

# SCHOOL - A BASIS FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION

Newly arrived children and young people in  
the Nordic countries



Nordic Welfare  
Centre

**School - a basis for successful inclusion**  
**Newly arrived children and young people in the Nordic countries**

**Editor:** Judit Hadnagy

**Authors:** Anna Gärdegård, Jenny Tägtström, Joan Rask, Caroline Jonsson, Ann Patmalnieks and Oddrun Midtbø

**Photographers:** Joakim K E Johansson, Oddrun Midtbø, Joan Rask, Kicki Nilsson, Anna Gärdegård, Laura Mendelin and Mostafa Mohammad Ali & Mostphotos

**Editorial staff:** Judit Hadnagy and project leader Anna Gärdegård

**Responsible publisher:** Ewa Persson Göransson

**Graphic design:** Idermark and Lagerwall Reklam AB

**Printing:** TB Screen AB

**ISBN:** 978-91-88213-25-9

**Circulation:** 300

Nordic Welfare Centre, Sweden  
Box 1073  
101 39 Stockholm  
Tel: +46 8 545 536 00  
info@nordicwelfare.org

Nordic Welfare Centre, Finland  
Mannerheimvägen 168 b  
00271 Helsinki  
Tel: +358 20 7410 880  
helsingfors@nordicwelfare.org

The publication can be ordered in print format or downloaded at  
[www.nordicwelfare.org](http://www.nordicwelfare.org)



# Content:

Foreword.....	4
Advice from research and practical experience .....	6
School an arena for inclusion.....	8
How many children and to which countries? .....	12
Flexible schooling for newly arrived migrant children .....	16
Bilingual children must begin studying in ordinary classes more quickly .....	21
Systematic work and a good structure is the foundation for Örebro municipality.....	26
Free school shows the way with summer schools .....	29
Education system and school organisation.....	31
Social workers provide support in the school environment .....	37
Vinje welcomes refugees .....	41



# Foreword

Between 2011 and 2016, nearly 200 000 children and young people arrived in the Nordic countries as asylum seekers, either unaccompanied or with their families. The most important platform for inclusion and integration of newly arrived children and young people is school.

We know from research that completing primary education is the single most important protective factor for a number of social problems, regardless of a family's socioeconomic background. There are many young people in the Nordic countries today who have not completed secondary education or vocational training; their employment prospects are significantly impaired, and they are at greater risk of social exclusion.

Newly arrived children and young people must have the same opportunities as their peers to become established in the employment mar-

ket in the future, to earn a steady income and play an active part in society. There is every reason, therefore, to mobilise and to study what has been learned from research and practical experience to see how we can create suitable conditions for learning and inclusion in school.

In this publication we have interviewed researchers and practitioners with extensive experience and knowledge of this field. We hope that their experiences will provide inspiration and ideas to advance the important work that is being done now and in the future.



**Ewa Persson Göransson**  
**Director**  
**Nordic Welfare Centre**





# Advice from research and practical experience

Here we highlight some of the important messages from research, and experiences of the people interviewed.

## **Identify a pupil's skills and strengths and meet them with high expectations**

Positive expectations in respect of a child's study outcomes, combined with a supportive environment, are important key factors for all children. For newly arrived children it is especially important to find out their previous knowledge and experience so that educational

and social support is based on the child's needs and at the right level.

## **Facilitate for children and young persons to be able to retain their home culture whilst they are adjusting to and learning about the new culture.**

Highlight the pupils' different backgrounds in different teaching contexts so that this



strengthens the children and their mutual peer relationships in class..

**Create opportunities for the parents to be included in children's education.**

Provide information about the school and give feedback on how children are getting on in a way that the parents can take in. Teachers may also need to know the process that the parents are going through and how it can affect them in different ways.

**Educate teachers about mental disorders so that pupils who need help can get the right help.**

Children with a refugee background can have appalling and traumatic experiences behind them. Knowledge and educational tools are needed to work with children who have been

traumatized, for example working with predictability and secure, clear frameworks. Much of the healing and recovery happens thanks to the support of persons in daily life, in school and housing and not in direct treatment or therapy. If prolonged stress is not removed or traumatic experiences are not dealt with, it can lead to serious mental illness and behavioural problems.

**Cooperate with different actors and accept help from the wider community.**

This can be done by the school, social services and entities such as civil society developing a working relationship. To facilitate such cooperation make agreements, structures, routines and access to facilities.



"Both school and preschool are extremely important arenas for integration and inclusion in relation to the children's future and opportunities. For newly arrived migrants with a refugee background it is essential that they get to embark as quickly as possible on a daily routine with school and friends and everything that forms part of a normal life."

Those are the words of Hildegunn Fandrem, Professor of Education at Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioural Research in Education at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Fandrem is engaged in research into psychosocial adjustment of young immigrants, how they adapt to a new culture and how this affects them psychologically, emotionally and socially. Her latest research focuses on inclusion processes in multicultural classrooms.

### **A bridge between different cultures**

For newly arrived migrant pupils, school can act as a bridge between family life and their new life in Norway. In school and preschool, values and attitudes that are considered important in Norwegian society are communicated to them. Fandrem believes that it is important for children to feel that they belong in Norwegian schools; this is the key to finding themselves and their place in the new society.

In school it is possible to discuss values and ideas that vary between different cultures and together examine how to handle different situations, she says.

As a teacher it is possible to highlight the pupils' different backgrounds in different contexts in a way that strengthens children and their relationship with their classmates. Weaving it into the teaching is a good way of doing it; when talking about the Vikings and the hardships they endured during their voyages to Turkey can be highlighted if there is a Turkish pupil in the class, while pointing out at the same time that this is now, or at least have been, a popular holiday destination for many people from the Nordics. In religious instruction, the pupils themselves can participate in the tuition and talk about "their" religion.

