and civic orientation. They should also be able to complement previous educations through Swedish adult education. For immigrants with short or no educational background, special measures should be available (SOU 1971:18, p. 44, Ch. 10).

It resulted in a curriculum of Swedish language education, School Curriculum of Swedish for immigrants (Läroplan i svenska för invandrare, Lsfi71). Since study associations, which were organising the education had (and still have) the status of non-formal adult education, its education could not be regulated by the state, and hence the curriculum received the status of 'recommendations' (Statskontoret 2000, p. 23). Simultaneously, in 1971, a special budget post for basic Swedish language education for adult immigrants organised under the responsibility of the National Education Agency and organised by study associations, was created in the yearly governmental budget.

The inquiry report also proposed that immigrants should have the right to conduct studies in Swedish language during working hours, which was also proposed in a government bill (Prop. 1972:100) and implemented by law, the Act on rights to leave and salary when participating in Swedish education for immigrants (SFS 1972:650). The act states that it is the responsibility of the employer to contribute to the finance of education for immigrants by paying the salary during 240 hours, independently on whether this is scheduled on working hours or not. This was enabled through an agreement between the Swedish Employers' Union (*Svenska Arbetsgivarförbundet, SAF*) and the Swedish Workers Trade Union (*Landsorganisationen, LO*), in the context of a resolution of the European Council in 1968, stating that all foreign workers should have the right to at least 200 hours language education (SOU 1999:x, p. 307). This right to Swedish language education was initially limited to persons who began their employment in Sweden from 1 January 1973, but was soon revised (Prop. 1973:43) so that also immigrants who started their employment before this were included.

These measures were the first steps of Swedish language education as part of the public educational system for adults. Before these first initiatives, starting in 1965, language training was very limited and at the cost of the participants.

### The 1986 Swedish for immigrants-reform

A committee, the so-called Swedish language for immigrants' committee (*sfi-kommittén*), was appointed in 1978 with the task to oversee the Swedish language education. It described the organisation as fragmented, the teaching as in lack of clear learning goals, and the teachers in lack of relevant training. It issued two reports in 1981, but could find no agreement on organisational leadership and funding (see SOU 1981:86; SOU 1981:87). A major tension in the work, was the disagreement of how it should be organised, as part of the educational system or as part of the labour market training. In 1986 school a two-tier track system of Swedish language education and training was implemented. This meant that a basic Swedish language education for immigrants was introduced as specific form of education regulated by law, Act on basic Swedish education for immigrants (SFS 1986:159) together with a new curriculum (Lsfi86), which replaced the previous. In effect the education became more regulated as regards, for instance, learning goals, content and teachers' qualification. It was the responsibility of the municipality to offer this education. An advanced level was also introduced. This was organised by study associations or the Public Employment Service Education (*arbetsmarknadsutbildning, AMU*) and without any curriculum or regulations about teachers' qualifications.



### The 1991 Swedish for immigrants-reform

As basic Swedish language education became the responsibility of the municipalities, access to the education was evened out across the country. However, accessible access to the advanced level remained unevenly distributed. This critique, together with additional incentives (see Prop. 1988/89:4), in 1991 the regulations of the Swedish language education for immigrants was integrated to the School Act (SFS 1985:1100) and a new curriculum was introduced (*Läroplan för för grundläggande svenskundervisning för vuxna invandrare, Lsfi-91*). This reform meant that the basic and advance levels were integrated into one unified education.

Simultaneously, in the system for refugee reception was under reform. This included the introduction of a new system of state economic compensation for the municipal refugee reception. The municipal costs for Swedish language education for refugees was now integrated with the flat rate compensation that the Migration Agency payed to the municipalities for each received refugee. As part of this development, access to Swedish language education was tightened up, so that it was only offered to persons with registration domicile. In effect, asylum seekers and other groups who cannot register domicile were excluded.

Moreover, the right to Swedish language for immigrants education is limited to new arrivals, during their two first years, in some cases their first three years, of residence in Sweden. Swedish as a second language is introduced as a mandatory education for the municipalities, to be offered to persons who are not eligible to Swedish language for immigrants.

### 1994

Whether Swedish language for immigrants is to be particular education or not, remains a contested issue. In 1994 the Swedish National Agency for Education proposes that it shall repeal as a particular educational form, but this is rejected. Nevertheless, it repeals to rely on particular regulations, meaning that the curriculum for Swedish language for immigrants (*Lsfi-91*) is abolished, and the education is instead regulated by the school curriculum for the voluntary school forms (*Läroplan för de frivilliga skolformerna, Lpf94*). An ordinance stipulating that the education shall have a course curriculum was introduced (SFS 1994:895) as well as the first ever course curriculum (SKOLFS 1994:28).

This reform also involved that the time limit for how long a participant could access the education was removed and the right to start the education within three months from registration domicile was introduced.

### 2003

Following on a major revision of adult education initiated in 1995 (*Kunskapslyftskommittén*), the government proposes (see government bill, Prop. 2000/01:72, p. 2) that the education shall remain as its own school form but that all immigrants should be eligible and that the course curriculum should be changed so that the education can be differenced. A new course curriculum is introduced in 2003 (SKOLFS 2002:19), containing different courses that can be studied following differentiated study pathways.

Another issue, that is part of a larger revision of the refugee reception system (Dir. 2001:87), regards if the civic orientation courses shall be integrated with the language education or not. The issue remains unsolved.



## 2007

In 2001 the Carlbeck commission was initiated to oversee education for children, youths and adults with retardation. The commission also made proposals regarding the Swedish language education for adult immigrants (see government bill, Prop. 2005/06:148). A new course curriculum is introduced (SKOLFS 2006:20), which means that civic orientation is disintegrated from Swedish language education. The responsibility for civic orientation courses remains with the municipalities, but not as part of the Swedish language for immigrants education, hence the education is now a language education only.

## 2009

Some minor revisions are implemented in relation to reforms of the refugee reception system, that is transferred from the municipalities to the Public Employment Service. A new course curriculum is introduced, which implies a change of the name but not much more (SKOLFS 2009:2).

More importantly, the right for folk high schools to offer the course is introduced. This means that folk high school can offer the course as a subcontractor of the municipality, or as an independent provider.

## 2016

A review of the basic adult education was commissioned in 2011 (*GRUV-utredningen*). It proposed that Swedish language education for immigrants should cease to exist as a separate school form (SOU 2013:20). The education was integrated with municipal adult education and a new course curriculum was introduced in 2017 (SKOLFS 2017:91). Municipal adult education now consists of basic adult education, upper secondary school adult education and Swedish language for immigrants. The new course curriculum facilitates coordination between Swedish language for immigrants and Swedish as a second language, that is part of basic adult education.

## 2018

In the government partly revises the Introduction Program (*Etableringsprogrammet*) for refugees. The revision meant that the Introduction Program was mainstreamed in the sense that it became more similar to 'ordinary' labour market interventions, including, for instance, that the participant have less impact on which measures that are part of the individual introduction plan. Of interest here is what has been called the 'educational plight', meaning that participants with short educational background (have not completed upper secondary school), and when the Public Employment Service estimates that the participant will not enter the labour market before the end of the Introduction Program, are obliged to study to reach the level of upper secondary school (see SFS 2017:820).

## 4.2 Enduring and contested issues

As shown in the sequential description, the development of the regulation of Swedish language education is rather complex. It involves several organisational bodies, with varying interests and rationalities, and their overlapping regulations. However, a number of contested matters seems to have survived over time, in spite of all revisions.

Initially, Swedish language for immigrants was not a formal education. The understanding of it was that it was a training to improve labour market and societal integration; it was practically oriented. The development of the distinction between language training as part of labour market intervention, and language education as part of the formal education system, must be understood in the broader development of the education system, not least its



development of adult education. While the basic level of Swedish for immigrants first became part of the educational system in 1986, the advanced level was integrated in 1991.

Since 1991 the education has been unitary in the sense that it is one education under the responsibility of the municipality. A repeated critique is about the education's lack of individualisation. The students have heterogeneous educational backgrounds, from no formal education at all to very advanced levels. IN response to this, since 2003 the education differentiated into courses and different pathways for students with different backgrounds.

Whether the education should be its own form of adult education, or part of other adult education has been another enduring and contested issue. While it was critiqued that it was difficult for the participants to combine different school forms, for instance Swedish for immigrants with compulsory education, it was questioned whether Swedish for immigrants, due to its nature and content, could respond to the same regulations as compulsory and upper secondary adult education. It was only in 2016 that it ceased to be its own school form, and was integrated with municipal adult education (*Kommunal vuxenutbildning, KomVux*).

Since the revision of the regulation of the Introduction Program (SFS 2017:820), it is emphasised that Swedish language for immigrants education shall be combined with other measures, including, for instance, practice or other studies. Over time, there is an enduring concern about the combination of introduction activities for new arrivals.

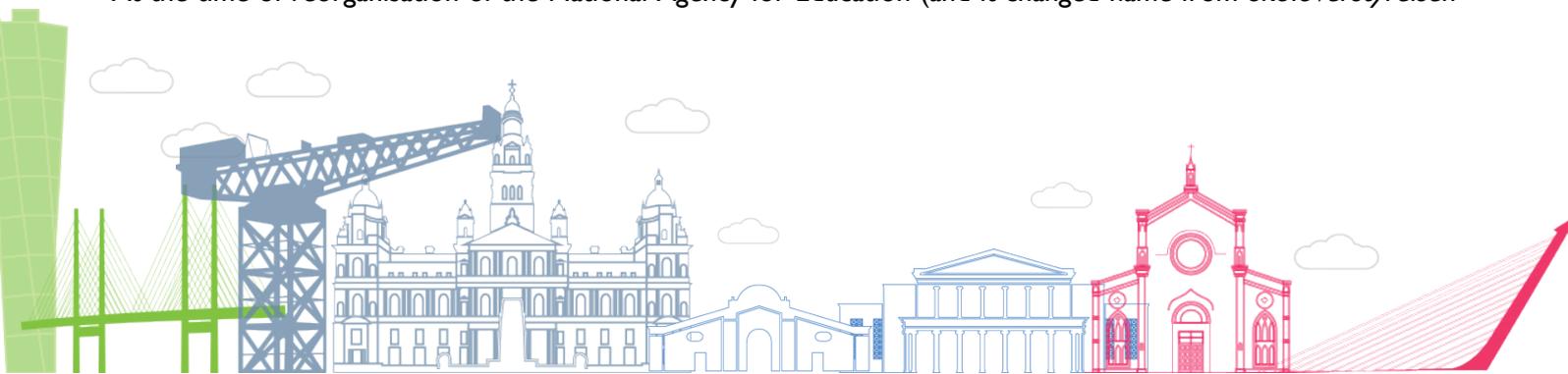
Access to the education has changed several times. When the Swedish for immigrants was first introduced in the 1960s, it was for all foreigners who were newly arrived to Sweden. In 1971 this was extended to include all foreigners who did not have basic proficiency in Swedish language. As the state compensation to the municipalities changed in 1991 (which was in response to growing refugee immigration), access was limited to refugees during the first two years, i.e. the introduction period. This limitation was removed in 1994, but asylum seekers did not regain access.

### 4.3 The role of civil society

The role of civil society is of special concern in this report. How the role of civil society in language education and training is to be described depends on how civil society is understood. Of particular relevance for the Swedish case is not just what common understanding of civil society, but how the tradition of *popular adult education (Folkbildning)* is viewed.

Sweden has a long and strong tradition of *folkbildning*, a word which does not easily translate into English. Its roots dates back to the popular movements of the 1800s, including the non-alcoholic movement, religious movements, feminist movement and the workers movement and many of the folk high schools and study associations are still associated with, for instance, labour unions, political parties and religious congregations. It refers to adult educational activities outside the formal educational system, and historically its activities have been centred to libraries, study associations and folk high schools. In English, it is usually termed non-formal or popular adult education.

Study associations and folk high schools have been central organisational bodies in Swedish language education and training. They are usually regarded as part of civil society, though not without critique, since they are state financed. At the time of reorganisation of the National Agency for Education (and it changed name from *Skolöverstyrelsen*



to *Skolverket*) in 1991, the National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*), charged with power to distribute the national grants to folk high schools (*Folkhögskolor*) and study associations (*studieförbund*), was established. This was to emphasise that the *folkbildning* was non-formal and not part of the formal educational system. This is also why, it was only when the responsibility of Swedish language education was transferred to the municipality and municipal adult education (*kommunal vuxenutbildning, komvux*), that the first formal curriculum was adopted.

## 5. 'Swedish for Immigrants' in the Introduction Program

Municipalities are obliged to secure that all residents aged 16–64 years in lack of basic Swedish language proficiency can access Municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants (*Kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare, SFI*), commonly referred to as Swedish for immigrants. The education is voluntary and free of cost for the participants. New arrivals typically access the education as part of the Introduction Program.

New arrivals with registration domicile (*folkbokföring*) and who are aged 20–64 years can sign-up with the Swedish Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*). In most cases the new arrival will be referred to the Introduction Program (*Etableringsprogrammet*). As part of this an Introduction Plan is established. Persons who follow their Introduction Plan are eligible to Introduction Allowance (*etableringsersättning*) for up to two years. It is not mandatory to participate in the Introduction Program or to follow the plan, however a person who does not participate has no other right to economic support. Basically, all participants of the Introduction Program will be assigned to Swedish for immigrants.

Swedish for immigrants is a qualified language education that aims to give adult immigrants an opportunity to achieve basic knowledge of Swedish language. The focus is on functional second language and the education shall provide students with tools for communication and active participation in everyday situations and working life, as well as continued studies. The education also aims to provide adult immigrants who lack basic reading and writing skills an opportunity to acquire such skills. A student who is not functionally literate or has another writing system than the Latin alphabet, shall receive basic reading and writing lessons within the framework of the education. The student should be able to combine language training with employment or other activities, such as civic orientation, internships or other kinds of education. The education should therefore be designed as flexible as possible in terms of time, place, content and work methods.

Below we first outline how admittance into Swedish for immigrants is regulated and how 'new arrivals' from the Introduction Program are positioned within this. Next we first describe the program and course curriculum and then some statistics of the students, including their numbers, study hours and study results on a national level. We then enter the topics of organisation and funding, as it is formulated in national steering documents and as it plays out at the local level. Following on this, we describe how collaboration plays out on the regional and local level from different perspectives. The section is wrapped up with a discussion on two major challenges that was identified in the conducted interviews.



