

# 11 Holding course

## Civil society organizations' value expressions in the Swedish legislative consultation system before and after 2015

*Roberto Scaramuzzino and Brigitte Suter*

### **Introduction**

Contrary to the general trend in European countries since the 2000s, Sweden has neither restricted its migration policy nor limited the rights of migrants. Indeed, the red-green coalition government that took office in 2014 was adamant about wanting to keep at least the status quo in its migration policy. In April 2015, the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfvén, in a newspaper interview, declared that there was no limit to the number of asylum seekers Sweden could receive (Lönnaeus 2015), while in September of the same year, he declared 'my Europe does not build walls,' at a public solidarity manifestation for refugees in Stockholm (Regeringen 2015a).<sup>1</sup> However, after receiving 80,000 asylum applications in two months, the government – together with regional and local authorities – reconsidered its stance. At a press conference in November 2015, Löfvén said 'It hurts me that Sweden is no longer capable of receiving asylum seekers at the high level we do today. We simply cannot do so anymore' (Regeringen 2015b), and went on to announce a number of drastic measures, all of which were designed with the explicit purpose to reduce the number of asylum seekers in the country. Such measures included the re-introduction of external border controls (as of November 2015), as well as limited family migration, and the issuing of temporary protection statuses instead of permanent ones (as of June 2016). The effects of these measures, the government argued, were also beneficial for the integration of the immigrants already in the country (Regeringens proposition 2015/16). Swedish 'exceptionalism,' thus, came to an abrupt halt (Emilsson 2018).

Swedish civil society organizations (CSOs) were considerably involved in the reception of newly arrived refugees during the so called 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and were able to mobilize funds, and volunteers both independently and in cooperation with public authorities (Turunen & Weinryb 2017; Bevelander and Hellström 2019). After this clear and rather dramatic turnaround of the Swedish public authorities, the question is how civil society organizations have reacted and possibly adapted to the new policies. This chapter, thus, focuses on CSOs, and asks if, and in what way the events of

2015 have changed the CSO's normative positions, both towards migration and integration. The chapter does so by exploring statements and opinions made by CSOs in the Swedish 'referral system,' i.e. the legislative consultation system [*remissväsende*].

The referral system is one of the most typical procedures of the Swedish legislative system for interest representation. It is a process of consultation in which organizations that have a stake in a specific policy area or issue can comment on drafts of legislation. These comments are addressed and taken into consideration by the responsible public authority (e.g. a particular department) in drafting the final document before it is submitted for voting in parliament. Serving as an important tool of democracy, through the referral system, the government invites stakeholders to comment on a legislative draft, especially with regard to the potential consequences of the implementation of the proposal. Furthermore, it promotes 'broad civic participation in the public debate' (Swedish government offices 2009: 5).

As most CSOs are driven by values (Anheier 2005) – whether their source is ideological, religious or cultural – we can expect their claims, comments, and statements on legislative drafts to be value-based. The Swedish term for civil society organizations – 'idea-based organizations' [*idéburna organisationer*] – in fact expresses this neatly. In this sense, in this chapter, values are understood as organizational values, closely linked to 'ideology': 'a system of multiple beliefs, ideas, values, principles, ethic, morals, goals, and so on, that overlap, shape, and reinforce one another' (Beck 2013: 1). They are often expressed through different advocacy strategies, such as lobbying politicians and civil servants, publishing statements on traditional and social media, staging street protests, and participating in consultation processes with public authorities.

This chapter sheds light on, first, the general norms and values of the CSOs, as expressed in the organizations' self-presentation and vision, or mission statements. In a second step, the chapter seeks to elucidate how these declarations of norms and values have made their way into the referral system within a selection of key legislative processes. Finally, the aim is to see whether the events of autumn 2015 (the 'refugee crisis') have led organizations to change their expressions of norms and values in the field of migration and integration.

### *The CSOs and the legislative processes explored*

For our study, we have selected five central CSOs. They are among the organizations that have been most involved in migration and integration policy issues in Sweden in the last decades, both when it comes to advocacy and service. They also represent different organizational types and hence logics (Scaramuzzino & Wennerhag 2019). Two of them are classic 'solidarity organizations,' the Red Cross [*Röda korset*], and Save the Children [*Rädda barnen*]. As solidarity organizations, rather than organizing and representing

