

# NEW IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

## Labour Market Inclusion of Migrants



## NEW IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

### Labour Market Inclusion of Migrants

*Nino Simic, Kristin Marklund, Ann Jönsson, Helena Lagercrantz, Caroline Lagercrantz, David Erichsen, Joan Rask, Jeanette Björkqvist, Bjørn Kvaal och Annska Ólafsdóttir*  
Editor: Nino Simic

ANP 2018:813

ISBN 978-92-893-5796-8 (PRINT)

ISBN 978-92-893-5797-5 (PDF)

ISBN 978-92-893-5798-2 (EPUB)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/ANP2018-813>

© Nordic Council of Ministers 2018

Layout: Jette Koefoed

Cover Photo: Dan Burch, Mostphotos.com

Graphics p. 9, 31, 56: Gustaf Norlén, Nordregio.

Print: Rosendahls

Printed in Denmark



### Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Shared Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

Nordic Council of Ministers  
Nordens Hus  
Ved Stranden 18  
DK-1061 København K  
[www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org)

Download and order Nordic publications from [www.norden.org/nordpub](http://www.norden.org/nordpub)

# NEW IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

## Labour Market Inclusion of Migrants

- 5 Preface
- 6 Introduction
- 7 Terms and concepts
- 8 Integration in the labour market – opportunities and challenges
  
- 14** **THEME: A COMBINATION OF WORK AND LANGUAGE TRAINING**  
Best practice: Swedish for professionals (Sfx), Sweden  
Best practice: Industry packages (Branchepakker), Denmark  
Best practice: Social Impact Bonds, Finland  
Best practice: Integration reception centres (Integreringsmottak), Norway
  
- 28** **THEME: WORK INCLUSION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN**  
Foreign-born women are facing a threefold challenge  
Best practice: Yalla Trappan, Sweden  
Best practice: Job Opportunity (Jobbsjansen), Norway
  
- 42** **THEME: NETWORKS AND CIVIL SOCIETY**  
Building networks is a route into employment and integration  
Best practice: Neighbourhood Mothers (Bydelsmødre), Denmark  
Best practice: FIKA, Finland  
Best practice: ÖppnaDörren, Sweden
  
- 54** **THEME: INTEGRATION IN RURAL AREAS**  
New arrivals are a resource for rural areas  
Best practice: The Multicultural Centre, Iceland  
Best practice: Bättre bemötande, Sverige  
Best practice: The Nyår project, Sweden
  
- 67 Final remarks
- 68 References
- 70 The Expert Group on integration of new arrivals in the labour market

”

**We have a lot  
to learn from  
each other.**

---

# Preface

Those arriving in the Nordic countries as refugees need to enter the labour market as soon as possible. The Nordic welfare system is based on the idea that both men and women work. Work also makes it easier to learn a new language and become familiar with a new culture. In the case of women, starting work, supporting oneself and leading a more independent life can be a huge change in life.

In 2016, after the large influx of migrants in the Nordic countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers decided on an initiative that involved the exchange of Nordic experiences in the field of integration. The Nordic Welfare Centre was then tasked with running a Clearing Centre in the area of integration whereby research, facts and best practice were gathered on the project's website, [www.integrationnorden.org](http://www.integrationnorden.org).

This publication looks at facts regarding the inclusion of new arrivals in the labour market, and focuses in particular on examples with an ambition to shorten time to integration into the labour market.

We have a lot to learn from each other!

The Nordic Welfare Centre would like to thank participants in the group of Nordic experts who helped us identify examples of best practice that can be passed on to others. We are also grateful to Nordregio who have produced statistics and maps and compiled research findings on behalf of the Clearing Centre.

**Eva Franzén**

Director, Nordic Welfare Centre



---

# Introduction

This report sets out measures for achieving faster integration of refugees and foreign-born residents in the labour market in the Nordic Region. The examples presented in the report have been selected by our group of Nordic experts. This group consists of those working at different levels in each country and have a good insight into and knowledge of their own country's measures in integration. Some of the group members work in government ministries and authorities, and others at regional or municipal level. In selecting examples, they have focused on the integration initiatives deemed to have the greatest likelihood of being implemented in their neighbouring countries. This selection is based on the knowledge gained from research and recommendations made by our Nordic co-operation partners.

In this report we have also sought to give a brief description of current research and knowledge regarding effective measures and the possible challenges facing refugees in the labour markets in the Nordic Region.

The report is based for the most part on previous publications relating to this project, such as "Policies and measures for speeding up labour market integration of refugees in the Nordic region" (2017) and "State of the Nordic Region – Immigration and Integration Edition" (2018). Other publications forming the basis of this knowledge compilation include the ESO Report "Inspiration för integration – en ESO-rapport om arbetsmarknadspolitik för nyanlända i fem länder" (2017) and the Nordic Council of Ministers report on "Nyanlända kvinnors etablering: En komparativ studie av nyanlända kvinnors etablering på arbetsmarknaden i Norden och de etableringspolitiska insatserna" (2018).

It is important to emphasise that refugees and foreign-born constitute a heterogeneous group that reflects a variety of circumstances and needs. Educational level and language skills can differ greatly, not only between migrants from different countries but also in terms of the proportion of men and women respectively who are well-educated. And, as is the case in the native-born population, there are a number of interlinked factors that determine the chances of getting into work. These can include personal experience, personal qualities and the physical and mental health of the individual.

Although the full integration of refugees in the labour market is a process that is both demanding and to some extent difficult, a less comprehensive and ambitious goal would mean the Nordic countries run the risk of creating long-term exclusion with far-reaching consequences for both society and the individual. Our hope is that this report will serve as an inspiration and aid in finding solutions to both present and future challenges.

---

# Terms and concepts

Below is an explanation of some of the terms commonly used. The use of these terms differs from country to country, but this is how we have used them in this publication.

**Asylum seeker.** A foreign citizen who has arrived in a country and requested asylum, but who has not yet had their application processed.

**Family reunification/reunion.** This refers to a 'process whereby family members separated through forced or voluntary migration regroup in a country other than the one of their origin'.

**Integration.** This term is the subject of much debate and lacks a crystal-clear definition. A broad formulation is that integration is a reciprocal and multidimensional process requiring input from both the new arrival and the population in the recipient country, a process that begins on the migrant's arrival in the recipient country.

**Labour migrant.** A person who migrates to another country in order to work.

**Migration.** Migration is an umbrella term for immigration and emigration. Migrant refers to a person who has moved to another country regardless of whether they are moving voluntarily or being forced to move.

**Newly-arrived.** A newly-arrived is someone who is received by a municipality and has been granted right of residence on the grounds of their refugee status or on other grounds whereby they require protection. A new arrival's family members are also regarded as new arrivals.

**Quota refugee.** A person who prior to their journey to a specific country has been granted right of residence as part of the refugee quota set by the government of the recipient country.

**Refugee.** A person who has fled from their home country or country of permanent residence and has been granted refugee status according to the UN Refugee Convention. In this publication we use the term in a broader sense so as to include refugees in accordance with the UN definition and also those requiring subsidiary protection status and their family members.

**Subsidiary protection status.** According to the EU definition, a person that has been granted subsidiary protection status is in danger as the result of armed conflict and who risks the death penalty or being subjected to torture.

**Sources:** UN, UNHCR, Swedish Migration Agency

---

# Integration in the labour market – opportunities and challenges

Text: Kristin Marklund

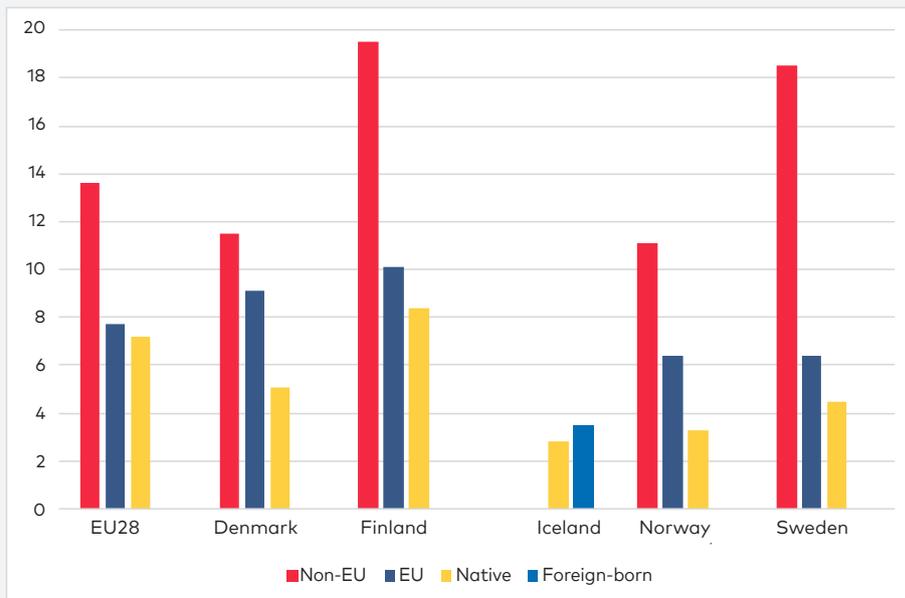
**The reception given to refugees by the Nordic countries in recent years has presented both opportunities and challenges, but above all it represents a humanitarian undertaking. This must soon be translated into measures that enable the integration of new arrivals in a new society. A distinguishing feature of the Nordic countries, seen in an international context, is the high levels of employment among both men and women. Integration in a well-functioning labour market, universal access to it and the tax revenues generated are prerequisites for the Nordic welfare model.**

In recent years net immigration has accounted for two thirds of the population growth in the Nordic Region, and as much as three quarters in Sweden and Denmark. This population increase is coincident with an increase in the number of elderly in the Nordic Region. Mention is often made of a so-called "old-age dependency ratio"; that is to say, a measure of how large a proportion of the population is over 65 years of age in relation to those of working age. This proportion is increasing throughout the Nordic Region, but it is particularly alarming in the sparsely populated municipalities, where a fall in the population base could soon pose a threat to the right of the inhabitants to services and healthcare. The major urban regions show a more positive trend, but in large parts of the Nordic Region there is a need for new labour.

The average age of the asylum seekers who have arrived in the Nordic countries in recent years is low. Therefore, when the integration of new arrivals is successful, this can have a positive effect on the recipient countries as long as more job seekers are able to enter the labour market and become self-supporting.

## **How can successful integration in the Nordic labour market be ensured?**

It's not easy comparing ways in which the integration of immigrants into the Nordic labour markets actually works. During the large influx of refugees in 2015, Sweden received 163,000 asylum seekers while the numbers in Norway and Finland were just over 30,000, in Denmark a little over 20,000 and in Iceland 354. Sweden has received significantly more asylum seekers than the other Nordic countries, which has presented challenges in terms of long processing times, a shortage of accommodation and heavy pressure on the municipalities to arrange schooling and Swedish language courses.



**Figure 1**  
**Unemployment**  
**(15-64 years)**  
**according to**  
**country of birth,**  
**2017.**

Source: Processing of Eurostat data by Nordregio.

It takes five to ten years for refugees to become established in the Nordic labour markets. Differences between the Nordic countries, not least in terms of the numbers of refugees received, means that making comparisons is not that easy. There are also structural differences between the countries. For example, according to the OECD, Sweden is one of the countries in Europe that has the lowest proportion of jobs that require no vocational training - so-called "simple jobs".

We can see certain differences in the way the establishment of new arrivals is organised in the Nordic countries. In 2016 the Danish government took the decision to speed up the integration process. This seems to have worked well, although it is too soon to draw any conclusions. In Sweden, the so-called EBO law gives refugees the right to settle where they like as long as they arrange their own accommodation. Around 50 per cent of asylum seekers have taken this opportunity to go and live with relatives, for example - often in areas that have a high proportion of migrants but are close to a major urban area where there is a greater chance of finding work.

In contrast to Sweden, Denmark and Norway have clear requirements regarding good language skills in order for the applicant to be granted permanent residence permit. During the settlement process, immigrants in Denmark must pass a language test in order to receive the full amount of funding. The Swedish government has made it compulsory for new arrivals to learn the Swedish language. This means that new arrivals who are considered to need training in order to get into work must apply for and attend such a course. Anyone refusing to attend the course risks losing their two-year introduction benefit.

