

## EWSI Analysis on Voluntary and Citizens' Initiative: Sweden

### 1 INTRODUCTION

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Are considered as citizens' initiatives all activities mobilising large numbers of volunteers (e.g. in workplaces, schools, local communities, etc.) to support immigrants' long-term integration and/or open up the public to integration matters and diversity. **These initiatives most notably involve people-to-people or mutual learning activities** matching migrants with mentors, peers or people volunteering their time or space. These initiatives may concern housing, mentoring, child or university-level education, extracurricular activities for children, lifelong learning, language learning, information provision, assistance with public services, translation, job preparation, awareness-raising/advocacy, etc.

Given EWSI's thematic focus, the emphasis is placed on citizens' initiatives focusing on long-term reception (e.g. during the asylum procedure) and integration (of beneficiaries of international protection and/or other categories of migrants), and not on the **initial front-line humanitarian reception for asylum-seekers** (e.g. food, clothing, shelter before entering the reception phase).

### 2 LONG-ESTABLISHED VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

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*Description of initiatives that have been running for several years.*

In 2014, the Swedish National Audit Office did a review of the civil society involvement in the integration work<sup>1</sup>. It concluded that civil society organisations very seldom are providers of integration services. However, audit only looked at the civil society involvement as providers of public services in the introduction programmes without taking into account civil society efforts through activities outside of the state responsibility. Civil society actors have an increasing role as a complement to public services. Some of their complementary integration services are financed by the European integration fund and The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society.

Nevertheless, this conclusion is a disappointment for the government since there is an ambition to involve civil society in the integration work. The parliament and Government did decide on a [policy for civil society \(Bill 2009/10: 55\)](#) highlighting the importance of civil society involvement in the integration policy.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.riksrevisionen.se/PageFiles/18960/RiR\\_2014\\_3\\_Civilsamh%C3%A4llet%20i%20integrationsarbetet.pdf](http://www.riksrevisionen.se/PageFiles/18960/RiR_2014_3_Civilsamh%C3%A4llet%20i%20integrationsarbetet.pdf)

The Government has also signed an agreement with non-profit organisations to be more involved in the integration work and the government has proclaimed an ambition to get rid of any obstacles for civil society involvement. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions' (SKL) website, in November 2016 provided 8 [examples of civil society involvement in integration work](#). Some of them are a cooperation with local sports associations Other measures focus on meeting places in general in order to connect the local communities with migrant newcomers (Ånge municipality), improve integration potential in rural areas (Örnsköldsvik municipality).

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society hand out grants to civil society for integration and anti-discrimination work: 3 types of grants (Anti-discrimination activities, Ethnic organisations and anti-extremism) since 2007 for about 400 000 € annually. Between 2010 and 2012, a special grant for vocational mentoring for newly arrived immigrants with professional skills was also available:

## 1. Vocational mentoring for newly arrived immigrants with professional skills (2010-2012)

With a yearly grant of 4,5 million SEK, 9 non-profit organisations, trade unions and business organisations in five regions of Sweden received the grant. The aim was to speed up the integration process while strengthening civil society organisations' participation in the integration efforts. Mentees – mainly newly arrived refugees – were matched with an established professional.

In 2015, an [evaluation report](#) was published. Although about 750 persons were involved in the project, the evaluation is only based on the 259 individuals who were registered at the Employment Service and documented before and after the project. When entering the project, 98% were registered as unemployed. At the end of the programme, the share of unemployed decrease to 40%. Most of the persons leaving unemployment did not enter employment or ordinary education (only 14 persons), but started some form of labour market programme.

The evaluation also compared the participants with similar profiles outside the programme to study the effects of the mentoring. The results for the whole group show no significant effects of the programme on employment or regular education. However, a small positive effect was found among men and their probability to earn at least 42800 SEK after the programme. For women, the effects were negative but not statistically significant, signalling a lock-in effect of the program. The measure proved most effective for those with a longer education and more work experience in their homeland. Overall, the project shows that mentorships generally work better for newcomers with specific professional profiles or with higher education.

## 2. Refugee guides

First established in Eskilstuna municipality in 2006, the idea is to match newly arrived immigrants with persons well established in the receiving community to support immigrants in their daily lives and help them learn the language and cultural codes. The aim is creating a society where all feel included. Both parts participate on a voluntary basis and no money is involved. It is the municipalities who organises the matching of about 700 individuals since 2006. [Find out more](#)

Eskilstuna municipality stimulates further programmes all over Sweden. [Find out more](#)  
80+ municipalities are involved in the programme. See the example of [Gothenburg](#)

Refugee guide in numbers (Eskilstuna):

- 2006-2012: 90 matchings
- 2013-2014: 410 matchings

Refugee guide in numbers (Rest of Sweden):

- 2012: About 15
- 2012-2013: About 25
- 2013-2014: About 35
- 2014-2015: About 70.