### **Children that belongs to two cultures do best**

John Berry, the Canadian professor of psychology, has identified four main strategies that individuals use when encountering and adapting to a new culture. A strategy can be seen here as something that a person chooses consciously or unconsciously, but it can also be about the environment and ideas in society. For example, the attitudes and behaviour of school staff can influence how pupils are treated and their opportunities. In such cases the strategy is imposed from outside.

The four strategies are *integration, assimilation, segregation and marginalisation*. Researchers at the Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioural Research in Education in Stavanger have used these four concepts and applied indicators for inclusion when analysing how newly arrived children and young persons adapt to their new life in Norway.



**It is in school that the foundations for participation and inclusiveness in the new society are laid, says Professor Hildegunn Fandrem.**

If a person values and retains their original culture, side by side with adapting to the new culture, this is defined as having chosen an *integrating* strategy.

"Studies show that the children and young people who adopt this strategy are doing better both mentally and socially," says Hildegunn Fandrem.

*Assimilation* as a strategy focuses on newly arrived immigrants adapting to the new culture as rapidly as possible, but little value is attached to the original culture. Some think that Norway has an assimilation policy to a greater extent than an integration policy, says Fandrem. It can be a matter of how society develops actions for newly arrived immigrants, but it can also be about the use of language and concepts by both politicians and the media.

"For school employees, it can be important to be aware of how the debate is currently being conducted, so that teachers and school leaders can make a conscious decision that is in the best interests of the pupils, and not routinely adopted for the solutions currently recommended," she says.

*Segregation* as a strategy is about continuing to live in the original culture and not participating in the new one. In most cases this is not relevant for children and young people attending preschool and school, but for their mothers, who may stay at home, this can be a reality. If the parents lack knowledge and understanding of the society they have moved to, it can also affect the children and contact with school, for example because of language difficulties.