---

Comparisons between the Nordic countries show that the level of employment among refugees and their families is low during the early years, after which it rises. However, even after 10-15 years the level of employment remains lower than for native-born. Finding work fast is considered to be one of the key factors to successful integration in the labour market. It is important, however, that the individual's entry into the labour market is not just temporary but permanent with time. One of the factors for success is a booming economy with a strong demand for labour.

### **Faster entry to the establishment programmes**

Firstly, in order to avoid idle time and the stress this creates, it is important to shorten the processing times. Secondly, asylum seekers too should be able to participate in different integration measures.

An early start on the integration programmes increases the likelihood of faster entry into the labour market. Asylum seekers have often had to wait for integration measures to be brought in before being granted right of residence. At the same time, the processing time for asylum applications has increased since the autumn of 2015. In 2016 it took an average of one year to process an asylum application in Sweden and Norway.

An attempt is being made in Norway to intensify the integration process at four selected asylum reception centres - known as integration reception centres (integreringsmottak). The target groups are partly residents who have been granted right of residence and partly those who most likely will be granted it.

The residents take part in an intensive full-time programme to learn Norwegian and also learn about working life and society in general. The purpose is to shorten the route into employment or education.

In Denmark, there is an initiative that combines practical experience and language learning with the aim of shortening the route into the labour market. Immigrants must embark on a Danish language course no later than one month after being granted right of residence. The municipalities must also arrange subsidised jobs, work placements or further training for all new arrivals within one month. The state provides an incentive to the municipalities by giving them extra funding for each new arrival who enters work or embarks on regular study. At the same time, those immigrants who pass a more advanced test in the Danish language are awarded a so-called Danish bonus.

Finland does not have the same tradition as the other Nordic countries in terms of receiving asylum seekers, but here too the proportion of those who are foreign-born or have parents who are foreign-born has increased. Integration in the labour market is identified as being the most important issue. New ideas for stimulating integration in working life are more than welcome. Finland has the desire to learn from its neighbours and test innovative solutions in

---

areas such as the funding of integration initiatives. One example has been the introduction of a bonds programme for social innovation called Social Impact Bonds. Private investors are given the opportunity to fund integration measures. If the results are seen to benefit society, the investors reap some of the profits

### **Initial assessment of refugees' skills**

Competence mapping at an early stage in the asylum process is now taking place in all the Nordic countries except Iceland. Changes have been made in the way this early mapping is done to ensure greater streamlining. New digital platforms allowing refugees to carry out a self-assessment at the time of their registration is being tested in Norway and Sweden.

Skills mapping is compulsory at all the reception centres in Norway. It is too soon to say anything about the potential effects. Sweden is now implementing a Jobskills programme whereby asylum seekers can register their skills online in their mother tongue. A new evaluation of the Danish model involving face-to-face interviews has shown better results.

Finding effective methods of validating an immigrant's level of education is a matter of high priority in the Nordic countries. Within the framework of official Nordic co-operation, the Nordic Expert Network for Validation (NVL) has developed the ValiGuide, a platform that describes the validation process and the skills required for qualified validation and also provides tips for more successful implementation. The ValiGuide is intended to help ensure a more consistent and thus a more secure validation process.

### **A fast track offered by vocational language training**

The Nordic countries currently offer step-by-step language training at different levels as part of the state-funded establishment programmes. Language training is available to all immigrants, be they illiterate or academics. The challenge lies in preserving the consistently high quality of this training and in setting entry requirements that are clearly stated.

Research shows that vocational training with integrated language training in the workplace produces the best results in the shortest time. All the countries are therefore experimenting with new education models that seek to improve the link between language learning and employment. Targeted courses that combine language with other vocational skills and training in the workplace have shown positive results.

Industry packages (Branchepakker) is one example that originated in Denmark and is based on an agreement between the municipality and the employer. It is a structured concept for integration that is anchored in the local labour market. An immigrant's vocational and language skills are developed partly on the basis of his or her level of interest and partly on the needs of the local labour market.

---

Industry packages model consists of five modules, the first of which is an eight-week introductory course followed by a further four courses which are held in succession and tie the participant ever more closely to the labour market. An assessment is made after each module. The participant must achieve easily measurable goals before starting on the next module.

The different types of fast track schemes available in Sweden provide faster entry into the labour market for new arrivals who seek work and have experience or qualifications in a shortage occupation. The fast track scheme in Sweden is an all-in-one process involving a work placement, language practice and training. The labour market parties reach agreement on which occupations are to be included. The fast track consists of a combination of various measures taken by the Swedish Public Employment Service, such as an assessment of vocational skills, a course in vocational Swedish, a work placement and supplementary training.

Sweden currently has fourteen central agreements regarding a fast track in forty or so occupations. To give an example, just one central agreement of this kind – in health and medical care – can be applied in 21 regulated professions; that is to say, in cases where the professional title is protected by law and can be used only by the individual holding that qualification.

Another example worth mentioning is Swedish for professionals (Sfx), a language course that focuses on vocabulary specific to a particular occupation. The target group is immigrants with a vocational qualification but inadequate language skills in Swedish. The participants attend the course together with others from the same occupational category – certain Sfx courses also offer them the opportunity to do a work placement and supplement their training with qualifications at upper secondary school or higher education level in order to work in Sweden. At present there are courses available in ten different and unrelated occupations for those wishing to work as, say, engineers, architects, entrepreneurs, craftspeople, pedagogues, bakers and roof workers.

#### **Outreach measures to strengthen networks and reach immigrant women**

Women do not have access to labour market programmes and other measures to the same extent as men. This is borne out in many ways: men are invited to participate in a number of activities whereas the support offered to women is slow in coming, and when it does come it is not so well adapted to their needs. There are a number of outreach measures across the Nordic Region that aim to end the isolation experienced by some foreign-born women. This is where civil society has an important bridge-building role to play in the community.

---

Civil society organisations play an increasingly important role in the integration process. These organisations offer meeting places, which creates opportunities for refugees to become more actively involved in their community. Facilitating meetings between refugees and those already established in the country is a good way of combating discrimination.

Strong social networks are seen to be crucial to getting a job in the Nordic region, and this applies not only to immigrants. Despite this, there are few studies that illustrate the role of these networks in helping refugees enter the labour market. More general studies show that informal channels are important routes for entering employment and that many jobs are never publicly advertised. A shortage of networks has been described as the greatest obstacle facing foreign academics in seeking a job that matches their skills. Studies indicate that there is a higher level of employment among immigrants who play an active part in idea-driven organisations and have native-born friends.

## **Factors for success**

---

**The experiences amassed over recent years makes it possible to identify several factors that are of crucial significance in shortening the time it takes to enter employment:**

**faster acceptance on the establishment programmes**

**early competence mapping**

**fast tracks involving vocational language training**

**outreach measures to strengthen networks and reach immigrant women.**



---

## A COMBINATION OF WORK AND LANGUAGE TRAINING

**Best practice:  
Swedish for professionals (Sfx), Sweden**



Mahmod Al Qayem is able to get behind the wheel of the lorry thanks to the Sfx course for truck drivers.

---

# Sfx – a more direct path into the right job

Text: Caroline Lagercrantz

**Mahmod Al Qayyem took the Sfx course for truck drivers in 2017 and has now been working as a truck driver for Postnord for eight months. He came to Sweden from Palestine six years ago and spent his first few years in Sweden working in the construction industry.**

A friend told him about the Swedish language course for truck drivers (Sfl). This suited Mahmod since he had had experience as a driver in his home country.

"I'd had experience of driving heavy goods vehicles in the past but wasn't that good, so SFL gave me the chance to learn about the job almost from scratch. It was an excellent course that covered both theory and practical experience, and I had really good instructors. And after finishing the course I got a job almost immediately," says Mahmod al Qayyem.

The course enabled him to make many friends with whom he is still in touch, and he would certainly recommend others to choose Sfx. Before starting, however, it's a good idea to have quite a good command of Swedish since the course is fairly demanding. Mahmod Al Qayyem had already done the Sfl language course when he began learning vocational Swedish, so for him it was not that difficult.

"Sfx is a great opportunity! Without this course I would have presumably stayed on in the construction industry. Now I work reasonable hours with less stress and better pay."

He delivers the post at night in the Stockholm area and enjoys the work.

"In the future I might start my own business in the transport industry," he says.

Anders Åström was Mahmod's Al Qayyem's teacher in vocational Swedish for truck drivers. He says that

most of those who take the course – around 80 per cent - find a job as a truck driver within seven months after finishing. During the two and a half years the course has been available it has attracted around 75 applicants.

## **An effective route into the labour market**

The students come from different backgrounds, but one important target group is new arrivals who have an introduction benefit – funding support to which refugees are entitled during their first two years in Sweden.

The Sfx course for truck drivers takes 22 weeks and starts with two months of theory in a classroom setting, where the focus is on vocational language. The course then goes on to more practical elements such as driving lessons and a placement at a company which is carried out under supervision. The aim is that the students pass the driving test for truck drivers as required by the Swedish Transport Administration.

"The course participants already have the vocational skills and are familiar with the vocational language in their mother tongue, so what is needed is to translate these to the Swedish context. It usually goes fast. At the same time they acquire qualifications for doing another job as, say, a garage mechanic or a caretaker. This is a route into the labour market and, above all, into getting a more skilled job," says Anders Åström.



PHOTO: TRULS BUSCH CHRISTENSEN

Katarina Stiessel Fonseca is the Sfx Coordinator for the County of Stockholm.

---

### Utilising skills in the right way

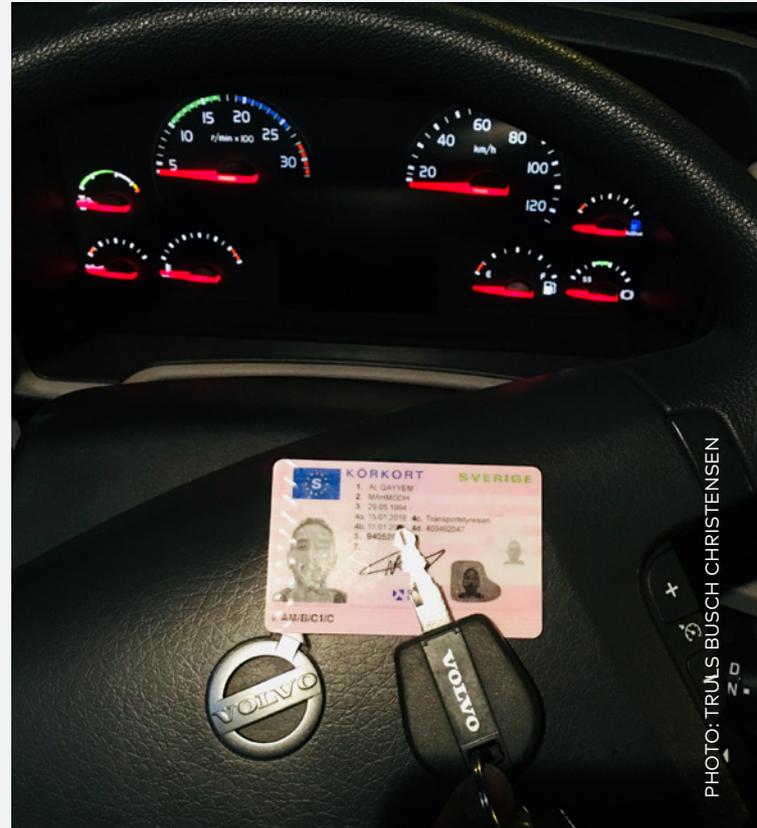
Katarina Stiessel Fonseca is the Sfx Coordinator for the County of Stockholm.

"Sfx is about utilising the skills of new arrivals and targeting occupational categories where there is a demand for labour." The courses are set up differently because the vocational requirements differ from sector to sector. Common to all the SFX courses is the fact that they offer curricular language training that leads to a qualification in one of a number of occupational categories.

"Above all it's a case of finding the right job for the right person," says Katarina Stiessel Fonseca.

"Right now we have a booming economy and it's easier to find a job quickly." The fact is, however, that an academic or individual with vocational qualifications who works in a job requiring no qualifications is society's loss. The right skills that person has are wasted at the same time that they may be in a job that could have provided a living for someone with no qualifications.

"Also, it's more stimulating to do language training together with others from the same occupational background. You create networks and cultivate your professional identity instead of losing it the way many new arrivals do," says Katarina Stiessel Fonseca.



Mahmod Al Qayyem's driving licence opened the door to the labour market.