## 5.1 Admittance and financial allowance for new arrivals

The course is not limited to new arrivals. To participate a person must be 16 years or older and domiciled in Sweden. Moreover, the person must not have the basic knowledge of Swedish language that the course aim at. In practice this means that speakers of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish speaking Finns does not have a right to participate. Finnish citizens living in Finland close to the Swedish border, and who works in Sweden but do not have basic knowledge of Swedish language, have right to access the education. These requirements for access exclude two quite large potential groups of students. Firstly, many international students and temporary migrant workers, who do not initially plan for a longer stay and, hence, do not register domicile are not eligible. Secondly, and for our study a more important group, all asylum seekers are excluded because they do not have a residence permit and cannot register domicile.

It is the municipality who decides if a certain person is eligible or not. If a student has been admitted, they have the right to complete the course. The school principal can decide that a student must stop the education if he/she lacks the ability to learn or do not make satisfactory progress. If there are special reasons, however, there should be an opportunity for the student to resume the studies at a later stage (SFS 2010:800, chapter 20, § 9).

Participation in the course does not entail any allowances; the right to Introduction Allowance for new arrivals is regulated in relation to the Introduction Program. Courses should normally be available within three months after a person has registered domicile in a municipality, but for new arrivals the goal is that it should be made available after one month.

Since 1 January 2018, following on a major revision of the Introduction Program, new arrivals with 'short educational background' (meaning not finished upper secondary school) and who is estimated not to be matched with an employment before the end of the Introduction Program, shall take part of Swedish for immigrants, civic orientation course and basic adult education. This is commonly denoted the 'education duty' (utbildningsplikt) and implies a break with past integration measures. The education duty is not limited to language education, but has in practice a strong bias towards this.

## 5.2 Program and course curricula

The education is formal and regulated through national legislation and program and course curricula, including the School Act (SFS 2010:800), the Ordinance of adult education (SFS 2011:1108), the Ordinance about program curriculum for adult education (SKOLFS 2012:101) and the course curriculum of Swedish for immigrants (SKOLFS 2017:91).

The state also regulates Swedish language education through ordinances. Ordinances are decided by the government and do not have to be supported by parliament. Ordinances can therefore be changed quicker and easier than acts, such as the school act. In relation to Swedish for immigrants, the ordinance on adult education (SFS 2011:1108) specify many details. For example, it states that Swedish for immigrants must be designed so that individuals can combine language training with other kinds of education within the school system (§ 3). Regulations like this has the purpose to stimulate parallel activities. The same ordinance stipulates that there shall be a course curriculum that provide room for the teacher and the students to plan the teaching themselves. Moreover, the



course curriculum stipulates the knowledge requirements for each course. The Swedish National Agency for Education may issue further regulations on the course curriculum (§ 12). Other requirements in the ordinance are too many to mention. Some of the more important ones are that municipalities are responsible for creating an individual study plan in collaboration with each student, requirements for principals and teachers, and a specification that a student should be considered to have dropped out after three weeks of absence.

The ordinance about adult education (SFS 2011:1108) states that there should be a curriculum for each course of Swedish for immigrants. The National Agency for Education's regulations on the course curriculum for municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants (SKOLFS 2017:91), specifies the aims, goals, character, structure, assessment and knowledge requirements. The current syllabus is from 1 January 2018.

Three state agencies and one regional state organisation have important roles in the national system for Swedish for immigrants-courses. The Swedish National Agency for Education is a state agency responsible for the school system, of which the education Swedish for immigrants is a part. They do follow-ups and evaluate the school system at the national level and report to the government. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate is responsible for supervision and quality assessment of all schools, including Swedish for immigrants.

The education consists of four courses, A, B, C and D that can be studied along three study pathways, 1, 2 and 3. Study pathway 1 consists of the courses A, B, C and D, study pathway 2 of the courses B, C and D and study pathway 3 of the courses C and D. The different study pathways are aimed at students with different educational backgrounds, conditions and goals. Study pathway 1 is for students with short or no educational background, illiterate and students with limited reading and writing skills. Study pathway 2 is for students with longer school backgrounds and who can use the Latin alphabet. Study pathway 3 is aimed at students who have studied at the university level and can use the Latin alphabet.

<b>Pathway 1</b>	Course A	Course B	Course C	Course D
<b>Pathway 2</b>		Course B	Course C	Course D
<b>Pathway 3</b>			Course C	Course D

*Figure 1: Courses A, B, C and D according to study pathway 1, 2 and 3 of Swedish for immigrants*

The assessment of which pathway that is suitable for a specific student and which course in the study pathway the student should start with should be based on a mapping of his or her knowledge and other conditions that could have impact on the possibilities of fulfilling the requirements. A student can change pathway after each course.

The courses have a grading system (a, b, c, d, or e) and the knowledge requirements for each course are the same regardless of the study pathway. The knowledge requirements, regulated in the course curricula, are focused on abilities, but not the content of the course. All students should be given the opportunity to study up to and including course D within their pathway, which corresponds to B1/B1+ in the European framework.



Moreover, the education shall on average be at least 15 hours per week during a four-week period. However, the scope of the teaching may be reduced if the student requests it and the school principal finds that it is compatible with the aim of the education. There is no upper limit of how many hours a student can spend in the education (School Act SFS 2010:800, Ch. 20, § 24).

After Swedish for immigrants is completed, the person can continue with Swedish as a second language (*svenska som andraspråk*) that is structured as a sequential step after Swedish for immigrants. While both educations are part of municipal adult education, Swedish for immigrants is its own education and Swedish as a second language is part of basic adult education (corresponding to primary and lower secondary school). If a person, for example, want to study at the university he or she must be eligible and have grades in Swedish language, English language and mathematics, meaning that Swedish for immigrants is not enough to enter university studies. If the person has foreign education this must be validated. In adult education courses in Swedish language, one can study (regular) Swedish or Swedish as a second language. All courses are free of charge.

In 2016 about 42 000 students studied at the primary and lower secondary level, and 179 000 at upper secondary level (Skolverket, 2018b). In that year, about 46 per cent of the total 222 000 students were foreign born and each student participated on average in 3.4 courses, making the total number of course participants approximately 754 000. At the basic level, Swedish as a second language is the most common course with about half of the course participants in 2016, representing 46 000 course participants in Swedish as a second language.

### 5.3 Students, study hours and study results in a nation-wide perspective

The national reporting about the implementation of Swedish for immigrants in a national perspective, captures the whole education, meaning that there is no distinction of new arrivals and other students. We shall here see to the number of students, how study hours vary depending on the study pathway, and the study results and how these might be interpreted.

#### 5.3.1 Number of students

In 2017, over 163 000 students participated in the Swedish for immigrants education. This is an increase of 8.7 per cent compared with 2016 (Skolverket, 2018a). The number of students has increased every year during the 2000s. Since 2007, the number of students has more than doubled. In 2017, the number of course participants were almost 222 000, which means that each student participated on average in 1.4 courses during the year. Out these, 14 per cent studied in study pathway 1, 45 per cent in study pathway 2, and 41 per cent in study pathway 3. The official statistics also register the number of beginners, i.e. persons who start their first course during the year. They were about 65 000 in 2017.

Women were for a long time more numerous than men, but currently there is a gender balance. In 2017, 56 per cent were 25–39 years, 30 per cent older than 39 years and 14 per cent younger than 25 years. As for the students' educational background, 61 per cent had at least 10 years of education. 17 per cent had a 7-9-year-old education, 18 per cent a maximum of 6-year education and for 4 per cent there was no information on educational background. Women had on average lower education than men.



The statistics also show that most participants are from non-EU countries. The statistics do not provide any information about reasons for migration, but the large majority are either refugees or family to refugees. The most common mother tongue among the students is Arabic, about 40 per cent. Tigrinya, Somali and Persian are the second, third and fourth most common mother tongues. About 75 per cent of the students have one of the ten largest languages as their mother tongue. Among the remaining students, almost 160 languages were represented. Syria is the most common country of birth over the past four years. Other common countries of birth are Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and Poland.

Table 1: Number of students, 1997–2017

Year	STUDENTS			NEW STUDENTS		
	Total (N)	Share (%)		Total (N)	Share (%)	
		Women	Men		Women	Men
1997	40 457	60	40	17 815	58	42
1998	36 859	61	39	16 552	59	41
1999	36 176	60	40	15 319	59	41
2000	36 741	60	40	15 994	59	41
2001	41 044	60	40	20 795	57	43
2002	44 723	59	41	20 255	56	44
2003	48 714	59	41	22 647	57	43
2004	50 700	60	40	21 010	59	41
2005	50 759	61	39	20 894	58	42
2006	62 063	58	42	31 109	52	48
2007	73 082	57	43	34 104	52	48
2008	82 110	56	44	36 495	54	46
2009	91 237	57	43	36 090	57	43
2010	96 136	57	43	37 681	54	46
2011	102 434	58	42	38 612	54	46
2012	107 827	57	43	40 091	53	47
2013	113 613	57	43	43 093	52	48
2014	124 750	54	46	48 561	49	51
2015	138 386	52	48	53 027	48	52
2016	150 142	51	49	58 112	46	54
2017	163 175	51	49	63 168	48	52

Source: Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), public statistics

### 5.3.2 Study hours

As noted above, Education Act (SFS 2010:800) stipulates that the Swedish for immigrants education shall on average be at least 15 hours per week during a four-week period. However, the scope of the teaching may be reduced if the student requests it and the school principal finds that it is compatible with the aim of the education. Earlier, there were guidelines that total hours should not exceed 525 hours, but in practice there is no upper limit.

Statistics from the National Agency of Education (Skolverket 2018a) show that those students who began their education in 2015 and completed at least one course with approved results up until 2017 on average studied 501



hours. The number of teaching hours varies greatly depending on the study pathway and which course the student start on. Beginners at course 3D who completed a course studied on average for 159 hours. Beginners at course 1A who completed at least one course studied on average 603 hours. The average time for those of the 2015 students that finished at least one course up until 2017 was 59 weeks. Here too, there are big differences depending on the starting course.

### 5.3.3 Study results

It is very difficult to measure the results, since a drop-out is not necessarily bad. Leaving the Swedish for immigrants education can be due to finding employment, or entering other forms of better-suited educations. In 2017, 37 per cent of the course participants completed a course and 23 per cent interrupted it. In addition, 41 per cent are assumed to continue the course next year.

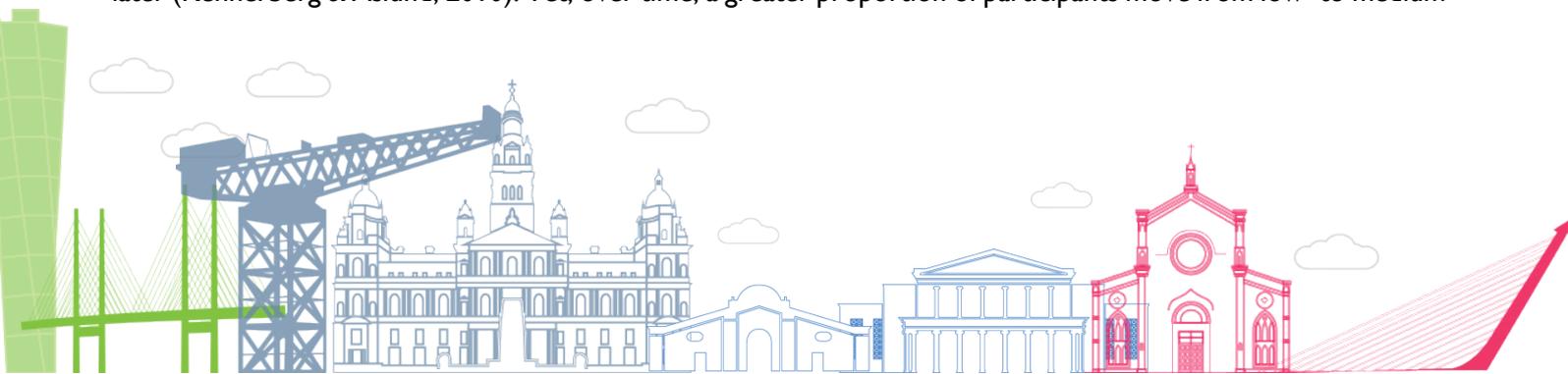
Of the beginners who had their first course start in 2015, 65 per cent achieved final results in at least one course up until 2017. At the same time, 23 percent had interrupted one or more courses without completing any course during these two years. For 12 per cent, there was no information on either completed or interrupted courses and therefore they probably continue their education.

The study results reflect the students' educational backgrounds. Among those entering study pathway 1, course A, only four per cent finished module D within two years, while those entering study pathway 2, course C, 45 per cent finished module D.

Since 2009 there are obligatory national tests at the end of the B, C, and D courses. The tests serve as a support for teachers' assessment and grading, but is not a formal examination. In 2017, there were approximately 22 000 course participants who participated in the B-test, just over 30 000 who participated in the C-test and just over 24 000 who participated in the D-test. About 90 per cent pass the course tests, and are graded from an A to E.

There have been substantial efforts to improve the results of Swedish for immigrants. The government introduced a new course curriculum in 2003 and national exams in 2008 to standardise provision, and earmarked additional funds for Swedish for immigrants teachers' training in the period 2007–2015. In 2010 a national Swedish for immigrants-incentive, a bonus of SEK 10 000:- (€ 1 100) for participants to complete the course early, was introduced. And special commissions have examined whether new arrivals could be encouraged to learn Swedish faster by introducing a time limit on participation or introducing a Swedish for immigrants voucher whereby students could choose their language provider (currently municipalities choose whether to offer the education in-house or subcontract it). So far, these reforms have been met with limited success. The 2003 curricula failed to affect results and the study bonus was terminated in July 2014 after it was shown to have very limited effect (Statskontoret, 2009; Åslund & Engdahl, 2012).

Evidence on what impact the Swedish for immigrants has on labour market participation is somewhat mixed. A year after the completion of Swedish for immigrants, only 36 per cent of participants had an employment (Statskontoret, 2009). Students who dropped out or finished at levels B, C, and D had similar employment rates as non-participants, all higher than students who only finished level A. According to another evaluation, Swedish for immigrants-participants initially have lower employment and earnings than their peers who do not participate, but catch up later (Kennerberg & Åslund, 2010). Yet, over time, a greater proportion of participants move from low- to medium-



skilled occupations. Although participants may have faster upward mobility during a ten-year period, they do not catch up with non-participants when it comes to holding a medium-skilled or skilled job. But the positive result applies only to those who complete the training up to level D. Those who start but do not finish at the highest level have a long-term position on the labour market equivalent to those that do not undertake the education at all.

