

## 2.5. COUNTRY REPORT: SWEDEN

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The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) have undergone substantial cultural and social changes due to increased migration from the 1970s onwards. While the Nordic region has become more multicultural in terms of demography, workforces and cultural practices, criticism of multicultural politics has increased. Despite different patterns of immigration in the Nordic countries, they all seem to share growing political tensions with regard to multiculturalism and migration. Many migrants have experiences of racism and discrimination (Eide & Nikunen, 2010:1). In all Nordic countries, right-wing conservative parties have strengthened their position. In Norway and Denmark, such parties have for some time been represented in the Parliament, and in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats came into the Parliament after the 2010 election. This party has on its agenda to reduce the costs for migration and dramatically change the national migration policy. They blame the government for being too permissive and generous. It is against this background the present report is written.

### 1. METHODOLOGY

This report draws mainly on desk research combined with contacts with stakeholders. Relevant sources of information are reports from government institutions in Sweden such as the Swedish Board of Migration (Migrationsverket) and the National Board of Education (Skolverket). Both these authorities regularly publish statistics, reports and other types of information on their websites. They also sponsor academic research to some extent. Other sources are reports from the EU and OECD. Reports from international organizations are also used, i.e. NGOs such as Save the Children Sweden and the Swedish Red Cross. Furthermore, we base

the report on academic research and publications. Relatively extensive research has been conducted on migration and refugee issues since the 1980s. We have focused on more recent studies from the last ten years. In 2010, a comprehensive interdisciplinary study with specific focus on asylum-seeking children was published by a Swedish research consortium, coordinated by the University of Gothenburg (Andersson, Ascher, Björnberg & Eastmond, 2010).

This consortium (GRACE) was formed at the 2004 conference *The Asylum-Seeking Child in Europe*. A wide range of studies were initiated on the macro-, meso- and micro-level to investigate the situation of these children. The final report has been valuable to the objectives of INTEGRACE. Another comprehensive and recent source of information is a report initiated by the Swedish Research Council (Bunar, 2010). This presents a review of the latest research on the integration of newcomers (including asylum-seeking children) into the Swedish school system. Bunar's report examines research projects with a special emphasis on language education as well as other educational integrative efforts.

In the section on 'best practices', the methodology for selection of cases will be described in more detail. For example, we have established contacts, mainly by mail or phone, with stakeholders, researchers and other relevant persons such as project leaders. We have also used documents from websites and reports from, for example, the School Inspectorate, an authority affiliated with the National Agency for Education. The advantage of reports from the School Inspectorate is that they have systematically evaluated a number of projects addressing refugee and asylum-seeking children (RASC) and newcomers according to an established set of relevant variables for discerning 'best practices'. In other words, the projects have passed a formal evaluation process conducted by experts.

## 2. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: GENERAL BACKGROUND

Sweden receives more migrants than the other Nordic countries (Sweden's current population is 9.4 million, which is about twice the population of Norway or Denmark). The largest (and oldest) group comes from Finland. Migration for work between the Nordic countries has a long tradition. During recent years, many Swedes, especially young people, have migrated to Norway for work and studies, and many Danes work and study in Sweden (and vice versa). At present, about 20 per cent of the population in Sweden is of foreign background (first and second generation).

### 2.1. Migration statistics

Over the past ten years, an increasing number of foreign citizens have come to Sweden to seek protection, as well as to work, study or to form or reunite a family. In 2009, nearly 100,000 persons (including EU citizens) were granted a residence permit. This represented an increase of 10 per cent compared to the previous year (Swedish Board of Migration, 2010). In the same year 13.8 per cent of the population was foreign-born – 5.1 per cent in another EU member state and 8.8 per cent outside the EU (Eurostat, 2010).

Immigration of relatives from countries outside the European Union occurs frequently and is a direct consequence of the family reunification policy applied to close family members of those granted asylum. This tendency reflects the present global situation. During the past ten years, the number of asylum seekers from Iraq, Somalia and the Balkan countries has increased. People coming from outside the European Union have also been given permission to work in Sweden during recent years. This has been made possible by changes in the *Aliens' Act*. Furthermore, migration from EU countries has increased, due in part to the fact that ten countries (seven of them from the former Eastern Bloc) became new member states in 2004 and two more (Bulgaria and Romania) joined in 2007.

### 2.2. Asylum<sup>1</sup>

During the past ten years, Sweden has been one of the most important receiving countries for asylum seekers in the EU; it is, in fact, among the top five countries which received the most migrants for reasons of asylum. Its share of reception is considerably larger than the share of Sweden's population in the whole European community. In 2007, Sweden received almost every second application for asylum from Iraqi citizens wishing to live in Europe. In Table 27, one can see the number of asylum applicants in the Nordic countries in 2010. Sweden stands out from the other Nordic

**TABLE 27. FIVE MAIN CITIZENSHIPS OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES, 2010**

Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
Afghanistan	1,465	Somalia	520	Eritrea	1,710	Serbia	6,255
Syria	815	Iraq	515	Somalia	1,395	Somalia	5,630
Iran	655	Russia	395	Afghanistan	980	Afghanistan	2,400
Russia	400	Afghanistan	240	Russia	630	Iraq	1,995
Serbia	265	Serbia	155	Ethiopia	505	Kosovo	1,715
Other	1,470	Other	1,265	Other	4,805	Other	13,880
Total	5,070	Total	3,090	Total	10,025	Total	31,875

<sup>1</sup> Data in this section is extracted and adapted from publications from The Swedish Board of Migration, except in cases where another reference is given.

**TABLE 27. FIVE MAIN CITIZENSHIPS OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES, 2010 (CONTINUED)**

Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<b>Population at 1.1.2010 and total of asylum seekers as a percentage of population</b>			
5,529,400 0.09%	5,351,400 0.06%	4,858,200 0.21%	9,340,700 0.34%

Source: Eurostat, 2011.

countries (Denmark, Finland and Norway) and has more applicants than the other three countries combined when it comes to citizens from Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

### 2.2.1. Asylum decisions

There are three bodies which review decisions on asylum cases: the Swedish Migration Board, the Migration Courts and the Migration Court of Appeal. Table 28 refers only to decisions made by the first body, the Swedish Migration Board, and covers the ten largest citizenships.

As can be seen in Table 28, asylum seekers from Somalia and Eritrea receive the highest percentage of positive decisions. Next come those from Afghanistan and then Iraq. Applications from Serbian and Macedonian citizens are almost always rejected.

The figures in Table 29 covers residence permits granted and rights of residence granted (reasons for asylum) by both the Swedish Migration Board and the Embassies of Sweden abroad. The figures only cover 'first-time applications', that is to say persons who have not previously had a residence permit or

**TABLE 28. CITIZENSHIP AND ASYLUM DECISIONS, 2010**

Citizenship top 10	Decisions	Residence permit granted	Residence permit refused	'Dublin' case	Other decision	Average handling time (days)	Percentage of decisions positive
Somalia	6,861	4,530	366	1,463	502	130	66.0
Serbia	5,511	41	4,660	66	744	55	1.0
Iraq	2,046	824	812	186	224	157	40.0
Afghanistan	1,892	1,039	434	335	84	157	55.0
Eritrea	1,347	900	74	303	70	119	67.0
Iran	1,283	264	843	78	98	200	21.0
Kosovo	1,149	46	756	186	161	127	4.0
Russia	1,035	100	528	263	144	138	10.0
Stateless	968	278	440	111	139	181	29.0
Macedonia	709	8	602	20	79	55	1.0

Source: Statistics, Swedish Board of Migration, 2011.

**TABLE 29. REASONS FOR GRANTING ASYLUM AND RESIDENCE PERMITS**

	Somalia	Iran	Iraq	Afghanistan	Eritrea	Total
Asylum: Convention refugees	467	275	623	190	168	<b>1,723</b>
Asylum: Persons in need of protection	4,381	81	329	783	751	<b>6,325</b>
Asylum: Particularly distressing conditions	57	17	90	168	11	<b>343</b>
Quota refugees	404	80	116	336	301	<b>1,237</b>
Impediments to enforcement	78	12	47	12	6	<b>155</b>
Refugee-family reunification	614	75	1,094	370	300	<b>2,453</b>

*Source:* Statistics, Swedish Board of Migration, 2010.

right of residence. Moreover, the table only covers the five largest citizenships. Residence permits granted for family reunification, employment, study, EEA rights of residence, adopted children, visits and other circumstances are also excluded from this table.

In 2010, residence permits granted for reasons of asylum (convention refugees) were most common among persons from Iraq, Somalia and Iran. And among Somalis also “persons in need of protection”.

### 2.2.2. Asylum-seeking children

Most asylum-seeking children arrive with their parents. In 2010, 2,777 children (aged 0-18) were granted asylum. Nearly half of these children (1,285) were unaccompanied minors. This can be compared with the total number of 8,727 residence permits awarded. The proportion of girls compared to boys was about the same in the ages up to 15 years, with a slightly higher number of girls. When it comes to children older than 15, the tendency is the reverse with a higher proportion

**TABLE 30. GROUNDS FOR GRANTED ASYLUM DECISIONS: CHILDREN AND ADULTS, 2010**

	Children in family	Unaccompanied children	Adults	Total
Convention refugee	503	90	1,343	<b>1,936</b>
In need of protection	771	1,003	4,180	<b>5,954</b>
Particularly distressing circumstances	172	188	244	<b>604</b>
Other, for example temporary residence permit	46	4	183	<b>233</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,492</b>	<b>1,285</b>	<b>5,950</b>	<b>8,727</b>

*Note that figures only refer to decisions made by the first reviewing body, the Swedish Migration Board.*

*Source:* Statistics, Swedish Board of Migration, 2011.

of boys, as there are many unaccompanied minors in this group (see section 2.2.3 on unaccompanied minors).

In Table 30, figures for positive asylum decisions are presented. In most cases, asylum is granted on the grounds 'in need of protection', 'Convention refugee' and 'particularly distressing circumstances'. The handling time for the Board of Migration to process an application for asylum was up to 300 days in 2008. Families with children are prioritized and the handling time was somewhat lower, i.e. 26 days less (Andersson, Björnberg & Eastmond, 2010).

Studies of refugee children's mental health and wellbeing, both in Sweden and Denmark, show that reception in the new host country plays an important role in their recovery from traumatic experiences and other types of hardship. Therefore, it is important to invest in qualified care as early as possible in order to prevent poor mental health in the future. Good care can even compensate for earlier bad experiences in the former home country. These observations hold for adults as well. Studies from Australia also indicate that early access to the same rights as citizens with a permanent residence permit promotes good health. Children's wellbeing is also related to that of their parents. Children are at risk if their parents suffer from depression, unemployment, etc. Recent research also stresses refugees' capacity for **resilience** and their ability to recover if provided with good living conditions. Furthermore, researchers place increasing emphasis on the importance of the child's perspective, i.e. of treating the child as an individual in his/her own

right (Andersson, Björnberg and Eastmond, 2010). The child has to be listened to.