## Swedish for Professionals (Sfx)

**Swedish for Professionals (Sfx), has been in existence since 2001 and is based on an agreement between all 26 municipalities in the County of Stockholm, the municipalities' member organisation Storsthlm and Stockholm County Council.**

**At present there are courses available in eleven different occupational categories where there is a shortage of labour. The courses are free of charge to students and are paid for by the municipality of residence. Important co-operation partners include the Swedish Public Employment Service, companies, trade union associations and various higher education institutions.**



## Best practice: Industry packages (Branchepakker), Denmark



PHOTO: THOMAS SØNDERGAARD

Wafaa Almsaief has a permanent job with the services agency Coor, working as a cleaner a shopping centre in Vejle. A job arranged for her by the job centre in Vejle as part of the Industry packages initiative. After just one month on her work placement she obtained a permanent job offering the standard terms of employment.

---

# Grateful to have a job and keen to do more hours

Tekst: David Erichsen, Joan Rask

**Wafaa Almsaief came to Denmark as a refugee three years ago. Today she works as a cleaner for 24 hours a week at a shopping centre in Vejle. It's a permanent job with standard terms of employment – something she appreciates. The biggest challenge on entering the labour market has been to learn Danish.**

Wafaa Almsaief arrived in Denmark in May 2015 when she fled from the war in Syria together with her husband and five children. Today she has a permanent job working for the cleaning services company Coor, whereby she does cleaning at a shopping centre in Vejle for 24 hours a week. A job she appreciates.

"I would really like to do more hours so I could earn more," says Wafaa Almsaief, who is 43 years old and the mother of two boys and three girls aged between nine and nineteen.

## **It was hard to begin with**

Her husband works in a shop in Horsens, and the family live in a house in Vejle. In Syria Wafaa Almsaief had stayed at home after finishing upper secondary school, so the move to Denmark has meant that going out to work is another new experience for her.

"I found things really hard to begin with here in Denmark, because I was used to being at home and couldn't speak Danish, but today I appreciate having a job where I've got colleagues to talk to and am able to earn my own money."

Wafaa Almsaief's first venture into the Danish labour market was doing a work placement at a preschool, something she found about herself thanks to her Danish contact family. The placement lasted for eight months but did not result in a job, so when the employment advisor in Vejle Municipality

suggested a new placement (via Industry packages) she was willing to do it since involved a short period of training, a short probation period and a quick solution in terms of finding a job with the standard terms of employment attached. She herself chose to try out the cleaning sector.

## **Successful co-operation with the jobs centre**

Kenneth Jacobsen is a service manager at the property services company Coor, which has around 8,500 employees located mainly in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

"We have good experience of making a durable match between one of our job openings and the individual in question while taking into account their ability and level of interest, and we supplied many good employees as a result of our co-operation with the job centre in Vejle. So in Wafaa's case, one month was enough time for us to know that we wanted to take her on," says Kenneth Jacobsen. For her part, Wafaa Almsaief's plan her future in Denmark is clear-cut and simple.

"My children have fitted in well in terms of school and friends, and my husband and I have got permanent jobs. So our plan is to stay in Denmark. I'm grateful I've got a job and am earning money because I've got a large family. So the next thing I'd like is to become really good at speaking Danish."



PHOTO: THOMAS SØNDERGAARD

Wafaa Almsaief wants to become good at Danish. She's therefore continuing her language training every week even though she has done the compulsory language course. And it also helps having colleagues to talk to.

---

# A targeted focus on sectors ensures the refugees are fit for work

**Industry packages are an integration tool that have been adopted in at least 25 Danish municipalities – and the organisations who are taking on refugees to work for them are delighted. Part of the secret is systematic training and concrete learning objectives which are included in every work placement.**

“We have turned the approach to integration on its head!”

So says Lars Larsen, a partner in the analysis and consultancy company LG Insight. Together with Vejle Municipality he has developed Industry packages, an integration concept whereby municipalities and businesses jointly set up a training process that target different sectors.

“A municipality wishing to work with Industry packages first identifies which sectors have job openings that could be of relevance to refugees who arrive here with no education, who speak no Danish and who may also have little experience of the labour market,” says Lars Larsen.

Before the process gets underway it is always established in advance what the individual and organisation in question will be practising during the placement.

“No one can allow employees to have a passive role in this process – which means the individual won’t run the risk of just doing the dishes for 26 weeks,” says Lars Larsen.

Many Danish municipalities have adopted the Industry packages concept. One of these is Frederiksberg Municipality. Here the proportion of refugees/families who are helped into work after three years is 51 per cent, which is considerably higher than in other comparable municipalities. The director of the centre, Dina Haffar Wolf is delighted with Industry packages.

“It’s a matter not only of self-sufficiency and integration but also the fact that the individual has gained control over their own life again. Many people have already had a long spell in a refugee camp, and that’s why the first job is incredibly important,” she says.

This scheme has proven to be a turning point for the employment advisors in the municipality. Previously the norm was to carry out an individual assessment of everyone based on their ideal scenario.

“The individuals involved now find that the Industry packages scheme provides them with standardised and goal-oriented advice, regardless of the employment advisor assigned to them. This is valuable, because it feels fair and puts more focus on the content of the work placement – rather than on the handling of the case,” says Dina Haffar Wolf.

She points out that the scheme requires a certain volume. For example, the centre has internal interpreters, teachers and welcome hosts where everyone implements and lives and breathes the Industry packages concept. During 2015–2016 the centre in Frederiksberg received around 500 new refugees, in 2017 there were 85, and this year Dina is expecting only around 50. Typical sectors are cleaning services, rehabilitation, care, production and transport, and the individual can black their nose in various sectors before deciding on the direction they want to go in.

The Industry packages scheme always offers three long work placements. The first is an introduction,

---

then there's training in sector-specific skills, and finally there's skills-building in a specific organisation. The principle is that the individual builds on their skills before they go into a regular job. The first scheme was set up in 2015, and one organisation that developed this concept further was *Foreningen Nydansker* (the Association Nydansker) a member-based consultancy whose services include implementing the Industry packages model. Its members are municipalities, ministries, trade union associations and businesses. Torben Møller-Hansen, Director of the Association, says its members are delighted with the scheme.

"If an organisation does not know what has happened on a previous placement, it is impossible to build on existing skills. The Industry packages model is almost like a mini-course, and if the municipalities don't understand this dynamic they can put the individual in a terrible situation because they cannot prove what they have in the way of skills," says Torben Møller-Hansen.

He regards Industry packages as the most effective integration tool there is, although he has no docu-

mentation. LG Insight does, though – in part. It is currently carrying out an assessment on behalf of the Danish Industry Foundation.

"We know for sure that about 25 Danish municipalities have used or are using Industry packages, and that it has met with a fair amount of approval from businesses in particular. There is still no documentation confirming whether it's having more effect, but we hear from the municipalities that the scheme is getting more people into work," says Lars Larsen.

Lars Larsen's advice to other Nordic countries is that the scheme should be anchored in larger organisational regions or units. That would make it easier for the smaller municipalities to take part.

"It's difficult for municipalities to individually promise jobs. Industry packages model is resource-intensive in terms of its development and operation. For once it is the municipalities that have come up with a scheme themselves without a single krona coming from the nationwide government bodies and organisations, and I really do hope the established education system adopts this scheme," says Lars Larsen.

## Industry packages

**Industry packages model is a standard process that takes account of the local labour market in employing targeted measures in the business sector that enable individuals to improve their qualifications and show them the route into employment. The concept is targeted at refugees and immigrants who have no connection to the labour market.**

**The concept focuses on the quickest route possible into the regular labour market and is based first and foremost on the needs and requirements that apply in the labour market and within the individual sectors.**

**Each scheme has the explicit goal of regular employment, and the progression of the individual is measured and made visible throughout the process with the help of proven and quality assured tools. The focus is on which requirements must be met to manage a job in a particular sector, which prerequisites the individual does not fulfil, and which initiatives and courses could give the individual the necessary skills to improve his or her chances of getting a job.**



## **Best practice: Social Impact Bonds, Finland**



PHOTO: JEANETTE BJÖRKQVIST

After trying for eleven years, Henry Chidi Nwadike has finally got a foot in the door of the Finnish labour market. He has managed it thanks to a new employment model whereby private actors take responsibility for the integration of immigrants in the workplace.

---

# Private investment is speeding up integration

Text: Jeanette Björkqvist

**Henry Chidi Nwadike from Nigeria has spent most of the years he's been in Finland studying and trying to get a job. But it's not been easy. On the contrary.**

**"I've applied for so many jobs but not once been called to interview. My qualifications are in the construction industry, but that hasn't helped either. I've been given a number of cleaning jobs but not proper employment."**

We find him doing his last but one work shift for the week as a kitchen assistant at one of Sodexo's lunch restaurants in Helsinki. Up to now Henry has been learning on the job, but now, says his area manager, Sainni Sänkiniemi, it's high time his work placement is replaced by a proper job.

"In our view this system is designed to complement the recruitment of new employees. What is good is that we don't need to take financial risks while training potential new employees."

The official name of the system she is referring to is Social Impact Bonds, or SIB, one which has previously been trialled as part of a number of other social innovation measures in Finland. SIB involves attracting investment in projects which have clearly defined and measurable goals and also have a positive impact on society.

## Small risks, big gains

Behind this model is the Sitra Jubilee Fund which has presented the SIB model to a number of ministries. In 2015 the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment seized on this initiative. The model was initially trialled on refugees, but now also covers other immigrants needing help to enter the labour market.

The model is designed so that the public sector takes few risks yet has all the more chance of making a profit. It is private-sector backers which invest the money and bear the financial risk if the measure fails to produce the desired results. The state for its part pays only for results; that is to say, the accumulated savings that the measure has involved for the public sector. And prospective employers pay only for the induction period required for a new employee.

## Sitra

---

**The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra is developing methods for promoting the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Finnish economy whereby the focus is on sustainable welfare. The Fund was set up to mark the 50th anniversary of Finland's independence, and is financed by the returns on the starting capital donated by Parliament on its establishment. This generates approximately EUR 30 million per year. Sitra comes under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament.**

---

So far this year the Fund has already been able to count on over EUR 14 million in investment. Up to now just over 200 immigrants have got into work and between 600 and 800 people are about to enter the labour market. This falls far short of the target: The aim is for 2,500 immigrants to get into work during 2016–2019.

**A sluggish start does not mean less ambitious goals**

Jussi Nykänen, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Epikus Oy which administers the programme, says it is not impossible to achieve these targets even though it has got off to a more sluggish start than anticipated. The reason for this has been an unforeseen bottleneck which is in the process of being resolved.

“Employment agencies have their own procedures which are more unwieldy than those we have set up. This may have been the biggest challenge since it means that immigrants who are interested don’t find out about our programme as quickly as we’d hoped.”

This has been confirmed by the person behind the initiative, Mika Pyykkö, who is Project Director for the so-called Impact Investing projects at Sitra. The whole idea is to streamline the integration process of immigrants in the labour market. However, where systems are made more simple the public sector does not always keep up.

“In an ideal world all public-sector activities would be based on flexible and effective thinking, where money and resources are invested for preventive purposes. But public administration is cumbersome and, despite good intentions, it can be hard to make it start thinking along the same lines as the private sector.”



Henry Chidi Nwadike is one of many individuals on a work placement who has been allowed to test their wings under the supervision of Sodexo’s district manager, Saini Sänkiniemi.

## Social Impact Bonds

**The SIB programme for integration serves as a network for labour market authorities, companies and immigrants in different parts of Finland.**

**Selection is made via the labour market authorities who channel immigrants seeking employment into different and flexible kinds of short-term, effective introductory courses.**

**The public sector pays for achieved results – when an immigrant is given employment.**



**Best practice:  
Integration reception centres (Integreringsmottak),  
Norway**

## **Integration reception centres shorten the route into employment and training**

Text: Nino Simic

**In order to avoid refugees ending up waiting passively for long periods in the standard asylum reception centres, Norway set up so-called integration reception centres with a total of 500 places in 2016 and 2017. Those who live at the integration reception centres undertake to participate fully in the programme which covers language teaching and language practice, cultural and social affairs, careers guidance, activities targeted at employment, schooling and training, daily tasks in their living quarters and other activities jointly arranged by the integration reception centre and civil sector.**

The standard asylum reception centres also offer information programmes, language courses and activities that prepare immigrants for work or study. The integration reception centres differ from the standard asylum reception centres in that the programme offered at the integration reception centre is full-time at 37 1/2 hours a week and is much more intensive and tailored to the individual. The aim is get the participants into work or education more quickly.

This initiative has two target groups: those who have recently been granted right of residence and

are awaiting a placement in a municipality, and asylum seekers who do not yet have right of residence but are deemed to have a good chance of being granted it. Those wishing to be transferred to an integration reception centre must apply for this themselves. Thereafter an individual plan is drawn up together with the host municipality. This plan is based on skills mapping and an assessment carried out by a careers advisor.

Integration reception centres are also a kind of laboratory for developing effective methods of integration that can potentially be implemented

---

## **Integration reception centres**

**The integration reception centres form part of a pilot project and co-operation between several actors. Those involved at administrative level are the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the Directorate of Labour and Welfare, the Directorate of Immigration and Skills Norway.**

**The group of contractors consists of the integration reception centre's host municipality, the asylum reception centre that has been converted into a integration reception centre, the careers guidance centre, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), businesses and civil society.**

**To start off, five integration reception centres were opened offering a total of 500 places in Bodø, Kristiansand, Larvik, Steinkjer and Oslo. The fall in the number of refugees meant that on 1 April 2018 the integration reception centre in Oslo which offered 150 places was closed.**

throughout Norway. The compulsory elements have already been mentioned in the introduction to this text, but in addition to these the host municipalities have been given a relatively free hand in furthering their co-operation with other public-sector actors, businesses and idea-driven organisations.

Integration reception centres have a working relationship with the surrounding municipalities. It is the integration reception centres' host municipalities that provide recommendations to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) about which municipality will offer the individual refugee a placement. The recommendations are based on the host municipality's knowledge about both the refugee in question and which municipalities are available to choose from in providing a placement. Investigations carried out in the settlement municipalities indicate that refugees who come from integration reception centres get going on introduction programmes faster than do refugees coming from other asylum reception centres.

An initial assessment that was carried out in 2017 only six months or so after the start reported positive results. It is too soon, of course to tell whether the programme at the integration reception centres will have provided a faster route into employment or education, but both the participants and the officials involved felt it had boosted the chances of integration. The project is set to finish at the end of 2018, but it is possible it will be extended.



---

## WORK INCLUSION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

# Foreign-born women are facing a threefold challenge

Text: Helena Lagercrantz

**Seen from an international perspective, there is a high labour participation rate and a high employment rate among women in the Nordic countries. The employment rate among foreign-born women is significantly lower, however, including in relation to foreign-born men.**

Those who are foreign-born – and above all foreign-born women – have lower labour participation rates than do other groups. The OECD has stated that foreign-born women face a threefold challenge: apart from the fact that they are women and were born in another country, they usually have a lower level of education and lack professional experience. Research also shows that women are treated less fairly during the settlement process and under-represented on labour market programmes, and that fewer job-oriented measures are targeted at them.

At the same time, it is important to point out that those who are “foreign-born” form a heterogeneous group representing a wide variety of circumstances and needs. It is important, for instance, to distinguish between foreign-born women who have come as immigrants and those who have come as refugees, since it is usually refugee women who have difficulty entering the labour market. This is especially so in the case of foreign-born women from countries outside the EU, since these tend to have a lower level of education than other immigrant women.

---

## Labour participation

**Labour participation among immigrant women in the Nordic Region who have come from countries outside the EU is approximately 20 percentage points lower than that among native-born women. The exception is Iceland, where participation is 9 percentage points lower.**

**If as many women as men were to get into work straight away, growth in the Nordic countries could increase by 15–30 per cent, according to a report by the OECD and the Nordic Council of Ministers.**

### **Differences in reception**

Several authorities in the Nordic Region that are in one way or another responsible for all or part of the settlement process are required to ensure that men and women have equal access to support. Despite this, studies show that the measures taken by these authorities reflect an uneven gender distribution. This applies even more so to foreign-born participants in the settlement process. A report by the Swedish Public Employment Service shows that more men than women among the new arrivals are given the opportunity to participate in job-oriented initiatives such as labour market training, work placements and subsidised jobs. In contrast, women are channelled into preparatory training and ancillary services to a greater extent.

The study also shows that in general men receive more visits and invitations to meetings with an employment service provider than do women. Men also meet their employment service provider at an earlier stage in the process, while women receive support at a later stage – support that is not as well adapted to their needs. Furthermore, men are more likely to have a variety of jobs to choose from as part of their settlement plan, while women are in a majority in the case

---

of health-promoting measures and measures aimed at investigating working conditions.

Other research shows that employers set higher requirements for female job applicants with a foreign background than they do for male applicants. For example, the OECD found that in general employers set higher language requirements for female job applicants than for male applicants.

In all, this shows that the Nordic countries need to raise awareness about how they can ensure the effective and gender-equal establishment of applicants in the labour market. What is clear is that more studies are needed to show what works and what doesn't, and which groups are best matched to specific measures and why. There needs to be mapping of the underlying factors involved.

#### **Parenting and the establishment process**

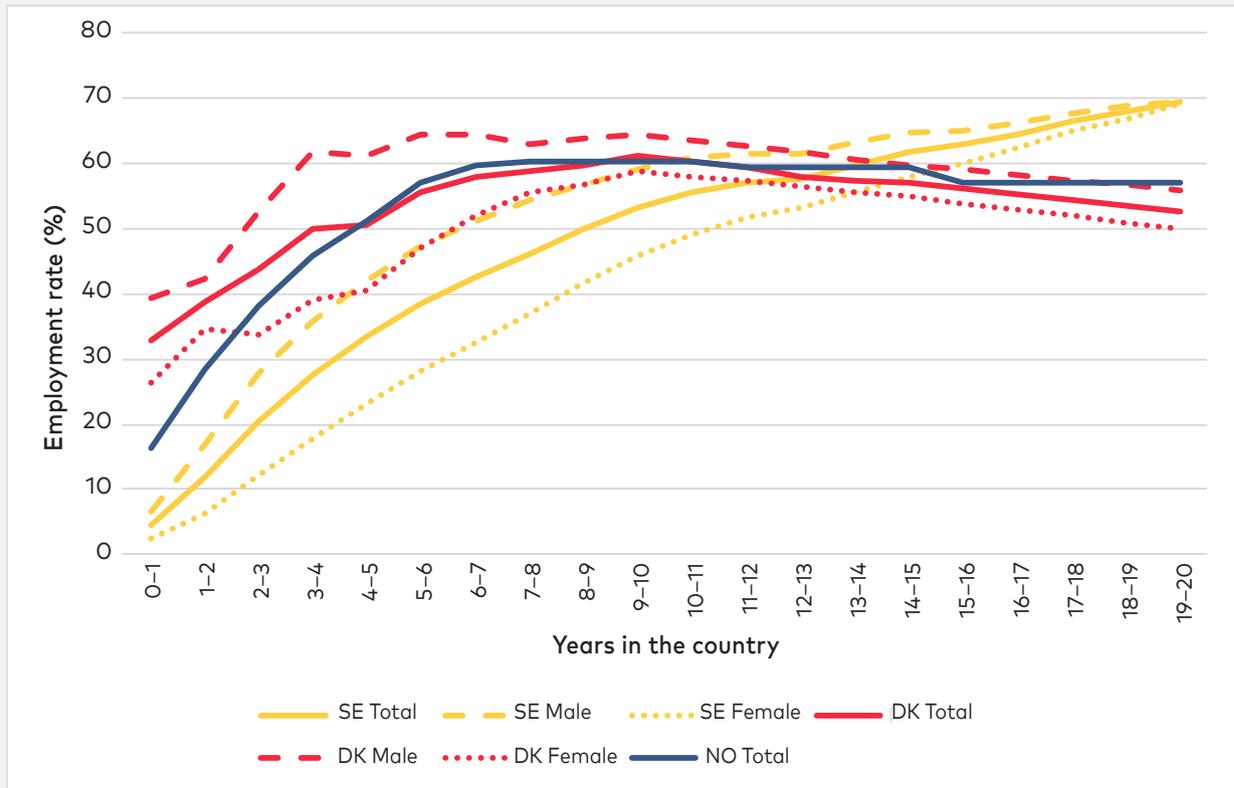
The distinguishing feature of the Nordic Welfare Model is that it promotes the participation of both men and women in the labour market. That said, parental allowance is very much designed for those who are already established in the labour market.

The majority of immigrant women of working age are also of childbearing age. This fact means that flexible solutions are needed in terms of both labour market measures and childcare, otherwise women on parental leave run the risk of delay in establishing themselves in the labour market and their integration will on the whole be made more difficult.

The traditional view of the family, where the woman is expected to assume greater responsibility for children, the family and relatives, can influence labour force participation among women who have recently arrived. For instance, an unequal pattern in the number of days reported by those claiming parental allowance may constitute one reason why the labour force participation rate among women born outside Europe is lower than that among men.

Several Nordic studies show that foreign-born parents make less use of childcare than do native-born parents. This discrepancy may depend on a number of factors. A Danish study suggests that foreign-born women are more likely to work at times when childcare services are closed. Another factor may be that a lack of language skills makes parents feel uncomfortable about leaving their children at preschool. Parents may also feel it is best for the child to be home with their mother, or they may consider the costs too high.

There are several measures that have proven effective in encouraging immigrant families to leave their children at preschool. One example is the language preschools, where children come into contact with preschool and their mothers



**Figure 2**  
**Employment rate for non-western immigrants 2016 by period of residence permit, according to gender.**

Source: National statistics bodies.

Note: Denmark and Norway: immigrants from non-Western countries. Sweden: refugees granted asylum.

receive language training. Another one is active co-operation with civil society. Norway has succeeded in increasing preschool attendance among immigrant children by introducing periods of free schooling in certain disadvantaged areas.

**Equality assessment of male and female participation in establishment measures**

Both Swedish and Norwegian surveys show that women are under-represented in measures targeting the labour market. At the same time, a number of prognoses predict that several female-dominated occupations including healthcare and welfare will see staff shortages. Despite this, there are fewer fast-track initiatives targeting the social sector than those targeting the shortage occu-

---

pations in the traditional male-dominated sectors such as wood, construction and transport.

One explanation for there being fewer establishment measures such as a fast track in female-dominated occupations may be that further training and more advanced language skills are required for getting a job in these sectors. This is confirmed by the fact that immigrant men with a low level of education are more likely to be employed than women with a low level of education.

At the same time, it is important to stress that the best long-term solution for the group of women furthest away from the labour market is not always ensuring their establishment as soon as possible. On the contrary, what may be needed in their case is long-term measures regarding language, education, subsidised employment and social orientation, preferably in close co-operation with civil society. This requires investment that will in the long run benefit both the individual and society – and not least the children.

#### **Outreach activities**

The group of foreign-born women whom the establishment measures find hardest to target is the one whose members are registered with the public employment service or are known to social services. This is where civil society constitutes an important resource. There are several examples of both local and nationwide organisations that are successful in targeting and reaching foreign-born women in the vicinity. The women working in these organisations act as bridge-builders and pilot the new women immigrants into society, which can in the long run help these women get into work. Organisations such as Neighbourhood Mothers (Bydelsmødre) in Denmark inform foreign-born women who have just arrived about Danish society, their rights and obligations, healthcare and childcare, and social norms and expectations.

#### **Municipalities that are success stories**

A report by the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI), describes the integration process in nine municipalities that have proven to be especially successful in getting foreign-born women into work. These municipalities are Bornholm, Frederiksberg, Frederikshavn/Læsø, Kalundborg, Kolding, Copenhagen, Middelfart, Tårnby-Dragør and Aabenraa. The report is based on interviews with those at managerial level and in an official capacity.

Common to these municipalities is the fact that the new arrivals can be put in touch with a case officer at an early stage. Although the municipalities make no mention of special measures for women, they make it clear that the requirements and expectations of each new arrival are the same, regardless of gender. All the municipalities add that they enjoy close co-operation with local businesses. Several of the municipalities report that they have found it a good idea to have the husband accompany the woman for her first few

---

meetings with her case officer. This guarantees that both parties receive the same information about the woman's rights and her future participation in the labour market. This finding is supported by both Danish and Norwegian studies, which show that traditional gender roles may influence the type of employment chosen by foreign-born women. This may be partly to do with the woman's own view of her duties as a wife and mother, and partly to do with the social control exercised by her husband and the local community.

Other Nordic studies confirm the Danish results. A work placement in combination with language learning has been shown to be effective. Doing a work placement allows the women to learn the language and build up a social network. There are studies that also highlight the importance of measures for boosting a woman's self-confidence, which could in the long run mean she has the courage to seek work outside the home. One stage in this process might be arranging meetings in language cafés or venues hosting group activities – places where women get together and discuss health, the family and working life. Norway is also focusing on raising the level of education among the women at least to compulsory school level, which could mean a good chance of them entering the labour market.



**Best practice:  
Yalla Trappan, Sweden**



PHOTO: HELGE RUBIN

From the left: Mary with her daughter Daisy and Zeina Douhani in the Yalla Trappan kitchen.

---

# Yalla Trappan – a leg-up to enter work and networks

Text: Nino Simic

**Zeina Doulani came to Sweden from Lebanon in 1989. The first job she got in Sweden was not until twenty years later at Yalla Trappan. She is now employed and supervising other women in the catering kitchen who are learning how to run a professional kitchen.**

The journey to this point has been a long one, but now she's finally made it.

"Yalla Trappan means a lot to me, it isn't just a workplace. Every day we meet people from different countries and cultures. We're like a family, no one puts pressure on us and no one exercises power over us."

The women employed here have a say in decision-making, are aware of their rights and are paid contractual wages. They learn about the Swedish labour market, labour legislation and acquire cultural awareness in the form of hands-on experience.

## **A role model for others**

It is difficult to overestimate Yalla Trappan's significance for Zeina Doulani. Working provides an income, self-confidence, something to look forward to, and the feeling of doing something worthwhile and being able to help others. But the job means more than that; it is a source of strength for the entire family.

"My children are proud of the fact that I work," says Zeina Doulani. "And it's important to me that I don't stay at home; I can be a role model for others."

And that's what she is for her four children: for the daughter who has obtained two sets of qualifications as a biomedical researcher and a pharmacist, for the son who is a construction engineer, for the second son who is a counsellor, and for the youngest, aged 19, who is taking the three-year programme in electrical technology.

Zeina Doulani is, however, also a role model for other women, such as those in the Lebanese Association who despite their educational background choose to stay at home.

"I ask them why they don't go out to work. They say they don't have time, they have so many children. But of course they would have time, that's what I say to them."

## **Companies that are socially responsible**

Yalla Trappan is a work integration social enterprise and women's cooperative run by a non-profit association in Rosengård in Malmö. Yalla Trappan has over 30 employees and also offers internships that provide an introduction to work experience. The target group is foreign-born women who are far removed from the labour market.

"When we started out there were six of us, and now there are thirty-five," says Christina Merker-Siesjö, Chair of Yalla Trappan. "We create job opportunities for those who are furthest away from the labour market: middle-aged women who lack an education and professional experience from their home country. We create social sustainability in disadvantaged areas – can you imagine what that means, seeing a woman who starts believing in herself, feels hope, spots the opportunities that exist and realises that everyone can have something to contribute to society!"

## **Social enterprise that invests in growth**

Yalla Trappan stands on three pillars. One is a café and catering business that serves



PHOTO: HELGE RUBIN

Yalla Trappan has a working relationship with the Swedish Public Employment Service and the City of Malmö in offering a number of women training in running a professional kitchen.

## Assessments of Yalla Trappan

Assessments are being made of the projects run by Yalla Trappan. They show that the women are given a boost, have greater faith in themselves, have the courage to take decisions, and really want to be involved and have a say. Women who have never been outside of Rosengård before are getting out and about more, making trips and voting in the general elections.

Yalla Trappan features in academic analyses done by Copenhagen University, the Stockholm School of Economics, Lund University and Malmö University. It has also featured in BBC programmes, Al Jazeera and Italy's biggest newspaper, *la Repubblica*.

---

lunches, another is a sewing and design studio, and there is also a cleaning and conference service. The sewing studio receives commissions from several companies including IKEA, which is, by the way, a working relationship that has great expectations riding on it. The cleaning and conference service takes commissions for office cleaning, and the catering business has begun making a name for itself throughout southwest Skåne thanks to its tasty cooking inspired by Middle Eastern flavours.

"Yalla Trappan is not a transit point," says Christina Merker-Siesjö. "It is a social enterprise where by all profits are ploughed back into the business. The women have collective agreements and equal pay, we have created our own lines of work, we run them, we manage the company itself and we make our own decisions."

Yalla Trappan is not a temporary workplace offering a placement to women who are then expected to leave and go on to another labour market. It is a company in its own right; one of a kind maybe, but no less sound a business which has carved out a niche of its own in the regular labour market.

The second pillar is a working relationship between the Swedish Public Employment Service and the City of Malmö. Yalla Trappan receives 30 trainees for instruction in cookery. This is just the first step; following on from this are other activities, further training, work experience, courses or a job.

The third pillar consists of the other areas of business development which are funded by different sources. One source is the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth which analyses the work of the sewing studio and provides suggestions for products that could be sold at a later stage to IKEA.

### **Investment in the future**

"Yalla Trappan means a lot to the women who work and do training here, but it means just as much to the next generation," says Christina Merker-Siesjö.

"The women set an example for their children. The norm at home is that mum now goes off to work with a spring in her step, and that means the children are happy too. And not only that, the women take more trouble to help their children with their homework, and they believe in their children in a totally different way to before."

The interest in Yalla Trappan's activities is large. Christina barely has time to answer all the questions about study visits, conferences and speakers. Everyone is listening: politicians, public officials, municipal authorities, labour market parties, idea-driven organisations. Sister organisations have been set up in several other locations.

"I see there is an incredible demand and a strong sense of commitment and will, yet everyone wonders how one goes about it," says Christina Merker-Siesjö.

In response Yalla Trappan has produced a book – "Yalla Trappan, så gjorde vi" – which has seen sales in many of the municipalities in Sweden. The book forms the basis of four workshops which in combination provide instruction on how to set up a similar enterprise.

"I'm aware that many people think it will happen quite quickly," says Christina Merker-Siesjö. "But it doesn't. By sharing our experiences we can make the journey there that bit shorter."



## Best practice: Job Opportunity (Jobbsjansen), Norway



PHOTO: MORTEN BRAKESTAD

Loubna works half-time at Torshovhagen preschool in Oslo, and makes sure that Axel, 4, and Max, 5, are happy and able to develop. Job Opportunity helped make sure that Loubna received language training and got into work. Almost seven out of ten women who participate in Job Opportunity in Norway get into work or training.

---

# Loubna wanted to work with children and young people – and Job Opportunity helped her do it

Tekst: Bjørn Kvaal

**Seven out of ten immigrants who participate in Jobbsjansen get into work or education. In Loubna's case, Job Opportunity has proven an effective way of showing what she can do – and what she wants to do.**

"Look at me, here I come!" shouts Axel, 4 years old, as he jumps off the pirate ship at Torshovhagen pre-school in Oslo.

Loubna, 32, watches him and also makes sure that Axel and his friends Max, 5, and Jonatan, 4, land safely on their feet.

## **Women become invisible**

The Syrian mother of two arrived in Trøndelag in 2015, where she attended the compulsory introductory programme on Norway and the Norwegian language for immigrants. After completing the programme she applied for several jobs but was never called to interview. Her CV lists her three-year university degree in education from Damascus and several years' experience of working with children – including those with autism. As well as that, she's good at drawing.

When Loubna arrived in Oslo in 2017, she was asked if she wanted to participate in Job Opportunity. Job Opportunity is a one-year full-time course leading to a qualification. It is run by city districts and municipal authorities and aimed at enabling immigrant women aged 18–65 to obtain qualifications in order to work or study.

"Some immigrant women become invisible. The man gets a job, a driving licence and a salary account and deals with the contact with government authorities. The women for their part stay at home and do not exercise their rights. Getting women out and about is a matter of ensuring equal rights and combating

poverty. Moreover, we need more people in work in terms of the economy, and we need to ensure the standard of welfare we have today can be maintained."

So says Anders Fyhn, head of the *Kvalifisering- og arbeidslivsseksjonen* (qualifications and work section) at the Integration and Diversity Directorate (IMDi).

## **Paid a salary while participating**

Job Opportunity has its roots in the introductory scheme for newly arrived refugees that was made law in 2004. However, this scheme did not apply to immigrants who had come to Norway previously. The Ny sjanse ('New Chance') scheme was set up and aimed at both men and women. This was a pilot project, and in 2013 it was reborn as Job Opportunity which today is aimed at women.

Now in 2018 the state is spending NOK 65 million on stay-at-home women participating in Job Opportunity. The IMDi allocates the funding in line with fixed criteria. The funding is used to cover salary payments for the project managers and a subsidy of NOK 97,000 for each participant. The municipalities and city districts often contribute 15–30 per cent as a co-payment.

## **Must meet up every day**

The women are recruited by the city districts and communities via the "jungle telegraph". Healthcare centres and preschools also provide information on the services available, and posters are put up at



“Both the employers and the participants in Job Opportunity are closely monitored. Having applicants who meet the qualification requirements makes job recruitment easier,” says Annette Sandberg, project coordinator for Job Opportunity in Oslo Municipality.

## **Job Opportunity**

**Job Opportunity consists of projects for stay-at-home immigrant women.**

**Aimed at immigrant women aged 18–65 years.**

**Monitoring carried out by city districts and municipal authorities, who apply for project funding from IMDi. Normal duration is one to two years for each participant, although this can be extended to four years.**

**Provides instruction in vocational Norwegian and an introduction to Norwegian working life in the form of practical training. The women’s skills and aims are mapped before the women are put in contact with local employers.**

**The staff at Jobbsjansen monitor around 20 participants each.**

---

the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), libraries, associations and other places where people get together.

The participants in Job Opportunity undertake to meet up every day for a programme that lasts 7 1/2 hours, and those who are absent because of illness must produce a doctor's certificate or a self-certification sickness form. The programme advisors at Job Opportunity are responsible for around 20 immigrants each – this allows for closer monitoring compared to the number of individuals given assistance by other case officers in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration. The programme advisors map the women's skills and wishes and see what might be suitable for them. Moreover, they have a good understanding of the labour requirements in their district.

"It's crucial to understand the needs of the employers, be they public or private-sector. The projects put women in contact with the employers who need the skills that these women can offer," says Anders Fyhn, head of section at IMDi.

### **Mapping targets and expectations**

Annette Sandberg is project coordinator for Job Opportunity in the Sagene district in Oslo Municipality. She mapped Loubna's background, goals and ambitions, and thereafter maintained regular contact with both Loubna and the preschool where Loubna was given her placement.

"Close monitoring of the employers and participants in Job Opportunity means we can map expectations and clear up any misunderstandings. Close monitoring of employers and employees also ensures progress is made during training and it helps ensure more successful recruitment in terms of meeting the qualification requirements," says Annette Sandberg.

### **Quicker to learn on the job**

Today Loubna works half-time at the preschool. For the time being this is not an established post leading to full employment. While waiting, therefore, she is planning to learn more Norwegian and continue her university studies in education.

The head of the Torshovhagen preschool in Oslo, Lene Harp Andrews, says that good dialogue with those in the city district and regular assessment of Loubna's skills – combined with Loubna's own aptitude and motivation – has helped this particular Syrian woman get a job with them.

"She had met the requirements in the Norwegian language when she started here. That formed the basis for further learning in terms of the Norwegian language, Norwegian work culture and our work methods. She's learning more easily through having practice in an organisation like ours rather than sitting in a classroom and learning from a blackboard," says Lene Harp Andrews.

### **Wants to become a teacher**

Back at Torshovhagen preschool, Loubna is soon at the end of another new working day.

"What will I be doing in five years' time? I'll have finished my university studies in Norway by then. My aim is to work with children and young people – maybe as a teacher."