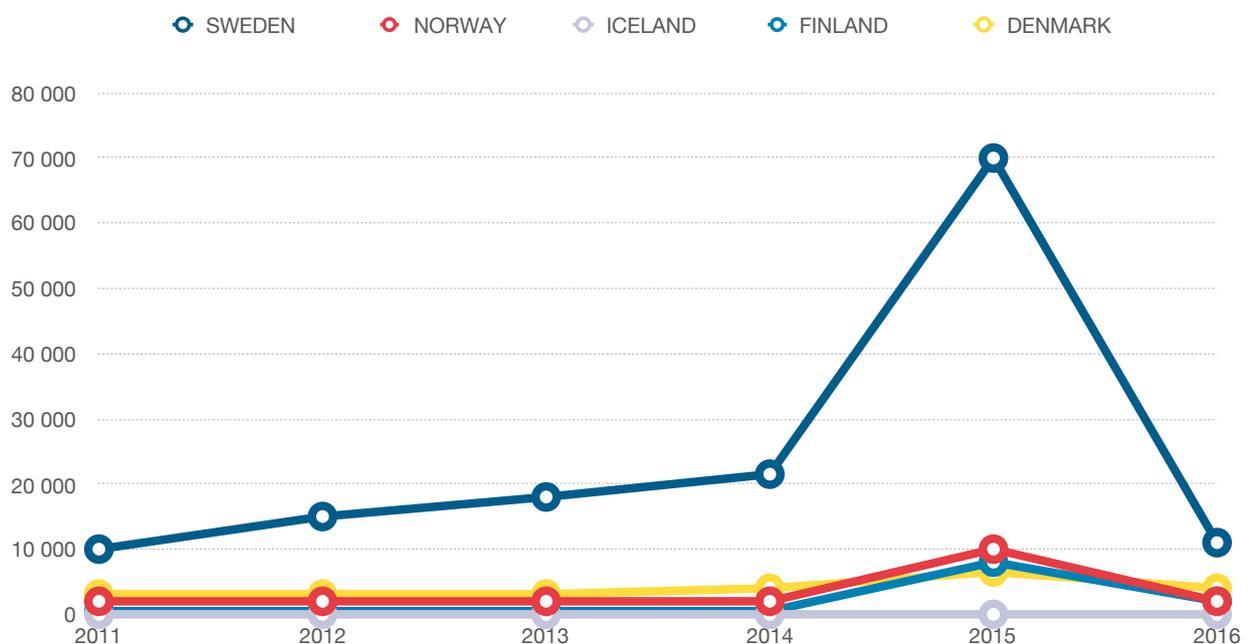


# How many children and to which countries?

COMPILED BY: Gustaf Norlén, Nordregio

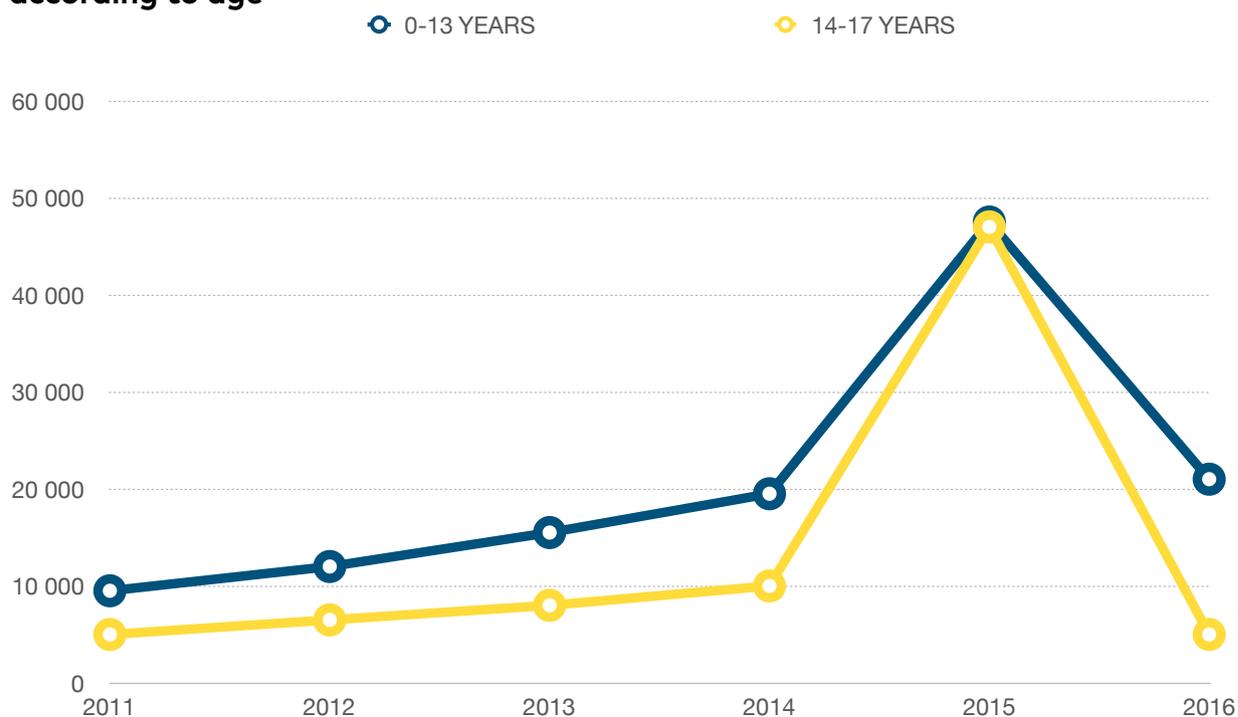
Between 2011 and 2016 nearly 200 000 child asylum seekers came to the Nordic countries. Most children came to Sweden, while Iceland was the country that received fewest asylum seekers. Most of the children are under the age of 13 when arriving, and far more are boys than girls.

Figure 1) Number of children seeking asylum 2011-2016



Between 2011 and 2016 a total of 196 665 child asylum seekers came to the Nordic countries. Most of these (148 725) applied for asylum in Sweden, followed by Norway (21 625), Finland (16 570), Denmark (12 510) and Iceland (460). Source: Eurostat

**Figure 2) Children seeking asylum in Nordic countries in 2011-2016 according to age**



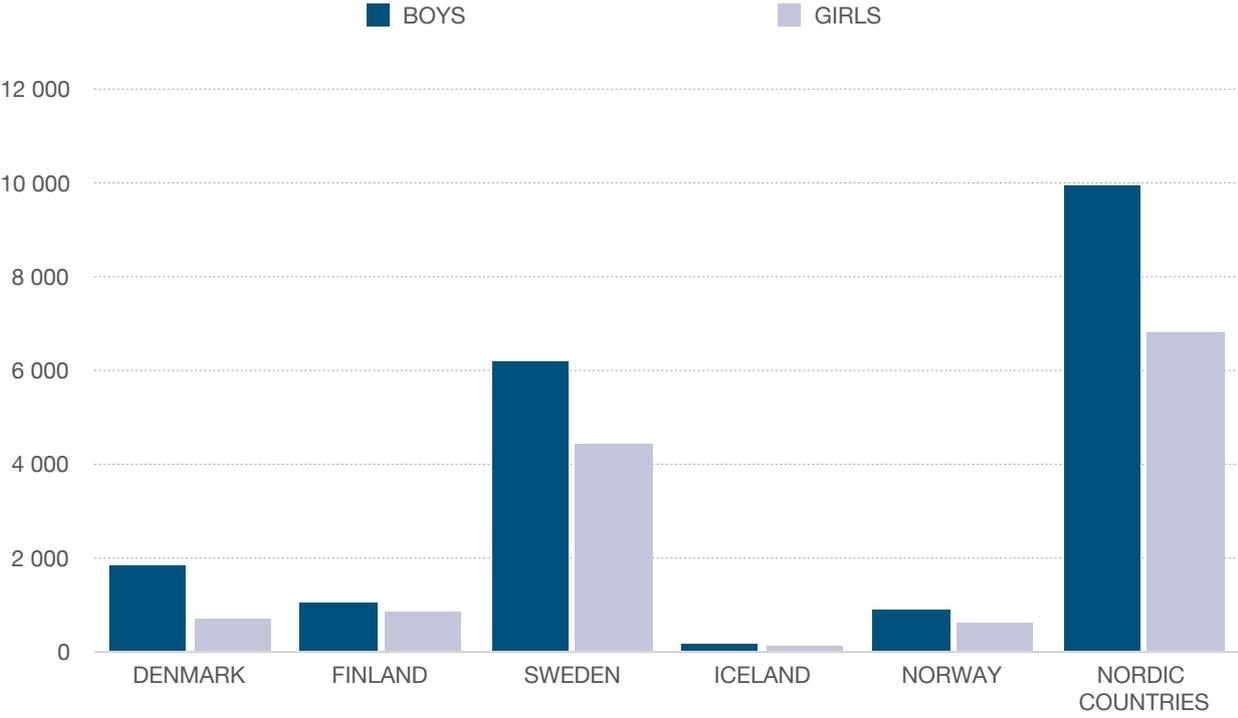
The majority of children seeking asylum in 2011-2016 are in the age group 0-13, apart from in 2015, which is an exception with regard to the age structure. Source: Eurostat