The asylum procedure, i.e. the waiting time for a decision, is an extremely important period, but has received relatively little attention until recently. At present, it has become a crucial issue together with an increased focus on the rights of children (including both legal and human rights) during the asylum-seeking process. It was not until 1985 that the Board of Immigration (Invandrarverket) first presented statistics on asylum-seeking children. During the period 1996 – 2008, the number of asylum-seeking children varied widely from year to year, from 1,700 to more than 9,000. The proportion of children within the total number of asylum seekers varied between 26 and 32 per cent in the same period. However, it is difficult to arrive at a conclusion based on these statistics as to whether refugee politics has become more liberal, because an eventual increased number of residence permits for these children one year might depend either on more liberal politics or on more pressure for escape from a certain disaster area (Andersson, Björnberg & Eastmond, 2010).

### 2.2.3. Unaccompanied minors

The number of unaccompanied children has increased during recent years. In 2008, these children constituted about 25 per cent of all asylum-seeking children. Most children (proportionately more boys than girls) come from Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq and are aged between thirteen and seventeen (Sveriges kommuner och landsting, 2010).

**TABLE 31. POSITIVE ASYLUM DECISIONS FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Iraq	69	337	621	464	110
Afghanistan	27	98	160	347	780
Somalia	33	101	189	345	913
Other	269	284	294	354	447
<b>Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>1,264</b>	<b>1,510</b>	<b>2,250</b>

*Source:* Statistics, Swedish Board of Migration, 2011.

**TABLE 32. ASYLUM DECISIONS AND HANDLING TIME OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS, 2010**

Citizenship top 10	Decisions	Residence permit granted	Residence permit refused	'Dublin' case	Other decision	Average handling time (days)	Percentage of decisions positive
Afghanistan	764	648	33	59	24	152	<b>85.0</b>
Somalia	687	472	42	111	62	131	<b>69.0</b>
Other	274	47	148	25	54	155	17.0
Iraq	78	40	26	5	7	145	51.0
Eritrea	53	49	0	3	1	138	<b>92.0</b>
Stateless	36	14	10	1	11	192	39.0
Unknown	21	3	13	0	5	220	14.0
Mongolia	14	3	10	0	1	132	21.0
Ethiopia	13	7	6	0	1	132	21.0
Uzbekistan	9	2	7	0	0	231	54.0
China	5	0	3	0	2	203	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,954</b>	<b>1,285</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>66.0</b>

*Source:* Statistics, Swedish Board of Migration, 2011.

Since July 1, 2006, the municipalities have had responsibility for receiving unaccompanied minors and the Board of Migration has to make written agreements with the authorities on a local level.

However, in the same period as these agreements were made, the number of unaccompanied minors increased. The consequence has been that the municipalities have not been able to handle the increased number of children in need of care and protection. In order to manage this situation, the government has increased the financial compensation for reception. Following this move, there has been an increased interest on the part of the municipalities to sign agreements for hosting unaccompanied minors. Many other EU countries have to confront the same issues. This issue has also been debated in the media over the past years. Some municipalities are more restrictive than others for various reasons. Among other things, changes in the infrastructure of small towns have led to negative reactions from the local population, sometimes with xenophobic overtones. In other cases, the opposite has been

the case, as small rural communities with low tax revenues have seen reception as an opportunity to improve their economy.

Table 32 shows asylum decisions, rejections and handling time for unaccompanied minors. More than half of the children (66 per cent) are granted residence permits.

Some applications are rejected according to the Dublin agreement, especially in the case of minors from Somalia. The average handling time is 146 days (i.e. almost 5 months). Children from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia are given priority treatment as most of them are granted asylum.

#### **Information to unaccompanied minors**

The Board of Migration has on its website a text addressed directly to unaccompanied minors written in English, where they describe the process of asylum and the necessary steps to be taken, from the application procedure to the process of

finding a custodian and a public counsel. If the child receives a residence permit, the municipality in which the child lives will take over to assist in finding housing. The text also refers to the CRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), which states that children are entitled to be united with their family. Finally, there is information on what happens if the application is rejected and on the process of returning home.

However, the political ambitions for unaccompanied minors are not always in line with these intentions in reality. Save the Children Sweden claims, for example, that it should take no more than 24 hours to find a custodian and that temporary living arrangements should not last more than 7 days before a permanent place is found. The report 'Oklart uppdrag' (Unclear mission)<sup>2</sup> indicates a lack of clear rules and co-ordination when handling unaccompanied minors. It is largely a matter of chance whether children get the necessary assistance during the reception process. This has to do with the attitudes of the custodians, their engagement and knowledge of whether the process is working well. The municipalities also have different interpretations of their obligations in the handling of unaccompanied minors. Sometimes children have to wait for 3 months before a custodian is found.

The report is based on interviews with just 21 children, but the results are still interesting as the children's own voices are heard. The youngsters say that what is most important is having a custodian and being able to go to school. Only five of the children were asked their opinion regarding the choice of custodian. Some custodians handle as many as ten children. The time spent with the children varies between 4 and 25 hours a month. Almost 25 per cent of the youngsters say they have hardly any contact with their custodian, except for in connection with meetings with authorities. Some youngsters expect this person to be like a parent, others like a recreation instructor, while others expect the custodian to be an assistant during encounters with authorities ([www.raddabarnen.se](http://www.raddabarnen.se) and the report 'Oklart uppdrag').

### 3. INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP

In this section we will sum up the various authorities working with asylum seekers and what they do.

#### 3.1. On a national level

The Swedish Parliament governs legislation in this area and determines which criteria should apply in order for a person to be eligible for a residence permit in Sweden. The Swedish Migration Board examines applications for asylum, resident permits and citizenship in Sweden. These decisions can be appealed in a court.

The administrative courts in Malmö, Göteborg and Stockholm (Migration Courts) re-examine the applications being appealed. The Administrative Court of Appeal in Stockholm (Migration Court of Appeal) is the highest body in migration cases and the body that determines how legislation should be interpreted. The Swedish Migration Board and the county administrative courts must observe the Administrative Court of Appeal's judgments.

The Swedish Migration Board is in charge of the following:

- receiving and considering applications for asylum;
- appointing public legal counsel;
- assessing a minor's age if necessary;
- looking for a minor's family members and relatives while applying for asylum;
- helping the minor to return if he/she is unable to stay in Sweden;
- setting up agreements with municipalities (see below) on reception of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors ([www.migrationsverket.se](http://www.migrationsverket.se), 09-02-11).

The Swedish Migration Board also offers accommodation and financial compensation for the time taken for a decision to be reached for an asylum application.

<sup>2</sup> The report 'Oklart uppdrag' is a short version of a larger study, which is part of the European project supported by EU, 'Closing a Protection Gap', which has been conducted in eight countries. In the report, 21 unaccompanied refugee children are interviewed, and six custodians, as well as six adults working with these children ([www.raddabarnen.se](http://www.raddabarnen.se)).

### 3.1.1. *Central administrative authorities for education*

The Swedish National Agency for Education and the Schools Inspectorate are two central administrative authorities for education in Sweden. Through the Education Act, curricula, etc., the Government and Parliament set the goals and guidelines for pre-school and school. It is then the task of the Swedish National Agency for Education to make sure these goals are achieved. "The Agency steers, supports, follows up and evaluates the work of municipalities and schools with the purpose of improving quality and the result of activities to ensure that all pupils have access to equal education. [...] The Agency also has responsibility for coordinating national initiatives for pupils with disabilities, environmental issues and issues relating to pupils who have just arrived in Sweden." ([www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se)).

It is the Schools Inspectorate's duty to supervise pre-school activities, the welfare of schoolchildren, schools management and adult education. This is the authority which ensures that existing laws and regulations are adhered to by local authorities, etc. "The aim of the Schools Inspectorate is to ensure the equal right of all children to a good education, in a safe environment, where everyone can achieve their maximum potential and at least pass in all subjects" ([www.skolinspektionen.se](http://www.skolinspektionen.se)). In addition to the Schools Inspectorate, the office of Children and School Pupils Ombudsman combats the abuse of children and pupils in pre-schools and schools. Decisions taken by a responsible authority can be re-examined by the Board of Appeal for Education if the Board is of the opinion that this is particularly necessary in the case of a certain pupil ([www.skolinspektionen.se](http://www.skolinspektionen.se)).

### 3.1.2. *The Swedish Ombudsman for Children*

The Ombudsman for children is appointed by the Swedish Government for six years. The main task of the Ombudsman is to work for children's and young people's rights and interests (up to the age of 18) according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In line with their aim to keep the child's perspective at the heart of their work, the Ombudsman has regular contact with young people by visiting schools and youth clubs.

Children can contact the Ombudsman by letter, telephone or mail. An annual report addressing the situation of children and young people in Sweden is submitted to the Government by the Ombudsman ([www.barnombudsmannen.se](http://www.barnombudsmannen.se)).

### 3.1.3. *On a regional and local level*

Sweden is divided into 290 municipalities and 20 county councils, which are responsible for providing citizens with a public service. In Sweden, the idea of a local government has a long tradition, which means that the municipalities and county councils have a high degree of autonomy and independent power of taxation ([www.skl.se](http://www.skl.se)). As for issues relating to asylum and immigration, the **municipalities** are in charge of:

- offering introduction places to people who have been granted a residence permit;
- the integration of these people;
- asylum-seeking minors;
- Swedish for immigrants and civic orientation courses;
- children in schools and pre-schools;
- appointing a custodian.

**County councils**, on the other hand, are, for example, responsible for providing asylum-seeking, refugee and unaccompanied children with the same level of health, medical and dental care any other child in Swedish society would receive ([www.skl.se](http://www.skl.se)).

### 3.1.4. *Examples of non-governmental institutions on the national, regional and local level*

In addition to well-known international organisations such as ECRE (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Red Cross, Save the Children, Amnesty International and UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund), several non-governmental institutions in Sweden work with issues related to asylum-seeking children, refugee children and unaccompanied children. Besides NGOs, the Church of Sweden merits a mention, as it provides consultation on migration and asylum issues as well as other questions. Furthermore, various informal networks working with volunteers in Sweden play a key role in helping children and families who are in hiding.

Several NGOs lobby publicly, e.g. in the media, to support vulnerable children, such as Children's Rights in Society (BRIS), and in particular with issues related to child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children, like ECPAT (Nationellt Metodstöd mot prostitution och människohandel = NMT). The Swedish Network of Asylum and Refugee Support Groups (FARR, [www.farr.se/](http://www.farr.se/)) and The Swedish Refugee Advice Centre are examples of organizations that work for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees; their work involves monitoring the Swedish authorities respect for international and national refugee law and providing refugees and asylum seekers professional legal assistance. Non-profit organizations that campaign for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are also of relevance in this context (such as The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL) and The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, (RFSU).