Despite domestic criticism about the results, some international comparisons indicate that language skills are progressing faster than in most other countries. OECD (2016) use the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) literacy test and compare recent migrants with those that have been in the country for more than five years as an indicator for language learning. The improvement of language skills is among the largest among surveyed countries and suggest that language training is relatively effective in Sweden.

## 5.4 National steering and local experiences of organisation and funding

### 5.4.1 National steering

The education is a mandatory part of the municipal adult education and it is the responsibility of each municipality to enable eligible residents of the municipality to participate in the education. Municipalities shall work actively to reach out to those who have the right to attend the education and motivate them to participate (SFS 2010:800, chapter 20, §§ 28–30, chapter 29, § 6). A person who is eligible can chose to enter Swedish for immigrants as offered by the municipality or as offered by an accredited Folk High School.

The municipality can offer courses through its municipal adult education or through a subcontractor; many choose to procure the service from non-municipal actors (Skolverket, 2018a). As of 2011, it is possible for folk high schools to become providers of the education, if they receive permission from the Swedish School Inspectorate. According to data reported in 2017, 63 per cent of all students study with municipal providers, and 32 per cent study with a subcontractor. In addition, 3 per cent study with folk high schools and 2 per cent with study associations.

*Table 2: Share of students at different Swedish for immigrant-education providers, 2013–2017*

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Municipality (%)</b>	65	67	64	62	63
<b>Folk High School (%)</b>	2	2	3	3	3
<b>Study Association (%)</b>	3	3	6	3	2
<b>Other (%)</b>	30	27	28	32	32
<b>Total number of students (N)</b>	<b>113 613</b>	<b>124 750</b>	<b>138 386</b>	<b>150 142</b>	<b>163 175</b>

*Source: Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), public statistics*

It is up to the municipalities to decide how much of the education they want to organise themselves and how much to procure. Therefore, there are local variations depending on factors such as the size of the municipality and political ideologies. All providers are, nevertheless, expected to deliver the same course. A majority of the 289 municipalities that organises Swedish for immigrants do all the language education in-house, while some solely have subcontracted providers.



In Malmö, one of the two municipalities we are looking more closely at, had in 2017 69 per cent of their 8 673 students at a municipal provider, 18 percent at subcontracted providers and 13 per cent at folk high schools. In 2018, the number of students were fewer, about 5 900. Following the insufficient quality among many of the private service providers, most of the private procurement of the education was stopped during the autumn of 2018 and the students were re-directed to the municipal adult education and folk high schools. There are only two private service providers left (Merit, distance education and Iris Hadar, who support students with impaired vision and hearing).

Generally, municipal adult education is financed through the municipal budget. However, in Sweden refugee reception and integration is financed by the state. This means that there is a system for state compensation to the municipalities for costs related to the reception of new arrivals and their family members, including a special post for language education. Municipalities receive a flat-rate compensation, including expenses for language education, for every person eligible to participate in the Introduction Program (SFS 2010:1122 Förordning om statlig ersättning för insatser för vissa utlänningar).

Table 3: Total municipal costs (in SEK) for Swedish for immigrants, 2014–2017

2014	2015	2016	2017
2 267 373	2 508 566	2 876 348	3 342 648

Source: Statistics Sweden

Expenses for the Swedish for immigrants education has increased a lot in the last ten years, primarily due to growing numbers of students. In 2005, the total costs were less than 0.7 billion SEK, and it reached a billion SEK in 2008. It jumped to 1.8 billion in 2010 and continued to rise to 3.3 billion in 2017. The average cost per students was about SEK 40 000:- in 2017. Historically, the costs have been between SEK 30-40 000:- per student (Regeringen 2013).

#### 5.4.2 Local experiences

The local organisation of Swedish for immigrants varies between municipalities. In Malmö the political responsibility is with the Upper Secondary School and Adult Education Committee (*Gymnasie- och vuxenutbildningsnämnden*) and its administrative department (*Gymnasie- och vuxenutbildningsförvaltningen*) is led by a director of administration who, among other things, is responsible for Swedish for immigrants. Similarly, in Eslöv the political responsibility is with the Upper Secondary School and Adult Education Committee (*Gymnasie- och vuxenutbildningsnämnden*), but the administrative department also serves Children and Family Committee (*Barn- och familjenämnden*) and is named Children and education (*Barn och Utbildning*).

In Malmö, under the director there are nine principals, each responsible for a language school or a special target group among the students. Once a week there is a management meeting between the director and the principals where they discuss goals, pedagogical issues, budget, collaborations (especially with the Public Employment Service), and coordination within the Introduction Program. When a new arrival sign-up with Public Employment Service, the person is referred to the guidance centre (*Vägledningscentrum*) that functions as an entry point to all language



education in the municipality. After being registered, the student meet with a guidance counsellor who make a short background mapping on educational background and a linguistic assessment. An individual study plan is designed, based on the students' needs. The most basic classification is whether a student is to be placed in pathway 1, 2, or 3. There is one common queue for the entire municipality and the student is directed to a specific school by the administration. Thus, the students are not free to choose. If a student wants to study at a folk high school, he/she must make an active choice when meeting the guidance counsellor.

In Eslöv, the students start with a five weeks introduction class, where they assess educational background and a linguistic assessment, make an individual study plan, and then refer the student to the appropriate level. Eslöv does not offer all courses on all pathways. Thus, pathway 1 students that finish module A, study together with pathway 2 students. And pathway 2 students that finish module B study together with pathway 3 students in module C. This is considered a big problem in Eslöv, since the pedagogics is not suitable for pathway 1 students.

*They don't have the right prerequisites to manage the requirements in module B. It is not right, I think. They are stressed about all tests. The goals should be more modest, to read a time table or how to phone the health care center. Persons on pathway 1 are very different, and does not fit in the generic curriculum.*

In both Malmö and Eslöv they seek to conform to the national regulations. They had the same view that language education should be prioritised before employment; they both also experience that pathway 1 students stand out in many respects and that it takes years for them to reach basic knowledge of Swedish language. Case workers in Malmö and Eslöv have varying experiences of the collaboration between the Public Employment Service and Swedish for immigrants. At the point of the interviews, in Malmö they were rather satisfied while in Eslöv they more critical. Moreover, with fewer students, Eslöv municipality doesn't have the same possibilities to cater to all needs. In Malmö there are more specialised classes. Another difference is that Malmö seems to try have a more inclusive policy. While Malmö work to keep as many students as possible in language training, in Eslöv they need to make priorities due to the limited capacity. An effect of this is that they tend to discharge students with slow progression. *"How far should we adapt the language training to help them? There are examples where it is obvious that the student never will pass the B-module, and there are others waiting to start. Then we have to refer the student to something else"*. Other situations where the municipality need to prioritise is in the enrolment. *"Should we enrol young persons with their whole life in front of them, or should we enrol the old woman to learn how to read and write? These are the kinds of conflicts that arise, and it is the coordinator that decides. It doesn't feel good, because there are persons that don't fit the system."* Prioritisations like this mostly happens when old students resurface. For newly arrived immigrants the legislation strongly protects their right to language training within the 3 months of settlement, and the new arrivals in the Introduction Program should enter a language course within one month (see the act regulating the Introduction Program, SFS 2017:584).



Table 4: Share of students that completed a course, Eslöv, Malmö and Sweden in 2017

Level	Eslöv	Malmö	Sweden
1A.		25	32
1B.	39	20	22
1C.		5	7
1D.		7	14
2B.	41	29	38
2C.	23	28	34
2D.		17	20
3C.	47	30	35
3D.	62	43	49

Table 5: Average number of hours for those that finished a course, Eslöv, Malmö and Sweden in 2017

Level	Eslöv	Malmö	Sweden
1A.	219	331	262
1B.	247	462	349
1C.		280	148
1D.		325	156
2B.	264	291	247
2C.	265	331	260
2D.		188	124
3C.	370	335	229
3D.	312	246	179

A part of the explanation for the prioritisation in Eslöv might be the local funding system. In Eslöv, the budget allocates a lump sum every year for adult education and then it is up to the adult education administration to decide how much that is going to be spent on Swedish for immigrants. In other municipalities, like Malmö, the Swedish for immigrants-organiser receives compensation per person or hours of teaching. The Eslöv compensation model is, according to the principal, problematic. “We often have the same amount of money independent of the number of students”. During the first years of the ‘refugee crisis’ Eslöv could manage anyway since most of those that settled in Eslöv were highly skilled, motivated and finished the training quickly. ‘It is much harder now’, the principal told us. “Many arrive with multiple problems and we could use specialized staff and counsellors to meet the needs”. By contrast, Malmö has increased the hours in language training above the minimum requirement, spend more money on every student, and have more differentiated classes. However, these higher costs are not reflected in the results. Tables 4 and 5 show that more students in Eslöv finish courses and the ones who finish a course do so in less hours which, in turn, might depend on a higher share of highly skilled new arrivals.

Another aspect of the organisation regards procuring and the folk high schools. The policy for outsourcing language training to private contractors and civil society organisations in Malmö has changed recently. The city of Malmö previously had decided that half of the language education should be organised by the municipality and half procured from private organisations and companies. After a TV-program in 2018 criticising low quality and possible fraud



among some private Swedish for immigrants-companies, Malmö did their own follow-up that confirmed these problems. When the contracts expired later in the year of 2018, the city decided to provide all language education in-house, with a few exceptions. In January 2019, at the time of our interview, there were about 5 000 students in-house, and about 1 000–1 200 students in folk high schools.

There are nine folk high schools in Malmö, some of them specialised on specific groups of students. The Hyllie Park Folk High School, for example, specialises on study pathway I-students and offer mother tongue assisted language training while others offer language training for specific professions. The Merit School in Malmö is an option for those that want to study by correspondence and Iris Hadar has courses for students with hearing and visual impairments.

In Eslöv they used to have all language education in-house. The last couple of years, about half of students are at folk high schools. Folk high schools are often used to cater to special needs and to live up to the requirement of flexibility. The language education at the Eslöv Folk High School was preceded by introduction classes (*Etableringskurs på folkhögskola*). An introduction class is not a language education, but a labour market measure that includes language training. It lasts for six months and is a measure for refugees with no or short educational background (see also Lindell et al. 2017). After the introduction class, the Public Employment Service often refer the new arrival to Swedish for immigrants, meaning that in practice, the introduction class prepare the participants for studies in Swedish.

### 5.5 Collaboration in a regional and local perspective

While municipal adult education is the responsibility of municipalities, several bodies at both national and local levels are involved in the implementation. The National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) is a state agency with overall responsibility for the Swedish education system, including Swedish for immigrants. They do follow-ups and evaluate the education system and report to the government. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) is responsible for the supervision and quality review of all schools in Sweden. County Administrative Boards (*Länsstyrelserna*) have the task to coordinate integration measures on the regional level. They dispose state funds to develop and support cooperation and to enable more efficient and flexible Swedish for immigrants through collaborations is given priority. From the perspective of this report, here specifically language education for new arrivals, the Swedish Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) is relevant too, since they coordinate the Introduction Program, and to which the Swedish for immigrants education is an important component.

Below we shall discuss collaboration in a vertical and horizontal perspective as this was experienced in the localities of our study.



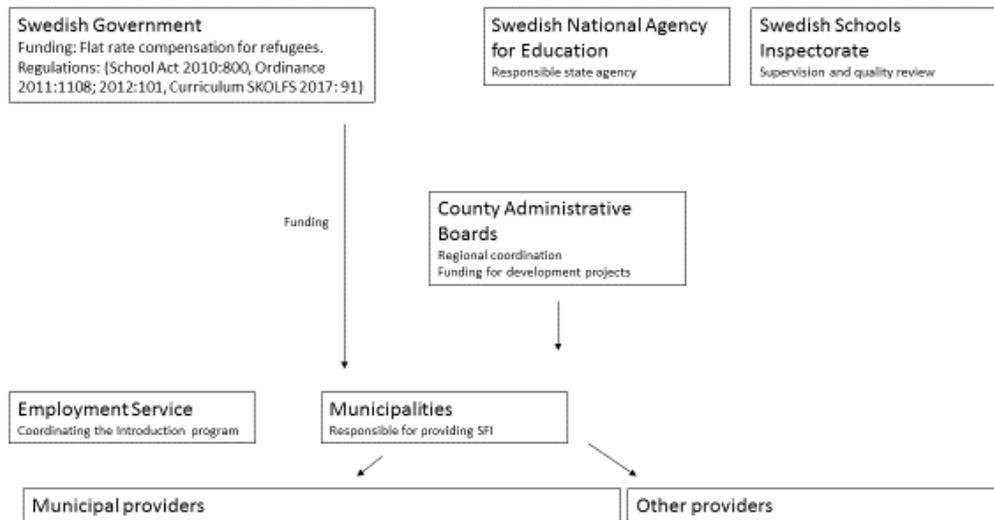


Figure 2: National organisation of Swedish for immigrants for new arrivals

### 5.5.1 Regional collaboration

On the regional level in Skåne, the County Administrative Board has a responsibility to coordinate and develop measures for new arrivals on the regional level. Regional cooperation and development is seen as necessary for pooling resources and the tailored provision of language training for specific groups of refugees. Not every municipality have the resources, know how, and enough participants to organize, for example, language training for chefs or plumbers, or to differentiate courses based on previous skills. However, since many different state, municipal and private actors are involved the administrative barriers can be large, especially for allocation of costs (Iberdemaj, 2014).

There are two well-known regional models for combining language training and vocational education: The Gävle and the Stockholm models. In the Gävle-model language training is incorporated into ordinary vocational training programs provided by the Swedish Public Employment Service (Berg, 2013). The Stockholm model is a cooperation between the adult education organisations in Stockholm municipalities, where different municipalities specialise in specific professions (Herrera, 2011). In a report on the development of vocational education in combination with Swedish for immigrants, they note that there is no aggregate statistics for these kinds of programs in the Skåne region. In 2014 they further note that there currently is no formal cooperation between municipalities, but a wish to develop such a cooperation (Iberdemaj, 2014). In our interviews, we did not encounter any regional cooperation.