a particular social group, they engage in particular issues, such as human or children's rights. However, they also differ, as the Swedish Red Cross is more service-oriented, while Save the Children is more advocacy-oriented. Furthermore, we have chosen two typical 'interest organizations': the umbrella organization for ethnic associations SIOS (*Samarbetsorgan för etniska organisationer i Sverige*) and the Swedish Women's Lobby (*Sveriges kvinno-lobby*). As interest organizations, they organize and represent specific social groups and their interests, and they are both advocacy and service-oriented. SIOS is an umbrella organization representing federations of ethnic associations in Sweden. As an organization directly organizing and representing immigrants' interests, it has important stakes in the formulation of migration and integration policy. The Swedish Women's Lobby organizes women around issues of gender equality and women's rights. It is an umbrella organization for women's organizations, including women's shelters, and ethnic women's associations. As a representative of the last category of organizations, we have included one of the largest religious organizations in Sweden, the Swedish Christian Council [*Sveriges kristna råd*], which represents different Christian faiths (Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic, and the Free Churches). These churches have been very active in advocating for migrants' and refugees' rights (Linde & Scaramuzzino 2018).

We have also made a selection of consultation processes around four different policy proposals, two for each policy field: migration and integration respectively. In order to see whether there has been a change in the values and norms expressed by the CSOs, we have selected two proposals from before, and two from after 2015. The policy proposals selected were the ones that proposed the most significant policy changes in these periods; all of them have been highly debated in the political and public discourses. All legislative drafts have, after the remiss procedure and subsequent revisions, been approved by the parliament and have entered into force. A more detailed description of each proposal is presented later on in the chapter.

In the analysis of the comments made by the organizations through the referral system, we have looked at their statements, and by means of content analysis, we have explored to what extent they can be implicitly or explicitly related to particular values and norms. The norms and values expressed have then been compared across policy areas and periods of time.

### ***Migration and integration in Sweden***

While Sweden was one of the European countries that had a high proportion (one fifth) of its population emigrate to North America between 1850 and 1910, in the middle of the twentieth century, the country increasingly became a country of immigration. What started with mainly labor migration in the 1960s until the oil crisis in 1973, took the shape of refugee migration since the 1970s, and especially during the Balkan war in the 1990s. Refugee migration is still a significant part of yearly immigration, however, family

reunification, labor migration, student migration, and intra-EU migration are also substantial parts of the immigration numbers. During 2015, almost 163,000 asylum applications were made, which was more than five times as many as during the previous years (European Migration Network 2016: 5). 2016 saw the highest number of first-time residence permits issued to more than 150,000 persons (for protection reasons, family reunification and family formation, labor immigration, and studies). This represents an increase by 32 percent compared to 2015, when roughly 114,000 individuals received a first-time residence permit in Sweden (European Migration Network 2016: 1). As can be seen in Figure 11.1, since 2014, refugees have constituted the largest number of first-time permit holders, while, previously, labor migration, EU migration, and student migration dominated the statistics. The refugee category consists, to a considerable amount, of Syrian nationals – about 40 percent in 2013, 50 percent in 2014, 30 percent in 2015, and 25 percent in 2016. Other major asylum-seeking groups during this period were individuals from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Eritrea (Migrationsverket 2019).

The foundations of the current integration policies can be found in the policy changes of 1998. Since that time, integration measures towards immigrants as a particular group have been restricted to the first 24 months after receiving a residence permit. In these first 24 months, the public system offers refugees and other migrants a language course, a civil orientation course, and labor market preparatory activities. Participants of this program receive a monthly ‘salary-like’ allowance. After this initial period, integration is mainstreamed, and the different governmental departments’ various welfare policy measures should guarantee equal rights, duties and possibilities for all residents in Sweden (Brekke & Borchgrevink 2007). Irrespective of

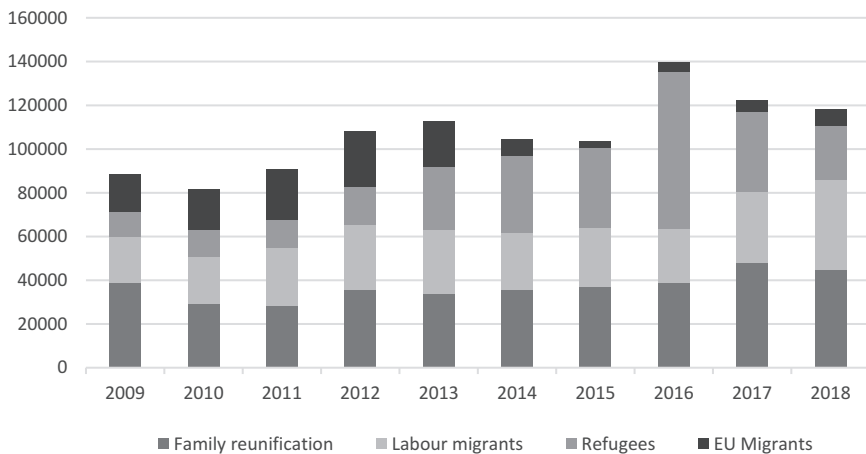


Figure 11.1 Number of residence permits issued in Sweden by category of immigration, 2009–2018

Source: Migrationsverket, 2019

government coalitions, Swedish integration policy has predominantly been rather functional, with a focus of equal rights, duties and possibilities for everyone, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background, and with a declared main goal to increase employment numbers among its foreign-born population (Suter & Qvist 2012; Scaramuzzino 2012).