### 3.2. Policy and legal framework

The objective of Swedish migration policy is “[...] to guarantee a migration policy that is sustainable in the long term and that, within the framework of regulated immigration, safeguards the right of asylum, facilitates cross-border mobility, promotes needs-based labour immigration, makes use and takes account of the development impacts of migration and deepens European and international cooperation” (Ministry of Justice, 2010, p. 1).

As for the objectives of Swedish integration policy, these can be summed up with the following goals and principles: “The goal of integration policy in Sweden is equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. The policy goals are to be achieved mainly through general measures for the whole population, regardless of country of birth or ethnic background. The general measures are supplemented by targeted support for the introduction of newly arrived immigrants in their first years in Sweden”. (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009, p. 1).

The Government decided in September 2008 on an overall strategy for integration. In this strategy seven areas were identified as especially important to work on to achieve the goal. The seven areas are:

- “faster introduction for new arrivals;
- more in work, more entrepreneurs;
- better results and greater equality in school;
- better language skills and more adult education opportunities;
- effective anti-discrimination measures;
- development of urban districts with extensive social exclusion;
- common basic values in a society characterised by increasing diversity” (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009, p. 1).

The Government also states that “An overall focus of the strategy is to increase the supply and demand of labour, and to create quality and equality in schools” (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009, p. 1).

As Sweden has signed the *UN Refugee Convention*, every asylum application received will be examined and a residence permit must be granted if the applicant is a refugee according to the Convention, or otherwise needs protection. Sweden must also adhere to EU rules, and the Refugee Convention is included in Swedish law together with rules for the declaration of refugee status. Along with other EU Member states (including Norway and Iceland), Sweden has signed the *Dublin Regulation* (2003/343/EC), the *EURODAC Regulation* (2000/2725/EC), the *Asylum Procedures Directive* (2005/85/EC), the *Qualification Directive* (2004/83/EC) and the *Reception Directive* (2003/9/EC) ([www.migrationsverket.se](http://www.migrationsverket.se), [www.sweden.gov.se](http://www.sweden.gov.se), 09.02.2011).

Sweden's main legislation on asylum and immigration is the *Aliens Act* (SFS 2005:716) and *Aliens Ordinance* (SFS 2006:97). “In January 2010, certain amendments to the Swedish Aliens Act came into force which aimed to adapt the Act to the Qualification Directive and the Asylum Procedures Directive. The new rules mean that a person who is a refugee or other persons in need of protection will be granted a status declaration. These amendments mean that there are three categories of persons in need of protection in the Aliens Act: refugees, persons eligible for subsidiary protection and other people in need of protection. Refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection are covered by the Qualification Directive. The third category (that of other people in need of protection) is a national protection category ([www.sweden.gov.se](http://www.sweden.gov.se), 09.02.2011). In the Aliens Act, the child's perspective

is stressed, which is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

“Section 10

In cases involving a child, particular attention must be given to what is required with regard to the child’s health and development and the best interests of the child in general.

Section 11

In assessing questions of permits under this Act when a child will be affected by a decision in the case, the child must be heard, unless this is inappropriate. What the child has said must be weighed according to the age and maturity of the child” (SFS 2005:716).

According to Swedish law (for legislation on education, see also the Education Act in Section 4), school attendance is compulsory for the first nine school years and free of charge. However, this only applies to children with a residence permit in Sweden. Children who are seeking asylum in Sweden have the right to attend school, but it is not compulsory. On the other hand, children who have been refused entry or expelled are not entitled to education on the same terms as asylum-seeking children. At present, the right to education for all children is being debated among politicians and the result has been two enquiries ‘Schooling for children who are to be refused entry or expelled’ (SOU, 2007:34) and ‘Schooling for all children’ (SOU, 2010:5) ([www.sweden.gov.se](http://www.sweden.gov.se)).

#### 4. OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND EDUCATION STATUS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE COUNTRY

According to an OECD report (OECD, 2009), there is strong social consensus in Sweden on the notion of equity in education. Sweden has a comparatively generous education system, with free primary and secondary education and parental choice of education for their children. There is no payment required from students or their parents

for teaching materials, school meals, health services or school transport. Pre-school (day care), on the other hand, is partly funded by a fee. Immigrant children in the Swedish school system have the right to receive instruction in Swedish as a second language as well as separate instruction in their mother tongue if that language is spoken daily in their home.

#### 4.1. The Swedish educational system

The Swedish school system is divided into non-compulsory and compulsory schooling. Non-compulsory schooling includes pre-school, the pre-school primary class, upper secondary school, upper secondary school for pupils with learning disadvantages, adult community education, and education for adults with learning disadvantages. Compulsory schooling includes regular compulsory school, Sami school, special school, and programmes for pupils with learning disabilities (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008; Skolverket/National Agency of Education, 2010a).

To sum up, school is divided into the following stages:

1. Pre-school (‘förskola’): for children up to 6 years of age. Pre-school is offered to all children in Sweden.
2. Preschool class (‘förskoleklass’): for children between 6 and 7 years of age. Pre-school class is offered to all children in Sweden.
3. Compulsory Comprehensive School (‘grundskola’): for children 7-16 years of age, grades 1-9.
4. Upper Secondary School (‘gymnasium’): not compulsory for grades 10-12, but a prerequisite if a pupil wishes to study at university level.
5. Adult education/Swedish for immigrants (SFI).

The *Education Act* is one of Sweden’s most extensive acts, covering all education from pre-school to adult education (Education Act, SFS1985:1100). On March 23, 2010, the Government presented the bill on a new *Education Act* – ‘For knowledge, choice and security’ (2010:800). The new *Education Act* applied as of 1 July 2011.

Under the *Education Act* (SFS 1985:1100/SFS 2010:800), all children and young persons in Sweden,

irrespective of gender, geographic residence and social and financial circumstances, shall have equal access to education in the public school system. All school-age children shall be offered a place by their home municipality in the appropriate educational establishment, even if pupils are only required by law to attend compulsory school (or equivalent). The public education system for adults shall provide adults with an opportunity to complement their previous education, in this case primarily those with the lowest level of education. The Education Act also states that the education provided in each respective type of school shall be equivalent (i.e. of equal standard), wherever in the country it is provided (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008).

During the 1990s, the Swedish education system evolved from one of the most centralized of educational systems into one of the most decentralized ones. In 1991, the responsibility for compulsory and upper secondary school provision was transferred to the municipalities along with a less centralized system of targeted grants for schooling. Today the municipalities are the authorities responsible for pre-school classes, compulsory school, upper secondary school, special school, municipal adult education, education for adults with learning disabilities and Swedish for immigrants. For upper secondary school and adult education, the county council may also be the authority responsible (*Education Act*, SFS 1985:1100/SFS 2010:800).

The state is the authority responsible for the special schools and Sami school. The curriculum, national objectives and guidelines for the public education system are laid down by the Swedish Parliament and Government. Teachers and principals are responsible for pupils achieving the educational standards and goals set by the national government. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate shall inspect and supervise the school system in Sweden. The task of the inspectorate is to determine whether a school or activity is functioning in relation to the regulations set out in the Education Act, school ordinances, national curricula and other national statutes ([www.skolinspektionen.se](http://www.skolinspektionen.se)).

Private schools (fee-paying) have historically been rare in Sweden. Following the reform of the school system at the beginning of the 1990s, the number of independent schools (no fee) schools has been

increasing. Because they are financed by grants from the pupils' home municipality, they are commonly known as independent or charter schools (Tagmua et al., 2010).

#### 4.1.1. Swedish for immigrants

Swedish for immigrants (SFI) is organized by most municipalities in connection with adult education. The municipalities are responsible for SFI and they decide how the training is organized. SFI is a qualified language training programme aimed at providing adult immigrants with a basic knowledge of Swedish. Adults with a mother tongue other than Swedish are encouraged to study at SFI in order to learn and develop a functional second language. The training provides linguistic tools for communication and promotes active participation in everyday, social and working life ([www.sfi.se](http://www.sfi.se)).

The aim of SFI is that adults develop their ability to read and write in Swedish, their ability to speak, read, listen to and understand Swedish in different contexts, their ability to use relevant tools, and their ability to adapt language to different audiences and situations. Students should also develop their intercultural competence by reflecting on their own cultural experiences and comparing them with the phenomena of everyday life and work in Sweden ([www.sfi.se](http://www.sfi.se)). The latter has been the subject of debate, as it can be seen as a kind of 'citizenship education' with normative overtones requiring students to assimilate Swedish culture and values. Mattlar (2009) discusses the risk that the SFI programme will teach students about the 'good' Swedish society and how to become 'good' Swedish citizens, which can be criticized from an ethical point of view.

## 4.2. Characteristics of RASC: Overview of the educational situation for refugees and asylum seekers

As shown in the previous section, the Swedish school system consists of pre-school, pre-school class, compulsory school, and upper secondary school. In addition to this institution, there are also leisure/recreation centres for children aged 6 to 12 years. Refugee children and youth have

equal access to these programmes, and the same obligations as others. Since 1.01.2002, asylum-seeking children and youth, too, have had access to the educational system, but it is not obligatory. The municipalities are responsible for providing this group with the same level of access to pre-school, primary and secondary school and leisure/recreation facilities as permanent residents have (SFS 2001:976).

The government has decided that children should have access to school no later than one month after their arrival in Sweden. However, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen, 2009) has found that students have to wait far longer than that. The state gives municipalities compensation for their costs (§ 4 SFS 2001:976, SFS 2002:1118). It is the municipal authority that is responsible for offering education, whereas the Board of Migration is responsible for the costs.

If they are not granted asylum, some children (and in some cases, their parents) still try to stay illegally; these are known as 'hidden children'. These children have no right to education, nevertheless the municipality may offer them instruction. During recent years, the municipalities have also received some money from the state to compensate for their costs. This somewhat contradictory and ambiguous policy has raised debates about children's rights and the interpretation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to 105 organizations in Sweden, it should be noted that not all children in Sweden are afforded the same right to education (United Nations Association of Sweden, 2010). In their critique, they point out that because education is not compulsory for asylum-seeking children, the number of asylum-seeking children attending compulsory school is decreasing. Moreover, there is the group of so-called 'hidden children' as well as those without identity documents. The critique has resulted in two investigations (SOU, 2007:34 and SOU, 2010:5). In the latest one, entitled 'Skolgång för alla barn' (SOU, 2010:5), the recommendation is that all children be given the right to education, except for those who are only staying for a short length of time. At the time of writing this report, this critique has been submitted for comments and awaits final decision in Parliament.

#### 4.2.1. *Additional educational rights connected to children's language and origin*<sup>3</sup>

Immigrant children, including refugee and asylum-seeking children, have the right to receive mother tongue instruction, study guidance in the mother tongue, and education in Swedish as a second language, whereas 'hidden children' have no rights of this kind.

##### **Mother tongue tuition<sup>3</sup>**

Under certain circumstances, children in pre-school, primary and secondary school have the right to receive help in developing their first language/mother tongue.