**Figure 3) Total number of children seeking asylum 2011-2016 by country**

Country	0-13 years	14-17 years	Total
Denmark	10040	6530	16570
Finland	7955	4555	12510
Sweden	85845	59655	145500
Iceland	365	95	460
Norway	11830	9795	21625
<b>Nordic countries</b>	<b>116035</b>	<b>80630</b>	<b>196665</b>

Source: Eurostat

**Figure 4) Children seeking asylum in 2016 by gender**



More boys than girls seek asylum in all Nordic countries. Source: Eurostat

**Figure 5) 2016. Total number of unaccompanied children and total number of children seeking asylum in the Nordic countries and EU.**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Unaccompanied children</b>	<b>Total number of children seeking asylum</b>	<b>Proportion of unaccompanied children in the overall total of children seeking asylum</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	1 219	2 410	50,6
<b>Finland</b>	401	1 700	23,6
<b>Iceland</b>	18	275	6,5
<b>Norway</b>	320	1 174	27,3
<b>Sweden</b>	2 199	10 909	20,2
<b>Nordic countries</b>	4 157	16 468	25,2
<b>EU</b>	63 125	398 375	15,8
<b>The world</b>	75 000	i.u.	i.u.

Data source: DK: Immigration Service and Eurostat; FI: Migration Service; IS: Útlendingastofnun and Eurostat; NO: Migration Directorate; SE: Migration Board; EU: Eurostat; World: UNHCR

\* In Denmark the total of children seeking asylum also includes those aged 18

# Flexible schooling for newly arrived migrant children



Nihad Bunar, professor at University of Stockholm.

**TEXT:** Anna Gärdegård **PHOTO:** Joakim K E Johansson

**No, one size doesn't fit all. If newly arrived migrant pupils are to be given a good reception in school, it is important to find an organizational model that is adapted to suit the pupil and not the other way round.**

– “The important thing is what you do with the pupils when they are in school. They need tuition and support based on their individual requirements and abilities. To achieve this, there needs to be a broad flexibility within the organization,” says Professor Nihad Bunar of the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Stockholm University.

Nihad Bunar carries out research into school conditions in the multicultural society and the relationship between migration and education. Apart from a flexible organizational model, he highlights other factors that are important if newly arrived young migrants are to be able to leave school with skills and grades to be able to enter a national upper secondary school programme.

– “ It comes down to the content or quality of the tuition and the school continuously tracking the pupil's progress in order to be able to adapt the pedagogical and social support system. Positive expectations among those close to the children in respect of their school outcomes and collaboration with the parents are other important key factors,” says Nihad Bunar.

The most common organizational models applied in Sweden to the schooling of newly

arrived children are introductory classes and direct integration. In introductory classes, newly arrived pupils are separated from the other pupils, and in direct integration the newly arrived pupils go directly into mainstream classes.

**One size doesn't fit all**

Nihad Bunar's research shows that there are advantages and disadvantages to both forms. A common criticism levelled at introductory classes cites isolation and segregation and the fact that integration into society is delayed. The criticism of direct integration is that it is not always backed up by the pupils need of support. Research has shown that different types of pedagogical and social support are often closely linked to whether the pupil is in an introductory class or not. When the pupil subsequently goes into an ordinary class, initiatives such as multilingual classroom assistance, for example, may cease or be reduced to a minimum.

Nihad Bunar says that in Sweden we have focused on finding an organizational model that everyone should use and that should be called best practice. He points out that this doesn't work, however, because the reality is more complex. Newly arrived migrants have a variety of backgrounds and needs, and munic-

palities and schools also have different opportunities and prerequisites. One size doesn't fit all.

– “What is required is flexibility in the local organization so that the pupil can have access to educational support and tuition based on his or her own needs and abilities. Introductory classes, direct integration and other variants are determined on the basis of this important principle. It is time to leave behind the concept of models,” says Nihad Bunar, adding:

– “If the local school is to achieve a level of flexibility that enables it to meet every individual pupil's needs, principals and head teachers must have a knowledge and understanding of the various organizational and pedagogical models and their advantages and disadvantages.”