### ***Swedish civil society organizations and the political process***

Sweden has a long tradition of CSOs engaging in politics, including in issues of migration and integration (Scaramuzzino 2012). The organizations are mostly advocacy-oriented and consist of popular movements [*folkrörelser*] with an emphasis on membership, volunteerism, fostering citizenship, social relations, and strengthening democracy (Lundström & Wijkström 1997; Micheletti 1995). They have played a significant role in representing groups of citizens, providing them with collective identities, making their voices heard, and influencing social norms. Furthermore, they play an important role in challenging the government concerning the rights of specific groups. Historically, they have been influential in pushing for workers' rights, women's rights, the rights of migrants, the elderly, and people with disabilities (Johansson et al. 2011; Feltenius 2008; Scaramuzzino 2012).

While CSOs in Sweden have mostly been advocacy-oriented rather than service-oriented, and funded by members rather than by the government (Salamon et al. 2004), they have traditionally maintained a collaborative relationship with public authorities (Trägårdh 2007). As a consequence, many CSOs are represented at different administrative levels (local, regional, and national) by umbrella organizations (Einarsson 2012). The recent decade's trend to privatize public services, such as education, welfare, health, and social care (Hartman 2011), has created new opportunities for civil society organizations to act as providers of services on behalf of public authorities and with public funding (Arvidson et al. 2017). These changes in the welfare system, together with a call by public authorities for increased collaboration with CSOs – not least for handling recent challenges linked to the integration of newly arrived immigrants – has further emphasized the CSOs' role as service providers.

The position of service provider does not, however, exclude CSOs from also pursuing political influence (Fyall 2017). As expressed in the agreement between the government and CSOs in 2008, in order to keep fulfilling the role of a critical voice, even when in collaboration with public authorities for service provision and when receiving public funding, CSOs should be able to maintain their independence (Arvidson et al. 2017). It means, for instance, that CSOs that receive public funding should not risk losing public support because of voicing criticism towards public policy or because of their advocacy activities for political and societal change based on their commitment to their specific mission and values (Arvidson et al. 2018). We hence find CSOs engaging in many policy areas, including the fields of migration and integration. In these specific policy areas, we find, among others, the following types of organizations: ethnic,

solidarity, religious, sports, adult education, and human rights organizations (Jönsson & Scaramuzzino 2018).

While the government invites certain organizations to provide comments on the draft proposals, the referral process is in fact open to anyone who wants to comment. Among the organizations that are invited to comment on such proposals we find public organizations, private enterprises, and CSOs. For the latter, this is a crucial channel for political influence besides other advocacy strategies, such as lobbying, demonstrations, petitions, and statements in traditional media or social media (Scaramuzzino & Scaramuzzino 2017). To be a ‘referral-instance,’ i.e. to be invited by the government to comment on legislative drafts can be seen not only as a token of status, as a legitimate representative for certain interests, but also of an embeddedness in the system (Hedling & Meeuwisse 2019).

The importance of this arrangement has been questioned in the contemporary political process as other forms of interest representation, such as lobbying, seem to have increased in importance (Naurin 2001; Lundberg 2014). Some research shows that the number of CSOs submitting comments within the referral system has declined (Lundberg 2014). The referral system is however still widely used by organizations for expressing their claims in relation to decision making in the legislative process (Johansson et al. 2019). It is often praised for being formal, structured, transparent, and open, also in the sense of having a low threshold for participation. Its effectiveness in achieving actual political influence has been questioned and it has been suggested that its benefit is not only to be understood in a broader perspective as legitimizing the organizations, but also getting the attention of the media and decision-makers and for the internal communication within civil society (Lundberg 2014). Hence, we expect the organizations to make use of the system to make claims in relation to public policy (in terms of new legislation), based on the mission and values that guide their activity.

### ***Civil society organizations’ activities and values pertaining to migration and integration***

Here follows a short presentation of the five organizations that have been selected for our study; the Swedish Christian Council, the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children, the umbrella organization for ethnic organizations SIOS, and the Swedish Women’s Lobby. The presentation includes relevant activities in the field of migration and integration, as well as a focus on their normative commitments as expressed in their mission statements (self-description).

