New policy for the introduction of newly arrived immigrants in Sweden

The new reform to speed up the introduction of newly arrived immigrants into working and social life enters into force on 1 December 2010. This is the greatest change in integration policy in decades. A quicker introduction will be made possible by strengthening the personal incentives to both take up work and take an active part in employment preparatory activities for becoming jobready. A clearer and more distinct division of responsibilities between different stakeholders will create an effective introduction chain. Individual introduction plans will be drawn up to make better use of the skills of newly arrived immigrants.

The reform entails, among other things:

- the Swedish Public Employment Service will have a coordinating responsibility for introduction activities;
- the Swedish Public Employment Service and the newly arrived immigrant will together draw up an introduction plan including activities to facilitate and speed up the introduction of the newly arrived immigrant into working and community life;
- a new benefit will be introduced that is the same for all newly arrived immigrants regardless of where in the country they live and is paid in connection with active participation in introduction activities;
- a new service provider – an ‘introduction guide’ – is to assist the newly arrived immigrant during the introduction period;
- newly arrived immigrants who have an introduction plan are required to participate in civic orientation.

All newly arrived immigrants, according to their circumstances, will be given professional support to, as quickly as possible, learn Swedish, find work and support themselves, and become informed about the rights and obligations that apply in Sweden.

Background

Until now, the municipalities have been responsible for what is called ‘introduction’. The introduction of newly arrived immigrants has been designed differently in different parts of the country. The municipalities have, for example, made their own decisions on whether to pay introduction benefits or financial support (social allowance) to newly arrived immigrants who take part in an introduction programme. The municipalities have also decided on the size of the benefit. Evaluations show that it has taken a long time for newly arrived immigrants of refugee background to become established in the labour market. On average, some 15 per cent of men have a job one year after being granted a residence permit, 35 per cent three years after and 50 per cent five years after. For women, the corresponding figures are 5, 20 and 30 per cent, respectively. The results show that there have been major structural problems with the introduction activities.

Summary of the main elements of the reform:

1. Central government responsibility, with the Swedish Public Employment Service as the coordinating agency

To underline the importance of rapid introduction into the labour market, the Swedish Public Employment Service is to be given a central role and a key responsibility. The Swedish Public Employment Service will take over the coordination responsibility for adult introduction activities from the municipalities. This will underline the work-first principle. The county administrative boards, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Migration Board will also be given new or revised areas of responsibility. The municipalities will continue to have important responsibilities for the reception of refugees and the introduction of newly arrived immigrants, for example for Swedish for immigrants and other adult education, housing provision and initiatives for children and young people. The municipalities will also be responsible for offering civic orientation courses to newly arrived immigrants.

2. Increased help to move to where the jobs are

The Swedish Public Employment Service, after consulting with county administrative boards and the Swedish Migration Board, is responsible for deciding how many newly arrived immigrants the different counties should receive. It is then the responsibility of each county administrative board to reach
agreements with the county’s municipalities. The conditions on the labour market are an important starting point when places for the newly arrived immigrants are distributed between the counties and in the agreements with the municipalities concerning reception. The county administrative boards are also to ensure via the agreements that there is capacity to receive people with special care and rehabilitation needs.

The Swedish Public Employment Service will take over responsibility for helping newly arrived immigrants, if necessary, find somewhere to live in a municipality. As soon as a residence permit has been granted, the Swedish Public Employment Service will conduct an introduction dialogue with the newly arrived immigrant. This dialogue is to deal with choice of appropriate area to settle in taking into account the newly arrived immigrant’s education, occupational experience and need for introduction activities.

This will improve the chances of matching the newly arrived immigrant’s skills with a suitable municipality to settle in. The Swedish Migration Board will still have settlement responsibility for parts of the target group. Newly arrived immigrants who have made their own housing arrangements are entitled, within six months of being granted a residence permit, to receive assistance to move to another municipality with better labour and housing market conditions.

### 3. An individual introduction plan will be drawn up

The outcome of the introduction dialogue is to be an introduction plan drawn up together by the Swedish Public Employment Service and the newly arrived immigrant. This plan is to be drawn up within two months of arrival in Sweden or the first contact with the Swedish Public Employment Service. A newly arrived immigrant is entitled to an introduction plan within one year of registration in the Swedish population register.

The introduction plan is to be designed based on the mapping of the newly arrived immigrant’s educational background, previous work experience and need for training and other initiatives. When the plan is drawn up, the newly arrived immigrant’s family situation and health are to be taken into account. Better individualised planning involving the active participation of the individual, and better follow-up to ensure that planned activities are carried out will strengthen the opportunities for good integration. How long the introduction plan is to apply will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but the maximum is 24 months.

As a general rule, the activities contained in the introduction plan should correspond to a full-time programme and contain, at minimum, Swedish for immigrants, civic orientation and employment preparation activities. This is the first time that activities and responsibilities are collectively regulated in a single Act. Newly arrived immigrants covered by the ‘Introduction Act’ now have the statutory right to employment preparation activities.

### 4. Individualised benefits to be introduced

Newly arrived immigrants who are involved in drawing up an introduction plan, or who take part in activities according to an introduction plan, will be entitled to benefits.

The introduction benefit is individual and the same for everyone regardless of where in the country one lives.

The introduction benefit for helping to draw up an introduction plan is SEK 231 per day, five days a week. The introduction benefit for taking part in activities included in the introduction plan on a full-time basis is SEK 308 per day, five days a week.

The introduction benefit is designed to encourage newly arrived immigrants both to work and take part in introduction activities. As is the case with students who receive financial support, newly arrived immigrants are entitled to work alongside the introduction activities without the benefit being reduced. Newly arrived immigrants, like others who are outside the labour market, will be required to take an active part in activities that improve their prospects of supporting themselves.

Absence for reasons other than illness, care of children or other acceptable reason will result in the introduction benefit being reduced. The introduction benefit is designed to enhance the prospects for gender equality. An individual financial benefit that is not affected by the incomes of other household members creates stronger incentives for both spouses in a family to take part in Swedish for immigrants, civic orientation and other employment preparation activities. It should also create better opportunities for newly arrived women to secure a place in the labour market.

The introduction benefit is a central government benefit and decisions concerning this benefit are taken by the Swedish Public Employment Service. The introduction of a central government introduction benefit means that the municipalities will no longer pay introduction benefits to newly arrived immigrants covered by the reform. To ensure that, under normal circumstances, the need for additional social welfare allowance will not arise, a newly arrived immigrant with children living at home is entitled to receive an additional introduction benefit. In certain cases, single people without children living at home are entitled to a special housing allowance. Decisions concerning these additional benefits are made by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, which is also responsible for making the payments.

### 5. Civic orientation – part of the introduction plan

Civic orientation is being introduced as an obligatory part of the introduction plan for newly arrived immigrants. Its aim is to foster a basic understan-
The municipalities are obliged to offer newly arrived immigrants a minimum of 60 hours of civic orientation, starting as soon as possible after the introduction plan has been drawn up and normally ending within a year. Civic orientation is to be taught by people with the appropriate teaching qualifications or experience and subject knowledge. The county administrative boards are to promote and support cooperation between the municipalities and follow up the activities.

6. Introduction guide – a new service provider

A newly arrived immigrant with an introduction plan is entitled to choose an introduction guide. The guide is an independent actor working for the Swedish Public Employment Service to support newly arrived immigrants in their search for work. The guide is to be supportive and proactive during the entire introduction period and, together with the newly arrived immigrant, enlarge upon the introduction plan drawn up by the Swedish Public Employment Service and the newly arrived immigrant.

Introduction guides are procured in accordance with the Act on System of Choice in the Public Sector. This means that newly arrived immigrants themselves select their guides. It also means that the conditions of this procurement differ from those of a traditional procurement. Companies and organisations may apply on a regular basis to be guides. All the applicants meeting the requirements of the contract documents are approved.

Remuneration for introduction guides will be performance- and results-based. Guides will thus have a financial interest in newly arrived immigrants being able to support themselves as soon as possible. A starting remuneration is paid when the guide is chosen and begins the assignment. The guide subsequently receives a monthly payment for the months in which the newly arrived immigrant is involved. A results-based remuneration applies if the individual finds work or studies at post-secondary level.