It is plausible that the combination of local responsibility and lack of regional cooperation contributes to a variation of quality of language training and education between municipalities. Well-developed language training and education is often dependent on large numbers of participants or students that can be designated to classes according to specific needs. In smaller municipalities with few and diverse immigrant populations, specialisation is often not possible.



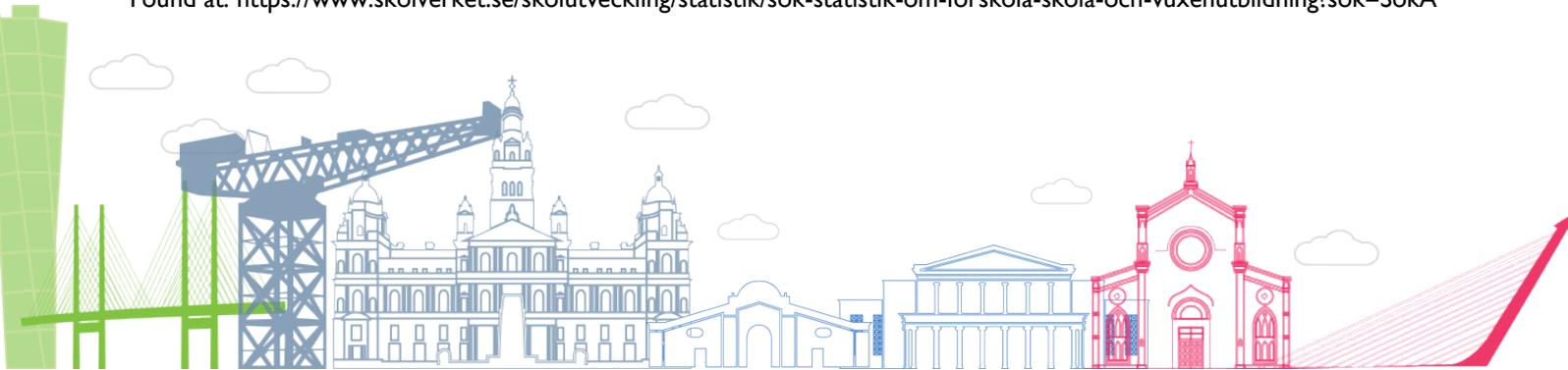
### 5.5.2 Vertical collaboration

As we have shown in the section about the historical development, the state regulations about how to conduct language education on the local level have increased over time. Ambitions to individualise Swedish for immigrants has led to new requirements, such as differentiated study pathways and flexible teaching hours. Requirements to have authorised teachers in Swedish as a second language has been introduced and strengthened over time. National tests and standardised grades, as well as requirements to have a principal responsible for the education is also relatively new regulations that municipalities need to comply with. The ambitions from the state is to have a standardised national model of Swedish for immigrants that is similar across the country. The governance model is clearly a top down model with local level implementation. The model is supported by two state agencies. The National Agency for Education is in charge of the details of the curriculum. They also have a mission to follow up and evaluate Swedish for immigrants, where they write yearly reports on the personnel and students (Skolverket, 2018a, 2019) and collect a lot of statistics that is publicly available<sup>1</sup>. The abundance of statistical information about costs, students per teacher, type of provider, drop-out rates, and student results are used as indicators for benchmarking and is a form of soft governance. The School Inspectorate conduct quality reviews in municipalities every few years that occasionally is compiled in national reports on how municipalities live up to the ambitions decided by the state and state agencies. In 2017 the School Inspectorate did supervision reports in the two municipalities we focus on, Malmö and Eslöv (Skolinspektionen, 2017a, 2017b). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate was very critical of the Swedish for immigrants education in Eslöv and ordered the municipality to comply with national regulations. In short, the education was not considered sufficiently flexible to meet each student's needs, the education was not offered throughout the year, and there was a lack of student counselling. A follow-up report six month later showed that the municipality now complied with national standards. According to our informants, the requirements to offer individualised and flexible language training is still an issue that poses problems in Eslöv. They try to comply, but think that the ideas and principles have negative consequences on the education. A quote from the principal illustrates:

*Different needs and life situations poses tremendous requirements for the teachers. There are persons that work, are trainees, are studying outside the municipality. To cater to all needs are difficult. Some have trauma. The teacher has a group of 20-25 students. Some come to class, others not. Some come on Monday, others on Tuesday. Students come and go. What the teachers do on Monday are followed up on Tuesday, but there are a different set of students present. It is too messy. Level three students can cope better because they have study technique. Others just sit there and are not motivated to learn. I don't believe in the idea of flexibility.*

The supervision report on Malmö drew attention to other types of quality problems. The critique was that not everyone who have the right to participate were offered Swedish for immigrants-education, and that the possibilities to study was not advertised actively. Thus, the problems were a lack of encouragement and access. This is recognised in our interviews, where some say that they had problems to provide language training within the three-month limit during the 'refugee crisis' and its aftermath. Another factor adding to the bulk in waiting line for access to Swedish for immigrants is that it is not only the newly arrived refugees that need access, but also persons who arrived earlier. For different reasons, including pregnancy, parenting, work, illness, etc., people might prolong the Swedish for immigrants-studies over many years. A person who is part of the Introduction Program has the right to enter Swedish for immigrants within one month from the date of the application whereas for other applicants

<sup>1</sup> Found at: <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/sok-statistik-om-forskola-skola-och-vuxenutbildning?sok=SokA>



this time frame is three months. Malmö was also not approved did at the follow-up six month later, and by January 2019 they were back within the three-month limit. In 2019 the Schools Inspectorate also reviewed the language training at a folk high school in Malmö with 500 students and found nothing to complain about (Skolinspektionen 2019). These examples show that there is a quite strong enforcement of national standards at the local level.

Our interviews with directors, principals and teachers of adult education in Eslöv and Malmö confirm a national model of language training for new arrivals that is supported at the local level. There are few contradictions and conflicts between the local and national levels. Most, if not all, of our informants support the reforms made on the national level. Reforms are decided on the national level and local municipalities try to the best of their ability to implement them. The local level is also responsive to ideas expressed on the national level, as expressed by one director of adult education: *“local politicians are very responsive to the national debate. What is discussed nationally have local consequences. It is about more requirements, ensuring progression, and a labour market focus.”* (2019-01-21). Even though local politicians tend to conform with state regulations and ambitions, one can find differences in priorities and focus on the local level between those civil servants responsible for labour market and social services on one side and language training professionals such as Swedish for immigrants -teachers and principals on the other side. More about these conflicting goals later.

### 5.5.3 Horizontal collaboration

As a large share of the students in the Swedish for immigrants education, study as part of their individual Introduction Plan. The Introduction Plan typically stipulate other activities as well, and it must be filled with full time activities for a maximum of 24 months, and there are clear state directions that activities should be parallel and not in sequence. It is in the view of this that the collaboration between Public Employment Service and the Swedish for immigrants education is crucial.

The cooperation between the city of Malmö and the Public Employment Service is, according to most of our informants, working well. The agreement is that the participants study Swedish for immigrants in the morning and the Public Employment Service refer the new arrivals to other activities after lunch. Exceptions are made. After negotiations with the Public Employment Service some study pathway I-students are now allowed to study language full time. Still, the fact that it is the Public Employment Service that have the formal responsibility for the Introduction Program makes the coordination of activities difficult, and this can have negative consequences for Swedish for immigrants providers and students. This is reflected upon at the administration office (*Vägledningscentrum*) where Swedish for immigrants participants are interviewed regarding their educational background and registered for Swedish for immigrants on a corresponding level.

*When there is an opportunity for a participant to enter an internship or work, the Public Employment Service might interrupt the language education activities for that individual, which may cause delays re-entering the language education. “We [the administration office] do not have a lot of contact with the Public Employment Service and we have no obligation to report to them. But sometimes there might be a need for us to communicate. Sometimes the Employment Service plan for a participant to enter an internship and this might not fit the schedule [for the language course] and the person gets behind at the language education and might give up. And sometimes the participant will have to resign from the education and get back in the waiting line to re-enter the language education. (181214)*



One potential consequence for the individual is a prolonged progression to learn Swedish. Another is related to the fact that the Introduction Program is limited to 24 months. This might affect the incitement to attend Swedish language course later when economic situation might be less beneficial.

From the perspective of the director, principals and teachers in Malmö, the 2010 introduction reform has affected the language training negatively, especially for those with no or little educational background who study on pathway 1. Previously they could concentrate on learning the language, now there are other activities as well which make students more fragmented and stressed. Some students want to concentrate only on the language, but that is not possible anymore. But it is not all bad. Now they, for example, have professional counsellors present at the Swedish for immigrants schools. Due to the 2010 introduction program, principals are also cooperating more closely with the Public Employment Service.

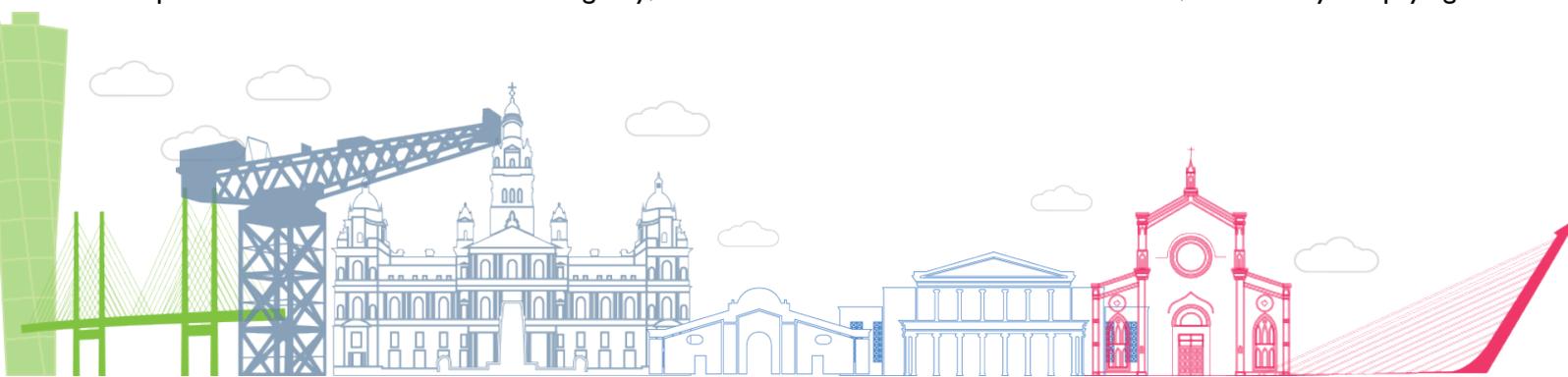
*Now, considering the introduction reform [of 2010], there is so much else going on outside of language education, which I do not always know what it is. I can feel that they can feel fragmented and stressed. Some of our students have said that it would be nice to have Swedish for immigrants all day, so that they can be in one place, just focusing on the language. A lot of the students are requested elsewhere. It's not only due to the introduction reform. Also, the labour market administration in Malmö can have plans for the students. I sometimes feel that the students should be left alone. It could be that they start here and it works well and then the Public Employment Service says that they have found an internship. But they are still on the A-module and they need more language skills. (2019-01-11)*

In Eslöv, our informants are overall more critical about the horizontal coordination. Some of the teachers we spoke to said that they have no cooperation with anyone. Cooperation between the Public Employment Service and Swedish for immigrants is supposed to be handled by the principal, and she is not satisfied either. According to her, students can suddenly say that they are starting another activity. Coordination with the Public Employment Service is characterized by *ad hoc* solutions.

*Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. They are a partner, but not on equal terms. The Public Employment Service has the power to decide. When the student is enrolled in the Introduction Program, decisions are made that we feel are wrong. Some problems could be solved if they had contacted us. Some case workers do, others don't. They decide that a student on pathway 1 should train to be a bus driver, and they don't speak to us, and wonder why that person doesn't manage the education. It's not very efficient.*

One teacher with pathway 2 students is slightly less critical about the cooperation with the Public Employment Service. *"Most of the time cooperation works well. The Employment Service try to tailor an individual plan for every newly arrived so they have Swedish for immigrant and other activities. Sometimes it conflicts with language education. It could have been better"* (2019-01-28c). The same teacher also tells us that the civic orientation classes tend to conflict with language training. *"Some students have civic orientation on Fridays, and then they are absent from class"*.

Previously in Eslöv, they had three-part conferences every six weeks between Swedish for immigrants, the Public Employment Service and the Social Services. They could discuss individual cases of slow progression or absence of leave. These meetings have stopped, but there are talks to start them up again. In Eslöv they also mention a lack of cooperation with the Social Insurance Agency, who don't ask about the attendance in class, even if they are paying



the introduction benefit. The idea behind the introduction benefit is that it is dependent on active participation, and if there is no communication between the agency that pay compensation and the service provider, this idea is not implemented in practice.

## 5.6 Contested areas in the local implementation of Swedish for immigrants

Two contested topics arose significantly in the conversations in both municipalities. The topics are the balance between a labour market and a language focus, and how to handle students with no or low educational background from their home countries.

### 5.6.1 Language education vs. labour market training

Faster labour market integration for immigrants, especially newly arrived, through parallel activities of both language education and labour market training has been the emphasis in political debates for years. The 2010-reform of the introduction program made it possible for new arrivals to participate in different activities with the same benefit, the introduction allowance. Previously, it was difficult to combine activities from the Public Employment Service, municipalities, adult education and regular employment, since these have different regulations and systems for financing the participant. In 2016, Swedish for immigrants was fully integrated into the general adult education and this made it possible to combine Swedish for immigrants and other activities with regular courses in adult education, such as mathematics or English language. While reforms of national legislation have made parallel activities possible, the coordination is done on the local level. So far, the effects of the integration of Swedish for immigrants into adult education are minor. Some mention that a few students now study other adult education courses in parallel with language training, especially maths and English.

In our interviews, language education professionals are not supportive of parallel activities and do not think it is an efficient method for achieving long-term labour market integration. Here we see a possible tension between the state, local politicians and the Public Employment Service on the one side, and language-education professionals on the other. However, since the Public Employment Service is the authority of the Introduction Program and Swedish for immigrants get their mission from local politicians, they can do little to change the situation. From the perspective of the director, principals and teachers this has affected the language education negatively, especially for those with no or short educational background who study on pathway I. Previously they could concentrate on learning the language, now there are other activities as well which make students more fragmented and stressed.