The pre-school curriculum states that:

"The pre-school should help to ensure that children with a mother tongue other than Swedish receive the opportunity to develop both their Swedish language and their mother tongue" (Skolverket, 2006, p. 7; Skolverket, 2010b, p. 9).

Pre-school shall provide opportunities for children with a mother tongue other than Swedish to develop both that language and Swedish. Municipalities have an obligation fulfil the curriculum requirements by providing special support in first language instruction. In reality, this is not always the case, and there are ways for municipalities to evade this obligation.

When the Swedish Schools Inspectorate conducted a follow-up study in a total of 21 pre-schools and 21 compulsory schools in 12 different municipalities to find out how these schools worked with language and knowledge development amongst young people whose mother tongue was other than Swedish, they found the integration of the child's mother tongue into ordinary school activities to be unusual. Most often the pre-school teachers thought this was the parents', and not the pre-schools', responsibility to develop the child's mother tongue. In some pre-schools mother tongue tuition could be observed, but that activity was more like a separate lesson, rather than being integrated into ordinary activities (Skolinspektionen, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> The national minorities have extended rights. For instance, there can be fewer than five students in order to provide education.

**TABLE 33. PUPILS IN PRE-SCHOOL CLASS, PUPILS WHOSE MOTHER TONGUE IS OTHER THAN SWEDISH, AND PUPILS WHO RECEIVE MOTHER TONGUE TUITION, ACADEMIC YEARS 2002/03 – 2010/11**

Academic year:	Number of pupils in pre-school class:	Number of pupils whose mother tongue is other than Swedish:	Number of pupils who receive mother tongue tuition:
2002/03	93,613	11,993	5,117
2003/04	89,514	12,722	5,637
2004/05	89,324	12,598	5,664
2005/06	88,407	12,809	5,968
2006/07	91,900	13,703	6,700
2007/08	93,390	15,715	7,141
2008/09	97,587	15,992	7,118
2009/10	100,283	17,950	7,845
2010/11	103,529	19,385	8,489

Source: [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se)

At present, the municipality has no obligation to offer mother tongue instruction in pre-school class, but as of 1.07.2011 it will be compulsory. The new Education Act (SFS 2010:800) states that the pre-school class should help to ensure that children with a mother tongue other than Swedish are given the opportunity to develop both that language and Swedish. This is the same formulation as in the actual curriculum for pre-school.

In the compulsory and upper secondary school, young people with a mother tongue or first language other than Swedish are entitled to mother tongue tuition. This instruction is regulated in the Compulsory School Ordinance (SFS 1994:1194) and the Upper Secondary School Ordinance (SFS 1992:394). According to the ordinance, the municipality is obliged to offer the student mother tongue tuition under certain circumstances. First of all, the mother tongue must be the language used daily for communication, and the student must have basic knowledge of this language. It is not enough if only the parents speak the mother tongue. Mother tongue instruction shall not include more than one language for the same student. If no suitable teacher is available or if the number of students with the same mother tongue is less than

five, the municipality is under no obligation to offer instruction in this particular language.

The syllabus covers the areas of literature, history and culture of the country of origin. The grades in this subject are considered equivalent to those in other subjects. Participation in mother tongue instruction is not compulsory for the student.

Mother tongue instruction can be organized in a variety of ways: as a student option, language option or as a school option. It can take place in or outside the regular timetable. If students study their mother tongue outside the regular timetable, they have no right to do so for more than seven years during their time in the public school system. Under certain circumstances and according to their individual needs, students may be allowed to study the language for a longer period. Students who wish to study their mother tongue in the upper secondary school must have a grade in that language from year 9 of compulsory school or equivalent.

An online resource site, Tema Modersmål (Theme Mother Tongue), has been developed primarily for those working in pre-school and school education.

**TABLE 34. PUPILS IN COMPULSORY SCHOOL PARTICIPATING IN MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION, SCHOOL YEAR 2010/2011. TOP TEN OF LANGUAGES**

	Numbers of pupils qualifying for mother tongue instruction:	Number of students participating in mother tongue instruction:	Percentage of pupils qualified for mother tongue instruction who participate:	Percentage of instruction taking place outside ordinary schedule:
<b>Top ten</b>				
Albanian	7,052	4,581	65.0	43.0
Arabic	33,204	22,643	68.2	53.9
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian	14,579	7,272	49.9	56.7
English	11,262	5,444	48.3	51.0
Finnish	8,525	3,782	44.4	36.1
Persian	6,683	4,088	61.2	65.1
Polish	5,946	3,425	57.6	57.7
Somali	10,196	7,355	72.1	53.2
Spanish	10,900	5,632	51.7	61.0
Turkish	6,012	3,571	59.4	73.3
Other languages (133)	66,013	32,332	49.0	60.8
Unspecified languages	1,040	148	14.2	37.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>181,412</b>	<b>100,273</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>56.6</b>

Source: [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se)

The website hosts different mother tongue chatrooms and provides tools for communication in different languages. These chatrooms are run by mother tongue teachers at both the pre-school and school level. In February 2011 about 35 languages were covered ([www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se)).

The benefits of mother tongue instruction have long been studied by academics, both in Sweden (see for instance Hill, 1995, and Hyltenstam, 2007) and abroad (see for instance Cummins, 2000), but still there is an ongoing debate about the pros and cons. Research is somewhat contradictory but, on the whole, improving and strengthening the child's mother tongue has been shown to benefit the child. However, many teachers nevertheless think that it is better to concentrate on teaching Swedish

only or primarily (see for instance Skolinspektionen, 2010).

### Study guidance in the student's mother tongue

Study guidance as an activity is closely linked with mother tongue tuition, but is regulated under the heading Special Support in the Compulsory School Ordinance (SFS 1994:1194). It states that a student who requires study guidance in his/her mother tongue is entitled to this. The text about study guidance is not clear when it comes to explaining what study guidance actually means. The Swedish National Agency for Education has put together some guidelines (Skolverket, 2008a) for how to teach newcomers. Their definition of study guidance is an activity to support the student's subject learning

by using his/her mother tongue. In general the study guidance teacher translates words or explains the subject in more detail to help the student understand (Skolverket, 2008b).

It is well known that study guidance is of great importance to the student's learning, but very often the student only receives such guidance at the beginning of his/her studies and this guidance does not cover the overall demands. Students need more assistance than what is offered, according to a study conducted by The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2008b). When visiting schools, the researchers found that there are some problems connected to study guidance. One problem is how to organize the cooperation between the study guidance teacher and the subject teachers. Another problem is connected to the knowledge base for study guidance. The same findings were revealed when the Swedish Schools Inspectorate in 2009 conducted a quality inspection at 21 pre-schools and 21 compulsory schools in 12 different municipalities to determine how effectively pre-schools and compulsory schools worked with language and knowledge development with young people (Skolinspektionen, 2010).

Likewise, at the upper secondary level, as a newcomer the student has the right to so-called 'Study Guidance in the Mother Tongue'. This means that a support teacher may provide some extra support in the student's mother tongue. Often this support takes place in a smaller group and sometimes as individualized guidance in the student's mainstream class.

#### 4.2.2. *Swedish as a second language*

The Compulsory School Ordinance (SFS 1994:1194) lays down that tuition (instruction) in Swedish as a second language (SSL) shall, if necessary, be arranged for students with a mother tongue other than Swedish. The head teacher decides whether this tuition will be arranged for students. The ordinance also states that instruction in SSL should be instead of Swedish as a first language. SSL can also constitute the subject Language option, Student option and/or School option. Although the head decides which students will have SSL and to what extent, the student's participation is also negotiated between the student and his/her parents.

The goal of SSL is to help students develop daily communication skills and give them the proficiency required to study their other school subjects in Swedish. The differences between Swedish as a first language and Swedish as a second language are related primarily to first versus second language acquisition. The achievement levels and proficiency requirement for SSL and Swedish as a mother tongue are the same.

The right and the opportunity to study SSL apply to both the compulsory and upper secondary school. With respect to eligibility for admission to university or other postsecondary study, both subjects (Swedish as mother tongue and SSL) are equivalent.

Although SSL and Swedish have the same legal status, there are some problems. It has been shown that SSL often has lower status among students and parents, and that the subject is often given as remedial education rather than a subject in itself. It is also a fact that SSL teachers often do not have the right qualifications.

#### 4.2.3. *Learning outcomes*

In Table 35, pupils with a foreign background are compared with pupils with a Swedish background. When it comes to learning outcomes in grade 9 for core subjects, one can see that pupils with a foreign background achieve fewer passes than those with a Swedish background. It is also evident that children with a foreign background who have studied Swedish as a second language achieve fewer passes than those who have studied Swedish as a first language (i.e. as a core subject). This implies that Swedish as a second language is used as a means to support children with a poor knowledge of Swedish rather than being a core subject in its own right.

### 4.3. *Status of RASC in the educational system*

The Swedish school system does not differentiate between the different types of newcomers. This means that children with different backgrounds and those living under different conditions, but who have recently arrived in Sweden, are often taught together; it also means that children with a wide range of levels are all taught together. The organization also differs across municipalities.

**TABLE 35. OVERALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND PROPORTION OF PUPILS FAILING TO PASS IN THE CORE SUBJECTS OF ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SWEDISH/SWEDISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN GRADE, DIVIDED INTO PUPILS WITH A SWEDISH BACKGROUND AND PUPILS WITH A FOREIGN BACKGROUND. ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/2010**

Subject:	Pupils with foreign background*		Pupils with Swedish background**	
	Number of pupils:	Failed to pass (percentage):	Number of pupils:	Failed to pass (percentage):
English	18,518	15.7	94,221	6.3
Mathematics	18,518	16.2	94,221	4.3
Swedish	10,933	4.6	93,739	3.4
Swedish as a second language	7,585	26.4	482	30.1

\* Pupils born abroad or with two parents born abroad.

\*\* Born in Sweden (including pupils with one parent born abroad).

Source: [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se)

If a pre-school age child arrives in Sweden, he/she may attend what is called open pre-school, which is free of charge. If their parents are working or studying, the children are offered a place in an ordinary pre-school. In some larger municipalities, or municipalities with a high proportion of newly arrived children with a mother tongue other than Swedish, there are sometime special pre-schools or parts of pre-schools that focus on this group of children.

If a school-age child comes to Sweden, he/she has to attend the compulsory school. As previously mentioned, the asylum-seeking child can choose to participate or not. For this age group, the so-called introduction, transitional or preparatory class is the main organizational form of introduction for newly arrived students. In some municipalities, these students go straight into an 'ordinary' class, but with special help. If the child starts in an introduction class, he/she is usually also associated with an 'ordinary' class. This means that both the child and the parents will know from the outset which 'ordinary' class the child will be in.

The Education Act states that:

"All children and young persons shall irrespective of gender, geographic residence and social and financial circumstances have equal access to education in the national school system for children and young persons. The education shall be of equal standard within each type of school, wherever in the country it is provided." (SFS 1985:1100)

From the quotation above, we can see clearly that education for newly arrived students is intended to be of the same quality as that of other students. The guidelines from the Swedish Agency of Education (Skolverket, 2008a) also emphasize that this should be the case. However, based on reports from The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, and from research in this area, we know that this is, unfortunately, not often the case. In the introduction class, the child has lessons primarily in Swedish as a second language, Mathematics and sometimes English. These are the 'core' subjects in compulsory schools in Sweden. In addition to these subjects, students are introduced to the so-called 'fundamental values' upon which the Swedish school is based. Sometimes instruction also includes practical and artistic subjects (and as soon as possible in their ordinary class). However, seldom does it extend to other subjects, and students do not get as much

mother tongue instruction and study guidance in their mother tongue as they need (see for instance Skolverket, 2008a; Skolinspektionen, 2009, 2010). Reports from The Swedish Schools Inspectorate also show that the teaching is rarely tailored to the individual student's needs. These circumstances make it extremely difficult for these students, and especially for those who start just a few years before they have to complete the compulsory school, i.e. to reach the final goal and get their marks in the last compulsory school year (Year 9). A strategy often used is to place the student in a class below his or her age.

If the young person is under 18, he/she has the right to attend the upper secondary school. If they are older, the SFI education programme may be an alternative. Some young people have to start again at the compulsory school (if they are under 16) or go to a specific preparatory class in the upper secondary school individual programme.

The official guidelines (Skolverket, 2008) very clearly state that all education should be individually adjusted, but in reality this is not always the case. As shown above, it is often the case that all of the newly arrived children are taught in the same way, without considering their previous knowledge.

## 5. BEST PRACTICES DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, we will focus on descriptions of best practice in education for newly arrived children as well as refugee and asylum-seeking children in Swedish schools. The section starts with a selection of previous research and recommendations on these matters. We will then present the results from a report by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions on best educational practice for newcomers at ten Swedish schools. The results of the report are presented as four points of best practice.

The Swedish National Agency for Education has formulated a set of General Recommendations for education for newcomers to be followed and implemented within the national school system. This

steering document can be viewed as best practice on a national level and is divided into six areas. The General Recommendations can also be used as a model for evaluation. The School Inspectorate has inspected and evaluated a sample of Swedish schools in the light of this set of recommendations and with a view to seeing how schools live up to these recommendations and identifying those which are fulfilling the goal of best practices when taking care of newly arrived and RASC children. This process is described in more depth later in this section. The section ends with some examples of non-governmental organizations' best practice projects and two projects based on media. We find the sample of projects interesting and think that they could be viewed as examples of best practice. The projects all exemplify the kind of work that we feel could be transferable to other countries and contexts.

### 5.1. Previous research and recommendations

Findings from several studies have highlighted the importance of the school's role in promoting health for migrant children. All children need a sense of security, and to feel safe they need orderly conditions; school is a place that can give them that. This is especially true if their parents have traumatic memories and lack the strength to take care of their children, and thus cannot function fully as parents. School can be a place where children feel safe and where they stay in touch with ordinary, everyday life (Ascher, Mellander & Tursunovic, 2010).

Statistical studies have shown that, compared to their native Swedish peers, immigrant pupils have, on average, weaker educational outcomes at all levels of education. These gaps are especially pronounced for pupils who were not born in Sweden, but who study alongside the second generation, that is those who are born in Sweden but whose parents were born abroad (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). In Sweden, differences in socio-economic backgrounds and speaking a different language at home accounts for a large part of the performance gap between native and immigrant pupils (Tagmua et al., 2010). Immigrant pupils are, compared to their native peers, less likely to be eligible for a national programme of upper secondary

education. In 2007/08, 23 per cent of all pupils with an immigrant background who finished compulsory education were not qualified to continue to a national upper secondary program, compared to only nine per cent of their native peers (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, 2009).

In the context of an OECD project, Tagmua et al. (2010) studied which policies promote successful education outcomes for pupils with an immigrant background in Sweden. They examined the question from the perspective of 'education outcomes'. The results show that Sweden has a well developed policy infrastructure and policy traditions for equity, which lay good foundations for policy action for migrant education. There is a long history of stressing the importance of immigrants acquiring the Swedish language and of providing language support. Policy also supports – through a legal framework – immigrant children in maintaining their mother tongue and culture. But such entitlements are often not fully exercised, notwithstanding the fact that these children are the intended beneficiaries. The decentralized Swedish education system allows the preschools, schools and municipalities to develop locally-tailored solutions given the specific composition of their population and the local contexts. The authors state that there is a risk that municipalities or schools with less experience may not have the capacity to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity (Tagmua et al., 2010).

Furthermore, this study shows that it is of critical importance that teachers and school leaders improve the multicultural perspective in teaching practice and school management. According to these authors: "Teacher education and training could include priority components such as formative assessment, action-research, second language acquisition, and intercultural education. Through such universal measures, not only immigrant students but also native students will benefit" (Tagmua et al., 2010, p. 8).

The authors also recommend that school leaders organize effective introduction programmes for newly arrived immigrant students. They state that:

"The priority should be to build capacity for a whole-school approach with which schools leaders can engage Swedish language teachers, mother language support teachers, subject or main classroom teachers, other school staff, parents and communities. Ensuring

learning opportunities during after-school time and summer holidays is of particular importance for low-performing immigrant as well as native students. This will require school leadership and collective efforts among teachers, parents and communities." (Tagmua et al., 2010, p. 8)

In Sweden, teachers in the big cities of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö may have classes with a high concentration of immigrant students. To tackle the issue of high concentration of immigrant students in certain schools, the study recommends that all relevant policies be orchestrated to make a real change:

"In the meantime, what education policy could do to alleviate negative effects of concentration on schooling outcomes is: 1) to monitor school capacity to accommodate newly arrived immigrant students and inform other policies, 2) to ensure that immigrant parents, especially with disadvantaged backgrounds, can make informed decision about school choice for their children, 3) focus on raising quality of learning environments in poorly-performing schools with a high concentration of immigrant students, and 4) creating more 'magnet schools' in the concentrated areas." (Tagmua et al. 2010, p. 8)

In a recent study (Tursunovic, 2010) of the school situation for newly arrived children in Sweden, three main results are presented. The first result is that the cooperation between the Swedish migration board, municipalities and schools must be organized in a way that minimizes stress and problems for the newly arrived children. The children need to concentrate on school work, to create new networks and to find normality in their abnormal family situation. The second result shows that the relation and dialogue between the home and school must function well. The school has to meet the parents with respect and through an open dialogue, and the general climate should be one of openness. The third result shows that the teachers' pedagogical skills and how they treat the children inside and outside school are important for the pupils' and parents' trust and confidence in the Swedish school system. The results from Tursunovic's study also show that some of the children have to wait for a place in a school for up to half a year, even though the government has requested that newly arrived

children be offered a school place one month after their arrival.

In a review of Swedish academic research on newly arrived pupils, the main organizational, relational and pedagogical conditions of their learning are discussed (Bunar, 2010). The presentation of this research is divided into three perspectives:

The first perspective is 'The social and individual perspectives', with a focus on researching the power relations between Swedes and immigrants in society and identifying formation processes amongst youth of immigrant origin. The discussion focuses on how social and individual perspectives affect the integration of minority children, those who have just been introduced into the Swedish educational system. Bunar's conclusion is that previous research tends to emphasize the problems and difficulties with education for minority children (Bunar, 2010). The majority of studies show how newly arrived pupils encounter structural obstacles in school and that the teachers' approach often focuses on problems. Moreover, in many studies, the relations between the school and the parents of these pupils are often described as problematic, even though some results show that migrant parents tend to trust the Swedish school system. Some studies call for better parental information on rights as well as obligations upon arrival to Sweden.

The second perspective in Bunar's review is 'The institutional perspective'. This perspective focuses partly on the research introduction classes or the so-called transitional or international classes, which is the main organizational form for the introduction of newly arrived students into the schools. The results from some interview studies show that newly arrived pupils disliked the system with preparation classes and described it as segregating. But on the whole, research within this field is described as limited or lacking.

The third perspective is 'The pedagogical perspective' and targets research that mainly deals with language learning and development. The primary focus is on learning Swedish as a second language and on students' native language. This perspective has dominated research on newly arrived pupils, and a large number of studies emphasize language learning processes as well as teaching students Swedish as a second language. The overall conclusion is that

mother tongue instruction has a positive effect on children's school achievements, and that the schools should offer migrant students more of this kind of instruction.

Bunar's (2010, p. 6) main observation is that:

"...the Swedish research is scarce and theoretically and methodologically underdeveloped, which makes it difficult to draw any certain conclusions on 'what works'. Furthermore, the majority of studies have illuminated various problems when it comes to school integration of newly arrived students and the students of immigrant origin more generally. Few studies are interdisciplinary, although many academic disciplines are represented in the research, and there are no studies attempting to compare Sweden with other countries. Generally speaking the Swedish research does not help us very much to understand the learning conditions for this group of students."

## 5.2. Best practice according to a report from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) represents the governmental, professional and employer-related interests of Sweden's 290 municipalities and twenty county councils. In 2010, SALAR produced a report on best practices in education for newly arrived pupils (for refugee and asylum-seeking children and other immigrant children). They based their information on ten Swedish municipalities. The results provide examples and present success factors which have contributed to good results for newcomers within the educational system:

### 1. The organization of education for newcomers

The report described introduction, transitional or preparatory classes as effective provided that they are well organized. In the introduction classes, the needs of the pupil can be observed and this can lead to earlier inclusion in the school and in society. The results show that it is important for the pupil to be moved to an ordinary class as soon as possible and with the minimum of disruption. To

this end, continuous assessment of a pupils' level of knowledge are important.

## 2. Mother tongue and study guidance

The municipalities in the study work to actively to incorporate mother tongue education and describe it as important. They refer to research showing that pupils with a good knowledge of their mother tongue achieve better results in all other school subjects. There is a shortage of teachers in mother tongue education, and some schools successfully use online (Internet-based) resources to provide this kind of instruction. Another key to success is well-developed study guidance in the pupils' mother tongue. There is a developing potential when it comes to mother tongue education and study guidance, for example with further technical resources and distance learning.

## 3. The political process

Swedish schools are governed by the municipal political system. The political process consists of setting goals, evaluating practice and the allocation of resources. The state has declared goals concerning knowledge, which include setting standards of attainment for all pupils in Sweden, and this applies to newly arrived pupils as well. Local goals can contribute to the development of school activities that help pupils achieve these goals. The results in the report show that it is important to have high expectations of the newly arrived pupils and to believe in their abilities. It is also important to evaluate the level of knowledge (attainment levels), to make the pupils visible and to frequently discuss their results and visit the classes. There is a need for extra resources for newly arrived pupils during their first time in school, so they can join the ordinary classes as soon as possible. The results from the SALAR study show that the extra resources the state gives to the municipalities for newcomer education are insufficient.