The Swedish Christian Council (SKR) is an umbrella organization for all Christian denominations in Sweden. The board consists of representatives of the four Christian ‘families’: the Lutheran (Church of Sweden), Catholic, Orthodox denominations, and the ‘Free Churches’ (mostly Lutheran faiths not affiliated to the former state Church). In a document ratified by the board in 2016, the Christian Council clarifies its commitments and values in the field of migration and integration. The document makes explicit the centrality of

the experience of refuge and exile for the Christian faith. Also, the central values of grace and charity, the special consideration of ‘the poor, the powerless, and the discriminated,’ and the value of the ‘inclusion of the stranger’ (SKR 2016: 6) are derived from this overarching experience of displacement. As a result of these overarching values, the SKR formulated the following normative guidelines for its stance on migration: the right to a life in dignity, fundamental rights for all human beings, special consideration for children and their situation, the right to family life (in one place), everybody’s obligation to contribute to a positive societal development, and the goals of peace, justice, and sustainability (SKR 2016: 15). The Lutheran Church (Church of Sweden) is the biggest denomination within the Council, and with six million members it is also the biggest civil society organization in Sweden. In the field of immigrant integration, many of its congregations offer various regular activities, such as language cafés. However, they are also engaged in various humanitarian activities, according to local needs. Activities in the field of migration and integration also include lobbying for a humane migration and integration policy.

The Swedish Red Cross is, just as its mother organization the international Red Cross, an international solidarity organization. The general scope of its activities is to help people in need, above all, in case of catastrophes due to war or natural disaster. In Sweden, the activities are arranged locally and can differ between various local or regional sections. As an example, the section in the southern city of Malmö identifies the challenges for many of the city’s inhabitants to be poverty, loneliness, and a feeling of alienation from society. Therefore, the prioritized areas of activity are migration and integration, health, and social participation. In the field of migration, the section offers 11 different activities, among others, meeting places, language training, and home-work support for children and young people (Svenska röda korset Malmö 2019). Before 2015, the activities included help with homework for young people, meeting places, and psychological support. During the summer and autumn of 2015, the Malmö Red Cross was involved in many emergency activities and outreach work at the Malmö train station. Activities after 2015 have mainly focused on creating meeting places and providing civil orientation and language training, depending on the participants’ needs. The organization is involved in a lot of collaborations with other civil society actors, for example, ones working for homeless or unaccompanied minors. The most relevant values that the Red Cross bases its missions and self-image upon is impartiality (working solely to reduce human suffering and to help those most in need), and neutrality (expressing no opinion regarding politics, ethnic belonging, religion or ideology).

The umbrella organization for ethnic associations SIOS is a nation-wide umbrella organization consisting of ca. 350 local ethnic organizations with ca. 50,000 members in total. It is recognized (i.e. partially funded) by the

government for its promotion of ethnic and cultural identity, representation of ethnic groups' interests, and promotion of their participation in society. Independent of party politics and religion, the organization promotes voluntary collaboration between various ethnic associations for the purpose of working for cultural diversity in society in a democratic manner. Its main purpose is to promote language, culture, education, and other issues related to minority politics. SIOS' activities aimed at achieving these goals include opinion making, writing position papers, and making claims through statements, as well as through educational, information, and project activities (SIOS 2017). In the area of integration, SIOS holds an active role in influencing policy. The organization does this through lobbying and other means of participation in the political process (such as consultation). Its vision of integration is based on a two-way process with ethnic organizations as equal partners. As such, it is against assimilationism. SIOS advocates for an open, democratic, and culturally diverse society that recognizes ethnic and cultural diversity (SIOS 2017). Its vision spells out the values of dialogue, equality, freedom of choice, and justice as guiding principles in this process (SIOS 2019).

The Swedish Women's Lobby (*Svenska kvinnolobby*) is an umbrella organization of the women's movement. It consists of 47 member associations throughout Sweden and it constitutes the Swedish section of the European women's lobby (EWL) with over 2,000 member associations. The organization works for women's enjoyment of their full human rights, and runs activities aimed at mainstreaming a women's and gender equality perspective in all political, economic, and social contexts, locally, nationally, on the European level and internationally (Sveriges kvinnolobby 2019). The organization's involvement in the field of integration and migration is mainly indirect, through the legislative consultation process, lobbying, and opinion shaping. The Women's Lobby compiles shadow reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to the government and the CEDAW committee in Geneva monitoring the implementation of the convention, highlighting women's specific situation in migration and integration, for instance with regards to Article 9 on citizenship. In their 2016 report, the Swedish Women's Lobby depicted that more women than men arrive through family reunification and point at the consequences for women when family reunification is subject to conditions of income. They pushed forward a demand for higher numbers of women in resettlement quota. Further demands were the improvement of foreign-born women's health, access to political representative positions, access to the labor market and work, and equal economic and social rights (Sveriges kvinnolobby 2016a). The organization's basic values are stated as gender equality and equality, based on the international Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as well as the Beijing Action Plan (1995).