*Now, considering the introduction reform, there is so much else going on outside of language training, which I do not always know what it is. I feel that they can feel fragmented and stressed. Some of our students have said that it would be nice to have sfi all day, so that they can be in one place, just focusing on the language. A lot of the students are requested elsewhere. It's not only due to the establishment reform. Also the labour market administration in Malmö can have plans for the students. I sometimes feel that the students should be left alone. It could be that they start here and it works well and then the Employment Service say that they have found an internship. But they are still on the A-level and they need more language skills. (2019-01-11)*

In Malmö, the director for adult education advocate for a stronger focus on education. He is convinced that Swedish for immigrants-students must continue their educational career also after Swedish for immigrants to reach 12 years of formal education, the level needed on the Swedish labour market. Progression is the key, he says: *"It is not*



*enough to reach module B, or even module C or D. All research shows that upper secondary education is needed to succeed on the Swedish labour market.”* He sees one of his most important missions as a director, to convince the political leadership about the importance of education for this group.

The director for adult education confirms the trend towards more employment focus, also within adult education in general. For example, the city council decided in 2015 that the goal for adult education in Malmö is to promote economic self-sufficiency. He is not entirely positive to the work-first focus. The goal should be to reach upper secondary education. *“What will happen in the next recession”,* he asks rhetorically. *“Let our students be students, everybody will benefit from that”,* he adds. *“You need a good level of language skills to manage.”*

*We in this profession notice that the employers are dissatisfied with this fast track to the labour market. Combining language education and labour market activities is here to stay. But we have overestimated the possibility to start already at the b-module. All we get is disappointments among employers. And if employers are disappointed, this entire system for labour market integration dies, and I already see that. (2019-01-21)*

Professionals in Malmö and Eslöv are in agreement. *“Our focus is that they shall learn the language. The Employment Service focus is that they shall work”,* one teacher said. During the introduction period, the requirement is full time activities. For many this is seen as bad, and another teacher said that many students are tired and even exhausted, which hinders them in their language education. Parallel activities mean that few finish the education, a teacher explains. She wishes that the first year or two should only focus on language education. *“Give them a chance to study, and increase the hours to 20–25 per week. Give people a chance to pass Swedish for immigrants, and then introduce other activities”.*

### 5.6.2 Pathway 1-students

Everyone emphasise the special challenges for pathway 1-students and mean that the question about illiteracy among adults has been ignored. Students with no or short educational background is a growing group, as well as pathway 2 students. *“Study pathway 1 is a huge problem”,* the director in Malmö told us in the interview. It is the pathway 1-students that ends up alienated and excluded from society. It is a huge challenge since this group is large in Malmö, about one third of all students. Few pathway 1-students continue up to the C and D courses. In Malmö they try to improve the student counselling, and provide the students with two extra hours per week. They also work with specialized teams, schools and principals for pathway 1-students.

Pathway 1-students are less affected by policy reforms. These students are taught in a different environment, with different pedagogical methods, and from a long-term perspective. One difference between Eslöv and Malmö is that pathway 1-students in Eslöv do not have support in mother tongue teaching. However, the interviews indicate that many teachers are multilingual, which is seen as an advantage. In both municipalities they have little hope for the future possibilities of this group of students. Most activities in the Introduction Program are not suitable for pathway 1-students. *“For those with no or short education there are not a lot you can do”,* as one interview person told us.

While students on pathway 3 can finish the language education in six months, pathway 1-students tend to stay in language education for 4–5 years. The 24-month Introduction Program, where the state is responsible for funding,



is way too short for pathway 1-students, or even pathway 2-students. The municipalities then have to pay for additional years of language education while the students are on social allowance from the municipal Social Services.

## 5.7 Gender dimensions

Gender-related issues were almost never mentioned spontaneously in our interviews. Neither Malmö or Eslöv have any separate classes for women or men. We had to ask specifically about the topic, and even then, our informants had a hard time reflecting on the issue. Age and health are more pressing issues. *“It is a challenge that many are older”*; one level 1 teacher in Eslöv told us when we asked about gender: *“They have pain everywhere. They have ailments. They have experienced a lot and feel so bad. Then it is difficult to learn and remember.”*

One teacher said that women are disadvantaged because they don't have the same possibilities to study at home. They are responsible for the household, for food, cleaning and children. Women are motivated to study, but sometime doesn't have the right home conditions. Men have better opportunities, but only want to work. Women are, overall, better students, another informant said. Especially among those with no or short education, women seem more eager to study and learn. They *“have a better flow through the system”*. They complete their studies more often, and continue with education to traditional women professions, such as nurses or day-care staff.

On the other hand, statistics indicate inequality between men and women. These inequalities are in part related to the fact that female new arrivals, particularly among the persons who arrived to Sweden in 2015 and onward, have a shorter educational background than the men who arrived in the same period. In effect, more women than men are referred to language introduction programs within the study associations or study Swedish for immigrants in study pathway I, and they face a long way to pass Swedish for immigrants and to enter other educational programs. But it is not only the educational background of new arrivals that have an impact. New arrivals who reside in Malmö and Eslöv and who are part of the Introduction Program also tend to be differentiated according to gender and in relation to occupation. More men than women are referred to work or internship instead of Swedish for immigrants. This follows a national trend in the management of the Introduction Program. The number of women who are referred to work rise slightly.

## 6. 'Language Introduction' in Upper Secondary Education

Children who have arrived to Sweden from another country and started school in Sweden after the regular school start for children, are regarded newly arrived students (*nyanlända elever*), independently of their legal status and reason of migration. After four years in the Swedish school system, the child is not regarded a new arrival anymore. Obviously, this categorization of new arrivals diverges from the one applied in regulations of the Public Employment Service and the Introduction Program. In this report, our focus is limited to language training and education for children aged 16 years or more. In the Swedish school system this involves the upper secondary school (*gymnasieskolan*).

The upper secondary education offers national programs (*nationella program*) and introduction programs (*introduktionsprogram*). A person with domicile registration (*folkbokföring*) in Sweden and who has completed compulsory education can enter upper secondary education until the spring semester of the year he/she turns 20 years. Introduction programs are provided for persons who have not completed compulsory education and are not



eligible to enter a national program. There is a wide range of national programs, including programs that prepare students for working life and for higher education. There are four introduction programs, including one that is specifically targeted towards newly arrived students: Language Introduction (*Språkintröduktion*). In this part of the report we focus on this education.

Below we first describe how admittance to the Language Introduction is regulated. After this follows a description of the content of the education is regulated and how this, in spite of national regulation, varies between municipalities and schools. We then describe how the number of students fluctuate over time and, building on interviews, how the Language Introduction is experienced in Malmö.

## 6.1 Admittance for newly arrived students with varying legal status

Admittance to upper secondary education is regulated in the School Act (SFS 2010:800, ch. 15). Admittance is the same for introduction and national programs. Persons with a (permanent or temporary) residence permit and who are registered domicile have the same rights to the education as other persons registered domicile in Sweden. This means that they can enter a program until the spring semester the year they turn 20 years. They cannot, however, as interpreted by the Swedish National Agency for Education, enter a national program in the second half of that year (Skolverket 2018c, p. 12). Asylum seekers, sans papier, and persons with a residence permit that does not allow domicile registration can enter upper secondary education before they turn 18 years. If the person has entered an introduction or national program, he or she has right to complete the education, also after the age of 18 years, but has no right to enter a new education on an introduction or national program after that age. However, the School Act does not prevent municipalities from offering this to their residents (Skolverket 2018c, p. 12).

### 6.1.1 The upper secondary education act (*Gymnasielagen*)

The so-called upper secondary education act (*Gymnasielagen*) was first introduced in 2017 (SFS 2017:353). It regards rejected asylum seekers, who applied for asylum before 24 November 2015 as an unaccompanied minor. As implemented in 2017, it meant that rejected asylum seekers under the age of 18 years and who could not be deported due to their age, could be granted a temporary residence permit so that he or she could complete their upper secondary education. In addition, if the person managed to secure an employment and become self-sustained after completion of upper secondary education, he or she could apply for a permanent residence permit. In July 2018 the regulation was revised, so that it enabled persons who applied for asylum before 24 November 2015 as unaccompanied minors, who had waited for more than 15 months and was over the age of 18 years when the rejection arrived, to be granted a residence permit so that upper secondary school could be completed. The residence permit lasted for 13 months, but could be transformed to a permanent residence permit if the person found an employment and was self-sustained within six months after completion of upper secondary school (see Lagrådsremiss 19 mars 2018; Prop. 2017/18:252). The law was critiqued, among other things, for putting too much pressure on teachers who were to assess whether the studies are 'serious'.

Since it is the municipality that is responsible for providing the Language Introduction, including establishing an individual plan about the length, it is unsurprising that this varies locally. This local variation might have far-reaching consequences for the individual, including determining access to residence permit.



## 6.2 National regulation and local variation

The language introduction program was introduced in 2011 through the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), when it replaced the “Introduction course for immigrants”. One aim was to increase the national equality for students as the quality of the program differed between municipalities and schools. In 2019 a change in the regulations (SFS 2010:2039, ch. 6, § 8) established that provision of Swedish language and Swedish as a second language education should be the focus of the program during an initial period of time. After that period the focus should be on subjects necessary for entering a national program in upper secondary school.

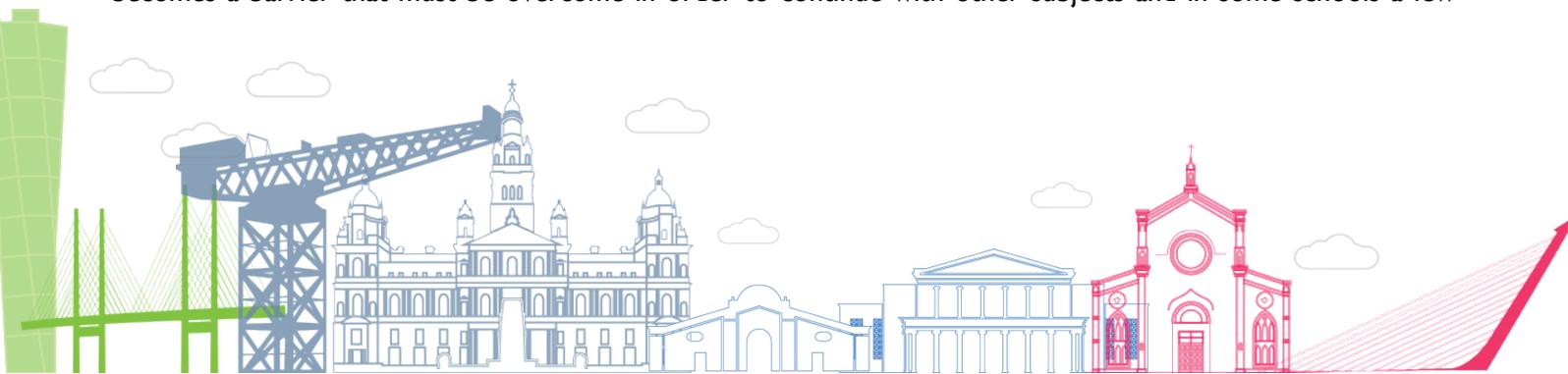
Language Introduction is part of the upper secondary education. It is regulated through national law and evaluated and monitored by state authorities. The documents that govern the Language Introduction are the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), the Education Ordinance (SFS 2010:2039) and the Ordinance about Curricula of the Upper Secondary School (SKOLFS 2011:144).

Municipalities are responsible to secure the provision of national and introduction programs, but they can be organized through municipal or private schools. Introduction programs do not have specified examination objectives (*examensmål*), instead the Education Act (2010:800) stipulates that the municipality shall establish an individual plan for each student in the introduction program. The education shall be offered at full time, equivalent to national programs in the upper secondary education. In hours, this imply a minimum of 23 hours per week, which is equivalent to the national programs in vocational education (SFS 2010:800, ch. 17, § 6). The municipality is responsible to map and evaluate each students’ knowledge in Swedish language as well as prior educational and work experiences, and the plan shall be student centred and specify the length of the program, its main content and purpose. It shall also allow for relevant actors, such as the school, social services and student health providers to cooperate.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the school to provide all students that complete the Language Introduction with a plan for continued education or labour market integration (SKOLFS 2011:144). Continued studies for students in the Language Introduction typically involves: another introduction program (for instance focused on vocational training) or a national program in the upper secondary education, studies at a folk high schools, or Swedish for immigrants or other municipal adult education.

Every year the Swedish Schools Inspectorate evaluates the quality of the Language Introduction. These evaluations show that the quality of the education varies between municipalities and schools. Among other things, the Swedish School Inspectorate concludes that municipalities and principals must improve access to subjects other than the Swedish language (Skolinspektionen 2017c). Further to this, the School Inspectorate critiques insufficient mapping of students’ prior knowledge and that there is the lack of individual focus; the education seems to be organised in relation to the availability of staff and space, rather than individual needs of the students, which lead to a slower learning progress. Further to this, there is a lack in the provision of support in mother tongue languages, which may also have negative impact on progress (see also Skolverket 2016; 2018c).

Despite a stronger focus on the importance of parallel studies, studying the Swedish language for a shorter time and then introduce other subjects and the importance of using mother tongue for a more effective learning process, there are differences in how schools interpret this. In some schools insufficient proficiency in Swedish language becomes a barrier that must be overcome in order to continue with other subjects and in some schools a few



subjects are introduced early. Many students experience that they want to study more subjects and more hours (Skolverket 2016).

### 6.3 The students

The students in the Language Introduction is a heterogeneous group in relation to age, mother tongue language, literacy, educational background, and much more. Some of the students have been workers when they start their education in Sweden. At the current situation, many of the students have arrived to Sweden as unaccompanied minors. The students in the Introduction Program reflects the immigration of children. The graph below, illustrates the registered asylum seekers aged 15–20 years during the years 2011–2017. Year 2015 stands out as a peak.

