



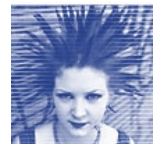
France 2004

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## Reception and integration of new migrants

Comment Paper,  
Sweden





## I.

Many people have chosen to settle down in Sweden during the last five decades. More than 11 percent of the Swedish population is today born abroad. Almost 20 percent has a foreign background. Sweden has become an immigrant country in a rather short period of time. When it comes to the rate of immigrants within the population Sweden is nowadays equivalent to France.

Immigration to Sweden changed in the end of the 80 ties. Earlier it consisted mainly of labour immigration, later it became mostly refugees. Since the 60ties Sweden has had an active immigration policy. It is designed to achieve the three goals equality, freedom of choice and partnership. Up to the year of 1985 the governmental Labour Market Administration was in charge of immigration issues. Concurrently with the growth of refugees among the immigrants increasing demand for contributions from society the administration of newly arrived immigrants was decentralized. The responsibility for introducing immigrants into the Swedish society was handed over to the municipalities. Local authorities had to offer housing, language courses, and a general introduction into the Swedish society. The need for social support and psychological treatment should also be met by local authorities. Refugees and their relatives were supported by social assistance or introduction benefit during the period of introduction. Immigration policy was replaced by integration policy in 1997. The new policy is aimed at the whole population, which implies that integration program only target newly arrived immigrants. After an introduction period general integration policy is in charge.

Most Swedish municipalities became engaged in the reception of refugees. Consequently Sweden has a long tradition of an active policy within the field of integration. This policy includes all refugees and their families. An important requirement is that they must have permanent residence status.

As in the case of France and the French reception platforms Sweden has a program for receiving immigrants when they arrive to the country. The comprehensive goal for this program states that "... society's initiatives for newly arrived refugees and other immigrants should provide everyone the opportunity to support oneself financially and to actively participate in Swedish society". After completing the orientation program, the individual will be able to participate in society and participate in the Swedish work force. This requires that the individual have a basic knowledge about Swedish society, Swedish working life, and the Swedish language.



In Sweden, as in France, the Swedish Integration Board co-operates with several other actors and bodies to assure that the objectives of the official integration policy have an impact on various social fields. In Sweden it is an important task for each municipality and local authority to analyse the national goals in order to make them work on the local level. They outline specific goals for the orientation program; they implement the program, and carry out their own follow-up and evaluation procedures. To facilitate the implementation and the development of the integration process the goals are drafted in consultation with The Labour Market Administration, The Federation of Swedish County Council, The Migration Board, and The National Agency for Education, The National Board of Health and Welfare and The Swedish Association of Local Authorities.

A general conclusion is that you can find great similarities between France and Sweden when it comes to the reception of immigrants. That is why the French experiences might very well be of relevance to Sweden.

## II.

The Swedish reception of all newly arrived immigrants is based on a program which includes many of the elements of the French reception. However, there are parts and aspects of the French program that could be of special interest from a Swedish point of view. The integration contract, for example, seems to be of both practical and symbolic importance.

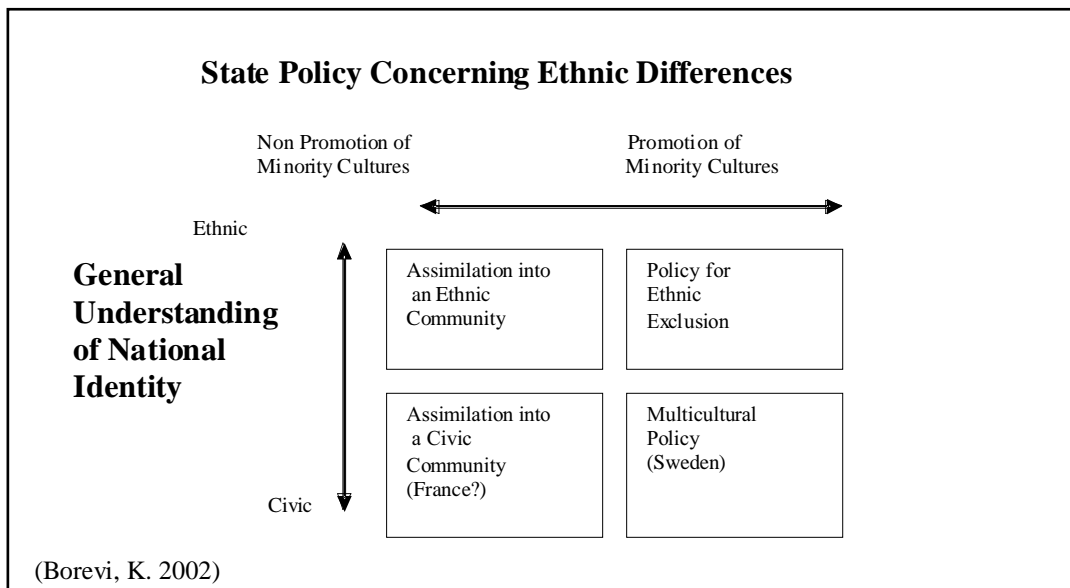
In Sweden the equivalence of this contract is called integration plan. In this plan you can see which measures and resources are needed in terms of education and training to enable the migrants to become self supported.