## 4. Cooperation outside the school

The municipalities in the study stress the importance of cooperation within and between municipalities for a holistic view of the pupils' situations. The pupils must be in focus, and it is important to clarify what other influential institutions and the key people around the pupils with whom the schools can start

networking. The results show that it is important to cooperate with parents and, in some cases, other family members and to provide extra support for pupils who need it, even during the summer holidays. Additionally, there must be cooperation between the schools and other administrative authorities, companies and researchers, to get inspiration for developing new ideas and solutions concerning newly arrived pupils' education.

## 5.3. General recommendations concerning education for newcomers

The Swedish National Agency for Education has formulated recommendations for school integration such as guidelines concerning education for newcomers (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2007/2008). These recommendations offer support in determining how school statutes (laws, ordinances and regulations) can be applied. A general recommendation derives from one or more statutes. It specifies the actions that can or should be taken and aims at influencing the development in a certain direction, thus promoting uniform application of the law. Thus, the recommendations must be followed unless the municipality and the schools can show that education is being carried out in such a way as to achieve the requirements specified by the regulations. These general recommendations concern the work involved in receiving newly arrived children and youth in the 9-year compulsory, upper secondary and special schools. They are aimed at responsible school authorities, officials in charge and school staff. The recommendations are also meant to guide pre-school classes, leisure/recreation centres and the independent schools which admit newly arrived pupils. These recommendations can be viewed as representing best practices on a national level and are divided into six different areas:

### 1. Reception

The municipality should:

- have guidelines for how newly arrived pupils are to be received;
- ensure that these guidelines are known to the school staff;

- see to it that information on how to enrol in the school is readily available to pupils and their parents or guardians.

The schools should:

- have routines for how pupils are to be received,
- create good relations based on trust with the pupil's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

## 2. Introduction

The municipality should:

- work to develop collaboration between different concerned parties in the immediate social context.

The school should:

- have established the contents of the school introduction;
- have set routines for introducing newly arrived pupils to the class;
- provide the pupil and his/her parents or guardians with information about the school's fundamental values, goals and working methods.

## 3. Individual planning

The school should:

- map out the pupil's reading and writing abilities and knowledge of his/her mother tongue as well as Swedish and other languages;
- map out the pupil's knowledge level in different subjects in terms of concepts, understanding and problem-solving abilities;
- have routines with regard to how and by whom such assessments should be carried out and documented;
- carry out assessment continuously by means of recurrent structured dialogues with the pupil and, to the extent possible, his/her parents or guardians;
- consider the respective advantages and disadvantages of teaching the pupil in a class or a special group;
- be prepared to change the organization.

## 4. The instruction

The municipality should:

- make an inventory of the need for and supply of mother tongue teachers and teachers of Swedish as a second language;
- coordinate resources between schools in the municipality as required.

It is important that the school:

- organise instruction on the basis of each newly arrived pupil's needs and prerequisites;
- start out from the pupil's abilities, interests and strengths;
- capitalize on and further develop the pupil's knowledge of different subjects;
- apply working methods that unite language development and learning of subject contents;
- have a clearly defined division of responsibilities regarding instruction of the individual pupil.

## 5. Follow-up and evaluation

The municipality should:

- evaluate the effects of the local municipal guidelines;
- follow up on the extent to which the need for mother tongue teachers and teachers of Swedish as a second language has been met in the municipality.

The school should:

- assess the degree to which newly arrived pupils' needs for mother tongue instruction, study guidance and instruction in Swedish as a second language have been satisfied;
- regularly review its routines for pupil reception and introduction;
- evaluate the effects of placement for each individual pupil.

## 6. Professional development

The municipality should:

- identify the needs of and coordinate professional development for staff members responsible for instruction.

The school should:

- analyse the staff's need for professional development;

- assess different personnel groups' need for special professional development.

#### 5.4. The School Inspectorate's evaluation

The general recommendations proclaimed by the National Agency for Education form a steering document, but they can also be used as a model for evaluation. In 2009, the School Inspectorate evaluated whether the Swedish schools followed these recommendations. The evaluation was of 34 schools within 14 municipalities<sup>4</sup>.

The School Inspectorate is a central agency responsible for the supervision of pre-school activities, the welfare of schoolchildren, schools management and adult education. The School Inspectorate ensures that local authorities and independent schools follow existing laws and regulations. The aim of the School Inspectorate is to ensure the equal right of all children to a good education in a safe environment, where everyone can achieve their maximum potential and achieve at least a pass in all school subjects.

The results from the evaluation show that most of the pupils feel safe in school and like being there, but the results also show shortcomings in all levels of education for newly arrived pupils. For example:

- newly arrived pupils do not always get the education they have a right to;
- introduction classes are often physically segregated from the 'main' classes; pupils feel segregated and have few Swedish friends;
- instead of the head teacher, a 'driving spirit' often has responsibility for the newcomers' education, such as a particular teacher or a person with another occupation;
- it is often the case that the newcomer's prior knowledge is not assessed, so all newly arrived pupils are put in the same introduction class, without an individual study plan;
- often pupils do not receive any study guidance in their first language;
- school staff does not receive special training to allow them to meet these pupils' needs (The Schools Inspectorate, 2009:a).

The evaluation shows the extent of the positive effort to implement the general recommendations from the National Agency of Education in several Swedish schools.

##### 5.4.1. *The example of two schools in Bollnäs*

In the School Inspectorate's evaluation a number of schools are presented as good examples, for instance the work done in the city of Bollnäs, a municipality with 26,000 inhabitants in central Sweden. Two schools, Nyhamreskolan and Gärdesskolan, are evaluated very positively because their work in newcomers' education is satisfactory and because they wisely follow the general recommendations given by the National Agency for Education (The Schools Inspectorate, 2009a).

Firstly, Bollnäs has a pronounced ambition for newly arrived pupils to be included in the regular education system. They have well-developed and clear guidelines for the reception and introduction of newly arrived pupils in the municipality and at the schools. The guidelines are firmly established at the schools and among the staff. Secondly, the people interviewed in this municipality and at the schools there talk positively and respectfully about the newly arrived pupils as a resource. Thirdly, the schools have a substantial plan for integrating newcomers into ordinary education. They have developed routines for tracking pupils' reading and writing skills, and assessing competency in the mother tongue as well as in other subjects. The organization is flexible and the teachers educate the newly arrived pupils in different group constellations, adjusted to the pupils' prior education and knowledge, age and needs.

According to the plan made up by the schools, every newly arrived pupil belongs to an 'ordinary' class. Therefore, they have some lessons together with this class from the very beginning, such as training aimed at psychosocial wellbeing, drawing and cooking lessons. At the outset, other lessons are located to the introduction class, but just for a short period. As soon as the pupils have achieved basic knowledge of a subject, they move to the ordinary class. Often they are integrated into

<sup>4</sup> After contact with Anna Davis, Elisabeth Ritchey and Helena Olivestam Torold at the Schools Inspectorate.

ordinary lessons after only two or three weeks. The staff at these two schools has stressed the importance of good relations with the parents, and they encourage parents to participate in school for the first two weeks, in order to increase pupils' feelings of security and also for the parents to gain an understanding and knowledge of the Swedish school system. According to the results from the evaluation, the pupils report that they feel welcome in the society, safe, secure and respected, and that they like the school and have Swedish friends (The Schools Inspectorate, 2009b).

### 5.5. Examples of best practices within the municipal school system

Many examples of 'best practice schools' working on integrating migrant children are mentioned in different documents and evaluations produced by national school authorities, and these cases are often discussed among researchers and in the media, for example schools in the multicultural suburbs in the big cities of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö.<sup>5</sup> Most of these models for schooling are adjusted to suit all migrant children. The examples we present here are of instruction that has been specially adapted to RASC.

#### 5.5.1. Example: Involvement of RASC parents in the educational integration of their children

In several of the documents studied for this report, a holistic model for integration of RASC and late arrivals has been advocated and has also been developed in different forms in some municipalities in Sweden. Here, we will present one example from Göteborg. The model has been developed within a municipal resource centre (Resursenheten för introduktion av nyanlända barn- RIB). It is called the Gunnared project.

The holistic model takes its point of departure from a holistic perspective of the child's introduction into

school. It considers the child's and his/her family's competences, knowledge and needs and how they are interrelated. A holistic school introduction includes taking measures within education as well as health and leisure time and is structured in close cooperation with the family.

The holistic model consists of two steps:

1. Reception in school.
2. Introduction into education.

In Gunnared, there is a kind of introduction centre for newcomers which are situated in a suburb of Göteborg. Here the child will stay with his/her closest family (or relatives) for three to eight weeks. The main purpose is to find out as much as possible about the newly arrived pupil's prerequisites and needs before he/she enters the Swedish compulsory school. By the same token, the family receives support in normalizing everyday life for the child.

In this centre, the family's background and present living conditions are also mapped out. This includes the child's competences and knowledge and the potential of the family to support the child's schooling. In addition, the child's health is checked. This mapping process is carried out through observations and interviews in normal everyday situations between family members. The results are the basis for planning the next step, which is an introduction to education.

An individual development plan is worked out, which considers the child's needs as a newly arrived pupil. The introduction to education prepares the child for ordinary schooling and is based on the child's strongest language and/or through considerable remedial education. Emphasis is placed on developing an understanding of the child's previous knowledge and competences. The aim is also to introduce the child to various study techniques as well as to present the fundamental values of the school, as formulated in the curriculum. The goal is that, after completing the introduction process, the child shall be included in ordinary schooling characterized by an individualized, intercultural and holistic perspective.

<sup>5</sup> A somewhat similar programme has been developed at a school in Norrköping (a middle-sized city). On the Swedish National Agency for Education website, this school (Tamburinen) is presented as an example of best practice in the field of education for newcomers (Skolverket.se/sb/d/3285/a/19811). The school is described as a good example, as it really tries to map out newly arrived children's previous knowledge as a part of everyday education and the teachers then proceed to adjust their lessons to the children's level of knowledge.

## 5.6. Projects focusing on empowerment and psychosocial wellbeing

There are several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with refugees on different levels in Sweden. For example, the Swedish Red Cross works for human rights, secure policy and a better understanding of refugees, both in Sweden and internationally. The Red Cross provides support and advice to refugees in Sweden. They can also provide assistance in the asylum process, search for missing relatives and help reunite families that have been broken up because of conflicts and war. Additionally, they help refugees and migrants to integrate into Swedish society through training in the Swedish language. The same type of assistance is provided by Save the Children Sweden, although with a focus on children, for example, unaccompanied minors.

Non-governmental organizations do not usually work within the Swedish school context and in particular not with the school situation for refugee and asylum-seeking children. However, in some schools, NGOs offer children activities after the school day is over, such as assistance with homework (for example the Red Cross and Save the Children). These activities are open to all children irrespective of their social background and ethnic origin and therefore may function as an important complement to the schools in promoting inclusion and integration.