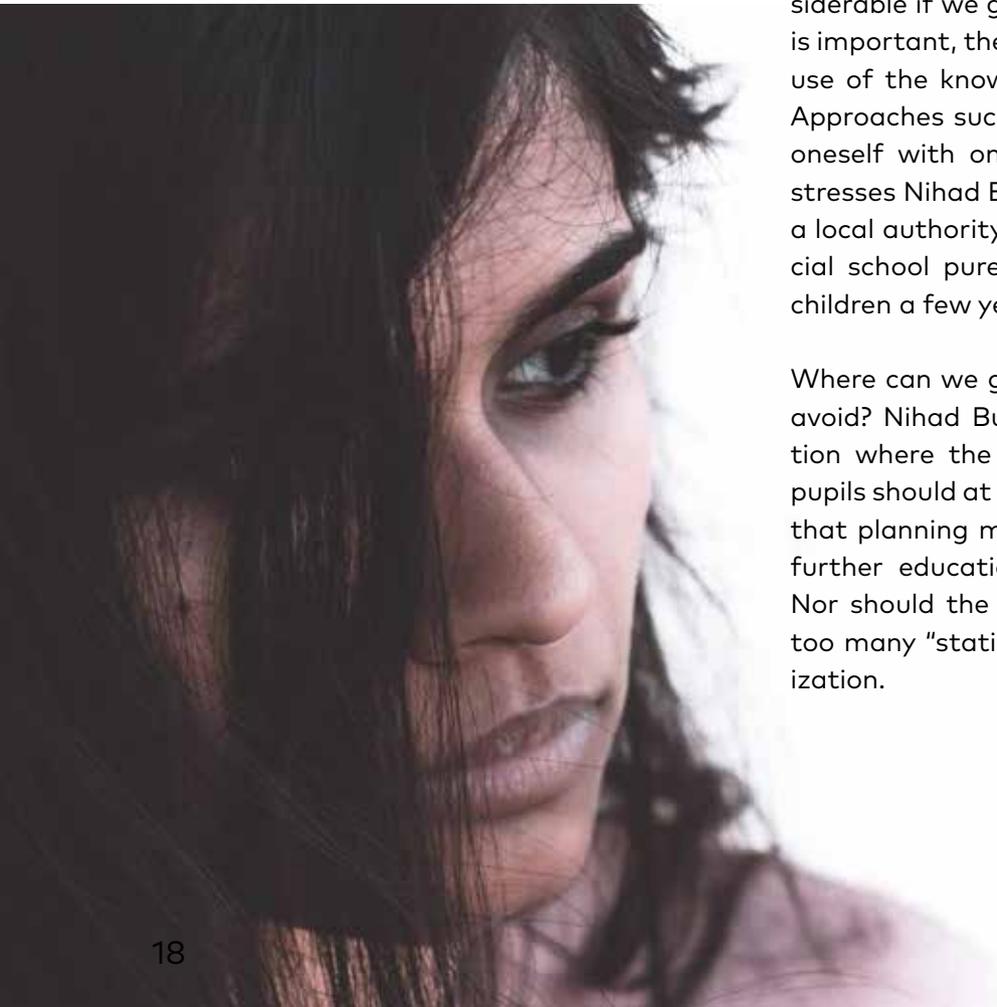
### How do we know that we are doing it right?

The key question that Bunar believes every principal or school leader should ask is: Does our way of organizing and delivering tuition to our newly arrived pupils lead to meeting their educational rights? Are they being prepared to be able to take active responsibility for society as a citizen both now and in the future?

–Or to put it more simply: How do we know that we are doing it right? How do we know that what we are doing will lead to the desired outcome? How do we know that what we are doing at least isn't wrong? If we don't know exactly what is the right thing to do, then at least we ought to try not to get it wrong.

The consequences for the pupils will be considerable if we get it wrong, Bunar believes. It is important, therefore, that the schools make use of the knowledge gained from research. Approaches such as “brainstorming the issue oneself with one's colleagues” are no good, stresses Nihad Bunar. He cites the example of a local authority in Sweden which built a special school purely for newly arrived migrant children a few years ago. It was later closed.

Where can we go wrong? Or what should we avoid? Nihad Bunar considers that any solution where the school physically segregates pupils should at most be a temporary one, and that planning must take place for the pupil's further education in mainstream schooling. Nor should the pupil have to move between too many “stations” within the school organization.



– “The stations between which the pupil moves pose a risk in themselves. They are the susceptible points for a pupil’s integration into the school. The more stations that are incorporated, the more problematic it becomes for the pupil. At the same time, there are local evaluations that show that it works,” says Nihad Bunar.

### **Challenges and high expectations are good for children**

One difficulty for newly arrived pupils in Swedish schools, especially unaccompanied children, has been that they are set too few challenges, combined with low expectations from people around them. This has been the case on the part of both teachers and society. Nihad Bunar thinks that the entire burden has instead been shifted to the pupils’ background:

– Many say “yes, but this is a pupil, after all, who hasn’t been to school, who can’t speak Swedish or who has experienced huge difficulties and stresses during his journey.”

The expectations placed on a pupil coming from such a background have been that “the pupil won’t cope in a Swedish school, no matter what we do.”

Bunar believes it is time we stopped coming up with these explanations and instead turn our attention to the school. We should ask ourselves how these pupils are treated by the school in this situation. How are they treated by the parents, if the parents are around in this case? It is clear that many pupils need

both care and support, but at the same time they must be met by high expectations and a supportive environment. This will encourage their development. These two factors are connected – an environment characterised by high expectations but also a high level of support, says Bunar, referring to research by his colleague Monica Axelsson.

– “One cannot have high expectations and challenges without a high level of support. This is at the heart of what we mean by high expectations and challenges for the pupils,” says Nihad Bunar.

### **Newly arrived children are everyone’s responsibility**

In many reports it is underlined that newly arrived pupils must be the responsibility of the entire school. All the teachers should take responsibility and feel that “all newly arrived pupils are our pupils, and all pupils should feel that these are our comrades.” The responsibility shouldn’t just fall on a few individual teachers.

There are around 4 500 schools in Sweden and for many local authorities, newly arrived migrants are a new target group. In contrast to other countries, it has been unusual for schools to enlist the help of the surrounding community. Nihad Bunar perceives that there could be opportunities for cooperation between schools and civil society, which could take the form of study support or assistance with homework.

– “As well as ensuring that people have housing, it is equally important that a social network exists and some kind of future prospects for the individual. The entire local community must be scanned. I am entirely convinced that plenty of resources are available in the local community as a whole,” says Nihad Bunar.

### **Föräldrar vill bli inkluderade**

Interviews carried out by the researchers with newly arrived parents show that they don't seek to be involved in the school's educational policy to the same extent as Swedish parents. They want information, feedback and to be met with respect, as that makes them feel included. The parents interviewed had high educational ambitions for their children, but their ability to support the children was limited. It is therefore important, believes Nihad Bunar, to find a means of supporting the parents, as this is also a way of supporting the child's learning and development. All research shows that the relationship between school and home is important. A prerequisite for the well-being of the children and for them to feel included is that the parents are doing well, have jobs, decent housing and feel accepted in Sweden.

- Parents need to be recognised as a significant resource and part in the children's education, otherwise problems will arise, believes Bunar.

## **TOOLS**

### **• Multilingual classroom assistance.**

In Sweden, multilingual classroom assistance is known as the primary pedagogical model and is also enshrined in law and in the form of special support. Multilingual classroom assistants act as an intellectual, linguistic and pedagogical bridge to the previous knowledge of subjects and language that the pupil brings with him/her.

A short film on multilingual classroom assistance, which has been produced by the National Agency for Education shows how this can be done and what might be worth thinking about, can be found here:

### **• Assessment**

Assessing a pupils knowledge and skills is emphasised in the research from Sweden and also from other countries. It is a case of identifying what the child has learned in previous schools and pinpointing the strengths of pupils. In Sweden it has been obligatory since 15 April 2017 to use the mapping material of the National Agency for Education for assessing the abilities of newly arrived pupils stage 1 and 2.



# Bilingual children must begin studying in ordinary classes more quickly

**TEXT AND PHOTO:** Joan Rask

Several Danish local authorities have demonstrated that many bilingual children learn Danish faster when they spend minimal time in reception classes. Linguistic researchers are urging caution, because it is necessary for language tuition to continue at a high level, as otherwise the children's language stagnates.

Sometimes there are six interpreters in the room. It is the parents who are attending a course on parenting children who attend to a Danish primary school. The school calls this "parent partnerships" – a partnership between the school and parents, and the aims are to give children the best possible opportunities to learn the language and go to a Danish school.

Gitte Frandsen is principal of Grøndalsvængets School, one of the schools in Copenhagen with the most bilingual children. The principal estimates that approximately half of the children in the school have two languages. During this school year she will make a radical change to how the school organize the education for children who don't speak Danish. Previously the children spent a number of years in reception classes. Now that is to change, and children are to be moved into mainstream classes much faster.

"We have always viewed reception classes as part of Grøndalsvængets School, and it means

a lot to us that children in the reception classes feel that they belong," she says.

Perhaps this attitude contributes to the fact that the bilingual children at Grøndalsvængets School manage nearly as well as those who only speak Danish in the examination in the 9th grade.

"We aren't quite there yet with the boys, but almost," she says

At Grøndalsvængets School the bilingual element is essentially a permanent constituent of everything that the school does. The parent courses are an initiative that was launched in the 2016/17 school year, and the results have been so good that the courses are continuing. Gitte Frandsen is pleased that the City of Copenhagen is introducing new rules for the reception classes. She regards the parent classes as an important key.

"It helps when the parents understand what it means to learn a new language and that they





**During this school year Gitte Frandsen will make changes in the organisation of education for the children.**

can give their children valuable help even if they don't speak Danish themselves," says the principal.

### **Reception classes – merely a stepping stone**

The City of Copenhagen has introduced new rules from the 2017/18 school year, meaning that children are now assessed much more thoroughly than before and that they must be moved as quickly as possible into mainstream classes. The change has taken place among other things because many smaller local authorities have been successful in attaching newly arrived children directly to mainstream classes from the first day of school. One of the schools is Møldrup School in Viborg municipality. Here school principal Katrine Ørnebjerg Larsen has worked with minimal use of reception classes for a number of years.

"Children integrate incredibly fast when we take care to give them the tools to do so and set support up around them among children of the same age and with the teachers," she says.

At the school in Jutland, it is not unusual for children in introductory schooling and at intermediate stage to be able to follow mainstream tuition after just one year in Denmark. "We don't just pitch them into a class – we embark on language tuition at full speed, and when it makes sense, the children move out into their own class," she adds.

Initially a new pupil is only present at break times, sports and physical exercise periods. Later mathematics may be added, and as the pupil develops, more lessons are added. The language tuition continues in parallel with schooling. The focus here is on supporting the children's language development, especially of concepts and language connected with social and subject learning.

### **One-sided focus**

Bergthóra Kristjánsdóttir is bilingual herself. She is an Icelander and is engaged in research at Aarhus University. In 2016, together with Susanne Jacobsen Pérez, she wrote the article "Newly arrived children and young people in the Danish educational system: Legislative basis and organisation". She points out that Denmark suffers from a lack of knowledge regarding what is effective, and she calls for data collection such as that carried out in Sweden. One thing we know is that teachers who speak the pupil's mother tongue achieve the best results.

"However, it is hard, and it is naturally impossible for the schools to have teachers who can teach in all the languages that children arrive with – but schools can acknowledge the children's mother tongue and help them to envisage life as a bilingual person," says the linguistic researcher.

In Bergthóra Kristjánsdóttir's view, one of the big problems is that the competence children have when they arrive in other subjects such as mathematics and English etc. remains completely at a standstill, because the schools are so focused on teaching them Danish.

### **A monoculture or multi-ethnic?**

"In Denmark it isn't legitimate to talk about society as multi-ethnic, and we don't even dare to teach bilingual children what it means to have two languages," says Bergthóra Kristjánsdóttir.

She welcomes the fact that the local authorities are linking newly arrived children more closely to mainstream classes and are phasing out time in the reception classes. This is because this move can provide easier access to fellow pupils and a closer connection to the local community, and she points out that studies show that many children learn Danish faster in mainstream classes.

"The main thing is that the schools provide support with extra language tuition throughout the child's schooling. After all, these children have a second language in their head, regardless of what rules exist in Denmark," she says. She states that there are many schools that do a really good job and that many municipalities have chosen a more ambitious approach than that demanded by the law in the region. In the City of Copenhagen, the ambition is to elevate the child.

### **Copenhagen model to the rescue?**

A burning platform; that is what Christina Haahr Bach calls the situation two years ago when the City of Copenhagen began to look at the reception classes. She is head of the Department for Inclusion, Integration and Health and has been working on the new model, New in Copenhagen, as it was named, for a number of years.

"We decided to insist that it was possible to channel children into the mainstream environment more quickly than was done previously. Some children were spending years in reception classes," she says.

## **GOOD ADVICE ON COOPERATION WITH PARENTS**

From Grøndalsvængets School, Copenhagen and Møldrup School and Viborg municipality:

- Arrange courses and open coffee shops – over a longer period
- Create information such as brochures about Danish schooling in all the mother tongues of the children's parents

## **GOOD ADVICE – ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

- When the need arises use integration leaders and resource centre and collaborate closely with local integration guides and municipality's resource centre

The City of Copenhagen is implementing a phased introduction of the new model over three years. The first school year is 2017/18, and from next year, language teachers in the reception classes will be obliged to work with extended pupil plans every third month. Here they must evaluate the pupils' progress in subjects and language and say when they think the child is ready for a mainstream class.

"There have been too many children who haven't received the right support," says Christina Haahr Bach.

At Grøndalsvængets School, school principal Gitte Frandsen is prepared to admit that the administration is right – and language teacher Maria Djurhuus nods in agreement.

"We needed a change," says Maria Djurhuus.

She is one of the teachers who can assess the newly arrived children. Previously the assessment was often carried out by an assistant

administrator, who evaluated which schools had the best capacity.

"Now we consider the needs of the individual child, hear about previous schooling and evaluate whether they should have special support," says the language teacher.

She is very pleased about the change in particular.

"We are not yet close to the Swedish assessments, because we only have a few hours for each child, but it is much better than before," says Maria Djurhuus.

She is a little anxious about the transition to the mainstream provision.

"I believe that it can lead to insecurity for some. I am pleased that we will evaluate children individually and that it is the child's overall welfare that is considered," adds Maria Djurhuus.

# SYSTEMATIC WORK AND A GOOD STRUCTURE IS THE FOUNDATION FOR ÖREBRO MUNICIPALITY

TEXT AND PHOTO: Anna Gärdegård

**Structured support and measures is the key for how Örebro municipality works in both the school system and social services. A central reception unit admits newly arrived children and young people to school. The social services provide structured interventions to strengthen young persons abilities to live an independent life.**

In Örebro the local authority has a joint reception unit, Perrongen, which admits newly arrived children to school. This applies to both primary school children and young persons of secondary school age.

The parents of preschool children get information about the preschool system and help with filling in forms and applying. For children in grades 1-6, it is now obligatory in Sweden to map the strengths, knowledge and abilities of newly arrived pupils, and after this the child is placed in one of the 72 schools in the municipality. Children of senior school age undergo an eight-week introductory programme before being placed in a school. For young people at upper secondary level, mapping is carried out in which their educational background is taken into consideration. Leif Age-

land, who is the unit head at Perrongen, says that the advantage they have seen thanks to central organisation is that children don't need to wait particularly long to be permitted to start school.

## **Children receive an equivalent introduction**

"We admit new children to Perrongen every week. We are well established in Örebro, everyone knows us and can refer children and parents directly to us," says Leif Ageland.

Other advantages highlighted by Leif Ageland are that the children receive an equivalent introduction to the Swedish school. Through the introductory programme senior school children have an opportunity to get accustomed to the school culture in Sweden. It is

not uncommon for children to come from a school environment that is more authoritarian than the Swedish system.

"In the school world we need to learn more about the school cultures that children come from. We are proud of the cultural competence we have acquired over the years here at Perrongen. And we are developing all the time – it isn't unusual for us to greet the pupils in ten different ways during a school day," says Leif Ageland.

### **"Utsluss" assists unaccompanied immigrants**

In Sweden, the responsibility for housing and care for unaccompanied children lies with the social services. The aim of the social services in Örebro is that "the young person is in employment and has arranged accommodation when he/she leaves Utsluss." To achieve this, the local authority offers various initiatives for housing with residential care homes for children and young persons and supported living as a basis. For those who have reached the age of eighteen and have a residence permit, there is a dedicated unit called Utsluss. It is the last link in the housing support.

"Working with the school is important for us and we have organised us to be able to share important information quickly. Everything is focused on supporting young people in coping with school. A representative from each residence and from Utsluss takes part in regular meetings with the school once a month. Staff at Utsluss also have special meetings with schools which our pupils attend," says Anna



**A good structure and collaboration are a key combination in the work, believe Marie Strömblad of Utsluss and Anna Jakobsson, Örebro social services.**

Jakobsson, unit head at the department for unaccompanied minors.

Örebro's work with unaccompanied has yielded results. The Utsluss unit has carried out its own follow-up, based on a final interview with each person at 21 years of age.

Out of a total of 40 persons since 2011, nearly half (19) have taken the upper secondary exam, 14 are studying or have studied at folk high school or Komvux, three are studying with planning via SFI (Svenska för Invandrare – Swedish for Immigrants) and four young persons are otherwise employed (job or parental leave). All the young people had holiday work

experience during their residence period and 39 out of 40 have had proper employment, 21 out of 40 have a driving licence and only four young persons have needed social welfare. 40 out of 40 had arranged accommodation and most have had the opportunity to take over their contract via Örebro Bostäder or private landlords.

“Our success is based among other things on the fact that our interventions are structured and aim to help the young person create an independent life with education, work and housing, even after they have reached 18,” says Anna Jakobsson.

### **Mentor as support**

The structured interventions mean that every young person is assigned a mentor, who provides support for contact with the school, such as performance reviews and regular contact with a school mentor or guide. Jobseeker evenings are also arranged, along with networking to develop contacts. There is a “job wall”, where vacant positions are advertised. With regard to accommodation, a young person can rent a sublet apartment and the accommodation is conditional on active participation in the Utsluss unit. To be able to take over the rental agreement at 21, they must be independent with an occupation or as a student, so that the rent is paid.