Save the Children (*Rädda barnen*) is a politically and religiously independent, democratic movement for Children's rights. Its role in the field of migration and integration is mostly in advocacy, that is, in opinion-building and



influencing policy makers (e.g., through the legislative consultation process). However, the organization also supports children in difficult situations, both materially, and psychologically (Rädda barnen 2017). The organization is present in the refugee reception system, and as such, in asylum accommodations over the whole country, working for the prioritization of children's rights. The goal is to provide volunteer support for newly arrived children from the first day of arrival in Sweden; for example, through arranging child-friendly rooms at the reception centers and places of accommodation. They also conduct inspections of asylum accommodations, arrange language and homework help, organize leisure time activities, as well as discussion groups, and meeting places. The organization also offers education in 'trauma conscious care' for more than 8,000 people working in 230 municipalities to increase the knowledge of the personnel working with reception. They also organize direct support for children, youth, and parents through a direct telephone line in several languages (Rädda barnen 2019a), work for children in vulnerable situations in Sweden, in general, and towards equal conditions for all children throughout the country (Rädda barnen 2019b). Their most central values are embedded in the human rights perspective, particularly, the child's perspective and reality, and the child's rights. The principle of the child's best interest is the normative guideline. This value fundament builds on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). After having presented the organizations and their values, it is now time to turn to the policy processes considered in the analysis.

### **The legislative consultation system**

In the policy field of immigration, for the period *before 2015*, we have selected a legislative draft concerning the introduction of financial and material requirements for family reunification (Regeringens proposition 2009/10: 77). Its basic premise is that the applicant is required to show the ability to financially and materially support the family members entering Sweden (through 'proper' accommodation). As one of the last EU countries, Sweden introduced its first pre-entry admission policy targeting family members in April 2010. The government's rationale with the policy was declared as 'improved integration,' both for the person already in Sweden as well as for the new family members. From a proponent's point of view, the policy proposition is seen as an incentive for employment and self-sufficiency. The policy's target group was a small group of people receiving subsidiary protection (Suter & Qvist 2012).

For the period *after 2015*, the legislative draft concerning a temporary reduction of ways to get a residence permit in Sweden was selected. The proposal suggested a number of restrictions to obtain a residence permit in Sweden for a period of three years (June 2016–June 2019). The proposal contained suggestions to issue temporary residence permits to applicants in all categories of protection statuses as well as to severely limit family reunification, among others, by extending the financial and material requirements to more

protection groups (except for resettled refugees). This policy measure effectively reduced Sweden's asylum policy to the EU minimum standard, and was seen as a very drastic measure (see also Bevelander & Hellström 2019).

For the policy field of integration, for the period *before 2015*, we have studied normative expressions in the legislative consultation process on a major shift in integration policy, the so-called Establishment Reform [*etableringsreformen*]. The policy proposal constituted a major administrative reform that shifted the responsibility for the integration of newly arrived immigrants from municipalities to the state. Furthermore, it expressed very clearly the responsibility for integration (which is understood as becoming employable) to lie with the individual immigrant rather than with the receiving society.

For the period *after 2015*, we have selected a legislative draft containing a number of suggestions to reform the regulations of the establishment system (not the system itself), aiming at facilitating and quickening the integration process of newly arrived immigrants (i.e. those who received a residence permit) with regards to participation in the labor market and society. The main reason behind the legislation named was to simplify the administration of the system. However, the document also contains several references to the Employment Services' increased possibility for financial sanctions against individuals as well as an increased mandate to decide on an individual's activities (less so for newly arrived immigrants). It is noteworthy that no reference is made to the events of autumn 2015, nor to the high number of asylum seekers in the reception system.

The two most recent pieces of legislation (the legislative draft prop. 2015/16: 174 and Ds 2016: 35) can be seen the government's reaction to the increasing number of people seeking refuge in Sweden during 2015.