The responsibility of municipalities and their allowances

Although the Swedish Public Employment Service has been given coordinating responsibility for introduction activities for newly arrived adults, the municipalities continue to have other important responsibilities. They will continue, for example, to be responsible for Swedish for immigrants and will also be responsible for offering civic orientation courses. Housing provision and initiatives for children in schools and pre-schools, for example, continue to be the responsibility of municipalities. The municipalities receive compensation from the state for these initiatives. A municipality that has an agreement concerning the reception of newly arrived immigrants for settlement is entitled to basic compensation corresponding to ten price base amounts per year.

For each newly arrived immigrant a standard allowance is paid that is intended to cover the costs of reception and practical help in connection with housing, special introductory activities at school, pre-school, out-of-school centres and other educational activities, Swedish for immigrants, civic orientation, interpretation and other activities that facilitate settling into the community. Compensation for certain remaining municipal costs for financial assistance is also included in the standard compensation. The standard compensation for 2011 is SEK 80 000 for people under the age of 65 and SEK 50 000 for people aged 65 and over.

Standard compensation is also provided for the initial costs of financial support to newly arrived immigrants that the municipalities may need to pay before the state introduction benefit can be paid out. In addition, compensation is paid for the costs of financial support to people who, due to certified illness or impairment of their physical or mental capacity, are unable to take part in introduction activities on a full-time basis, and for certain special costs related to support and service, and health and medical care. Special compensation is also provided for unaccompanied minors. Compensation may also be provided for certain other special costs and for activities to create preparedness and reception capacity, and to develop cooperation.

County councils are entitled to compensation for certain health and medical care costs and health check-ups.

Who is covered by the reform?

The target group covered by the Introduction Act is refugees, other people in need of protection who have a residence permit and their close relatives between the ages of 20 and 64 who have applied for
a residence permit within two years. Newly arrived immigrants aged 18–19 are also included. Newly arrived immigrants included in the target group differ from year to year. In 2011 the Swedish Migration Board expects to receive around 19 500 refugees in total, of which 11 300 will be adults and covered by the new Act on introduction activities for newly arrived immigrants.

The provisions on housing and compensation to municipalities cover the same target groups as the Introduction Act, but contain no restrictions regarding age. However, certain people in the target group covered by the Introduction Act are not entitled to an introduction plan. These are people who are in full-time gainful employment, attend upper secondary school, or because of illness or other impairment of their physical or mental capacity, are prevented from taking part in introduction activities at a minimum of 25 per cent of the full-time level.

Only certain people who immigrate to Sweden are covered by the Act and ordinances regulating the initiatives for newly arrived immigrants. In 2009 this group comprised just over 20 000 people, corresponding to 21 per cent of the 97 000 people granted a residence permit.

Implementation of the reform

The new Act and other changes enter into force on 1 December 2010. When the system is fully operational, raising the level of ambition for speeding up the introduction of newly arrived immigrants in the labour market will increase central government expenditure by SEK 920 million per year. When the changes produce results in the form of quicker introduction into the labour market, there will be benefits to society. For central government and the municipalities, these will be in the form of lower costs for allowances and higher tax revenues. For newly arrived immigrants themselves, there will be better opportunities to shape their own lives, and to participate in, and contribute to, Swedish society.

Governing acts and ordinances, etc.

- Government Bill 2009/10:60 ‘Introduction of newly arrived immigrants into the labour market – individual responsibility with professional support’

- Act on introduction activities for certain newly arrived immigrants (2010:197)

- Ordinances:
  - Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) 2010:407 Ordinance on compensation to certain newly arrived immigrants
  - Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) 2010:408 Ordinance on reception for settlement of certain newly arrived immigrants
  - Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) 2010:409 Ordinance on introduction dialogue and introduction activities for certain newly arrived immigrants
  - Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) 2010:1122 Ordinance on state compensation for activities for certain aliens
  - Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) 2010:1138 Ordinance on civic orientation for certain newly arrived immigrants

Procurement of introduction mentors: The Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency national website for free choice systems and the Swedish Public Employment Service website

Please address questions relating to the contents of this sheet to the Division for Integration and Urban Development, tel: +46 (0)8 405 10 00. Further copies of the fact sheet can be downloaded from the Government’s website www.regeringen.gov.se.

Printed by Grafisk Service, December 2010. This fact sheet is produced by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality.