

Study visit of the European Integration Network

8th and 9th of February 2017

Gothenburg, Västra Götaland, Sweden

For the first mutual learning activity of the European Integration Network, Sweden was chosen as a destination, following the wishes of the members of the Network expressed through a survey. Having a long tradition of integration Sweden, and in particular the Västra Götaland Region, is a good example of strong cooperation between actors at the local, regional and national level.

8th of February

The first day of the visit consisted in two parts:

- 1) In the morning, representatives from several entities gave short presentations about their work on integration of third-country nationals, so that participants got an overview of the Swedish system, and of the different actors present in Västra Götaland Region.
- 2) The afternoon took place at the Integration centre of the city of Gothenburg, where participants had the opportunity to learn more about their educational offer, but also interact with migrants and refugees attending the centre's classes.

1) Overview of the Swedish and Västra Götaland Region system

Introductory remarks

There are 1.7 million inhabitants in the Västra Götaland Region spread out in 49 municipalities, with 150,000 inhabitants in the city of Gothenburg. The region has an annual budget of 5 billion euros and employs 53,000 people, mainly in the healthcare sector with 6,000 doctors and 1,400 nurses. Gothenburg's history has always been linked to migration, since it was built by people from Scotland and the Netherlands. 50 years ago, there were 7 million people in the country. Almost all of them were "100 % Swedes". Since then, there has been a constant flow of migrants (from Hungary, Italy, the Balkans etc.). Today the flow is still constant with people coming from all over the world. Thanks to this, there are now 10 million people in the country.

Overview of the Swedish integration system

The Swedish system is divided between the national, regional and local level. At the regional level, there are 21 counties and 20 regions/county councils. At the local level, there are 290 municipalities.

The State is responsible for expenditure and for the management of agencies, including the migration agency. Responsibilities in the area of integration are shared between the ministry of justice and the ministry of employment. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the asylum process, settlement, management and expenditure of the asylum area, authority over the Migration

Agency and the AMIF-fund. The Ministry of Employment is responsible for labour market policy and coordination and management of the introduction of newly arrived migrants as well as authority over the Public Employment Service and the European Social Fund. Other ministries are also involved and cooperation works well thanks to an inter-service consultation for every governmental decision. Working on integration issues, there are two state agencies: the Migration agency and the Public employment service.

The Swedish integration policy aims to ensure equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic or cultural background. The reception of newly arrived refugees is a shared responsibility on a national, regional and local level. At each level, administrations aim to give refugees an education, training or a job. These objectives are to be achieved primarily through general/mainstream policy measures, supplemented by targeted support for the introduction of newcomers.

The number of asylum applications peaked in late autumn 2015 when it reached 10,000 applications a week. That is when the government decided to introduce border controls which helped decrease the flow. The numbers are still decreasing and the trend is expected to continue. However, the biggest challenges when it comes to integration are still to be met. The lengthy waiting times that refugees face and the lack of housing are the two main short term problems. The lack of capacity in some areas, notably teachers and interpreters, are a problem as 50% of the newly arrived have no upper secondary education, which is a requirement to enter the Swedish labour market. Temporary residence permits may not promote integration, and there are challenges related to increased segregation.

In 2016 – 2017, state funding to municipalities was increased and a new law was voted to distribute refugees in municipalities. Cooperation with municipalities has worked thanks to an existing legal framework, financial support and coordination. The allocation of migrants between the municipalities are taking into account local labour market conditions, population size and the overall number of newly arrived immigrants, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers already living in the municipality. A new reimbursement system for the reception of unaccompanied minors was also set up, along with financial schemes and a simplification of administrative processes to address the housing problem.

Regional development initiatives aimed at asylum seekers and refugees

The Region's task is to support state agencies and local organisations at the regional level. Västra Götaland is a diverse region and can therefore represent an average of the country at large. The economic situation in the region is good with less than 7 % unemployment which means there are opportunities to integrate refugees within the labour market if things are done in the right way.