A most interesting aspect of the French example is the discussion about and the approach to the key concepts: integration and inclusion. It seems like integration and inclusion are governing principles for the reception of immigrants. I think this is of importance in terms of transferability. In Sweden we do not generally discuss integration and inclusion in the same way.

It seems that Sweden and France have different integration policies and strategies when it comes to migrants and ethnic minorities. This might cause a transferability problem. Theoretically the model below can illustrate this difference. In the model you can find two dimensions. The first dimension represents the



understanding of what constitutes a national identity; the scale is running from an ethnic understanding of identity to a civic understanding. The second dimension deals with the state policy concerning ethnic differences, the scale is running from passive tolerance to active promotion of minority cultures. The model might help us discuss some principles which are fundamental if you want to understand the differences between France and Sweden. The model illustrates why there are problems transferring the French policy and measures of integration to a Swedish context. Different integration strategies are based on different views of citizenship and ethnicity.



The two bottom squares illustrate the differences between states in terms of how they acknowledge the special rights of ethnic minorities. The section where you can find Sweden shows how the state subsidise people who differ culturally and ethnically compared to the majority population. Referring to this model, I want to question the transferability of the French reception platforms. Consequently, I think that the approach of integration related to civic society and to political life is of importance for understanding how different social policies are implemented.

Another precondition which differs is the role of the state. This difference has an impact on how experiences can be transferred from one nation to the other in the field of integration. It is of importance when we discuss transferability. The French strategy is based on a strong role of central government, which is



not the case in Sweden. In Sweden, where local authorities have a great deal of autonomy in these matters, it is difficult to implement nation-wide strategies. The municipalities are in charge of social services. The role of the state is in many ways limited. The idea is that integration of migrants should be taken care of on the local level where social services can be adjusted to local conditions.

### III.

Integration policies and practices are hot issues in Sweden. A general background is that the employment rate among foreign born has decreased dramatically since the 70ties.

Although Sweden has a very strong labour market oriented policy as well as integration policy the employment rate among the foreign born is 15 percent lower than for Swedish born. Without income of their own, many of the immigrants have to depend upon social assistance for very long time periods. This is the trend despite that the immigrant population does not vary from the majority population in terms of level of education. The most disadvantaged groups are the recent immigrants. After a residence in Sweden of three years 66 percent cannot make ends meet. After nine years the immigrant group still suffers from high unemployment: 40 percent of men and 50 percent of women. Transfer payments, such as social assistance, have replaced salaries.

This severe situation, together with problems such as segregation and social exclusion, has led to hard critique against the official integration policy. The Integration Board has carried out evaluations of the introduction program of immigrants and refugees. It states that except for the rate of unemployment there is also a big problem with language courses. Only 33 percent of the immigrants reached the certificate level within two year. 20 percent interrupted their courses. The evaluations also reveal failures in the validation of skills and experiences among foreign born.

Several research reports suggest that the main explanations to the immigrants disadvantaged situation at the labour market is found at the demand side at the labour market, i.e. the perceptions and values among employers, trade unions and the general population. All this shows that the practice of integration policies is inadequate and that there is an urgent need for change in attitudes as well of relevant and more efficient reception program for immigrants.