A number of different projects address issues surrounding newly arrived children in one way or another. Most of these projects are designed to prevent racism and degrading treatment of immigrants. Such projects focus on processes of inclusion and integration and include immigrant children as well as non-immigrant children. Some projects aim to create meeting places open to all children. Other projects work with the whole family or especially the parents, for example with mentors or through group discussions. There are also language projects working on the translation of schoolbooks and other important texts into different languages. One interesting project focused on narratives among African immigrant youth (for example Malmsten, 2007; Nestler, 2007; <http://www.arvsfonden.se>).

Here we will examine two examples of projects. Both are aimed at empowering refugee and asylum-seeking children and both are funded by The Swedish Inheritance Fund, which supports non-profit organizations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas for developing activities for children, young people and the disabled. The Fund wants children, young people and the disabled to be able to take part in influencing developments in society. It gives financial support to projects that children, young people and the disabled take part in organizing themselves. The Fund's hope is that these projects will then serve as models and spread ideas throughout the country. Programmes must be innovative, stimulate development and lie outside the organization's ordinary sphere of activities. Organizations can sometimes also be granted support towards the cost of their premises. Financial support is particularly directed at non-profit organizations, but support can also be granted to local authorities if they cooperate with a non-profit organization (<http://www.arvsfonden.se/>).

### 5.6.1. Example: *Barn i väntan (BIV) & Barn i start (BIS) (Children waiting & Children starting)*

This project consists of group meetings with refugee and asylum-seeking children. It has been evaluated twice and is described as 'good practice' by the Swedish Inheritance Fund.<sup>6</sup> This project<sup>7</sup> is a cooperation between IM, the Swedish Organization for Individual Relief, and the Church of Sweden. The project started 2004 in Malmö and received its first three years of funding from The Swedish Inheritance Fund (Allmänna arvsfonden). Today the project has extended to other cities, for example Göteborg, Botkyrka in Stockholm, Linköping and Lund (<http://www.manniskohjalp.se>). The project in Malmö was evaluated by The Swedish Inheritance Fund in 2007 (Nestler 2007) and the project in Botkyrka by FoU-Södertörn (a research and evaluation unit) in 2010 (Bergström, 2010).

The project consists of group meetings with children. These meetings are designed according to the CAP method ('Children are people too'). All the group leaders in the project are volunteers and have training in using the CAP method. This method is

<sup>6</sup> After contact with Annica Thomas at the Swedish Inheritance Fund.

<sup>7</sup> After contact with Ulrika Anzén at BIS in Lund and Helene Rahm at BIV/S in Skåne.

a school-based psychosocial and educational group programme designed to address the problems of children who are exposed to familial substance abuse (see for example Buchalter, 2006). The method is a part of the Minnesota Program, which is used in work with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and their relatives. In the BIV and BIS projects, this method has been adapted to work with asylum-seeking and refugee children.

The method consists of group meetings with children in the age range 7-18 years from families seeking asylum (BIV) or from families recently granted residence permits (BIS). The aim is to teach children more about the asylum process and to promote their self-esteem regardless of which country they will grow up in, as well as to give them an opportunity to meet other children of the same age and with similar experiences and to further explore and understand their needs and opportunities (Bergström, 2010; Nestler, 2007). The group meetings include activities such as conversation, drama, music and art. They focus on different subjects at the meetings, for example the first subject is 'emotions and how to handle emotions', and the second is 'what happened in the home country before the family had to escape'. The experiences from the first meeting will be carried through, and form the basis for the second meeting, and so on (Nestler, 2007).

The results from the evaluation of the project in Malmö show that during the first three years of the project they had two groups with 4-9 children every half year. The groups meet once a week for 14 weeks. There are two voluntary leaders in every group and all volunteers in the project have a lot of experience of working with vulnerable children. The children and their parents receive information about the project in school, but sometimes also through the Migration Board or the child/youth psychiatry clinic (BUP). After the first year the project leaders identified a need among the parents and they started supportive meetings with parents. The results also show that the children and their parents were grateful for the project and highly valued the outcomes. The project is described as unique, as it focuses on the children's experience and not the parents'. It is described as an example of a project that constructively empowers children

with creativity and joy and that helps to prevent poor mental health (Nestler, 2007).

The results from the evaluation of the project in Botkyrka show that during the years 2007 to 2009 about 15 children participated in BIV and about 50 in BIS. However, they did have a problem with recruitment, especially in groups for asylum-seeking children. It is easier to recruit children in families who have recently been granted residence permits. The problem was connected to unclear instructions about the projects, which led to some people dropping out soon after the group had started. Participants dropping out is described as a common problem in projects like this (Bergström, 2010).

### *5.6.2. Example: The music project for wellbeing during the asylum-seeking process*

Another project that can be viewed as an example of best practice is a music project.<sup>8</sup> This project is the result of cooperation between IM, the Swedish Organization for Individual Relief and Music Teachers Without Borders. The project started in Malmö and Helsingborg and is directed at asylum-seeking children and young people waiting to hear whether or not they can stay, as well as newly arrived refugees who already have their residence permits. The main objective is to offer some joy and encouragement to children who are in a stressful and distressing situation while waiting for a residence permit. Another objective is to improve the children's and their parents' psychological well-being during the waiting period, regardless of the outcome of the asylum process. The idea is also that the children and young people can bring the music with them wherever they end up in Sweden, and if the asylum application is denied they can hopefully continue with music in their homeland. The children and young people have the opportunity to play music on an instrument twice a week, and once a week they have rhythmic, a pedagogical method for group lessons that has a playful approach to music. After a year, the children put on a concert for parents, relatives and the general public (<http://www.mtwb.org/>). About 30 children will have tuition in an instrument (transverse flute or guitar), and

<sup>8</sup> After contact with Annelie Kungsman-Persson at the Migration Board in Malmö.

participate in rhythmic classes. The children get two instrumental classes and one rhythmic class every week. While the children participate in these activities, the parents and/or siblings can meet for a café activity (<http://www.manniskohjalp.se>).

The project emanates from an idea developed from a project in the slum district in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There, children with social problems and difficult life situations were offered the chance to play an instrument. The instruction took place in so-called comedores – canteens where children gather before and after school to get food and help with their homework. The children were offered lessons on how to play the violin or flute and in rhythmic. Lectures were given twice a week at each canteen, and three canteens were involved. The idea, transferred to a Swedish context, was to work with children who, for one reason or another, were excluded from ordinary life in Swedish society, for example, some refugee children living in Malmö. These children were offered flute and rhythmic lessons for a period of seven weeks. The whole project ended with a show on the Children's Scene at the Malmö Festival. The show had a circus theme and the children played, sang and danced with family, friends and the general public as their audience (<http://www.mtwb.org/>).

The music project's first year is described as a success, even though not all goals have been reached yet. The children have started to learn to play an instrument. When performing in front of an audience, they expressed pride and happiness. Few of the children have dropped out and there is a waiting list for this project. The parents' reactions to the project are so far positive, especially when they see how the children have fun and learn something at the same time. After the first year, some children have continued to play instruments at 'culture school', a municipal optional extracurricular school for music, art, etc. provided in many Swedish communities (Musikprojektet, 2010).

The main tasks for the second year (Musikprojektet, 2010):

- The most important task is still to give the children joy and encouragement in the distressing situation that awaiting a residence permit may imply and to help them find a place in a new country.

- To introduce the children to a musical instrument and to create a permanent interest in music and in playing music.
- To continue work to promote the integrative process, in the sense that the children get better contact with Swedish culture, language and adults who can be positive role models for them.
- To develop cooperation with the 'culture school' in Malmö and Helsingborg.
- The project should also get more public attention in the press and other media.

The project also has to recruit volunteers who can lead activities, such as helping with homework, or assisting parents while the children play. The project recruits children and their families through the BIV/BIS projects, but will begin recruiting cooperation with the Migration Board (Musikprojektet 2010). During the project's second year, thirty children participated in the project (11 girls and 19 boys).<sup>9</sup>

## 5.7. Projects with a focus on media

We have also chosen two examples of projects with a focus on asylum-seeking children and media. One is an information project, which began as a Swedish Migration Board initiative. The other is a European project called CHICAM, reaches refugee children in six European countries by using film, art and social media.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child declares the right of all children to understand and have an influence on their situation. If children do not understand the situation, they feel unsafe and insecure. The Migration Board has observed the lack of information compiled specifically for asylum-seeking children and acknowledged these children's need to understand the situation they are in. Although we live in a society based on giving information, most of this is directed at adults, and rarely at children (Migrationsverket, 2010).

### 5.7.1. Example: Project 'Directed information to asylum-seeking children'

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, a state agency which works to ensure that young

<sup>9</sup> After contact with Erik Lundquist at the music project.

people have access to advice and welfare, has chosen five projects as good examples. For example, at the request of the Migration Board, Malmö has conducted a pre-study on good practice regarding information for asylum-seeking children. The resulting recommendations are that:

- the target group is defined;
- the special needs of the target group are taken into consideration;
- a clear pedagogical approach is used;
- the information needs to have an explanatory and clear structure.
- if another person presents the information, he/she must receive some prior instruction (Migrationsverket, 2010).

This is a development project aimed at creating age-specific information for asylum-seeking children and young people, but also at addressing adults who play an important role in their life (e.g. caregivers). The material includes, for example, leaflets about the asylum-seeking process (one for children with a family and one for unaccompanied children) and a web portal on the website of the Swedish Migration Board. All material was released on 5.04.2011. However, the idea of taking a child's perspective by creating a children's magazine (based on a famous cartoon series and using stories developed around a popular figure and role model for young children, the friendly bear called Bamse), received much media coverage as well as attention from organizations working towards more human and liberal asylum policies. The critics claimed, for example, that some stories led to false expectations of the consequences if a family were not granted asylum but instead sent to their former home country. Clearly, one has to reconsider which strategies are appropriate when addressing young children.

One portal of the Board's website is thus aimed directly at children, and information is available in six languages. At this portal there is also a forum, where children can pose direct questions to the Board. A subsidiary goal of the project is to develop support material for adults who play an important role in the lives of these asylum-seeking children, young refugees and unaccompanied children. The latter two target groups are interconnected and dependent on each other. It is important, not least for the younger

children, that adults close to the children have access to support when talking to the children about what asylum-seeking means. The adults may be the children's parents, teachers or other persons of importance to the children, not least teachers, who encounter RASC in their daily work. Therefore, the Board has set up a site with information and guidance specifically for this target group. The aim is also to provide guidance on how to start discussions in a classroom about migration, etc., through, for example, role play. Furthermore, the information developed can serve as a relevant tool for children in general to better understand what it is like to come to Sweden as an asylum seeker/refugee (Migrationsverket, 2010; <http://www.migrationsverket.se>).