Table 11.1 Selected legislative drafts in the policy fields of migration and integration, before and after 2015

	<i>Migration</i>	<i>Integration</i>
<b>Before 2015</b>	Legislative draft ( <i>proposition</i> ) 2009/10:77: Financial support requirement as a condition for family member immigration ( <i>Försörjningskrav vid anhöriginvandring</i> )	Legislative draft ( <i>proposition</i> ) 2009/10:60: Newly arrived immigrants' establishment on the labor market – individual responsibility with professional help ( <i>Nyanlända invandrars arbetsmarknadsetablering - egenansvar med professionellt stöd</i> )
<b>After 2015</b>	Legislative draft ( <i>proposition</i> ) 2015/16:174: Temporary restrictions of residence permits in Sweden ( <i>Tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppehållstillstånd i Sverige</i> )	Department series ( <i>departementserie</i> ) 2016:35: A new system of rules for newly arrived immigrants' establishment in work life and society ( <i>Ett nytt regelverk för nyanlända invandrars etablering i arbets- och samhällslivet</i> )

The two consultation processes in 2009 took place during the early years of the liberal-conservative coalition government in Sweden (2006–2014), and were initiated by the government (consisting of the Liberal, the Centre Party, the Moderate, and the Christian Democratic Party). The consultation processes in 2015/16, on the other hand, were initiated by the ‘red-green’ government, a coalition between the Social Democratic and the Green Party, with external support from the Left party (2014–2018). This coalition government remained in power after the 2018 election but with the support of the Liberal and Center Party. As stated above, all four legislative and administrative changes have starkly shaped the policy fields of migration and integration in the last decade. They are, therefore, highly suitable to explore Swedish CSOs values on these two matters and to answer questions of potential value transformations before and after the high number of refugee arrivals in 2015.

### ***Values expressed through the legislative consultation system (2009–2016)***

The following section presents a brief analysis of commentaries by Swedish organizations to the four policy proposals divided according to the two policy areas. All quotes and references relate to the comments made by the organizations to the propositions considered in each section. This publicly available but unpublished material was retrieved upon request from the office of the Swedish Government.

#### *Policy field of migration*

The first consultation process within the migration policy area regards the introduction of financial requirements for family reunification (2009). More specifically, the applicant was to show that s/he could support the incoming family economically and provide them with ‘decent’ accommodation. The government’s rationale for this proposal was to ‘improve integration’ (Regeringens proposition 2009/10: 77). Among our sample of organizations, four of them commented on this proposal: Save the Children, SIOS, the Swedish Red Cross, and the Swedish Christian Council (SKR). All four organizations expressed criticism towards the proposal, in particular towards the argument that it would create better conditions for integration. In the words of the Swedish Red Cross: ‘[Our experiences] point to the fact that family reunification is often a precondition for successful integration and rehabilitation. This experience is also shared by many municipal public servants working with introduction of newly arrived immigrants’ (Svenska röda korset 2009a). All organizations also extend the criticism to the view that newly arrived immigrants, as a group, are to be blamed for their lack of integration, and they oppose their being depicted as lacking incitements for integration (mostly finding a job). To the contrary, all organizations argue that a successful integration requires relevant structural changes in Swedish society. SIOS offers the following statement:

The condition of self-support is intended as an incitement for the individual to get a job and a place to live as soon as possible. Our experience shows that most of the newly arrived immigrants do not need any incitement. They are already motivated and want to contribute. Lack of incitement among individuals is not the problem. The problem lies in the structural conditions of Swedish society.

(SIOS 2009a)

Furthermore, all organizations focus on children as a particular group that will ultimately be penalized by the reform. They argue that, in the case where the condition of self-support for family reunification should be implemented, families with children should be exempted from the policy. Not surprisingly, Save the Children expresses the strongest criticism towards the idea:

A consequence of the condition of self-support may be that family members will be forced to live separated for many years, which is very serious from a children rights' perspective. Save the Children argues that the condition of self-support lacks a rights' perspective in which the family is recognized as the base unit in society, and where the equal value of all people is recognized.

(Rädda barnen 2009)

To sum up, the clearest value expressed by the organizations is that of the family as a unit that belongs together. Following from that, the family member's spatial proximity is seen as a prerequisite for successful integration (rather than the other way around). Furthermore, the organizations express a normative stance on integration that sees its fundamental drive in the structural conditions of a country, rather than in the newly arrived individuals. Splitting families as a 'motivation for integration' is, the organizations argue, the wrong way to go, as it is not lack of motivation that hinders migrants from integrating, but structural factors in Swedish society. In this sense, they place a societal rather than individual blame for the problems of integration.

The second consultation process within the migration policy area relates to the government's reaction to the so called 'refugee crisis' and a government proposal to limit the possibilities for migrants to obtain a residence permit in Sweden in 2016. Three organizations commented on the proposal: The Swedish Red Cross, the Christian Council, and Save the Children. All organizations were very critical of the proposal, and the language used in their comments shows a high level of indignation. As stated by the Red Cross: 'The proposal and the rhetoric around it carry a risk of strengthening prejudice and stigmatization' (Svenska röda korset 2015). They see it as '...the result of an all too fast and not thought through process, at a time when political courage, persistence and reflection are needed more than ever' (ibid.). They

also find the description of the background supporting the proposal ‘misleading.’ They, in fact, challenge the assumption, which according to the organizations is expressed in the proposal, that a reduced flow of migrants would improve opportunities for newly arrived migrants to integrate.

We find a similar tone in the Christian Council’s comment in which the organization makes reference to the basic values of Christian theology to point to the proposal’s discrepancy with many of its fundamental principles, including hospitality. The commentary refers to Jesus’ experience of being a refugee, to the ‘essential values that we argue come from the gospel,’ and the churches’ duty to protest against injustices and work for a better society for all people’ (SKR 2015). It also specifies their values as ‘everybody’s equal worth,’ ‘hospitality,’ and ‘human dignity’ (ibid.). The strong criticism in the commentary refers to both the language in which the issue is raised (presenting refugees as the problem) and the restrictions in the Swedish migration policies that are proposed by the government.

Save the Children is also strongly critical. The organization emphasizes a lack of respect for the conditions stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as a lack of analysis of the proposal’s consequences for children seeking refuge in Sweden. Furthermore, the organization is opposed to the proposal as it makes a distinction between people who are granted a residence permit under the 1951 Refugee Convention and people under subsidiary protection clauses, calling it out as a form of discrimination.

To sum up, the values expressed, on the one hand, relate to, the provisions proposed in the draft, which the organizations consider to be in opposition to human rights and principles of solidarity. According to these principles, Sweden has a duty to protect people fleeing war by granting them refugee status. On the other hand, there is a strong criticism of representing refugees and migrants as ‘the problem’ in the proposal, as the organizations fear this will only strengthen stigmatization and prejudice in Swedish society, and hinder the fostering of their basic values: everybody’s equal worth, hospitality, solidarity, and non-discrimination.

Concluding our analysis on the policy field of migration, with regard to our research inquiry, we see no general shift in the values and norms expressed by the organizations before and after the refugee crisis. What is noticeable is that in 2016 – in the aftermath of the refugee crisis – the critique expressed by the organizations seems to become more radical and reference to their values and norms more explicit. The critique expressed in the first consultation process mostly points at the potentially negative effects of the provision, while the second policy proposal sparked a critique by the organizations that denounced the very ethical implications of the provisions. In some of the statements, the good faith of the government is called into question, as is the proposal, which is labelled as ‘misleading.’ This might be due to the fact that the second proposal implies a much stronger renunciation of Sweden as a welcoming country towards refugees, compared to the first one.

*The policy field of integration*

The first consultation process within the field of integration concerns the introduction of a new system for the integration of newly arrived immigrants, the Establishment Reform (Regeringens proposition 2009/10:60). Two of our selected organizations commented on the proposition, i.e. the Swedish Red Cross and SIOS. Both organizations have a positive view of this governmental initiative, in the sense that they see a need to reform the integration system. However, they are also critical of its focus on the individual immigrants' responsibilities and alleged shortcomings that they see implied in the proposition:

The Swedish Red Cross notes, however, that the draft in this way exclusively bases its statements on the obligations of the newly arrived immigrants and not of the receiving country, which might be interpreted as perceiving the problem to mostly lie with the newly arrived immigrants. However, it can, in our opinion, also lie in the knowledge, attitudes, and values among us Swedes.

(Svenska röda korset 2009b)

The organization goes even further in its criticism suggesting that the proposal includes 'generalizing and categorizing judgments about newly arrived immigrants' (ibid.). The organization states that it is against 'all forms of discrimination' (ibid.), implicitly arguing that these judgements might be interpreted as discriminatory. Both organizations welcome the proposal of a dialogue between the government and the CSOs working with integration, but they expect a more holistic view of the issue. In the words of SIOS: 'but we think it should be about more than the labor market and education issues. Participation in societal life is an important entry point into the labor market' (SIOS 2009b). To sum up, the organizations base their criticisms of the proposal on the idea that integration should concern more than labor market participation and should include other societal aspects. Furthermore, they emphasize the principle which was also evident in their comments concerning migration policy, namely, that the problems with integration, and hence the solution to them, do not lie within the migrant group, but rather, in the structures of Swedish society.