## **Assessment**

**An assessment carried out in 2017 by the analysis company Ideas2evidence shows that 52 per cent of the participants got into paid work and 16 per cent into training after completing the Jobbsjansen programme in 2016.**

**Forty per cent of the participants have become self-supporting since then, compared to only one per cent beforehand. The target set by the authorities is to see that 60 per cent start in work or training soon after they finish at Jobbsjansen. No impact assessment of Jobbsjansen has been made to establish definitively the contributing factors for these favourable results.**



---

# NETWORKS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

## Building networks is a route into employment and integration

Text: Ann Jönsson, Nino Simic

**Most people get a job through networks and informal channels. Despite this, a survey done of the establishment programmes in the Nordic Region shows that they are largely run in centralised form by government authorities.**

There are many examples describing the significance of networks and informal channels – those in civil society – for people seeking work. A group of researchers have been tasked by the Axfoundation to compile the research and literature available on the significance of networks for integration and recruitment from the perspective of society, the individual and the business sector. Seventy per cent of job seekers in Sweden got into work via networks, while 16 per cent did so through the Public Employment Service. In another study, 70 per cent of the academics asked stated that a shortage of networks was the biggest obstacle to finding a job. An OECD report from 2016 shows that 40 per cent of employers in Germany make use of informal networks.

There is a positive link between participation in the local community and that in working life. Experience from Norway shows that migrants who have Norwegian friends or are involved in clubs or associations find it much easier to get into work than those who lack similar networks. Migrants often lack knowledge about how important these networks are for establishing themselves in their new home country, and are under-represented in bodies such as sports associations and other civil organisations.

---

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has studied the significance of civil society for integration and co-operation with the public sector. MUCF highlights the significance of local organisations in which migrants take an active role along with local residents - settings where they are not regarded as clients and recipients of the support offered by the majority society. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions also points out that actors both at national level, such as the Public Employment Service, and at regional and local level need closer co-operation with civil society and the cultural sector to enable different groups to come together.

Networks are not only important for the migrant's establishment in the labour market but also of great significance when seen from other aspects. The migrants also need to learn about the new country's culture and, in a broader sense, establish a link to its society.

Many Norwegian municipalities have embarked on more long-term co-operation with civil society – such as the Red Cross, study associations and the sports movement – in order to run asylum reception centres, language cafés and meeting places, arrange cultural, sports and other kinds of activities, and match refugee guides to new arrivals.

Research from Denmark shows that a sense of community within a group of migrants can also facilitate contacts with the community at large. If there is no access such a network of this kind for establishing close contacts, this may also seriously damage the prospects of becoming established in Danish society. In this context Canada is being held up as a source of inspiration: Through competitive tendering, bodies such as ethnic organisations are given charge of the migrants' settlement process, and this creates a sense of involvement among local residents.

Civil society can play an especially prominent role in rural areas. Involvement on a voluntary basis is a key factor in ensuring successful integration. The inclusion of migrants in local leisure activities, getting new arrivals involved in sports clubs, festivals and language cafés are just some examples at local level in different parts of the Nordic Region where the aim is to establish ties between the local community and the immigrants.



## Best practice: Neighbourhood Mothers (Bydelismødre), Denmark



Neighbourhood Mothers is primarily aimed at women from non-Western countries. Its members operate on a voluntary basis at local level to support other women.

---

# Women from around the world are helping each other

Text: Joan Rask

**How am I a good mother when I'm living my life in the Danish welfare state yet have grown up with values that are rooted in a completely different culture? This is a question Samaneh Moosavi has asked herself over and over again. She now shows that immigrant women have plenty to give each other.**

"It's hard to become part of a new and alien culture. There's something inside me that wants to protect myself and my children from these new values. When someone knocks on the door, I still wonder if it's someone wanting to kill me even though I've now lived in Denmark for eight years." So says Samaneh Moosavi, who is 24 years old, married and the mother of two boys. She's a refugee from Afghanistan, and is now a volunteer at her local branch in Skanderborg of the nationwide network Neighbourhood Mothers.

"When we came to Denmark I was suffering from serious depression. Neighbourhood Mothers was like a gift from heaven: I became better informed and indeed became a totally different woman," says Samaneh Moosavi, who will soon have finished her training as a social and healthcare assistant.

Neighbourhood Mothers is primarily aimed at women from non-Western countries. They work as volunteers at local level to support other women who are often isolated and can be difficult for the established system to reach.

The Fund for Social Responsibility runs the initiative which is financed by foundations, government bodies, municipalities and donations. There are over 600 neighbourhood mothers allocated into 40 groups representing around 55 languages. This

cultural diversity can present a challenge, so one requirement is that the neighbourhood mothers can speak Danish.

## **The neighbourhood mothers are recruited through networks**

The neighbourhood mothers undergo a basic course consisting of 15 modules in line with the principle of "Help to help yourself". The subjects can be anything from raising children, teenagers, open dialogue, municipal affairs and personal health. The language of instruction is Danish. The course involves drawing on one's own resources and knowledge and experience, and this is linked to the methods used by Neighbourhood Mothers.

The women either apply for a place on the course by themselves or else are encouraged to do so by other neighbourhood mothers. It can also be the municipality that establishes the contact. Experience from Denmark shows that the groups work best when they are part of a co-operation with other actors at local level such as housing associations, voluntary charitable organisations and so on. These groups need ongoing sparring and feedback that can be provided by different public-sector bodies, non-profit organisations and so on, partly because regulations and openings can change, and partly because this is voluntary work where all the women involved typically juggle a job with family.



PHOTO: TRYGFONDEN

The neighbourhood mothers undergo a basic course consisting of 15 modules in line with the principle of "Help to help yourself".

## Neighbourhood Mothers

Networks for women and mothers exist in many towns and cities, but Denmark is the only place that has a rural-based organisation and has conceptualised this initiative. It runs small-scale activities in Oslo, Helsingborg and Helsinki. Neighbourhood Mothers very much welcomes Nordic initiatives and is willing to take part in more of them.

---

### **Greater self-confidence often leads to a job**

Greater self-confidence is hard to measure, but when it results in a job this makes it easier. The non-profit organisation Economists Without Borders carried out a socio-economic analysis in 2016. It showed that Neighbourhood Mothers has a positive impact on employment, education and a knowledge of Danish, and on children. Even by conservative estimates the calculations show that for each krona invested by society, it gets DKK 2.80 back. And on the basis of what the authors would call realistic assumptions, society gets all of DKK 10.10 back, and that's not taking into account the fact that more people benefit from training.

Deloitte has also carried out an assessment. This dates from 2015, and states: "The Neighbourhood Mothers initiative assists both the women receiving help and the neighbourhood mothers themselves in that they develop greater self-confidence and a stronger attachment to the local community, and are given the courage and tools to resolve challenges themselves."

However, precisely how one can measure the value of a voluntary mentor is difficult to establish, so as of 2018 Neighbourhood Mothers are implementing a new documentation tool for measuring the changes brought about through dialogue.

For Samaneh Moosavi, who talks animatedly about her job, it's about helping a fellow human being. There's only one question where Samaneh Moosavi remains silent. What would be different if the other Nordic countries wanted to set up Neighbourhood Mothers?

"... Nothing ... they should just do the same as Denmark. It works really well," she says.



Samaneh Moosavi.

PHOTO: JOAN RASK



## Best practice: FIKA, Finland



PHOTO: MOSI HERATI

Pernilla Holmström, who is Finland-Swedish, and Qing Ye, who is Chinese, were brought together in the autumn of last year and have really hit it off. Apart from the fact that they are the same age, like the same things and go to the same gym, Qing Ye has also received substantial help in accessing professional networks and has also made a good friend who comes from Finland.

---

# Finding one's place in society with the help of a mentor

Text: Jeanette Björkqvist

**For nearly six years the FIKA project has brought together over 700 immigrants and Finnish mentors. These have built up relationships, created friendships and shared networks. FIKA is a means of creating and reinforcing human bonds, creating a space in society where a new arrival can throw down their first roots.**

It's not easy to move to a foreign country and not know a single person in your new world. That is what Qing Ye from China found last year when she arrived in Finland.

"I came into contact with others from China and friends from other countries quite quickly. But neither they nor I knew how we would meet Finnish people, and having no contact with them means you feel alone and excluded."

When she found out about the Finland-Swedish project FIKA, she didn't hesitate to sign up.

"I was wondering above all how I could put my teaching qualifications to good use. But I had no

contacts and no real understanding of traditions, customs or ways of thinking in Finland. I met Pernilla Holmström who became both my mentor and for now my only Finnish friend."

## **Finding a match requires gut instinct**

When an immigrant contacts Luckan, it is the integration coordinator, Yasmin Samaletdin, who conducts an interview to begin with and identifies the individual's requirements and realistic targets. Equipped with the knowledge gained from the interview, she sounds out her volunteer mentors and tries to match one to her client.

## **The Luckan Association**

---

**Luckan is a Finland-Swedish centre for information and culture and is situated in eleven locations around the country. Luckan addresses many social issues both by arranging activities at the centre and online. The organisation has an extensive cultural programme and offers specific activities for children, young people and immigrants.**

**Luckan's backers are Sydkustens Landskapsförbund, Svenska Studieförbundet, Samfundet Folkhälsan, Föreningen Konstsamfundet and Understödsföreningen för Svenska Kulturfonden.**



Yasmin Samaletdin, the integration officer at Luckan, emphasises the fact that the organisation needs to have a down-to-earth, personal touch and never become so big that she herself wouldn't have time to interview and come into contact with everyone there.

---

“The expectations from both sides ought to be similar, and what’s more, they ought to be compatible as individuals.”

At its best the mentor model serves to benefit and give pleasure to both the participant and the mentor. The outcome can have a tangible effect from society’s point of view: a client who establishes a closer link to society will do well and feel happier, while a mentor who learns about another culture is able to expand their networks.

### **Integration is about more than just work**

The integration policy pursued by Finland and the rest of the Nordic Region focuses on work and has created different routes into the labour market. And work is of course important, according to Yasmin Samaletdin. Yet people also need to find other ways of belonging, and this is where FIKA comes in. There are no specific requirements placed on those seeking a mentor. It’s enough to have right of residence and feel a desire to connect more with the local community.

“Integration is a complex issue; it requires networks of different kinds. These are not easy to find for someone who has just arrived here, and this is where I think FIKA has a lot to offer. We have a low threshold and are flexible in accommodating needs.”

Jessica Lerche, development manager at Luckan, has a background in education. She set up FIKA as one of Luckan’s activities. Mentoring in the workplace had already been tested within the education system. Before FIKA was launched, Jessica Lerche had also got to know about the Swedish Red Cross organisation Yrkeskompis.

The staff at Luckan are hoping there will be greater continuity in the future. Like many other integration projects, FIKA is struggling with the financing. That, she says, can be frustrating.

“What we have in Finland, and also in many other EU countries, is third-sector organisations that have built up working structures and skills over the years that risk being lost during every round of funding. This system is neither fit for purpose nor efficient in economic terms.”

## **FIKA**

**As part of its efforts to promote integration, in 2012 Luckan launched a project called FIKA (Förening, Integration, Kommunikation, Aktivitet). Assessments show that the participants believe FIKA has been of help in their integration. The challenge has been partly to find volunteer mentors and partly to manage what are sometimes unrealistic expectations regarding results.**



## Best practice: ÖppnaDörren, Sweden



Invitationsdepartement arranges a dinner with Lina and Peter in Hallunda.

---

# The door is always open

Text: Nino Simic

**Only three out of ten people get a job without the help of contacts. In this knowledge, Axfoundation embarked on its long-term settlement and integration initiative called ÖppnaDörren. The organisation promotes different kinds of encounters between established Swedes and new arrivals; it enables new arrivals to access networks and provides the opportunity to get to know people from cultures other than one's own.**

The cornerstone of ÖppnaDörren, Swedish for Open the Door, is the belief that the face-to-face encounter is key to an understanding about other people. This encounter is a prerequisite for breaking down segregation and strengthening the integration process. It needs to be easy for established Swedes to become involved in ÖppnaDörren.

As of 2018 ÖppnaDörren has been co-funded by the European Social Fund, and the aim of the interim project up to 2020 is also to initiate 3,300 meetings with new Swedes as part of their settlement process in co-operation with municipalities, employment agencies, interest groups and employers.

## Axfoundation and ÖppnaDörren

**Axfoundation is an independent, non-profit organisation which takes solid practical measures to promote a more environmentally and socially sustainable society. The organisation regards enterprise as a force for change. The Axfoundation is linked to the Axel Johnson Group, which operates in the trade and services sector in Europe. ÖppnaDörren is co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).**

ÖppnaDörren's activities consist of four organisations that each take a different approach in paving the way and then arranging the meetings.

**Yrkesdörren**, Occupation Door, has the task of matching established Swedes to new Swedes who have a similar level of experience in a sector and occupation. The purpose of each meeting between the participants is that it will in turn give rise to two further meetings.