The role of the 49 municipalities is very important: They have to provide for refugees' education, housing and wellbeing. They also have to ensure that old Swedes and new Swedes learn how to live together. The region needs to facilitate and develop new ways to deal with those issues.

Among the region's initiatives is the focus on individual's 'occupational identity' – networks of different occupational groups to help refugees maintain their competences, skills and talents; as well

as projects to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise (many of the most successful entrepreneurs in Sweden have a foreign background). Initiatives have been launched to help newcomers participate in cultural life, recreation and sport and the region has encouraged the spread of best practices between municipalities. Thanks to the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL) the region was inspired from Stuttgart and Baden Wurttemberg to start a pilot with welcome centres in two municipalities.

The country administrative board - the importance of collaboration between different actors at each level

At the regional level Sweden is divided into 21 counties and 20 regions/county councils. In each county there is a county administrative board, a state agency. In the field of integration they are responsible for coordinating the municipalities in the reception of newly arrived migrants.

‘Capacity’ (the political will and organisational capacity) and ‘preparedness’ (access and availability of accommodation, housing and health care) are the two most important dimensions of the integration process.

The region's 49 municipalities are grouped in 4 regional associations, with respectively 14, 12, 8 and 15 municipalities. This arrangement helps the region deal with the diversity of the municipalities' questions as the management of the different integration processes can be handled through these 4 groups. “Regional collaborative groups” are frequently organised in which the leaders of each of these 4 groups gather with representatives of the Region, with the Public employment service, the Social insurance agency, the Migration agency, Universities and NGOs. This helps the county to see clearly when to allocate governmental grants to municipalities in order to facilitate settlement and raise municipalities' preparedness.

The county has also been working on an early intervention programme for asylum seekers that is articulated into four parts; a partnership with the national county council to develop digital language tools to speed up the process, a partnership with the Swedish national council of adult education to allocate funding to study associations, a partnership with folk high schools for early language training and another with the public employment service to get an early mapping of asylum seekers' competences and skills.

In 2009, the county launched a website: <http://www.informationsverige.se/Engelska/pages/start.aspx> (later expanded to the whole country) that is available in 10 different languages and contains information about everything you need to know about Sweden. The county is also currently developing a learning Swedish language application which will be available from April onwards to enable refugees to learn Swedish as early as possible.

Housing shortages is an issue in 44 of 49 municipalities. Refugees are not the only vulnerable groups needing housing and 78,000 homes will need to be built in the region by 2025 to meet the demand.

The Swedish Public employment service (Arbetsförmedlingen)

Arbetsförmedlingen, **the Swedish Public employment service**, is a governmental agency aiming to improve the labour market by bringing job seekers and employers together. Their role is to improve the labour market in the long run.

A new digital tool for asylum seekers helping to map competences and skills will be launched on the 1st of April 2017. There is a shortage of competences affecting specific sectors. Many employers need workforce but cannot find skilled workers. The challenges arising from the unprecedented number of asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees has to be seen as an opportunity. Employers need to hire non Swedes as there will not be enough young Swedes. The role of the agency is therefore to make sure that those born outside the EU are employable.

The agency sets up an individually targeted introduction programme to evaluate professional and language opportunities. The program is individualised and can differ for each person.

The Introduction Program involves the following features:

- Individual introduction plan. A dialogue between the Public Employment Service and the refugee results in an introduction plan based on a mapping of educational background, previous work experience and need for training and other initiatives.
- Individualised benefit. Active participants in the introduction program are entitled to a benefit for a maximum of 24 months.
- The introduction plan should include:
 - Employment preparation activities
 - Swedish for Immigrants (Sfi). Sfi aims to help adult immigrants acquire a basic knowledge of the Swedish language. All immigrants with a permanent residence permit are entitled to language tuition in Swedish free of charge.
 - Civic orientation course, of 60 hours, with the aim is to foster a basic understanding of Swedish society.
- The municipalities are responsible for providing Swedish for immigrants and civic orientation courses.