### 3. **Voluntary associations as a part of the introduction programme in the region of Skåne.**

This project aims to develop collaboration between the public and non-profit organisations in the reception of the newcomers. The goal is to create a platform to better use the voluntary sector capacities to improve newcomers' social contacts and to promote newcomers' participation in the society.

The project is a partnership between the network for voluntary associations and the regional country board in Skåne region. The target group consists of newly arrived immigrants following an introduction programme. [Read more](#)

### 4. **Berättarministeriet**

Berättarministeriet is a non-profit foundation that runs writing centres for children aged between 8 and 18 in socially disadvantaged areas in Sweden: which is a unique way to approach challenges schools and teachers face. It is organised as a tri-sectorial cooperation between volunteers, governmental bodies and the private sector. Berättarministeriet offers creative writing workshops, five days a week and free of charge. In addition, it has developed school curriculum programmes that equip teachers with learning methodologies and inspiring ways to teach.

Through storytelling, Berättarministeriet inspires children to unleash their imagination and build self-confidence. In doing so, the foundation contributes to greater equality in society. Their vision is "A Sweden where all children and youth conquer the written language and can actively participate in society". Their work is inspired by the American non-profit organisation 826 National. Currently they have three writing centres, all located in the Stockholm region, and the organisation is expanding. They have 300+ volunteers have reached 16, 000+ children since its start. [Found out more](#)

## 3 NEW VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

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*Description of major initiatives started only recently, particularly since the large numbers of refugee arrivals in 2015.*

### 1. **Swedish from day one**

This is only major initiative (apart from the Refugees Welcome, which is about handling housing issues) that emerged after the start of the so-called 'refugee crisis'.

*Swedish form day one* aims to give asylum seekers and refugees “stuck” at reception centres, an opportunity to learn the Swedish language and gain knowledge about the Swedish society as of their first day in Sweden. This is seen as important since the waiting times for an asylum decision and settlement is growing longer. The Swedish language is used as the basis and starting point in all activities, even if they are implemented in different ways in practical workshops on, for example, cooking, knitting, music and pottery. Most circles are implemented with a focus on everyday social issues to get to know Sweden. Theory is mixed with practical training where interactions with the various social actors and institutions are offered to gain insight into, for example, childcare, healthcare, government and other institutions' role in the society. Participants can also visit various institutions, organisations and places that are important for newcomers.

The program started in August 2015 and was estimated to give 20,000 persons in reception centers language training and knowledge about Sweden. A follow-up showed that 39,000 asylum seekers were participating in the 10 educational associations during the autumn of 2015. The associations were active in more than half (166) of the country's municipalities.

In the amended 2015 budget from November 2015, the government proposed an additional 750,000 million € to the educational associations for their work. [Read more](#)

## 4 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

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*Description and comparison of the profile of volunteers active in old versus new initiatives.*

This is not known.

## 5 INNOVATION ASPECT

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*Description and comparison of innovative or entrepreneurial aspects of the old versus new initiatives.*

Most initiatives were founded before the current refugee crisis. The one large new initiative is the language training and civic knowledge education in reception centres, done by educational associations, which has succeeded in reached more people than expected. On reason for its success is the use of existing infrastructure of educational associations that are present in most Swedish municipalities. These organisations are semi-professional, and can easily expand their activities with volunteers due to their large local networks.

## 6 ADDED VALUE AND IMPACT

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*Description and comparison of innovative or entrepreneurial aspects of the old versus new initiatives.*

*Description and comparison of the impact of old versus new initiatives.*

The most successful NGO initiatives seems to be the ones focusing on non-employment related activities. The Vocational mentoring initiative was a failure and did not have positive effects on labour market integration. Other labour market activities carried out by non-public actors have also had little success, such as the introduction guides that was part of the 2010 introduction reform. Both of these labour market measures are now disbanded. Overall, the public labour market measures are probably enough to satisfy the needs.

Measures and initiatives outside of labour market activities are hard to evaluate. However, they could be appreciated from their success on expanding their activities. Both Refugee guides and Berättarministeriet are seen as very successful, and have expanded their number of volunteers, activities and target groups during the last couple of years. They both bring added value, since they offer activities not covered by the public offer.

Language training and civic orientation from day one, organised by educational associations, has also been a success in their ability to reach their target group. It is too early to say anything about the effects and effectiveness of the initiatives. However, compared to public language training and civic orientation, it has proven to be very cost efficient, taking advantage of their already existing organisation, teaching experience and ability to mobilise volunteers.