



Government reform to speed up the introduction of new arrivals in Sweden

The Government proposes to speed up the introduction of newly arrived immigrants to working and social life by means of the reform 'Labour market introduction of newly arrived immigrants – individual responsibility with professional support'. More rapid introduction will be accomplished by strengthening incentives to find a job and to participate in introduction activities. A clearer and more distinct division of responsibilities between various actors will create an efficient introduction chain.

The reform involves:

- Giving the Swedish Public Employment Service co-ordination responsibilities for introduction activities instead of the municipalities.
- A new benefit that is the same for everyone regardless of where in the country one lives is paid to new arrivals when they actively participate in introduction activities.
- A new actor – an 'introduction guide' – that will be introduced to support the new arrival during the introduction period.
- New arrivals who have an introduction plan are to take part in civic orientation.

The aim is that, on the basis of their own circumstances, each new arrival will be given professional support to, as quickly as possible, learn Swedish, find a job and support him or herself.

Background

As municipalities have been responsible for the introduction of new arrivals, measures varies in different parts of the country. The municipalities have taken their own decisions as to whether they are going to pay introduction benefits or social allowance to new arrivals who take part in an introduction programme. The municipality has also decided the size of the benefit.

It takes unnecessarily long time for new arrivals to become established in the labour market. The pace has been particularly slow for many new arrivals with refugee backgrounds. On average, some 15 per cent of the men have a job after having had a residence permit for one year, 35 per cent after three years and 50 per cent after five years. For women, the corresponding figures are five, 20 and 30 per cent, respectively. These results indicate that today's introduction activities are burdened with major structural problems.

Summary of the main sections of the reform:

1. Central government has main responsibility, while Swedish Public Employment Service is the coordinating government agency

To clarify the importance of rapid introduction into the labour market, it is natural that the Swedish Public Employment Service has a central role. The Public Employment Service will take over responsibility for coordinating introduction activities for adults from the municipalities. This will underline the work-first principle.

The municipalities will still have important tasks regarding refugee reception and the introduction of new arrivals. These include matters such as 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 to new arrivals.

2. Increased help to move to where the jobs are

Since the Swedish Public Employment Service will take over responsibility for assisting a new arrival finding a place of residence, the opportunities for matching his or her skills with a suitable municipality in which to live will be improved. Immediately after being granted a residence permit, the Public Employment Service is to conduct an introduction interview with the new arrival to catalogue his or her background. This forms the basis for a decision on a suitable place of residence.

The period in which new arrivals are offered help to find housing is extended from one to six months after residence permit

3. An individual introduction plan to be drawn up

The Swedish Public Employment Service, together with the new arrival, is to draw up an introduction plan based on previous educational background and work experience. Better personal planning in which the individual actively participates, and better follow-up

of implementation of planned activities, will strengthen the potential for good integration. The length of the introduction plan will be determined on a case-by-case basis, with a maximum length of 24 months. As a rule, the activities included in the introduction plan are to correspond to a full-time programme and, at minimum, must contain the following: 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. New arrivals covered by the Act will now gain a statutory right to take part in employment preparation activities.

4. Individualised benefit to be introduced

New arrivals who help draw up an introduction plan, or who take part in activities under an introduction plan, will be entitled to a benefit. The introduction benefit will be individual and the same for everyone regardless of where in the country one lives. The introduction benefit will be designed so that it encourages new arrivals to both work and take part in introduction activities. New arrivals, like others who are outside the labour market, will be required to actively take part in activities that improve their prospects of supporting themselves. As is the case with study grants, new arrivals are to be able to work alongside their introduction activities without the benefit being reduced.

The introduction benefit is designed so as to increase the potential for gender equality. An individual 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 mean better opportunities for newly arrived women to enter the labour market.

The benefit will be provided by central government. Decisions concerning the benefit will be taken by the Swedish Public Employment Service. The establishment of a central government introduction benefit means that the municipalities will no longer pay introduction benefits to new arrivals. Nor will payment of a social allowance be relevant in most cases.

5. Civic orientation – part of the introduction plan

Civic orientation is to convey the importance of fundamental values such as democracy and the equal value of all people. It should include the acquisition of knowledge and reflection on what living in Swedish society entails, gender equality and respect for the integrity of young people. It is also to provide clear information on the rights and obligations of the individual.

6. Introduction guide – a new actor

A new actor – an introduction guide – is to help the new arrival find a job. The guide is an independent actor, working on the instructions of the Swedish Public Employment Service. A new arrival will be able to choose a guide via a free choice system for introduction guides. The guide is to provide support and be proactive during the entire introduction period and, together with the new arrival, is to help develop the introduction plan drawn up by the Swedish Public Employment Service and the new arrival. Compensation to guides will be performance- and results-based. A guide will thus have a financial interest in the new arrival being able to support him or herself as soon as possible.

The Swedish Public Employment Service currently offers new arrivals coaching by a procured supplementary actor. Support and coaching by a supplementary actor involves a maximum of six months' help in finding a job or beginning a regular education programme. This service is not offered to all new arrivals, and often only after a person has been in the country for one or two years. The task of an introduction guide is broader than that of a coach and all new arrivals will be offered the services of a guide as soon as possible after being granted a residence permit.

About implementation of the proposal

It is proposed that the new Act and other changes enter into force on 1 December 2010. The target group covered by the Act is refugees, other people in need of protection who have residence permits and their family members between the ages of 20–64. New arrivals between the ages of 18–19 are also included if they do not have parents in Sweden.

The reform is estimated to increase costs by SEK 920 million when the system is fully operational. Once the changes produce results in the form of quicker entry into the labour market, there will be benefits to society. For central government and the municipalities, this will be in the form of lower costs for allowances and higher tax revenues. For new arrivals themselves, the benefits will be better opportunities to shape their own lives, and to participate in and contribute to Swedish society.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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Questions about the content of this fact sheet can be addressed to the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, tel: +46 8 405 10 00. Additional copies of the fact sheet can be printed from the Government website: www.regeringen.se

Printed by Grafisk Service, December 2009.
This fact sheet has been produced by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality.