

IN SWEDEN, A SLOW ONGOING INTEGRATION PROCESS

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In Sweden, the number of asylum seekers had been on average around 26 000 during the 30 years that go from 1984 to 2013. It had started increasing already in 2010 to reach 81 000 in 2014 and then it doubled in 2015. This is the largest number of per capita asylum applications in Europe, according to the OECD figures.

The number is only higher in Hungary but migrants did not stay there, there were only registered there. The number of per capita asylum applications was almost three times larger than Germany's and more than six times larger than the EU-average. Of the 163 000, 70 000 were children and 35 000 unaccompanied minors. Such a large inflow was problematic, for example it was hard to get accommodation and tents were used at some point. So by the end of 2015 Sweden started to settle border controls and rules were changed for residence permits. The number of asylum seekers therefore jumped back to the old average level (29 000 in 2016).

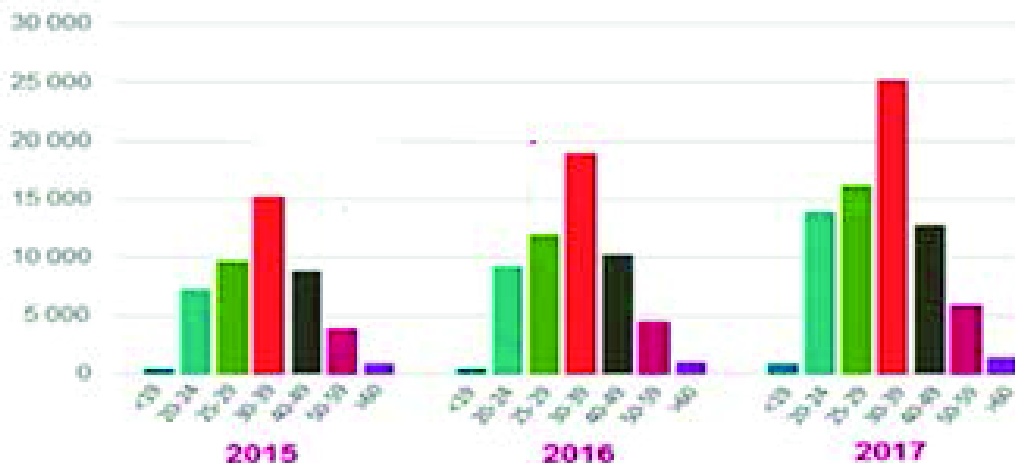
Since 2010 there is a two year Introduction Program in place for refugees after they were granted with residence permit and were placed in a municipality. The program is coordinated by the Swedish Public Employment Service,

(around 650€ per month) to those who actively participate in introduction measures. These measures include courses in the Swedish language, civic orientation (for example rights and obligations) and employment preparation activities (for example adult education, subsidized jobs such as step-in-jobs and fast tracks).

The beneficiaries of the Introduction Program mainly come from Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea. Half of them only have primary education or no education at all. The good part of it is that those refugees are quite young (a major part of them is aged between 20 and 40) and we have time to provide them with education. The government is planning to compel adult newly arrived refugees with at most primary education to attend municipal adult education as part of their Introduction Program.

The share working or in education 90 days after

Age of participants in the Introduction Program



Source : Sweden Statistics



the introduction program ended is still relatively low. Only 30% of them are working or being given education. However, it is getting a bit better over time, as the Introduction Program is being corrected and adjusted. Nevertheless, there is still a lot to accomplish for these figures to increase.

In fact, it takes a very long time for refugees to find a job in Sweden, whereas natives have very high employment rates in Sweden.

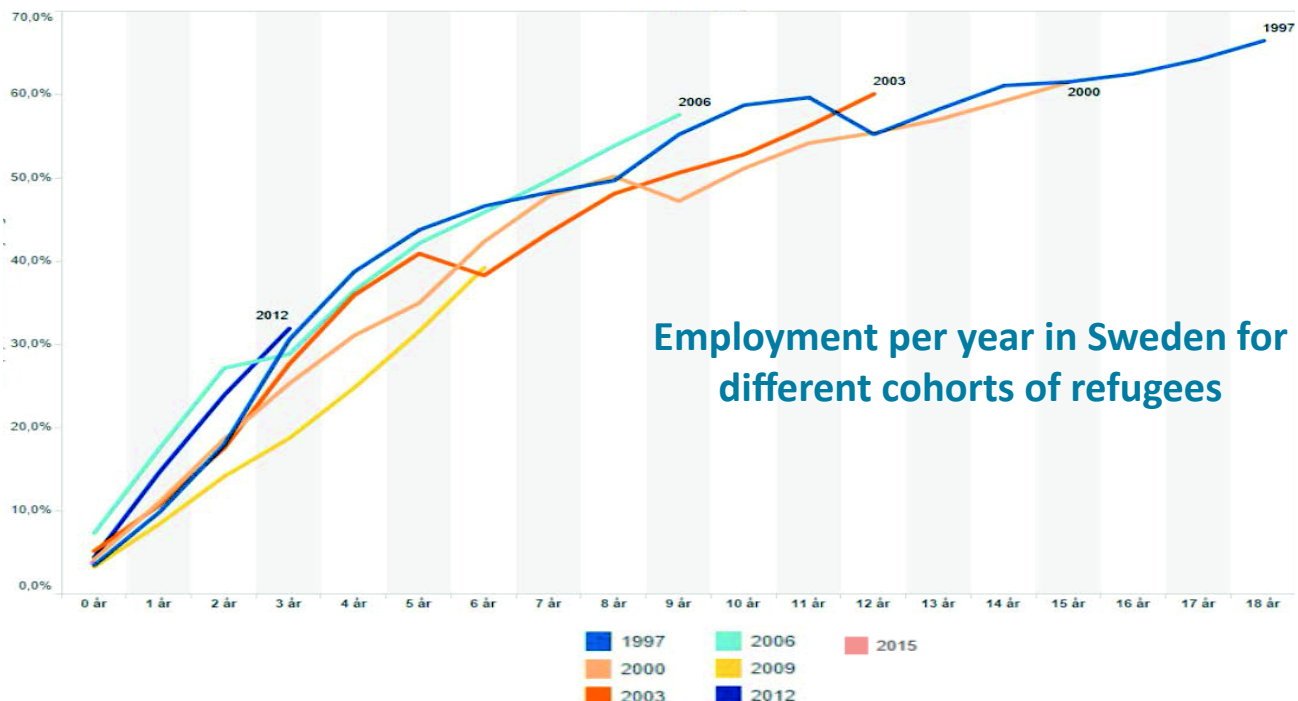
However, the employment rate of refugees is not so low compared to other European countries.

Sweden has in general more positive attitudes to immigrants than most European countries and these attitudes had been improving over time, showing that newer generations are in general more positive towards welcoming refugees. But attitudes have become more negative lately.

In 1992 the share of respondents that think it is a good idea to receive fewer immigrants in the SOM-survey (Gothenburg University) was 65 per

cent. This share has decreased over time to reach 40 per cent in 2015, but jumped up to 52 per cent in 2016. Similarly, the share of respondents that think it is a bad idea to receive fewer immigrants in Sweden had increased from 16 per cent in 1992 to 37 per cent in 2015 and then decreased to 24 per cent in 2016.

The attitudes towards immigrants in Sweden have become much more polarised than what they were before. When I moved from Argentina to Sweden I was surprised by the fact that, for Swedish citizens, most problems should be resolved by the State. But since the arrival of refugees some large groups of people think "we are going to fix this ourselves" and they work very hard to welcome and help refugees integrate. At the same time, there has been a strong increase in votes for anti-immigration parties in Sweden and even an emergence of acts of violence against refugees. More than a dozen fires at housing for refugees have been reported, the majority of which are understood to have been started deliberately. A very positive movement towards the refugees as well as this very negative development are both happening at the same time among Swedish public opinion. ●



Source : DELMI