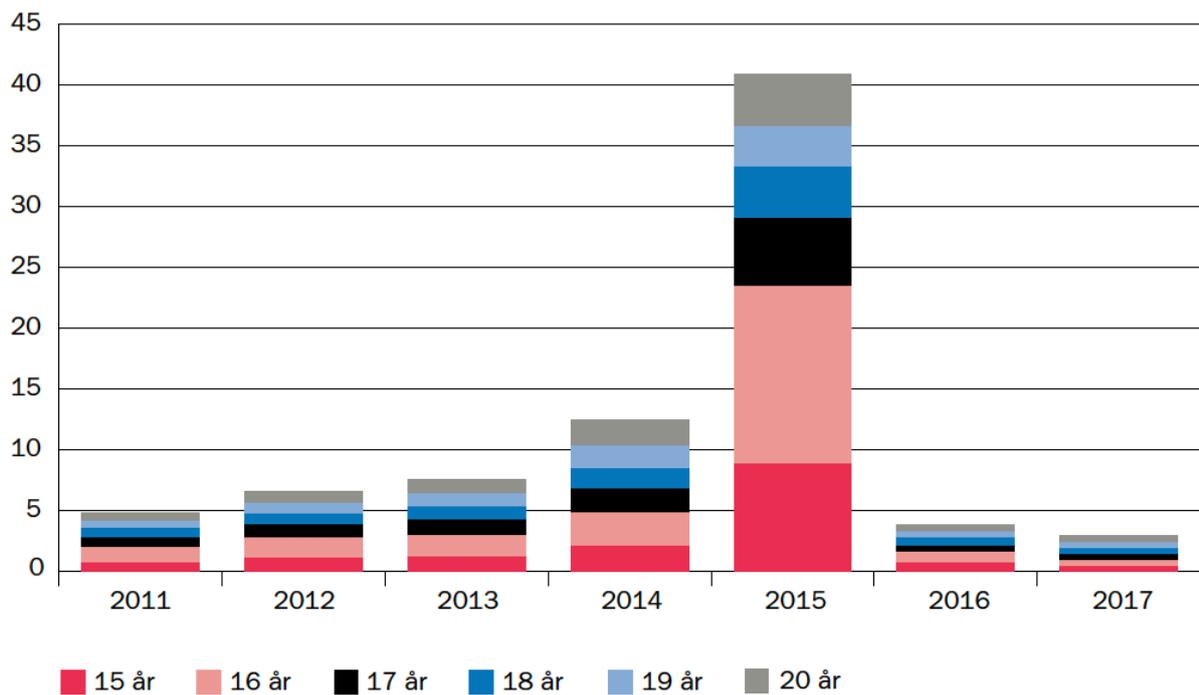


Figure 3. Number of persons aged 15–20 years (år) registered in the refugee reception system, 2011–2017; Source: Skolverket 2018c, p. 26 (builds on statistics from the Swedish Migration Agency)

The number of students in the Language Introduction grew in the period from 2011 to 2016, both in numbers and as share of introduction program and as share of upper secondary school. In 2016 the students in the Language Introduction constituted 10 per cent of all students in upper secondary school.



Table 6: Students in the Language Introduction, fall 2011–2017. Number of students, share of students of the introduction program and share of students of the upper secondary school

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Number of students</b>	7 586	9 871	12 093	13 966	18 863	35 863	32 185
<b>Share (%) of all students in introduction program</b>	34	32	35	38	44	60	54
<b>Share (%) of all students in upper secondary school</b>	2	3	4	4	6	10	9

Source: Skolverket 2018c, p. 28

In 2017 the number of students started to decrease (Skolverket 2018c). This pattern corresponds to the number of children who applied for asylum in Sweden during the same period, from 2011 there was a gradual increase with a peak in 2015. In 2015 a total of 70 384 children applied for asylum in Sweden, out of these, 35 369 were unaccompanied minors. When the number of applications decrease in 2016, the number of students in the Language Introduction decrease as well, but in the urban regions of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö the situation is less sensitive to this.

#### 6.4 Local experiences of Language Introduction – the case of Malmö

The language introduction program is open for asylum seekers at the age of 16-18 and persons at the age of 16-20 with a residence permit another language than Swedish as a mother tongue. Irregular migrants also have access since children in Sweden have the rights to go to school. The language introduction program is administratively a part of the upper secondary education but is a preparation for students to enter a national upper secondary program. The municipality is responsible for the organization. In Malmö the introduction program is executed through the municipality, where the introductory part (start and middle level that corresponding to third and sixth grade in elementary school) is offered at the school Norra Sorgenfri. A continuing program at some of the municipal upper secondary schools in Malmö, some have more general theoretic profiles and other have specific profession profiles such as restaurant, health care, child care, technique and transport. Additionally, there are private and third sector performers. Before 2015 the number of students in the language introduction program in Malmö were about 350 and since then the number of students has been about 850 per year. At Norra Sorgenfri there are 450 students, a majority are boys, at the continuing programs about 150 students and about 200 students study at the introduction courses organized by third sector or private performers. There are three levels depending on the prior knowledge of Swedish.

The majority of students at Norra Sorgenfri are at the two lowest levels but some years there are differences in the cohorts, in 2017-2018 a large part of the students advanced faster and their knowledge in Swedish was actually at the highest level. As the continuing programs in the upper secondary schools were full the students had to stay at Norra Sorgenfri and continue their studies in the other subjects there, some of the students could then enter directly in to national programs in the upper secondary school. In the year of 2018-2019 the new students are the two lower levels. Although there is no clear explanation to these differences in level and progression in the student cohorts over time but factors such as prior education background knowledge of reading and writing in the mother tongue language are important.



The age of the student when entering the introduction program is crucial in regards to the future study options. As the language introduction program has a course plan for only one year a student that is 19 years old will only have access to the introduction language course for one year and then be transferred to an adult education program (SFI/KomVux). The consequences are economic and pedagogical as the student will receive no funding for a secondary upper education but is referred to student loans and work. Additionally, the studies are more demanding at the adult education and that might be a challenge for students that face difficulties such as having arrived to Sweden as an unaccompanied minor, the lack of a family context and problems with accommodation. Thus, a student who is at the age of 17 when entering the program will have possibilities to continue a three-year program in an upper secondary school with funding and substantial pedagogic support.

The short course plan for the Language Introduction causes issues in relation to students who wish to apply for a Swedish temporary residence permit through “The upper secondary school law” (Gymnasielagen), that allows students to continue and finish their studies at that level. Formally, according to Swedish law, the entrance to the Language Introduction provides ground for a permit but not in Malmö.

The principal at Norra Sorgenfri describes some of the challenges organising the education:

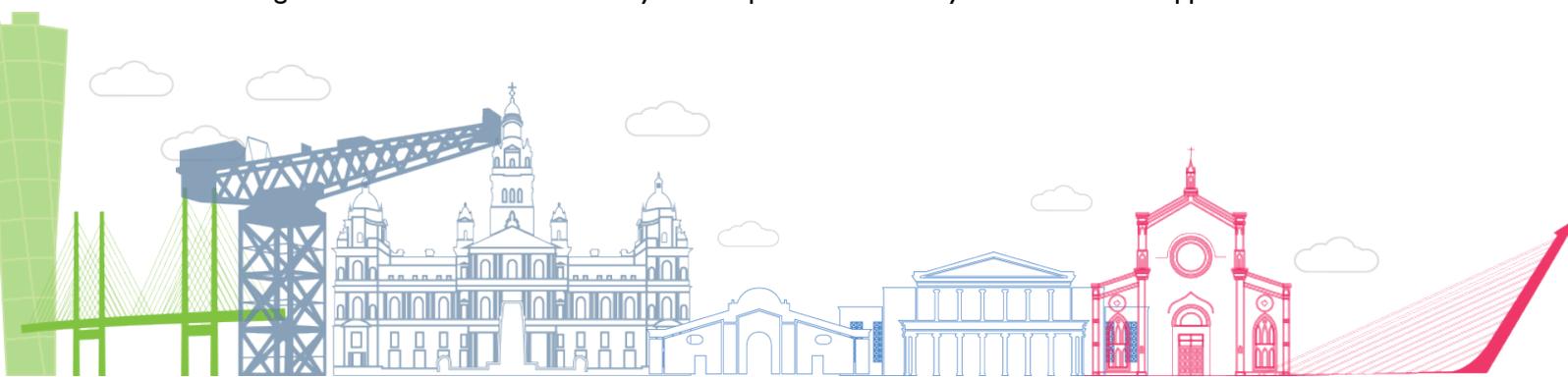
*I cannot wait and hire teachers when the semester has started, I will have to do that during the prior semester. And we never know the number of the students beforehand, we only make estimations. //...//And these are only estimations, there might be two extra busloads with students arriving to Malmö! And if we estimate that we will need 29 classes then we will hire the staff for that and begin with 23 classes when the semester starts. We need to keep some space in the system so that we can offer students to enter classes at their level and yet keep it open for beginners to come to newly stated classes. Otherwise it is not fair to the students. It is true that the language introduction courses cost a lot, our students need a lot of support. But we need to remember that the state compensates the municipality more for those students than for other students. (2019-01-29)*

Although new arrivals with low levels of the Swedish language may need to enter beginners’ classes, the principal points out that they have no ambition to strive for homogeneity. They have classes with students on different levels in the Swedish language and other subjects.

Not only the organisation of classes is challenging, but many of the students have serious health issues, such as difficult experiences from migration and flight, hearing and visual impairments due to war injuries, separation from parents and family, malfunctioning housing and lack of support. It is important to know that the school is not a medical institution, the principal argues.

*But we need professional staff that understand the students’ health issues so that we better can cater for students’ individual needs. Since 2016 we have increased our service for student health, we need to work to improve for good quality. And we need a good cooperation with other actors, such as Social Service, so that we really can support our students //...// Everything, background and current situation, in the student’s life matter in relation to progression in the studies.*

The students’ backgrounds are also highly diversified, some students may have been labouring since the age of 8 years while others have already commenced an upper secondary education in their countries of origin. With different backgrounds students have a variety of competences and may need different support or learn different



things in order to realise their studies.

One critique that the Swedish National Agency for Education has brought forward is related to local differences in the organization of the language introduction course, those differences may be how the municipality live up to cater for the individual needs of students, or how many hours per week the students are offered classes. In 2017 The Swedish School Board published a support material for the evaluation of students' proficiency of Swedish language, Building Swedish (Bygga svenska) (Skolverket 2017). But there are no national tests to pass the different levels, low – to continuing level, all tests are locally produced.

*Acquiring knowledge in the Swedish language is crucial in order for the student to enter continuing education or to enter the labour market. The principal points out that it is important to understand the language training program for young newcomers in relation to individual needs otherwise the risk is that students will drop out and then later face hinders to continue their education or enter the labour market. One such option is to increase the cooperation, with the Swedish Employment Agency in Malmö regarding education, internships and labour market entrance. That is one example for how to meet the needs among this highly diversified group of students.*

There are challenges to the organization of individualised education for newly arrived students in the upper secondary school, including different educational backgrounds, ages, languages and health issues. Other issues are related to the mobility of students and the fact that only estimations of the number of students can be made. Thus, apparently there are areas that are vital for the outcome of the studies, besides the regulations. For instance, while health is not a part of the educational responsibility, it is an important aspect of individualised education. In Malmö, staff with medical expertise has been increased in order to better support the students in the Language Introduction. This shows that language education is not only about education, but other support structures as well.

## 7. Civil Society Initiatives

Access to Swedish for immigrants, as provided by municipal adult education, was cut for persons without registration domicile in 1991. This means that asylum seekers, among other groups, do not access this education. Instead, asylum seekers might access language training at refugee accommodation facilities or through local initiatives organised by NGOs. In response to the increased numbers of asylum seekers in 2015, the government have established economic incentives to increase access to language training for persons during the asylum process. These measures include Swedish from day one (*Svenska från dag ett*), Everyday Swedish (*Vardagssvenska*), and Early measures for asylum seekers (*Tidiga insatser för asylsökande, TIA*).

Swedish from day one and Everyday Swedish is organised through popular adult education (*folkbildningen*). This means that state funding is allocated through the Swedish National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*) to study associations (*studieförbund*) and folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*). Early measures for asylum seekers is organised by NGOs and state funding allocated by County Administrative Boards (*Länsstyrelser*). Below we first describe the measures that are part of popular adult education and then the Early measures for asylum seekers.



## 7.1 'Everyday Swedish' and 'Swedish from day one'

Starting in 2015, the government is funding two measures of Swedish language training for asylum seekers', Everyday Swedish (*Vardagssvenska*) and Swedish from day one (*Svenska från dag ett*) as part of popular adult education. When introduced in 2015, it was open for study associations to organise these activities (SFS 2015:521). Since 2016 it is also possible for folk high schools to organise Swedish from day one (SFS 2016:765). These measures are funded by the state, and allocated to study associations and folk high schools through decisions of the Swedish National Council of Adult Education. They target adult asylum seekers during the asylum process and after they have received residence permit but while they are still residing in refugee accommodation facilities, and they are free of charge for the participants. The overall aim is to provide asylum seekers with 'meaningful activities', such as Swedish training and information about Swedish society during the asylum process and which can facilitate integration after residence has been granted.

Everyday Swedish is organised by a study association as a Study Circle. It follows a curriculum (*Studieplan för Vardagssvenska*) and lasts 40 study hours (å 45 min). The main focus is on the Swedish language in everyday situations and it aims at providing the participants with a basic proficiency of Swedish language. Over the years 2016–2018, the number of hours provided have increased to an average of 44 hours per study circle, thus more hours than what is demanded. The number of participants for each group is 10–12 persons (Folkbildningsrådet 2019; 2018).

Swedish from day one is a measure that can be organised by a study association or by a folk high school as a Study Circle or as an Other Popular Adult Education. This means that there is no study plan and that, for instance, that the number of study hours is not regulated. However, in order to reach the expectations of the state, it is stipulated that it should last more than nine hours (Folkbildningsrådet 2018). Activities might include language cafés, swimming and bicycling classes, city tours, work place visits, and much more.

The interventions started in August 2015 and aimed to reach 20 000 persons. A follow-up study found the measures reached more than 60 000 persons, which amount to about 37 per cent of all asylum seekers that registered their application that year (Folkbildningsrådet 2016). In 2016, 2 549 Everyday Swedish activities were arranged, and 16 808 Swedish from day one activities. In total, these reached out to 218 521 participants (Folkbildningsrådet 2017). Since then, the numbers of both asylum seekers and participants have decreased. In 2018, popular adult education activities for asylum seekers reached out to 82 376 participants (Folkbildningsrådet 2019). The table below shows how state funding for Everyday Swedish and Swedish from day one has changed over the years 2015–2018.