The agency also developed a job training programme: the '100 club' where they offer support to major companies willing to employ at least 100 new arrivals within three years. So far, more than 1,200 people took part in this programme and more than 200 were hired at the end of the programme. The agency also developed a "fast track" initiative to create faster ways into the labour market with a special focus on newly arrived that have education and skills that are in demands. That track focuses on educated people, in order to maintain people's occupational identity (whether they are chefs, doctors, teachers, electricians or nurses, the focus is not only academic branches).

The important part is the early mapping of people's skills to enable them to be quickly matched with employers. People can sometimes be employable directly but most of the time, there is a need for complementary courses (validation, education or language).

The agency also helped set up internships and job training in the public sectors through subsidies. In the same manner they created "modern temporary jobs in the public sectors". The public sector has

therefore taken the lead in order to give people with difficulties a chance to get into the labour market. While not easy, those modern jobs generally do not require a high level of education training. An example given was that of the time wasted by doctors and nurses who often have to do administrative work instead of focusing on their patients. This is the typical of type of “modern job” that could be developed. It would create employment, enabling the public sector to train and hire refugees who have arrived with no skills whilst helping the medical sector.

Arbetsförmedlingen’s aim is that 5,000 people in the region should be employed by 2020 and at least 500 people by the end of 2017 thanks to those programmes and to different subsidies which have been successful in attracting private and public organisations.

The role of education for integration and inclusion

Higher education can help integration in many ways. It can help newly arrived refugees to find jobs through further education and fast tracks programmes. It can also help integration by empowering refugees and enabling them to meet Swedes. The University can also teach all students how to reflect critically and independently and can help turn them into ‘democratic global citizens’. It can also help with the reconstruction of Syria after the many refugees who will have benefited from this higher education go back to their home country.

Universities now have new tasks that the government has given to them. The University of Gothenburg now helps with the approval and recognition of previous education and skills and has developed an assessment of “real competences” which she defined as “knowledge that can have achieved through others ways than formal merit”.

The University of Gothenburg has also developed complementary education for recognized refugees with a University degree especially for those with degrees the field of healthcare but also social workers, psychologists or in the biomedical field as those skills will be needed in the near future.

After the Swedish Employment Agency identified an urgent need for new teachers, the University of Gothenburg set up fast track programmes to train refugees who used to work as teachers to help them adapt to the Swedish school system and curriculum. Part of the fast track programme is done in Arabic. This enabled those former teachers to be trained in Arabic and to learn Swedish at the same time. The training lasts for 26 weeks. Around 30 people started the programme in November 2016. There are issues that still need to be solved, in particular problems related to travelling to the training centre. Furthermore, once the refugees have completed the training they are not awarded European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits that they need in order to become a teacher. This complicates the process for refugees. There is also a shortage of Arabic speaking teachers who are available to train refugees. Despite these challenges, she believes that, in 20 years’ time, people will see refugees as those who ‘saved’ Swedish schools from ending up with insufficient numbers of teachers.

The University also works with the Swedish Employment Agency and the city of Gothenburg to disseminate information to refugees about higher education twice every six months. They provide refugees with information about access to and eligibility for the programmes and courses. The University has also started to offer an individual guidance programme for newly arrived refugees

wanting to enrol in regular University courses called 'Behörighetsgivande' ("Qualification course"). The first round began recently with 45 students enrolled. It teaches academic and professional Swedish (Swedish level 3) and methodologies to study in a Swedish university.

This work has been enabled by a great cooperation between the city, the region, the Gothenburg region association of local authorities (GR), the county administrative board of the region and other universities/colleges in the region.

Recognition of skills and prior learning and educational achievements

Validering Väst is a support structure for the region which aims to provide certification for non-formal and informal learning. In Sweden there is today more focus on certification than there used to be. A project entitled 'standard for branch certification' was created, as well as the National Delegation for Validation for the period from 2015 to 2019. The Delegation's task is to follow, support and encourage coordinated work to develop certification processes in formal education and for the labour market at both the national and regional level.

The Delegation has 15 members: four representatives from different trade unions, four representatives of employers' associations and representatives of different national authorities (the Public Employment Service, European Social fund (ESF) council, the National Agency for Education, the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, the Council for Higher Education and the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth). The vision of the National Delegation for Validation is to make certification available to many more people than is currently the case.

The certification process can be carried out in many different ways. For an assistant nurse, the process starts with an assessment plan. The assessment takes place in the work place and takes four to ten weeks with a teacher and a supervisor overseeing the certification process. In other areas it can only be a written test and that could take just two hours. There need to be different validation certification processes depending on the circumstances and the type of work.

The certification process is set up by national agencies but Sweden does not have a centralised way of certifying skills and knowledge. If the certification is related to grades, a teacher will have to be involved. If the certification is related to an occupational skill, it will be different. It could be a certificate that is awarded following an internship. Methods for certification will need to be developed for more sectors and occupations.

Health in Sweden for asylum seekers and newcomers

The aim of the region is to increase the power and the ability of asylum seekers and newcomers to manage their own lives, to work in the community and to experience good health. Following a report from the Swedish Red Cross, which showed that a high number of asylum seekers are struggling with mental health issues, related to traumatic experiences from war, torture or difficulties during migrating, the region aims to increase the power and the ability for asylum seekers to cope with the difficulties in their lives.

In order to do so, the region developed health information that is culturally and linguistically adapted to be more easily understood by refugees. A poster explaining refugee's rights and duties along with advice on how they can take care of themselves was created. Healthcare is not free for everyone in Sweden and explanations are needed. Nurses in Sweden have an important role to play as they are highly educated and refugees will interact mainly with them when they need access to healthcare services.

The region also set up health support group sessions that each last about two hours. Each group consists of eight participants, a group leader (anyone who is registered as living in Sweden) and a 'health communicator' (this could be an asylum seeker or newcomer with language and cultural skills and knowledge about medicine and public health education) who will meet on up to five occasions. In the introductory session, advice is given on how migration can affect health, information about how to deal with stress, disturbed sleep, about tobacco, alcohol, food and physical activities and the Swedish healthcare system. These health support groups will not replace the work of therapists but can help prevent the mental state of refugees from worsening. The sessions enable the refugees to talk about sleep or stress and this can relate to traumatic events that they have experienced in the past. Health communicators have the task of being present in churches, mosques or meeting places in order to ensure that refugees know about those groups. These group sessions will soon be offered to unaccompanied minors, especially 18 year olds, who can often be marginalised.

Questions and conclusive remarks

Italy raised the issue of the failure of the relocation system, and compared the economic situation of Italy with that of Sweden (same ageing population but completely different unemployment levels).

Portugal asked how Sweden is dealing with the around 30,000 asylum seekers who have not been granted international protection in Sweden. The University Vice Chancellor replied that in Sweden, migration is a much polarised debate. Last year, migration was the most important issue for Swedes, which was reflected in the political debate. It therefore is the responsibility of all parts of the public sector to communicate on the fact that migration is not a problem.

Antoine Savary concluded that the Commission will issue in 2017 a call for proposals with a priority of strengthening community building.

2) Visit to the city of Gothenburg's integration centre

The group was given the opportunity to meet teachers and students of the centre's civic orientation courses, which are compulsory 60 hours classes within the introduction programme. In one of the classes, the teacher arrived from Lebanon 30 years ago. He worked as an accountant and then as a teacher for Swedish for immigrants (SFI). For him, interaction with others is crucial for the success of the course. As a teacher he wants to be a bridge with society and a role model to follow for refugees.