The last proposal concerns a modification of the integration system introduced in 2008, i.e. a new regulation for newly arrived immigrants' integration proposed in 2016. The comments submitted among our sample of organizations are from the Swedish Red Cross and Swedish Women's Lobby. Their approach to the proposal is quite different. While the Red Cross is generally positive towards the proposal in most of its aspects, the organization is critical of the context in which it is implemented. Here, they mostly relate to the government's migration policy of restricted access to residence permits:

The Swedish Red Cross wants to highlight, in particular, the effect that limitations in opportunities for family reunification, time-limited residence permits, and the fact that many newly arrived immigrants suffer from mental illness have on the [immigrants'] preconditions for utilizing the provisions [offered within the system of integration, e.g., Swedish classes for immigrants].

(Svenska röda korset 2016)

The Swedish Women's Lobby's commentary highlights the lack of a gender-perspective in the current integration system. The criticism is strong in both language and the content, as expressed in the following quote claiming that the integration system is very unequal gender-wise: 'the [gender] inequality within the integration system is striking' (Sveriges kvinnolobby 2016b). This is due to the lack of an active gender-based provision and, hence, a critique of a 'gender-blindness' in the system. The authors of the commentary in fact stress that gender equality 'does not come by itself. In order to allow women to use the [integration] provisions<sup>2</sup> to a higher degree, active gender-equality work is required' (ibid.). Another more general criticism is that, in their opinion, it seems that it is not the needs of the newly arrived immigrants that are at the base of the reform, but rather the public authorities' need for effectiveness and cutting costs. To sum up, the organizations have expressed criticism towards the proposal, but the values and norms behind it are not very explicit. The criticism is more about what the proposal does not address (restrictive migration policy and gender-blindness), than about the actual provisions that are proposed.

In conclusion, in this section on integration policy, our analysis does not show any general shift in the values and norms expressed by the organizations before and after the refugee crisis in the field of integration policy. It is noticeable, however, that the organizations have extended weaker criticism to the latter proposal than to the first one. This is likely due to the fact that the second proposal implies a less radical change from the system at the time than the first one. In fact, until 2009, the Swedish integration policy had emphasized multiculturalism, the fight against structural discrimination, and the psycho-social dimensions of integration (Scaramuzzino 2012). It could further be interpreted as the organizations' acceptance of the government's shift in perspective from structures to individuals, which they had criticized in 2009, and as a result of which, their criticism focuses on the implementation of the integration policy rather than its underlying values.

## Concluding discussion

It is clear from this brief analysis of commentaries by Swedish organizations that the Swedish referral system offers an arena for engaging in value-based advocacy. It allows us to see 'values in action.' In fact, the organizations

clearly use this arena as a space for articulating policy-related claims that are based on their norms and values. As we can see, they share a common base of values in the policy fields of migration and integration focusing on humanitarianism, hospitality, inclusion, and solidarity towards the migrants coming to Sweden. Further, they also share an understanding of the structural nature of inequality, underlining their conviction that most causes of the problems with integration are to be found in the Swedish society rather than in the individuals migrating to Sweden. This is emphasized by many organizations in the different consultation processes analyzed here. Hence, they strongly criticize the government's attempt to justify policy changes that have a negative impact on migrants. Illustratively, they challenge the government's claim that restricted immigration is necessary for sustaining the general welfare system. They further oppose the government in its claim that poor integration results are the result of the individual migrants' lack of motivation or skills.

The statements in which values are most discernible concern the drastic changes in the migration policy of 2016. While the policy change in 2009 introducing requirements for family reunification received strong criticism based on the apprehended negative consequences of the provision for migrants, the commentaries on the 2016 proposal signal a complete clash between the government's position and the values and norms that the organizations stand for. The criticism of the 2016 legislative draft has been so strong that we also find a spill-over into the field of integration policy; for instance, the Red Cross' argument that the restrictions on the possibilities to obtain a residence permit are not only a violation of human rights, but also an obstacle to successful integration of those migrants that manage to enter the country.

In the integration policy area, the criticism is significantly weaker, and the values are less explicitly expressed. The criticism is mostly based on the allegedly negative effects of the proposed provisions on the integration of newly arrived refugees, rather than on the values and norms implied. We see, however, that the organizations have expressed the need for a more structural perspective on integration. This was particularly visible in the consultation process of the Establishment Reform of 2009, and may be explained by the fact that it implied a strong shift away from the traditional, more structure-focused integration policy. The 2006-elected liberal-conservative government introduced 'individual responsibility' as a bearing concept, something the organizations reacted to by stressing the need to tackle structural problems, such as discrimination and socio-economic inequality, instead. It is interesting to notice that this criticism does not appear in the comments from 2016, except for when it comes to structural issues of gender inequality. It is also interesting to notice that the more critical the organizations are of a legislative draft, the more explicitly they ground their comments in their value-bases and ideology, for instance in Christian theology or human rights.



## Notes

- 1 All translations into English are the authors.
- 2 Integration provisions of language course and other educational activities.

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