Table 7: State funding to study associations and folk high schools, 2015–2018 (SEK)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Swedish from day one</b>	55 000	150 782 200	106 250 000	118 029 450
<b>Everyday Swedish</b>		72 000 000	63 750 000	49 851 000
<b>Total</b>	55 000	222 782 200	170 000 000	167 880 450

Source: Folkbildningsrådet 2016; 2017; 2019



The proportion of participating women has increased since 2016. In Everyday Swedish organised by the study associations the number of women increased from 29,7 per cent in 2016 to 38,5 per cent in 2018. The longer courses in Swedish from day one organised by the folk high schools, continue to be dominated by men (59,7%), whereas the shorter courses are dominated by women (56,5%) in that same year. In the report, Swedish National Council of Adult Education (2019) concludes that gender imbalances in participation might be understood in relation to, for instance, local access to child care and whether other measures have been taken to facilitate women's participation. Moreover, there has been a slight increase of participants older than 45 years. The educational backgrounds of the participants differ in the study circles and courses. The folk high schools report that half of their participants only have elementary school as their highest educational degree.

Challenges, as experienced by the organisers, include uncertainty regarding the number of participants. Another challenge regards the organisers out-reach to asylum seekers in own accommodation. In some urban areas the folk high schools might find it easier to reach-out, but in other geographic locations the organisers must use different strategies, including social media, putting up ads in the grocery stores or through the preschools.

The benefits of training Swedish language with a study association or folk high school is related to the methodology of popular adult education, i.e. perspectives of all individuals equal value and the flexible, inclusive way of working with education – to learn about democracy is not only to study democracy but to practice it. An evaluation of Swedish from day one as implemented in one assigned study associations, describes how the study circle not only becomes a place to learn Swedish, but also a place where asylum seekers bring documents for translation and a place to ask for help navigating Swedish society (Fejes et al. 2018b). The report also brings up the tension between the civil society and the state – is it reasonable that the civil society carry such extended responsibilities (Fejes et al. 2018b, p. 71)? This last question, what the responsibilities of the civil society versus the public sector should be, belongs to a larger discussion in Sweden about the role of the civil society, where NGOs and civil society organisations have been reluctant to step in as regular service providers (Osanami et al. 2018).

### 7.1.1 Collaboration in a regional perspective

In Skåne there are 18 folk high schools, the majority is on the west coast and in Malmö. Study associations are more dispersed and larger in number. In Skåne, almost all folk high schools collaborate through the association Skåne's folk high schools in collaboration (*Skånes folkhögskolor i samverkan*), and the study associations collaborate through the association Skåne's study associations in collaboration (*Skånes studieförbund i samverkan, SISAM*). There is an agreement between the County Administrative Board Skåne and Skåne's collaboration associations for folk high schools and study associations. The collaboration is experienced as well functioning, and study associations and folk high schools have been participating in meetings with the Region Skåne and the Swedish Migration Agency. Integration is among one of the seven agreed focus areas. In two thirds of the study associations and folk high schools in Skåne offer Swedish from day one and Everyday Swedish. In 2018, the study associations in Skåne provided 713 activities with a total 7 726 participants. Women's participation is slightly higher in Skåne than the national average (Folkbildningsrådet 2018).

### 7.2 'Early measures for asylum seekers'

In early 2016 the government proposed that County Administrative Boards should take over the responsibilities to coordinate integration preparatory measures for asylum seekers, including language training, from the Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*) (see Government Bill, Prop. 2015/16:100). According to the government, this would improve



asylum seekers' access to regionally and locally adapted integration measures.<sup>2</sup> The new intervention, Early measures for asylum seekers (*Tidiga insatser för asylsökande, TIA*) is regulated by law (SFS 2016:1363). The County Administrative Boards were also tasked with providing a digital language learning service, to help asylum seekers improve their Swedish language skills. In its current form, the intervention Early measures for asylum seekers has existed since 2017.

NGOs can apply for funding to organise Early measures for asylum seekers, and it is the County Administrative Boards that allocates these. It is also the County Administrative Boards is responsible to evaluate and follow-up on the activities. The funding regard activities that target asylum seekers aged 18 years or more, who reside in refugee accommodations facilities or in so-called Own Accommodation (*Eget boende, EBO*). The activities may also target persons who have obtained a temporary or permanent residence permit but still reside in a refugee accommodations facility (see SFS 2016:1363). If a participant of an Early measures for asylum seekers-activity has travel costs, this he/she can apply for reimbursement from the Swedish Migration Agency.

### 7.2.1 Local experiences

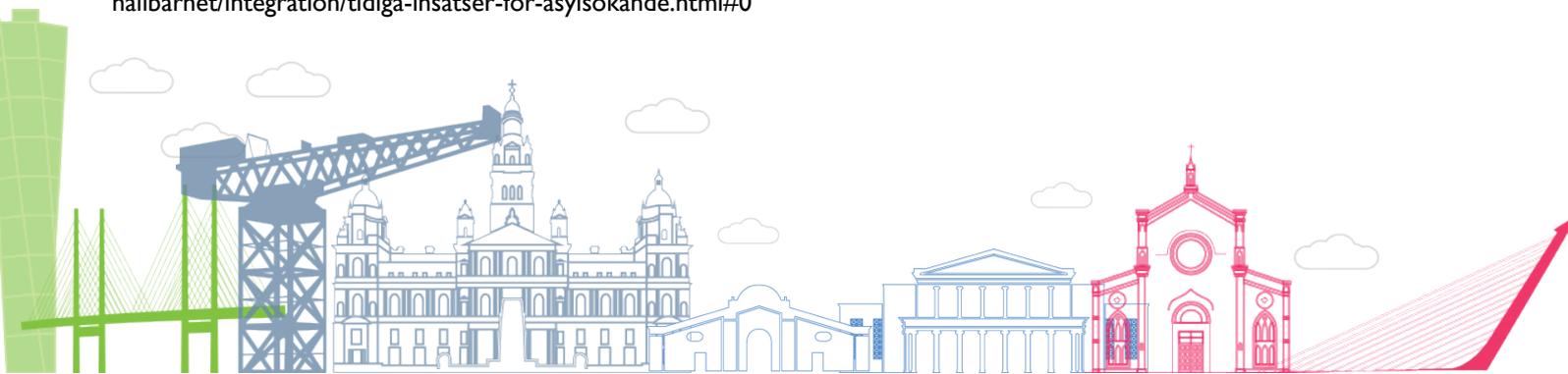
The County Administrative Board Skåne announces a call for applications for funding for Early measures for asylum seekers activities twice per year. In total, 47 projects were funded in 2017, 38 projects in 2018, and 28 applications in 2019.<sup>3</sup> The projects are about health, information about Swedish society and Swedish language training.

According to an evaluation that the County Administrative Board Skåne made in 2018 (Länsstyrelsen Skåne 2019), the projects mainly focused on health, information about Swedish society, Swedish labour market and Swedish language training. While Swedish language training was not a prime focus in the main part of the projects, it was important as a secondary part. Projects with Swedish language training as a prime focus were concentrated to the city of Malmö. Despite that Swedish language training was not the prime focus of the projects, the County Administrative Board Skåne regional concluded that the projects overall contributed to Swedish language proficiency and, in effect, have promoted participation in Swedish society and prepared for studies in Swedish for immigrants. Additional benefits from the projects are related to increased knowledge about the Swedish labour market, how to write a CV and the validation process of previous competencies. Among the core issues of the projects are also norms and values, including norms about gender equality, children's rights, norms about parenting, secularization and religion in Sweden.

It is difficult to provide an exact picture of the number of participants in Early measures for asylum seekers activities. From the reports of the 18 projects that received funding in the fall of 2017, a total of 2 722 adults participated. However, as the organisations register and document participation differently, it is not possible to estimate how many of the participants are unique. In addition, it is also possible that the same persons participated in several activities in different organisations. The majority of the participants reside in refugee accommodation facilities. The organisations explain this as due to difficulties in reaching out to asylum seekers in 'own housing'. These figures are, however only estimations made by the organisations. There is no registration of how the participants resides. The participation of women in Skåne is slightly higher (28,2%) than the national average (25%) (Länsstyrelsen Skåne 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Swedish Government, "Satsningar i vårbudgeten för en effektivare etablering och minskad arbetslöshet," News release, April 13, 2016, <http://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2016/04/satsningar-i-varbudgeten-for-en-effektivare-etablering-och-minskad-arbetsloshet/>

<sup>3</sup> Reported on the Country Administrative Board Skåne webpage, see <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/skane/samhalle/social-hallbarhet/integration/tidiga-insatser-for-asylsokande.html#0>



The report discusses how increased number of participants can be achieved. As lack of childcare might hinder participation, one strategy used in the projects is to organise activities for children in parallel with the activities for adults. The importance to organise activities that are easily reached through public transport is emphasised, especially in relation to persons who live in remote places with less organised activities. Another strategy to reach out to participants, is to arrange activities in housing areas where it is known that many asylum seekers in 'own housing' lives.

## 8. Conclusive Discussion

Swedish language training and education for adult immigrants is governed and implemented under the intersection of integration, education and labour market policies. Since the first initiatives in the 1960s, it has undergone numerous reforms. While it was first established with migrant workers in mind, over time it has become more oriented towards newly arrived refugees and their families. Today it is, for the large part, a highly formalised education, while at the same time some certain aspects of language training are voluntary and non-formal. Importantly, asylum seekers and refugees have significantly different access to language training and education. In this report we have considered language training and education for asylum seekers and refugees aged 16–64 years.

Swedish for Immigrants (*Svenska för invandrare, sfi*) is a formal education with national school and course curriculum accessible free of charge to all adult immigrants who do not have basic Swedish proficiency. Refugees (with domicile registration) generally participate in the education as part of the Introduction Program that is coordinated by the Public Employment Service. Asylum seekers do not have access to this education. Asylum seekers and refugees of school age can enter the education system and access language education as part of this, but access for asylum seekers is more limited. Adult asylum seekers can also access Swedish training through third sector initiatives, including study associations, folk high schools and NGOs. Here we shall first summarise these educational and training forms, and then discuss some relevant aspects of them.

### 8.1 Summary of measures

#### Swedish for immigrants in municipal adult education

The education 'Swedish for immigrants' (*Svenska för invandrare, sfi*) is accessible free of charge for residents aged 16 years and who do not have basic Swedish language proficiency. It is regulated by national steering documents and organised and financed through municipal adult education.

Refugees commonly access the education as part of their introduction. Almost all refugees and their families participate in the Introduction Program, coordinated by the Public Employment Service. It lasts for 24 months and is an eligibility criterion for the Introduction Allowance. Participation is not mandatory, but a person who does not participate according to their individual plan has no right to other kinds of economic support. Swedish for immigrants is a prime component of these plans. Swedish for immigrants contains three study pathways and four courses that are the same independently of study pathway. Study pathway 1 is for persons with no or short educational background, and pathway 3 for persons with longer educational backgrounds.

It is the responsibility of the municipality that all residents eligible for the education can access it, but they do not need to organise it themselves. Since 2011 folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*) accredited by the Swedish National Agency of Education (*Skolverket*) have the right to offer it, and in some locations they do substantially. Municipalities



can also subcontract the education to other providers, including third sector and private contractors.

### Language Introduction in upper secondary school

Asylum seekers and refugees of school age can enter the education system and access language training through this (but asylum seeking children do not have compulsory school attendance). Persons with a residence permit have the right to enter the upper secondary education from the age of 16 and until the age of 20 years; asylum seekers only until the age of 18 years, but municipalities are free to offer it. Asylum seekers who entered the upper secondary school before the age of 18 years, have the right to complete the education. Under certain circumstances, this right persists after a negative decision on the asylum application.

'Language Introduction' (*Språkin introduktion*) is an upper secondary school program for students who have completed compulsory school and who do not qualify for a national program and do not speak Swedish. It involves, among other things, complementary studies to reach qualification to a national program and Swedish language education.

### Voluntary language training initiatives

Asylum seekers of 18 years and more (and refugees without domicile registration) have no right to enter formal language education. Instead, they can receive language training through voluntary initiatives from the third sector. This means that availability varies across different locations. Ability to participate can also depend on access to childcare and transportation.

In response to the comparatively high numbers of asylum seekers in 2015, the government now funds new forms of language training, including 'Swedish from day one' (*Svenska från dag ett*) and 'Everyday Swedish' (*Vardagssvenska*) organised by folk high schools and study associations. These courses can vary in content and length. In addition, the government also finances so-called 'Early measures for asylum seekers' (*Tidiga insatser för asylsökande, TIA*), which may include language training. This funding is distributed to local initiatives after a decision of the County Administrative Board. In Skåne, a large majority of the initiatives are organised in Malmö.

## 8.2 Conclusions

State regulation of Swedish for immigrants has increased over time. This development has involved a shift away from varying forms of training and towards an educational setting. The ambition was to create one national good quality and standardised education. Requirements to have authorised teachers, national tests and standardised grades, as well as requirements to have a responsible principal, are some of the regulations that education providers need to comply with. At the same time, this development has also involved a strong demand for the individual adaptation of the education to the heterogenous backgrounds of students. This has manifested itself through levelled courses and differentiated study pathways, as well as flexible teaching hours. Moreover, the increased differentiation between groups of students, has also meant that asylum seekers as a group since 1991 are excluded from the education. Instead, asylum seekers are referred to more arbitrary forms of language training organised by the third sector and which varies geographically. The Swedish School Inspectorate conducts quality reviews on how municipalities live up to the ambitions decided by the state and state agencies. Our material confirms that while the local level comply with national regulations, at the local level there is still variation.



## Organisation

Initially a variety of organisations were responsible for the provision of Swedish for immigrants. Over time, as a way to enable regulation of a standardised education, but also, for instance, to even out geographical variation of access to Swedish for immigrants, today it is integrated as part of municipal adult education. This has indeed contributed to balancing out of geographical variations. However, municipalities can subcontract the education to third sector and private providers. This is, sometimes due to political ideologies, done differently across municipalities, ranging from having all education in-house to have all subcontracted.

## Coordination of integration measures

Fast labour market integration for refugees and their families through parallel activities during the Introduction Program, mean that language education is combined with other education or labour market training. From 1 January 2018, new regulations of the Introduction Program strengthened this further. Such combinations demand well-developed horizontal coordination. In Malmö, for example, the agreement on the local level is that the participants study Swedish in the morning while the Public Employment Service secure other activities for the participants in the afternoon. Another aspect of the horizontal coordination is the one between the municipalities, who are responsible for the language education, and eventual third sector or private education providers.