Students were asked to explain what they thought about the integration process in Sweden. Students in the classroom were Syrians, Palestinians and Egyptians. Three of them already spoke English before the course started. They gave different answers about their perception of the integration

process. For some, the most crucial part of the integration process was to meet local people. Many in the class room found social relations are hard to establish and develop in Sweden. For others, language, access to work and access to housing were the main barriers to their integration. They also mentioned that civic orientation should be taught during the time that asylum seekers spend waiting in the centres applying for refugee status.

Integration in the city of Gothenburg

Inequality is a major challenge for a sustainable city such as Gothenburg. Gothenburg will offer many opportunities in the future as it will see an increase in its population of 10,000 people per year over the next 15 to 20 years and it will see around 110,000 new jobs created in the region.

Refugees need to be able to understand and speak Swedish in order to integrate into the local society. However, language can only really be learned through social contacts, such as through the work place, and the local population therefore needs to be involved in the process. Swedes need to become Swedish guides for refugees or “language friends” who can help refugees learn Swedish. The city has a mentorship programme, which matches newcomers and Swedes in terms of their background and interests.

Civic orientation course

The goals of the Integration Centre are to take advantage of the considerable talents of the newcomers and to communicate the benefits of migration. The centre organises civic orientation courses, which are offered to all recognized refugees and are obligatory for participants in the introduction program. Two hundred and ninety eight people registered for the course last year. The course can be given in 16 languages.

Classes are based on eight main themes: arrival in Sweden; life in Sweden; earning a living and developing in Sweden; the rights and obligations of the individual; starting a family and living with children in Sweden; exerting an influence on Sweden; looking after your health; and life as an elderly person. The course teaches the fundamentals of issues such as living in a secular society and provides information about alcohol or the welfare state, which not all refugees are familiar with. The courses are articulated around discussions and reflections rather than formal classes.

The curriculum and the study material from the civic orientation program can be found here: <http://www.informationsverige.se/Engelska/Samhalle/Pages/Boken-Om-Sverige-p%C3%A5-flera-spr%C3%A5k.aspx>

Many individuals contact the organisation to socialise with newcomers. The centre facilitates those encounters. Today nearly 1,000 people, be they newcomers or locals, come to the centre every week. The centre has therefore developed the ‘refugee guide language friend’ concept. This is someone who aims to help newcomers to socialise and become a full part of the local community and society. It is a simple system whereby one person from the centre arranges a meeting between a newcomer and a local citizen, attends that first meeting and then leaves the newcomer and the local to arrange with each other to meet when and where they want. This initiative promotes reciprocal

learning about each other's cultures and helps to combat discrimination in society. It helps to mobilise volunteers and to set up useful networks for the future.

The centre has also set up a fair when, every year for one week newcomers can meet people from the private sector in order to ask questions about work, entrepreneurship etc.

Questions

Portugal: Are you measuring the impact of the courses? Is there any strategy to work on ways to make the host society more open? Are nationals also involved? Reply: It is hard to know whether the course had an impact. Because it is so qualitative, you cannot quantify it. Work is ongoing to try to conduct some studies.

Belgium: Do you support the creation of networks of newcomers? How do you evaluate what sort of impact newcomers' associations have? Reply: Those networks have a very important role to play and the centre meets them regularly. There is a possibility for those associations to obtain money from the city. Youngsters in particular used to meet in the centre.

Swedish for immigrants (SFI)

The Labour Market and Adult Education Committee is responsible for municipal education for adults and for Swedish for immigrants (SFI). The administration focuses on the identification of "real and meaningful jobs" and on the conditions needed to offer such jobs. In order to do so, a "step by step job and education initiative" was launched, which is a supported career chain that takes newcomers from their first job to a "real and meaningful job". Five different "industry ladders" have been created. Those industries have been chosen because all of them have considerable recruitment needs and a big variation of job types, which suits this ladder approach. In 2017, a lot of education within the different ladders will start. This initiative has been very successful; so far, 320 individuals were hired on B-contracts (rehabilitated measures that are not allowed to replace ordinary services). 1,660 holiday jobs were also created during the summer of 2016 while labour market-related courses have been shorten and customised.