**Kompisbyrån**, Buddy Bureau, establishes digital contact between new arrivals and Swedes who have similar leisure interests. This type of contact is intended to lead to an hour-long chat in Swedish over a snack at a café.

**Invitationsdepartementet**, The Department of Invitation, brings together immigrants and those who speak fluent Swedish over dinner in someone's home. Invitationsdepartementet offers the opportunity to make digital contact. The host decides on the date for the dinner, and invites his or her guests by speaking to or text messaging them.

**Svenska med baby**, Swedish with Baby, arranges meeting places for children and parents from different residential areas and whose origins can be anywhere in the world. Initially the group consisted of a few people on parental leave; now this activity is being run in 16 municipalities. Since the start, Svenska med baby has had visits from over 37,000 participants living in 323 different residential areas and coming originally from 110 different countries.



---

# INTEGRATION IN RURAL AREAS

## New arrivals are a resource for rural areas

Text: Ann Jönsson, Nino Simic

**In 40 per cent of just over 1,200 municipalities in the Nordic Region the population is in decline. Without immigration this trend would have become even more apparent. In a quarter of the municipalities the rise in population is solely due to immigration. A large number of these are rural municipalities which over many years have witnessed the trend of people moving away and leaving behind an ageing population.**

It is interesting to see the immigration pattern of recent years from a rural perspective. The population of foreign-born has a young age structure. If the rural areas in the Nordic Region find ways of attracting new arrivals to stay and establish themselves there, that will potentially take us a bit closer to resolving some of the challenges facing the Nordic countries.

In many regions and municipalities in the Nordic Region the desire to attract immigrants is linked to efforts to address the problem of a dwindling and ageing population and a shortage of labour. There is also the desire to encourage innovation and the internationalisation of the Nordic business sector. Many regions and municipalities have formulated their own strategies for implementing national guidelines in the area of integration.

Nordregio has compared the results of the integration of immigrant workers and refugees in the local communities and labour market in five rural regions in the Nordic countries plus a municipality in the Faroe Islands. The municipalities studied were Herøy in Norway, Frederikshavn in Nordjylland in Denmark, Punkalaidun in Pirkanmaa in southwest Finland, Ísafjarðarbær in Vestfirðir in Iceland, Krokomb in Jämtland in Sweden, and Klaksvik Municipality in the Faroe

---

## Factors for success

**Immigration and successful integration ought to be treated as issues about regional development and growth and not as social challenges.**

**Social inclusion is fundamental if immigrants are to be motivated to remain in rural areas.**

**More successful matching is needed between migrant skills and the needs of the local labour market.**

**Having integration coordinators at local level has proven to be a factor for success.**

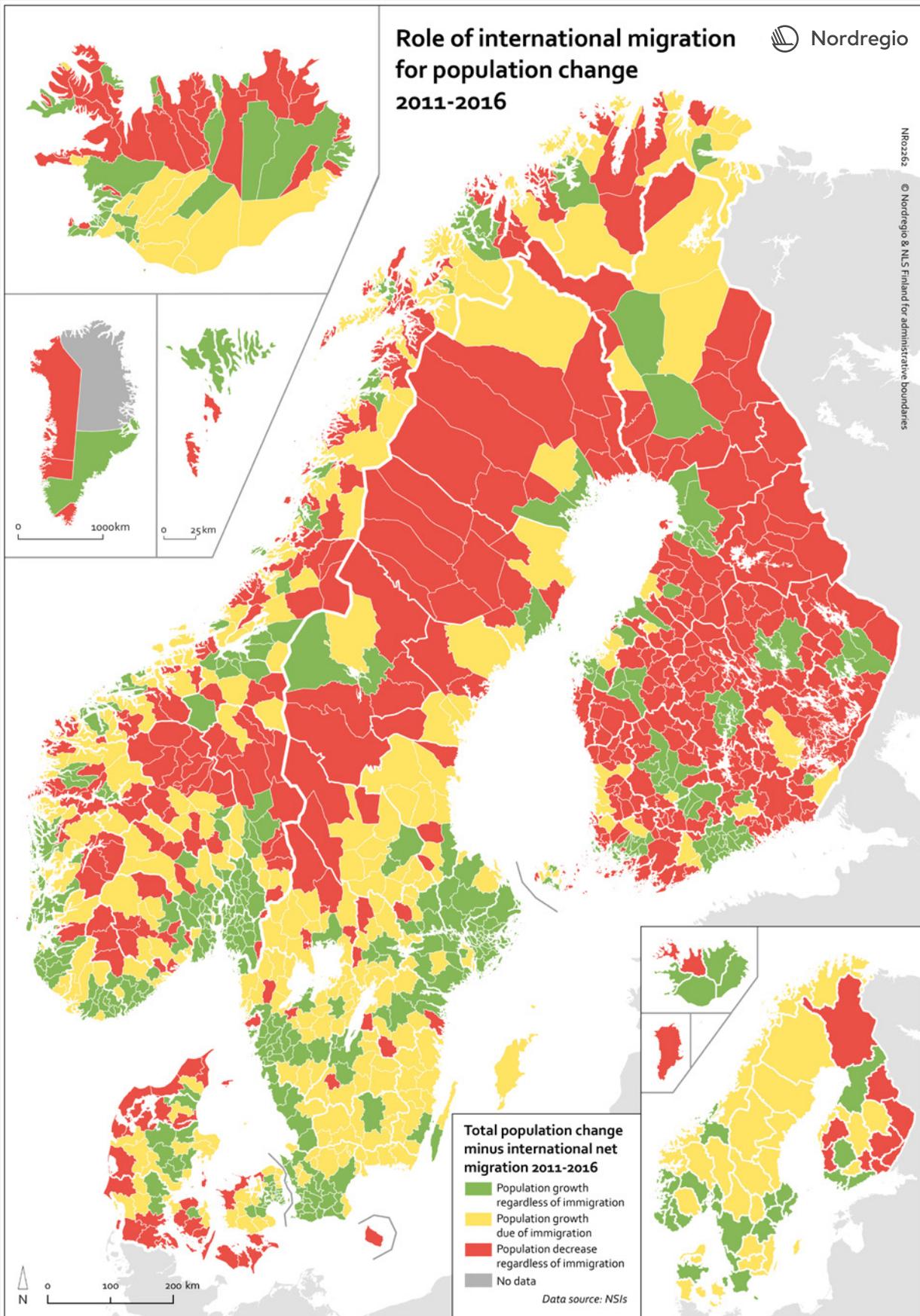
**Civil society organisations have significance for integration in society.**

**Successful integration requires active and consistent political leadership and co-operation with local businesses. The regions can do a lot to facilitate its implementation.**

Islands. The aim has been both to identify the good examples of and obstacles to successful integration and to understand the role of both the immigrant worker and the refugee in the local labour markets.

Denmark lacks a national policy that regards immigrants as a means of addressing the problem of a dwindling population in rural areas. However, some individual municipalities do take this perspective. Fredrikshavn has spotted the opportunities that arise where immigrant workers are encouraged to stay. The municipality also helps the spouse to find work and provides support regarding other practical issues too. This reinforces the link between the immigrants and the municipality.

In Norway, the fisheries sector means that the northern regions and coastal areas are very much dependent on labour from outside. The county of Nordland is supporting the influx of foreign labour in the form of a number of measures including the in-migration project started in 2013. The aim is to recruit 10,000 foreign employees by 2018. At the end of 2016, 8,000 people had moved into the county of Nordland.



State of the Nordic Region 2018, Nordic Council of Ministers.

---

In Sweden the integration issue is of extreme relevance to rural areas. In Jämtland, whose population has been in decline since the 1950s, deliberate measures are being taken to attract a larger number of immigrants to the region. These efforts are largely based on encouraging migrants to remain there after they have obtained their right of residence. A broad spectrum of measures is therefore being developed to increase the municipality's appeal and capacity in receiving immigrants.

In Finland there is agreement on the fact that foreign labour is needed, both today and even more so in the future. While migration in the major Finnish towns and cities is primarily linked to efforts to attract skilled labour, promote innovation and thus strengthen the region's competitiveness, the focus in the rural municipalities is on tackling the problem of an ageing population and young people moving away.

In Iceland the national strategy is focused on boosting the country's competitiveness to attract specialists from overseas. Individual municipalities such as Ísafjörður are tackling the problem of a dwindling population through an offensive to attract immigrants. The challenge facing the municipality is to improve the contacts between the native population and the immigrants and to encourage the latter to learn Icelandic.

In the Faroe Islands migration and integration are new issues. A coordinator has been appointed, with one task being to compile important information for new arrivals. Urgent goals for integration are developing courses in Faroese for immigrants and making better known which skills the immigrants have and what they can contribute to society. The coordinator has become a key figure on integration issues. Voluntary organisations also play an important role by arranging different activities for promoting integration.



## Best practice: The Multicultural Centre, Iceland



PHOTO: AGÚST GATLASON

Sultan Alsadon and her two children, Anwar and Qamar, have found safety under the blue mountains.

---

# Finding safety under the blue mountains

Text: Annka Ólafsdóttir

**The month of fasting in the Muslim year, Ramadan, is coming to an end, and Anwar Alsadon is busy preparing a party in Ísafjörður. She has invited her new friends here in West Iceland, far from her home in Iraq. She is cheerful about the future and says it's invaluable being able to live a normal life with her two children, Qamar who turns 17 this year and Sultan who is 22, in a place where the family can lead an independent life.**

They have been refugees since 2014. That was when Anwar Alsadon's brother was murdered in front of Sultan's eyes for the simple reason that he had a Sunni name. They were not able to stay in their home city of Basra, and their extended family – eleven in all – fled to Jordan where they were granted UN refugee status. Hard times awaited them. They lived in cramped quarters and were not allowed to work. The days consisted of endless waiting for a better life. In November 2017 Anwar Alsadon was offered asylum in Iceland. She knew nothing about the country, but with the help of some searching online it was easy to see that there were many good aspects to the country – peace, security and opportunity. In February 2018 they moved to Ísafjörður – and the safety of the blue mountains.

Anwar Alsadon has started working part-time at a preschool, Sultan works at a restaurant, and Qamar has finished year ten and is starting upper secondary school in the autumn. Anwar Alsadon says she can hardly believe how good life is.

"Everything here is far better than we'd dared hope! We'd been warned about prejudices against Muslims, but we haven't noticed anything like that. There is far more of an Islamic spirit here in Iceland than in the Arab countries, and by that I mean love, tolerance and goodness that is put into practice."

## **Mobilisation on a broad front**

The little community in the West Fjords swung into action when it became clear that 23 refugees were on their way to settle in the vicinity. The three mu-

nicipalities, Ísafjörður, Bolungarvík and Súðavík, organised the reception in co-operation with the Ministry of Welfare (Velferðarráðuneytið). One of the requirements made by the Ministry of the municipalities receiving groups of refugees in this way is that they appoint a project manager for one year. The Ministry reached a formal agreement with the three municipalities who appointed Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir as project manager. Flats were organised for the new inhabitants in Ísafjörður, Flateyri and Súðavík. The Red Cross provided volunteers to help the new arrivals adapt to their life in new surroundings and ensure they had everything they needed in the home.

## **The importance of finding the right job**

An important part of the integration process is to help the refugees get into the labour market. This stage in the process is done in co-operation with the Directorate of Labour, which operates under the Ministry of Welfare and both assists people seeking employment and administers the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir says that most refugees are ready to work. Finding one's place in the labour market is not easy – it can be tricky finding a job that matches the immigrant's interests and qualifications. It's important not to rush this process – sometimes part-time work is preferable so that the refugee can gain the maximum benefit from their course in Icelandic.



PHOTO: ÁGÚST G ATLASON

Anwar Alsdon arranges a party at the Multicultural Centre in Ísafjörður.

Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir.



PHOTO: ÁGÚST G ATLASON

---

Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir has been working flat out since taking on the job. It's not nine-to-five, and drawing a line between work and leisure is hard. The most important task, she says, is establishing good relations with the new arrivals:  
"This is a job you need to put your heart into."

### **Striving for homogeneity**

No exact job description exists, and one often has to go on intuition – the job content can probably never be set in stone. However, the Multicultural Centre in Ísafjörður is trying to formulate job descriptions for future project leaders. Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir believes this is very important; the procedures ought to be uniform regardless of where in Iceland the refugees end up.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Equality defines some aspects of the integration process during the first few years: Any health problems must be addressed; information on one's rights and obligations must be provided; and everyone is to receive intensive tuition in Icelandic and social studies. In addition, the refugees meet a counsellor every week.