Moreover, our material indicates that many professionals responsible for language education are critical of the increased labour market focus, saying that it impacts negatively on the language education, especially for those with no or little formal educational background. Generally, language training professionals are not supportive of parallel activities and do not think it is an efficient method for achieving long term labour market integration. Here we have identified a tension between the state, local politicians and the Public Employment Service on the one side, and language education professionals on the other.

## The role of third sector

Today Swedish for immigrants is regulated by national regulations and curriculum, and it is under municipal responsibility. However, this setting did not come through easily. In its early days, language training was to a large extent organised by study associations and folk high schools. As non-formal education institutions they were exempted from the curriculum; they could relate to these as 'recommendations'. Today the situation is reversed. As study associations and folk high schools are increasingly involved in language education again, they must comply with the national steering documents and they are obliged to hire teachers who have the right to examine and grade students.

## Gender

The gender dimension is repeatedly problematised in labour market debates, in principal the slow labour market integration of women with short or no educational backgrounds. However, in education policy discourses regarding Swedish for immigrants, it is not raised. This is also mirrored in our interviews with professionals from language education: our interviewees had nothing or very little to say about gender in the education. At the same time, from statistics we know that a majority of women that arrived to Sweden as refugees after 2015 have a lower educational background than men, and may face more difficulties to become self-sufficient. Further, we know that more men than women in the Introduction Program interrupt their language education.



### **(Unequal) language education as pathway for residence permit**

A completed upper secondary degree might enable an employment, which might lead to a work permit. This means that many asylum seeking students find themselves under extreme pressure to enter a national program before the age of 18 years. In the view of this, the varying quality of the education is detrimental, along with the insecurity geographical relocation of a student implies. In addition, many upper secondary schools find it challenging to cater for the individual needs that could bridge into national programs or the labour market.

### **Non-regulated voluntary initiatives**

The development of language education for new arrivals have been strongly drawn towards increased formalisation and unity. This development has implied that asylum seekers cannot access it. In response to the growing numbers of asylum seekers in the aftermath of 2015, the government has encouraged third sector language training initiatives for asylum seekers. These are not regulated and there are no follow-ups. This set-up creates a remarkable discrepancy between language training for asylum seekers and refugees.

## **8.3 Discussion**

### **Unitary and differentiated**

It is significant that the Swedish for immigrant's education over time has become more unitary, both in its regulation and organisation. Simultaneously, in response to the varying backgrounds of the students, it has also become differentiated in courses and study pathways. Moreover, while the municipality is responsible to secure that eligible residents can access the education, they can also subcontract it to other providers. This development, which in part follows the general development of the education system, has also meant that language education has become increasingly disconnected from the rationalities of non-formal education of the third sector as well as labour market training. It is unclear to what extent this has served language proficiency acquisition and labour market integration of new arrivals.

### **Sequential vs. parallel modules**

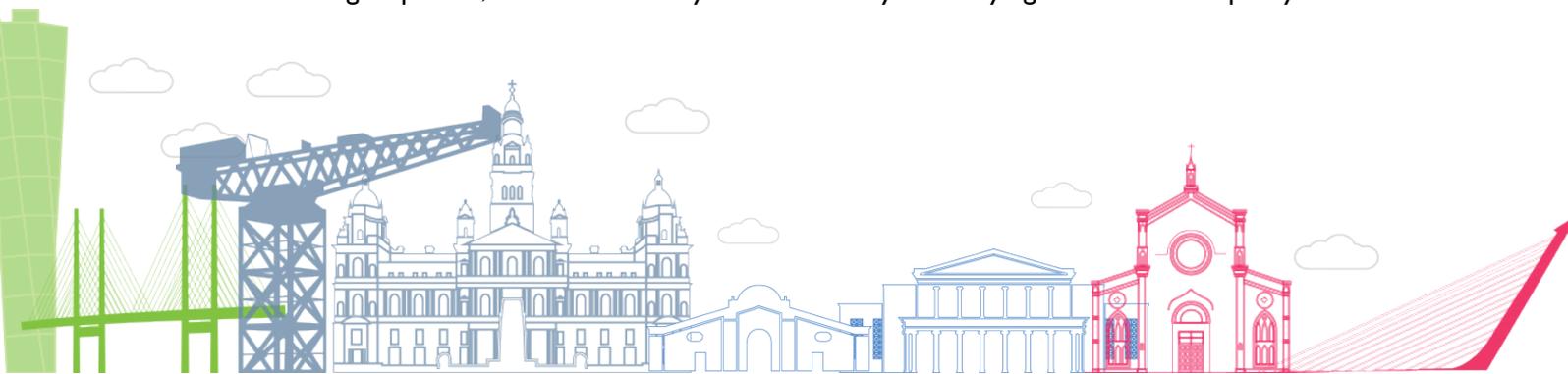
The question whether basic language education should be a prerequisite for entering other studies or labour market measures, or if it is best studied in parallel, has been a returning issue in the policy development. For a long time, it was a prerequisite, which meant that it also became an obstacle for some newcomers, especially persons with short or no previous educational background. Today it is typically a part-time activity of the Introduction Program, to be combined with other measures.

### **Local variation – Is it all about steering**

In spite of all regulation and unitary organisation, there is variation of the performance of Swedish for immigrants across municipalities, this is also visible in our study. Interestingly, this variation cannot be explained by regulations, finances, or the educational background of students. While the development of Swedish for immigrants is focused on steering, this raises questions about how far steering reaches, and what other factors might impact on language acquisition. Relevant aspects might involve the didactics in the classroom, including the relation between the students and teachers, and housing, both housing conditions and locations.

### **Humanitarian costs of municipal discretion**

The situation for asylum seekers aged 16–18 years, in many cases unaccompanied minors, is far from ideal. While this is a vulnerable group itself, their vulnerability is increased by the varying access to and quality of education



across municipalities. This is inhuman.

### **Language training for asylum seekers**

After many years in absence, in 2016 Swedish language training for asylum seekers was re-introduced. Instead of opening up the existing education for asylum seekers, the government introduced new measures through the third sector. The study associations and folk high schools adapted to that development. In some locations, such as Skåne, there seems to have been a satisfying process. Although there are statistics regarding the participation there is a lack of information regarding the outcomes of the courses and study circles. What potential effect is there in relation to later learning in Swedish for immigrants. Are the courses stimulating faster learning and entrance into the Swedish society? How is this perceived by the participants?

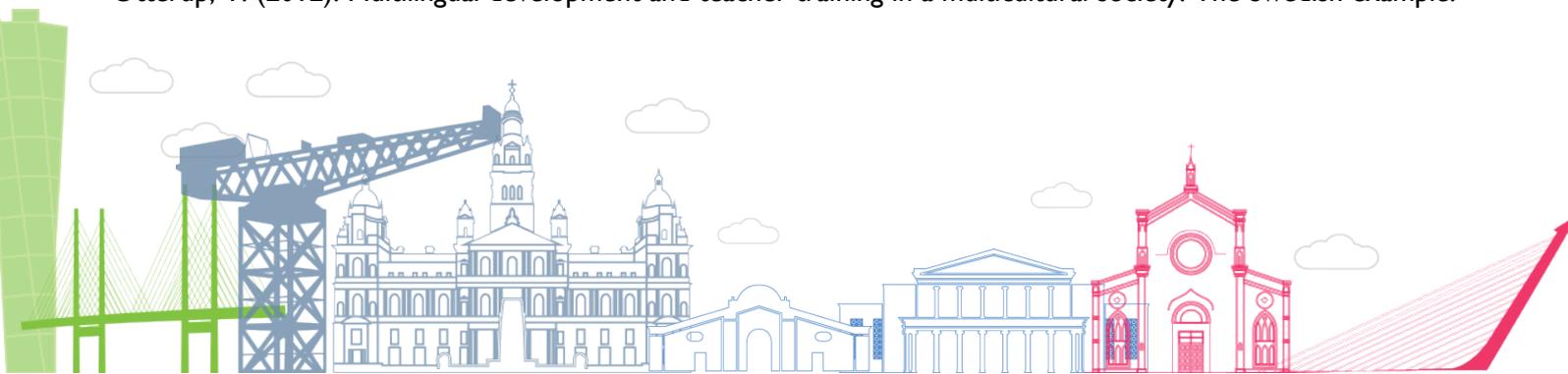
In relation to the Early measures for asylum seekers there is also a lack of knowledge regarding the quality of the activities and how they respond to different needs. One potential positive outcome of the overall strengthening of geographical dispersal of activities is that activities may become more accessible. Potential negative consequences could be the limited choice of activities and access for those who live in more remote areas.

It is unclear to what extent these are temporary or here to stay, and if they are here to stay why access to education is not preferred.



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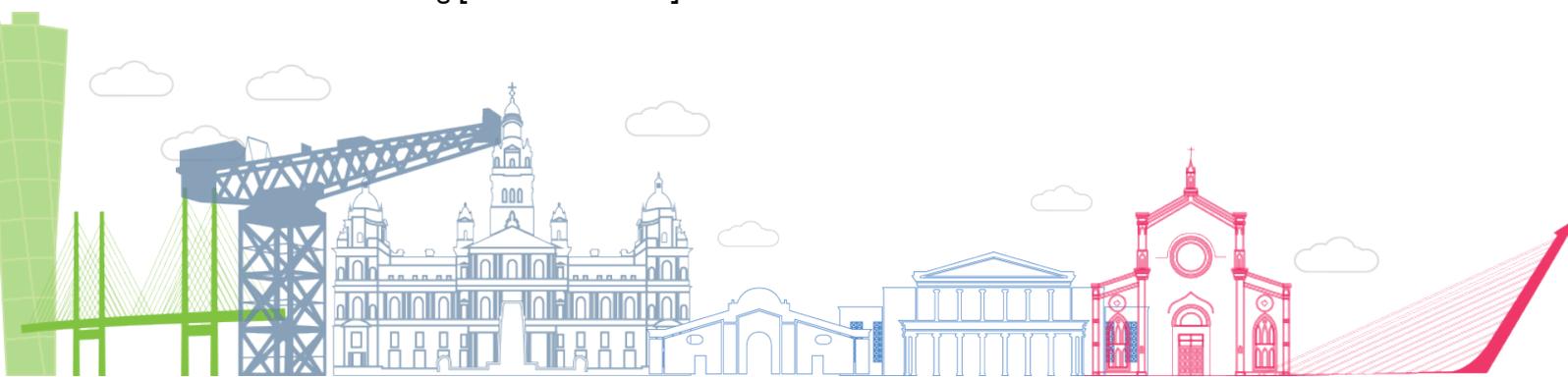
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### **National regulation (Acts, Ordinances and School Ordinances)**

- SFS 1950:382 Lag om svenskt medborgarskap [Act about Swedish citizenship].
- SFS 1950:2017 Kungörelse med vissa bestämmelser rörande tillämpningen av medborgarskapslagen [Ordinance about certain rules regarding how to practice the citizenship act].
- SFS 1972:650 Lagen om rätt till ledighet och lön vid deltagande i svenskundervisning för invandrare [Act about rights to leave and salary when participating in Swedish language education for immigrants].
- SFS 1985:1100 Skollagen [School act] (repealed 2010-08-01)
- SFS 1986:159 Lag om grundläggande svenskundervisning för invandrare [Act on basic Swedish education for immigrants].
- SFS 1994:895 Förordning om svenskundervisning för invandrare [Ordinance about Swedish language education for immigrants].
- SFS 1999:1175 Lag om rätt att använda samiska hos förvaltningsdomstolar och domstolar [Act about the right to use Sami in Administrative Courts and Courts].
- SFS 1999:1176 Lag om rätt använda finska och meänkieli hos förvaltningsdomstolar och domstolar [Act about the right to use Finnish and Meänkieli in Administrative Courts and Courts].
- SFS 2001:82 Lag om svenskt medborgarskap [Act about Swedish citizenship].
- SFS 2009:600 Språklag [Language act].
- SFS 2009:724 Lag om nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk [Act about national minorities and minority languages].
- SFS 2010:800 Skollag [School act].
- SFS 2010:1122 Förordning om statlig ersättning för insatser för vissa utlänningar [Ordinance about state reimbursement for interventions for some foreigners].
- SFS 2010:2039 Gymnasieförordningen [Upper secondary school ordinance].
- SFS 2011:185 Skolförordning [School ordinance].



SFS 2011:1108 Förordning om vuxenutbildning [Ordinance about adult education].

SFS 2010:2039 Gymnasieförordning [Upper secondary school ordinance].

SFS 2015:521 Förordning om statsbidrag till särskilda folkbildningsinsatser för asylsökande och vissa nyanlända invandrare [Ordinance about state funding to certain popular adult education measures for asylum seekers and certain newly arrived immigrants].

SFS 2016:765 Förordning om ändring i förordningen (2015:521) om statsbidrag till särskilda folkbildningsinsatser för asylsökande och vissa nyanlända invandrare □ Ordinance about amendment to Ordinance (2015:52) about state funding to certain popular adult education measures for asylum seekers and certain newly arrived immigrants □

SFS 2016:1363 Förordning om länsstyrelsernas uppdrag avseende insatser för asylsökande och vissa nyanlända invandrare [Ordinance about County Administrative Boards' task regarding measures for asylum seekers and certain newly arrived immigrants].

SFS 2017:353 Lag om uppehållstillstånd för studerande på gymnasial nivå [Act about residence permit for students in upper secondary education].

SFS 2017:584 Lag om ansvar för etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare [Act about introduction program for certain newly arrived immigrants].

SFS 2017:820 Förordning om etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända [Ordinance about introduction measures for new arrivals].

SKOLFS 1994:28 Förordning om kursplan för svenskundervisning för invandare [Ordinance about curriculum for Swedish for immigrants].

SKOLFS 2002:19 Förordning om kursplan för svenskundervisning för invandare [Ordinance about curriculum for Swedish for immigrants].

SKOLFS 2006:28 Förordning om kursplan för svenskundervisning för invandare [Ordinance about curriculum for Swedish for immigrants].

SKOLFS 2009:2 Förordning om kursplan för svenskundervisning för invandare [Ordinance about curriculum for Swedish for immigrants].

SKOLFS 2011:144 Förordning om läroplan för gymnasieskolan [Ordinance about curriculum of the upper secondary school].

SKOLFS 2012:101 Förordning om läroplan för vuxenutbildningen [Ordinance about program curriculum for adult education].

SKOLFS 2017:91 Skolverkets föreskrifter om kursplan för kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare [Swedish National Agency for Education's regulations about syllabus for municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants].





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