The committee also strengthened adult education. There are around 22,000 students per year who sign up for Swedish for immigrants (SFI) courses. SFI offers 10,000 language classes a year, of which half are for refugees. Those courses are arranged by the municipalities and are free of charge. Education in Sweden is completely free of charge.

There are three paths available for adult education. One is tailored to meet the needs of low educated/illiterate refugees where they can receive elementary education. Currently, around 2,900 refugees benefit from that. The second path is for people with 6-9 years of education in their native country. Here, they can receive high school level education. Around 11,800 are currently at that stage. The last path is for people with more than 10 years of education in their native country. They can receive specific education for adults. Currently around 200 individuals benefit from that. The integration process and education should continue as long as migrants are learning and moving on and this needs to be tailored to their needs and level.

There are eight schools working with this model and one of the schools has expertise working with low educated/illiterate individuals. There are about 140 employees at the authority and 80 million euros per year that are targeted on education and the labour market.

9th of February

Study visit at Restad Gard

Restad Gard is a teaching and accommodation centre for asylum seekers, the biggest in Sweden, with over 1200 residents. The centre aims to provide the necessary tools and encourage an interest in refugees to engage in Swedish society from the day that they arrive. The organisation owns the place and works through a contract with the migration board. The average stay for refugees in the centre is around 16 months. The organization tries to make the most of it to avoid frustration and segregation.

In order to carry out their mission, the centre collaborates with many actors at the local level: the municipality, the Swedish Folkbildning School, local civil society organisations, the Support Group (self-organised refugee group) and the Swedish migration agency. At the regional level, they collaborate with the Public employment service, the County administrative board and the Migration agency.

The centre's proximity to the city of Vanersborg, the closest municipality with 40,000 inhabitants, has helped ensure that there is cooperation with voluntary local organisations. It has also enabled daily interaction with local inhabitants which provides refugees with an opportunity to integrate into local society. There is public transportation, with buses every 15 minutes to the city centre. The centre has been a great success because it has enabled dialogue with refugees and between different private and public services, which have learned to work together.

The Support Group Network

Adnan Abdul Ghani, the initiator and member of the Support Group Network explained because of the length of the asylum application process and the absence of activities offered, asylum seekers risk ending up losing their motivation, and with time their ability to find work and the skills that they have acquired based on their education can be compromised.

The Support Group Network was set up to make the most of this waiting time, to prevent people from losing their motivation and to make use of their skills. Adnan explained that, when he was waiting for his refugee status, he realised that there were dozens of engineers, doctors and teachers in the centre, having nothing to do. They decided to get together and organize different activities for the residents, all run by refugees, making the most of everyone's skill sets.

After a year and a half of major successes within the centre, they decided to disseminate this good practice project to other places. In many cities there are already networks of NGOs trying to do this type of work but refugees were not included in the discussion. The Support Group Network therefore started to talk to refugees in camps, who were always surprised that they had the right to organise themselves in such a manner.

They set up the network and included representatives from the different support groups. In less than six months, 13 municipalities have adopted the project. The Support Group Network is today present

in over 20 municipalities. Last July the Support Group Network became an official organization, with the aim to engage in refugee capacity building. They want to change the 'victim approach' that most volunteers adopt when dealing with refugees, to a skills-based approach.

In close collaboration with the owners of the centre and local civil society organizations the Support Group Network has created various types of activity to make the waiting time meaningful. In 2015, 901 activities were created and, in 2016, 1,356 activities. In the centre, there now is a welcome club, which is a first reception room working from 10am to 4pm every day, providing information about the different activities that are available. Members of the network have set up a women's club with study visits, workshops etc. The sports club now has a full schedule with activities as varied as table tennis, Kung Fu, volleyball etc. Many language classes have been organised in the native languages or in Swedish. They have also organised internet classes and many other educational classes such as academic or craftsmen clubs. They also have a day care programme for kids and a sewing room. There is a wide range of activities for children, who are also involved in the Support Group Network. The youngest volunteer giving Arabic classes is 12 years old. The youth club is also very active and visits universities and helps the Support Group Network. Members have also created a cultural show called 'All under the same sun', which they have performed in various places in the region.