Anwar Alsadon says these measures are extremely important for them and is happy with how successful these aspects have been and how much importance is attached to studying Icelandic.

### **Hopes her job is made superfluous**

Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir ensures she is in touch with all those involved in the integration of the refugees:

"It's a question of contact between the different parties, and I am the contact point between them. I see to it that everyone is well-informed and given the necessary basic skills."

She is also the one who ensures the refugees receive the help they are entitled to.

An implementation group headed by Linda Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir is in charge of developing this role, but the ultimate aim is clear:

"This project is actually intended to make my role superfluous. It's intended to support the refugees so that in the end they're able to stand entirely on their own two feet."

## **The Multicultural Centre in Ísafjörður**

**The idea of creating an international cultural and information centre came from a group of people in the West Fjords who have different cultural backgrounds. Representatives from the West Fjords presented their idea to the Icelandic Parliament, which decided in 2000 to set up the information centre. The aim is to facilitate communication between the Icelandic population and the immigrants, co-operate with the municipalities to improve immigration services, prevent communication problems between different cultures, and facilitate the integration of immigrants into Icelandic society.**

**The Information Centre opened in 2001.**



## Best practice: Bättre bemötande, Sverige



As project manager for the Norrbotten County Administrative Board, Anna-Maria Lundkvist-Monroy has been involved in developing the online course Bättre bemötande.

---

# Web education leads to better integration

Text: Nino Simic

**Only by knowing yourself can you understand others – and only by understanding others can you be both direct and clear and at the same compassionate in your approach. Those seeking asylum in Sweden need consistent and clear information that is easy to understand. The online course *Bättre bemötande, Better treatment*, is a support for those who come into contact with asylum seekers through their work, at a club or association or in their private life to provide information in the right way.**

Norrbottnen needs people who can promote this trend, who can access the labour market and who choose not to move away but to stay in Norrbotten. The Integration & Tillväxt project in Norrbotten has been seeking to streamline the asylum reception process since 2016. The *Bättre bemötande* online course is a stage in this work.

There are three versions of the course: one which focuses on the asylum process, one which focuses on cultural awareness, and one overall version that combines both elements. A theme throughout the course is advice on the reception process.

"If we are to provide information in a clear and satisfactory way, we ourselves need to know more about the asylum process as a whole, not just our own part in it," says Anna-Maria Lundkvist-Monroy, project manager of the Norrbotten County Administrative Board. "The course describes in a simple way the skills that are needed. That's how we acquire the tools so that we in turn can give the asylum seekers a clear and accurate explanation about what the asylum process involves and what is required to become established in Sweden."

## **Difficult questions are made more simple**

Cultural awareness is a part of the online course in its own right. Different elements include awareness of cultural differences, managing conflict and providing sound advice on how to provide information about Swedish society.

"How do you indeed explain what democracy is and that Sweden is a land based on equality and explain

about everything that's needed to find one's own place in the labour market? You may pick up tips too as part of the course – the best operational case officers share what they know," says Anna-Maria Lundkvist-Monroy.

## **The course is for everyone**

The course has been designed primarily to encourage new arrivals to settle in Norrbotten, but it is available for everyone. The elements are short and concise – the total duration of the course is just over four hours. Each element can be studied in its own right. The course can be taken a group basis too – colleagues from the same workplace, for instance. The group are then given their own group account with a code which will facilitate the course administration.

## **The Integration & Growth (Integration & Tillväxt) project in Norrbotten**

**The project is a collaboration between the Norrbotten County Administrative Board, the Public Employment Service, the Swedish Migration Agency, Region Norrbotten, the Norrbotten municipalities, Luleå University of Technology and an umbrella organisation representing civil society. The project is supported by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.**



## Best practice: The Nyår project, Sweden

# The Nyår project aims at faster integration in Åre

Text: Nino Simic

**Åre comes top of all the municipalities in Sweden in addressing integration. A model for co-operation between the public, private and non-profit sectors has proven to be a recipe for success. The Nyår project is intended to make the municipality even more successful in getting the new arrivals on their feet and ensuring they settle in there.**

Viewing the new arrivals as a resource has reaped success in terms of both growth and diversity in this rural community. In the past few years, 85 per cent of the new arrivals in Åre Municipality have succeeded in becoming self-supporting.

However, these results could be even better. The labour market in Åre Municipality is seeking labour in both the public and private sectors. This means pre-school, care for the elderly, local care services and catering. Åre is also situated in the County of Jämtland, a region whose population has fallen by just over 7,000 in the past 25 years. Forecasts indicate that 22,000 people will leave the labour market between now and 2025 with only 15,000 young people who can fill the gap.

The best way to ensure a rise in population is to increase immigration, but there are a couple of bottlenecks preventing further improvements in the integration process. One is the long commutes to Östersund for students and those learning vocational Swedish, the other is the long processing times for formal validation of the level of education and experience the new arrivals bring with them.

The Nyår project (Nyår stands for "New arrivals – a resource for growth in Åre Municipality") is intended to address these bottlenecks. Thanks to this project, the municipality is given its own resources to make a far simpler and faster assessment of level of education so as to offer suitable training and vocational Swedish on the spot in the municipality itself. The aim is for 100

---

per cent of the new arrivals receiving support and assistance via the project to become self-supporting on a permanent basis and to establish themselves in Åre Municipality.

Of the total project funding which is around SEK 10 million for 2017–2019, 25 per cent is being financed by Åre Municipality and 75 per cent by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The idea is that the working model to be presented will serve as a learning example for other municipalities.

”

**Integrating new arrivals into the labour market is a matter of urgency for the whole of society.**

---

## Final remarks

This booklet presents learning examples of integration measures that are intended to shorten the route into the labour market for different groups of immigrants. The report also describes what is needed, according to research findings, to improve results in the area of integration.

The most recent influx of refugees has intensified efforts to create effective methods of integration. A great effort is being made in many quarters to trial new methods in project form. Since the large influx of refugees in the Nordic Region has taken place so recently, there has not been enough time yet to assess all the methods implemented.

However, the learning examples we have selected here have, for now at least, shown positive results in terms of getting new arrivals into work more quickly.

Although there are differences between the welfare systems and organisation of the labour market in the Nordic countries, successful integration in all these countries is dependent on how fast the new arrivals get into work or education. Integrating new arrivals into the labour market is a matter of urgency for the whole of society at national, regional and local level as well as across sectors - the public and private sectors and civil society. The similarities between the Nordic countries are so great that learning examples from neighbouring countries may provide an important source of inspiration for all those seeking to shorten the new arrivals' route into employment.

---

# References

- Aldén, L. & Hammarstedt, M. 2015. "Utrikesfödda på 2000-talets arbetsmarknad – en översikt och förklaringar till situationen". *Ekonomisk Debatt* 2015, Vol. 43, no. 3.
- Bevelander, P. 2005. "The Employment Status of Immigrant Women: The Case of Sweden", *International Migration Review*, vol, 39, no. 1, pp. 173-202.
- Bevelander, P. 2007. "Employment Integration of Refugees: The Influence of Local Factors on Refugee Job Opportunities in Sweden", IZA Discussion Paper No. 2551.
- Cheung, M. 2018. Hur skapar vi en mer jämställd arbetsmarknadsetablering? En studie av Arbetsförmedlingens förmedlingsverksamhet och insatser ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv. Working Paper 2018:2. The Swedish Public Employment Service.
- Dahlin, J. 2017. "Snabbspår & stickspår". En jämställdhetsgranskning av etableringsinsatser i budgetpropositionen för 2017. Sveriges Kvinnolobby.
- "Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees. A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society". 2018. OECD/UNHCR.
- Greve Harbo, L., Heleniak, T., Ström Hildestrand, Åsa. "From Migrants to Workers: Regional and local practices on integration of labour migrants and refugees in rural areas in the Nordic countries". Nordregio Working Paper 2017:5.
- Grunfelder, J., Rispling, L., Norlén, G. 2018. "State of the Nordic Region 2018". Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Heleniak, T. 2018. "From Migrants to Workers: International Migration Trends in the Nordic Countries". Nordregio Working Paper 2018:1.
- "Integration af nyankomne kvinder på arbejdsmarkedet". June 2018. Opsamlingsnotat. Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Joyce, P. 2017. "Inspiration för integration – en ESO-rapport om arbetsmarknadspolitik för nyanlända i fem länder". Rapport till Expertgruppen för Studier i Offentlig ekonomi. Ministry of Finance, Sweden.
- Jönsson, A. 2017. "Country Reports – Nordic Region". The Nordic Welfare Centre.
- Karlsdóttir, A., Rispling, L., Norlén, G., Randall, L., Sánchez Gassen, N., Heleniak, T., Peurell, E., Rehn-Mendoza, N., Lagercrantz, H. 2018: "State of the Nordic Region 2018: Immigration and integration edition". Nordic Council of Ministers
- Karlsdóttir, A., Sigurjónsdóttir, H., Ström Hildestrand, Åsa. 2017. "Fler flyktingar fortare i arbete". Policy brief 2017:5. Nordregio.
- Karlsdóttir, A., Sigurjónsdóttir, H., Ström Hildestrand, Åsa., Cuadrado A. 2017. "Policies and measures for speeding up labour market integration of refugees in the Nordic region".
- "Nyanlända får jobb snabbare". 1 February 2018. Arbetsvärlden, online article.
- "Nyanlända kvinnors etablering. En komparativ studie av nyanlända kvinnors etablering på arbetsmarknaden i Norden och de etableringspolitiska insatserna". TemaNord 2018:520. Nordic Council of Ministers.
- "Röster från immigranter i Norden – Om att bli en del av samhället". 2018. Interviews conducted by Splitvision Research AB on behalf of the Nordic Welfare Centre.
- "Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften". 2018. The Swedish Agency for Public Management.
- "Sådan får de bedste kommuner flygtningekvinder i job - Kortlægning af 9 kommuners beskæftigelsesindsats målrettet nyankomne kvindelige flygtninge og kvindelige familiesammenførte til flygtninge". 2018. The Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration.
- "Triple Disadvantage? The Integration of Refugee Women. Summary of findings". 2018. Report prepared for the Nordic Conference on the Integration of Immigrant Women into the Labour Market, Stockholm, 13 April 2018.
- "Varför ska vi öppna dörren?" 2015. Summary of the research and literature available on the significance of networks for integration and recruitment from the perspectives of society, the individual and the business sector. Axfoundation.



---

# The Expert Group on integration of new arrivals in the labour market

## Denmark

Lars Larsen  
LG Insight



Sara Glahder Lindberg  
KLocal Government  
Denmark



## Norway

Audun Kvale  
the Norwegian Association of Local  
and Regional Authorities



Benedicte Hollen  
the Directorate of Integration  
and Diversity



## Finland

Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo  
Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment



Varpu Taarna  
Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment



## Sweden

Anna-Maria Lundkvist-Monroy  
the Norrbotten County  
Administrative Board



Karin Eriksson Bech  
the City of Stockholm



## Iceland

Linda Rós Alfreðsdóttir  
Ministry of Welfare



Leif Klingensjö  
the Swedish Association of  
Local Authorities and Regions



Lotta Dahlerus  
the Swedish Association of  
Local Authorities and Regions







Nordic Council of Ministers  
Nordens Hus  
Ved Stranden 18  
DK-1061 Copenhagen K  
[www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org)

## **NEW TO THE NORDIC REGION**

In this report, we describe efforts to achieve faster integration of refugees and foreign-born residents in the labour market in the Nordic region. The examples presented in the report have been selected by our group of Nordic experts. In selecting examples, they have focused on the integration initiatives deemed to have the greatest likelihood of being implemented in their neighbouring countries. This selection is based on the knowledge gained from research and the recommendations made by our Nordic co-operation partners

In this report we have also sought to give a brief description of current research and knowledge regarding effective measures and the possible challenges facing refugees in the labour markets in the Nordic Region.

For more information visit [www.integrationnorden.org](http://www.integrationnorden.org)

ANP 2018:813  
ISBN 978-92-893-5796-8 (PRINT)  
ISBN 978-92-893-5797-5 (PDF)  
ISBN 978-92-893-5798-2 (EPUB)