The project has links to three reference groups, the aim being to get support and anchor the work. One group consists of participants from a number of charitable organizations, such as Save the Children, the Red Cross and BRIS (Children's Rights in Society). The second group involves twelve members of the staff at the Migration Board who have relevant knowledge of and experience working with RASC. The third group, and most important in this case, is the child reference group that is examining the material and providing opinions, from a child's perspective, on the actual meaning of, for example, various words and the structure of the text (<http://www.migrationsverket.se>). In addition, the Board was also assisted by parents in developing information that they could understand and find useful (seminar arranged by the Migration Board, 5/4/11).

While working with the asylum-seeking children, several questions were raised by them, such as:

- How does the asylum-seeking process work?
- What are the criteria for getting a residence permit?
- Who are all those people around the asylum-seeking child?
- What responsibilities do the various people involved have?
- How long does it take before the Migration Board makes a decision? To get a custodian?
- Why do they take fingerprints?

In this project, the Swedish Board of Migration has tried to put the child perspective at the top of its

agenda in the hope of finding a more innovative way to reach RASC. Thus far, the Board has produced a large volume of written information, but mostly from an adult and an institutional perspective rather than considering how to reach their younger target groups. Previously, due to the lack of relevant material for children, the local authorities and others involved often designed their own solutions on an ad hoc basis, which could be confusing for the young asylum seeker if he/she had to move to other places with different local policies and rules. Therefore, there has been a need to offer this type of material on a national basis.

The process of developing such information material has been influenced and permeated by three keywords – see children, listen to children and guide children. Asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied children must know about their rights, but, of course, they must also be able to understand the information provided. To actually have the power to influence and be given a tool of empowerment not only depends on receiving information which one can understand, but also on having enough time to discuss and reflect upon things. It is also crucial to be very clear in talks with children about the aim of a talk and to highlight the possibilities they may have to influence matters of importance to them; in other words, they must be given opportunities to make their voices heard. An important remark from the Board is that written information should never replace oral communication (Seminar arranged by the Swedish Migration Board, 5/4/11).

A crucial point in this plan for the asylum process is that asylum-seeking children be able to express themselves in the way they prefer, either in writing, or by talking, drawing, or through play, etc. To actually understand children's needs and not merely look at the world from an adult or an authority's perspective, new creative ways to work with children must be found. Thus, finding ways to gain insights into how children understand the world, their daily life, etc., was a central point of departure in developing the material described above. Furthermore, children should not be regarded as a homogenous group, because they all have different experiences, stories to tell and so on, which should be considered in the asylum process (Swedish Migration Board, 5/4/11).

### **5.7.2. Example: Children in Communication About Migration (CHICAM)**

CHICAM was an 'action research' project funded by the European Commission (Framework 5 Programme) and co-ordinated by the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, University of London. The aim was to use media production and exchange as a research tool to allow refugee and migrant children to represent their experiences of peer relations, school, family and intercultural communication through new media. In the context of increasing global migration, the rapid development of new communication technologies and concern about the specific needs of children, these research areas were chosen because they represent key areas of policy concern for Europe ([www.chicam.org](http://www.chicam.org)).

Six media clubs for refugee and migrant children (ages 10-14) were set up in six European countries. The clubs were held weekly out of school hours for a period of one year, with some extra full days during school holidays. Participants made videos and exchanged them on the Internet. In each participating country, researchers and media educators employed by the project collaborated with youth workers and teachers already working with the children. The clubs became social centres as well as a place to learn about and make media. Using the Internet, a communications network was established to facilitate sharing of the children's media productions, which in turn was intended to generate dialogues between them ([www.chicam.org](http://www.chicam.org)).

The Swedish media club was set up in a small city in a rural area. The club was located within a school and was held in collaboration with the school authorities as well as with the Culture School (Kulturskolan) within this particular municipality. The club was supplementary to the after-school centre, with a more specific focus: to encourage refugee children to tell their own stories about their lives through media productions – videos, drawings, animations and letters that were distributed via the Internet – and to exchange ideas and experiences with other children in the same situation in other parts of Europe. In this way, an internal platform (an intranet) was designed where the children could post their productions. The overall goal of

CHICAM, in a broader sense, was to empower and strengthen these children's self-confidence as citizens of Europe.

CHICAM was an innovative project and 'a model' to be adapted to schools in Europe. Through a dissemination process, the project outcomes were spread to school authorities in the EU countries. The project, however, succumbed to several 'childhood disease: since it was conducted before the era of broadband and at a time when many countries in Europe did not have computer access in schools (for instance, access to Skype was non-existent), it was difficult to develop a smooth and fast Internet network and to create simultaneous and multiple channels of communication. But the project had a great deal of potential and would probably be more successful today, when young people are more familiar with computers, social media, mobile phones, etc. The idea of CHICAM, for example, could be developed in multicultural schools in order to promote communication between refugee children in Europe and worldwide. A platform could be created where children are able to select a language for communication and use their mother tongue if they prefer to do so. In CHICAM it appeared that English became a 'working' language for the children involved, as most teenagers learn English at school.

## 6. AREAS IN NEED OF CHANGE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is most relevant, in the case of Sweden, to focus on the specific national context when discussing improvements in policies and recommendations for the integration of RASC. Although Sweden has quite a long history of migration, there are still profound problems with segregation, racism and other social problems, such as long-term unemployment, isolation and more health problems among migrants than among ethnic Swedes. Furthermore, there are more school drop-outs as well as lower grades among migrant children compared to ethnic Swedes. Thus, although there are some 'best practices' identified in the present report, there are still many measures to take and challenges for the future.

We will, in particular, rely on the recent comprehensive study (based on a number of interviews on various levels in society) by Andersson, Ascher, Björnberg and Eastmond (2010) and their recommendations concerning the reception of RASC and their families, as well as on our own observations from the present review.

### 6.1. The asylum-seeking process

Andersson, Ascher, Björnberg and Eastmond (2010) point out that the asylum process should be much more transparent than it is at present. This process is very complex and difficult for migrants to understand. There are a number of policies, laws and regulations to be followed, which are not always clear and easy to understand. They claim that an asylum-seeking family needs a personal adviser who can provide guidance throughout this entire process.

Furthermore, regarding unaccompanied minors, Save the Children has pointed out several shortcomings during the asylum-seeking process. There is, for example, a lack of clear rules and coordination when handling these children. Custodians sometimes lack both knowledge and engagement. Furthermore, children sometimes have to wait for three months before a custodian is found. There are also discrepancies in how different municipalities interpret the mission of handling unaccompanied minors. Save the Children claims that:

- All unaccompanied minors should have a custodian within 24 hours.
- The mission of a custodian should be defined more clearly. A national description for such a mission should be developed, as well as national criteria of eligibility, a national system for education, further education and tuition ([www.raddabarnen.se](http://www.raddabarnen.se)).

### 6.2. Access to schooling and other related issues

School is of great importance to RASC, as this is a place where the child can find peace and security when the family situation is turbulent and unstable, and parents may also be suffering from poor mental health. This is why children should have access to schooling within a month of

their arrival in Sweden; this requirement has also been endorsed by the Government, as mentioned previously. However, this does not always happen and sometimes children have to wait for more than half a year before they are given access to schooling (Andersson, Ascher, Björnberg & Eastmond, 2010).

Children with no papers should also have access to schooling. A proposal in this direction is now in progress in the Parliament. At present, it is up to the local school authority in a community to decide whether school enrolment is possible for these children.

There should also be better support for parents as regards schooling, for example information about alternative schooling routes and so on should be available. The study by Andersson, Ascher, Björnberg and Eastmond (2010) clearly shows that many parents receive hardly any information about the opportunities and obligations associated with their children's schooling; it also appears to be unclear which authority is responsible for issuing this information. The authors claim that the dialogue between the school and asylum-seeking parents has to be improved.

We propose that the so-called general recommendations be implemented more carefully at a local level. Among other things, teachers should get training in how to teach newly arrived pupils, including RASC, the aim being to promote these children's education. In general, a bottom-up perspective is preferable, where asylum-seeking children's and their parents' experiences can also be considered by the schools. One should look more at these families' resources and strengths than at their weaknesses.

### 6.3. Teacher education – an intercultural perspective

We would welcome that teacher education in general would be informed by an intercultural perspective, since Sweden today is a multicultural society. Although official documents on schooling often advocate that intercultural perspectives should be implemented in the compulsory school, this has been more of a rhetoric argument than a reality (Eklund 2003). An increasing number of children

have a migrant background, which is, as we have seen in this report, a challenge for school and should be taken seriously. Teachers at all school levels need to be taught how to deal with diversity issues. On the whole, they should be prepared to handle language issues and have a more qualified education in teaching methods to fit the needs of migrant children.

### 6.4. A holistic perspective – school, parents, children and community

Tagmua et al. (2010) recommend that school leaders organize effective introduction programmes for newly arrived immigrant students. They say:

“The priority should be to build capacity for a whole-school approach with which schools leaders can engage Swedish language teachers, mother language support teachers, subject or main classroom teachers, other school staff, parents and communities. Ensuring learning opportunities during after-school time and summer holidays is of particular importance for low-performing immigrant as well as native students. This will require school leadership and collective efforts among teachers, parents and communities” (Tagmua et al., 2010, p. 8).

### 6.5. The missing child perspective

Some studies also point out that children's voices are not always heard in the asylum-seeking process in issues related to schooling, even if the CRC (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) states that this should be the case. In some communities, the child has his/her own spokesperson, for example a teacher who is used to working with children and who has the specific, official role of assisting the child during the asylum-seeking process. This kind of support can be regarded as a 'best practice'. However, this person is not always consulted in reality. When the situation for a family is complex and difficult, as it often is, the child's voice is sometimes forgotten. Our recommendation is therefore that such support be guaranteed in all cases when children are affected by the decisions taken by official authorities.

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### Internet resources

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- [www.chicam.org](http://www.chicam.org)
- [www.raddabarnen.se](http://www.raddabarnen.se)
- [www.redcross.se](http://www.redcross.se)
- [www.sfi.se](http://www.sfi.se)
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	– Alcoholics Anonymous
BIS	– Barn i start (Children starting)
BIV	– Barn i väntan (Children waiting)
BRIS	– Barnens rätt i samhället (Children’s Rights in Society).
BUP	– The child/youth psychiatry clinic
CAP-method	– ‘Children are people too’- method
CHICAM	– Children in Communication about Migration
CRC	– UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECPAT	– End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes
ECRE	– European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EEA	– European Economic Area
EU	– European Union
FARR	– The Swedish Network of Asylum and Refugee Support Groups
GRACE	– Research on Asylum seeking Children in Europe
IM	– The Swedish Organization for Individual Relief
NGOs	– Non Governmental Organizations
OECD	– Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RASC	– Refugee and asylum seeking children
RFSL	– The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights
RFSU	– The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education
SALAR	– The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SFI	– Swedish for immigrants
SFS	– Svensk författningssamling (Swedish statute book)
SOU	– Sveriges offentliga utredningar (Swedish official inquiries)
SSL	– Swedish as a second language
UNHCR	– United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	– The United Nations Children’s Fund