The Support Group Network also initiated projects to help refugees develop their own networks and acquire some work experience. A job fair was also organised with 120 participants and 70 engineers. Sixteen engineers were recruited for work after the job fair.

The 'Pilot project: Future kitchen', a project targeting women with a low educational background, in order to train them to cook was also set up. At the end of this course those women can apply to do an internship in the municipality. The 'Tibro project' a project funded by the region is still at the planning stage and aims to integrate refugees into society through furniture making.

The Support Group Network has managed to send more than 48 asylum teachers to school to work as assistant teachers even before they have been given a residence permit. Thanks to those initiatives, 222 refugees have obtained internships and, in 2016, many were hired. Those initiatives were "needs-based activities", which is crucial in order to create social support and provide refugees with "meaningful waiting time". For members of the support group network, giving newcomers opportunities to learn is crucial. If they are sent back to their home country after two years of meaningless waiting time, they will be easy prey for extremists.

In 2016, the Support Group Network was given a human rights award by the region and a lifelong learning award by the European Union. They are now looking for funding to introduce the model in other centres in Europe. Save the Children is currently trying to introduce the model in Jordan. If a member state is interested in the project, members of the Support Group Network will make themselves available for in-depth discussions via Skype.

The Swedish Migration Agency (SMA)

The SMA serves individuals who seek protection in Sweden and third country nationals who want to work study or live in Sweden. The SMA receives and processes applications and produce decisions regarding who has the right to come or stay in Sweden and who needs to leave the country.

During the autumn of 2015, Sweden had to process nearly 163,000 applications (134,000 between September and December alone). Of those, there were 35,400 unaccompanied minors (22%). The SMA had to recruit 3,000 new staff members in 2015. The main focus that year was not to let anyone sleep outdoors. The crisis management involved a lot of counting beds throughout the country. Many organisations helped, in particular the Red Cross and the Support Group Network.

On the 12th of November, the government decided to step up border controls. A series of new laws were implemented, in particular ID checks, responsibility for reception centres to house people with residence permits, more restricted options for asylum seekers to be granted a residence permit in Sweden and an amendment to the right to assistance under the Reception of Asylum Seekers Act.

The goal of the agency in 2017 is to shorten asylum claim processing times, in particular through IT development and standardised case processes. The agency also wants to contribute to more medical age assessments and to a longer term portfolio of sustainable accommodation. Most people who arrived in 2015 have now had their asylum claim processed yet. Every month, 1,978 asylum seekers arrive in the country. Cooperation with NGOs and the government will therefore have to continue.

Double-cup

The 'double cup' project is based on the Swedish concept 'fika' (a coffee break). Candidates (asylum seekers and newcomers) are invited to a meeting with a business person at his/her workplace. The idea of the concept is simply for two individuals to meet for a coffee. There are no set goals as it can end up simply being a relaxing moment or lead to job prospects and career advice etc. The matching is not random as they try to profile each person and match them through an IT tool. The only rules given to both sides are that they need to be curious and to show respect towards each other.

Local business and the council have worked together to enable businesses to be involved in integration issues. They want to ensure that every asylum seeker and newcomer will be able to attend a 'double cup' meeting, which would provide them with new contacts in addition to their contacts with public authorities. It is designed to improve understanding about refugees and help change mind-sets within companies. It is a simple and straightforward step towards integration.

So far the project has had very positive ratings from both welcoming partners and candidates and 100 meetings have been organised between January and August 2016.

University West

University West was founded in 1950 and currently has around 11,500 students. University West provides a lot of activities for newcomers. The Support Group Network is a very important contact group as they can tell exactly what refugees need and have enabled the university to not only work for refugees but also work together with them. University West offers internships for newcomers and open lectures on a wide range of topics (lectures are free for and open to everyone). It also helps with the recognition of qualifications and has set up 'Spracafé', an opportunity for newcomers to visit the university and exchange experiences with students and staff over a cup of coffee.

They have also opened their library resources to newcomers and have given talks on higher education in Sweden.

Red Cross – Mobile trauma centre for traumatised and tortured refugees

The Swedish Red Cross have had treatment centres for victims of war and torture in Sweden for over thirty years. In November 2015, the Red Cross established a mobile treatment team in Restad Gard with one psychotherapist and one physiotherapist. They are treating 100 patients and are currently in contact with 200 people. Their goal is to provide early treatment to prevent chronic symptoms from rising. Working within the reception centre has been successful as it is easier, closer and cheaper. It also helps refugees to feel secure. Before the team set up its mobile office in Restad Gard, there was a shortage of trauma specialists to take care of refugees as most clinics and treatment centres are very remote from where refugees live. A supportive and short term oriented treatment was set up, especially through body awareness training sessions. Most patients have acute stress, depression, anxiety disorder and Post traumatic stress disorder.

The Red Cross conducted a study that found that 30% of refugees have mental health problems because of torture endured during conflicts or migration-related trauma. In the regular Swedish healthcare system, issues related to those traumas are not very well developed yet but the Red Cross and some other actors has been successful in putting more focus on the issue.

The study (in Swedish) can be found here:

http://www.redcross.se/globalassets/press-och-opinion/rapporter/studie_nyanlanda-och-asylsokande-i-sverige_web.pdf

Dalslands Folk High School - integration coordinators

Folk high schools have existed in Sweden for 150 years. They develop their own curriculum and are free from regulation, which has enabled them to be creative and come up with new ideas especially for students whom for different reasons does not yet qualify for university studies or courses that does not necessarily fit into the regular school system, often with a focus on arts and culture. This also makes the folk high schools able to bring in new ideas when it comes to migrant integration. In folk high schools, classes are divided into three groups. Those who take the main courses are aiming to go to university. Those interested in music culture etc. can take 'profile courses' and all the other types of courses are called 'special courses'. They have developed different 'special courses' related to integration: 'courses for immigrants' where they teach Swedish and knowledge about society, 'Swedish for healthcare employees' and 'Swedish for healthcare immigrants'.

The school is now working on a new integration project, aimed at developing a new type of education to become an 'immigrant coordinator'. The course started this year and 80% of the participants are newcomers. A few of the students taking part in the course to become an immigrant coordinator gave a short presentation about their reasons for taking part in the course. Those students explained that they could help in a different manner than most volunteers do as they understand refugees better. The course has been designed to be flexible in order to fit the way in

which participants see integration. The course will therefore evolve throughout the year and will probably be different each year.

Students will be sent to other European countries for practice studies. Member states can get in touch with the organisation if they want to receive one of the students, who could in turn train coordinators on the ground.

End of the visit

EIN members had the opportunity to visit the Support Group Network ongoing activities at Restad Gard and were guided by students from Dalsland Folk High School and by members of the Support Group Network (theatre, dancing room, sewing room, sport halls etc.)

The study visit ended up with a question and answer session. Members of the Support Group Network asked EIN members what they were planning to do now that they had seen Sweden's good practices. Some members expressed their hope that the network would help to share the best practices and will help groups such as the Support Group Network to acquire the tools that they need to expand.

Some members also wanted to know how EIN members were going to help fight racism. Portugal explained that they have created a media award to give media an additional incentive to provide people with true, constructive and positive information rather than fuel people's fears. In a similar vein, the Austrian government has started to work more closely with the media in order to give them facts about migration and refugees to prevent speculation and fear. Austria also emphasised that members of the Support Group Network were ambassadors of the integration cause as they show how wrong racists are.