Marie Strömblad, who works as a tutor at Utsluss, stresses that what happens in school naturally plays a part in how it turns out, but it is equally important as a young adult to have

someone who can help them navigate their way through society and has expectations of them.

“Since there are no parents close by, it is important that someone else is there to remind, push and keep an eye on each person,” she says.

### **Interacting with the surrounding society**

The efforts of volunteers cannot be underlined enough, believes Anna Jakobsson. During the year, the unit has received assistance from volunteers, who have offered their services as study supporters. These include for example retired and student teachers. There has also been collaboration with Örebro University and students studying to become teachers in social science and English.





**The summer school was a success, says resources teacher Mattias Bulun, student Faiz Azmi and principal Mats Barlow at the Kunskapsskolan in Örebro.**

# Free school shows the way with summer school

**TEXT:** Ann Patmalnieks **PHOTO:** Kicki Nilsson

**The summer school at the Kunskapsskolan in Örebro started up for newly arrived pupils who hadn't lived in Sweden for very long but it turned out that many more benefited from the initiative.**

The aim of the summer school was to keep the Swedish language going and to combat loneliness during the school holidays, recounts Mats Barlow, principal at Kunskapsskolan:

"Some of the new pupils can withdraw and can lack self-confidence. We thought that if we offered schoolwork in the holidays, we could attract them. They are very focused on studying, as this is a way into society.

However, the summer school was open to everyone.

"We have several pupils who have fallen behind for various reasons and need to catch

up in peace and quiet," adds Mats Barlow.

Since 2016 the school has had a preparatory class with ten pupils who have come from Afghanistan, some of them via Iran.

Faiz Azmi has left the preparatory class and started in the ninth grade. He was one of the pupils at the summer school.

"It was great and helped me a lot. I wanted to study a bit more to be ready for the autumn. I got lots of tasks from the teachers in natural sciences and Swedish studies," says Faiz Azmi.

---

## The summer school

The summer school operated for two weeks in the summer of 2017. 40 pupils attended in total, eight of whom were newly arrived. Pupils are considered to be newly arrived for up to four years after they have started Swedish school.

The Kunskapsskolan in Örebro is a free school for grades 6 – 9. It will organise another summer school next year. The school receives a government grant to organise tuition in the summer, but the grant doesn't cover all the costs. The organisation of which the school is a part of has an employee that works with disseminating research and experience to the schools that receive newly arrived pupils.

---

There were three teachers and resources teacher Mattias Bulun running the summer school.

"During a normal lesson there isn't so much time for each pupil. Here the tuition was more individual, which provides quality," comments Mattias Bulun.

### Focus on core subjects

The summer school focused on the core subjects of Swedish, mathematics and English. The pupils were divided up into groups based on their individual needs.

"Some found the maths quite hard, while others needed to work more on their Swedish. They got a possibility to focus in depth, with an adult present. The pupils felt that they were making progress. They are often aware that they need to work a little bit more with maths before ninth grade, for example, and it is nice to have done it before school starts," says Mattias Bulun.

The atmosphere at the summer school was different too.

"We started a little later and after working for a few hours we went to the café and had a sandwich. It was more relaxed, with more time to chat. It's also different because the pupils have chosen to be here," says Mattias Bulun.

### Free schools contribute too

Head teacher Mats Barlow thinks that it is natural that even a free school opts to have preparatory classes and run a summer school. "Why shouldn't we contribute too when so many are coming to Sweden? We want to show the other pupils that it is important to take care of these young people."

Mats Barlow thinks that it can be thought-provoking for the other pupils to understand that some of the newly arrived students have scarcely had an opportunity to go to school. "They see the effort that these students make. It might have the effect that fewer of the others only wake up in ninth grade when it is time to apply to upper secondary school."

# Education system and school organisation

**TEXT:** Anna Gärdegård

In all the Nordic countries, specially targeted tuition is provided for newly arrived immigrant children and all children have the right to attend school. There are certain prerequisites in some countries. In Norway, asylum seeking children have a right to schooling if the child is expected to stay in the country for more than three months, and in Denmark if the child is expected to remain for at least six months. In Finland there is no special time constraint. Iceland grants all children the same rights to education and compulsory school attendance, regardless of asylum status. In Sweden, asylum seeking children have the right to start school within a month, but school attendance is not compulsory. However, attendance is compulsory for pupils with a residence permit that is valid for at least a year.

The organisation of the education system varies. In Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, it is organised by municipalities into separate introductory tuition over a period of varying length or direct integration into mainstream classes. In Denmark, education for child asylum seekers is usually organised through separate introductory education in special schools attached to asylum accommodation centre. Greenland and the Faroe Islands have not accepted any refugees, while the acceptance of refugees and asylum seekers falls outside the remit of Åland's government and is regulated by national legislation.



## Rights in the education system

Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Iceland
<p>Compulsory school attendance applies to all children living or remaining in the country for at least six months and applies up to and including 9th grade.</p>	<p>Right to basic education applies to children seeking asylum and those granted asylum in the same way as to all other children of compulsory school age.</p>	<p>All children who are expected to remain in the country for more than three months have the same rights to primary school education, regardless of their legal status.</p> <p>Asylum seekers aged between 16 and 18 have the right to upper secondary school education if the young person has been through primary school or the corresponding level.</p> <p>Asylum seekers aged between 16 and 18 who have not completed primary school have the right to primary school education for adults.</p>	<p>Child asylum seekers have a right to education but attendance is not compulsory. Pupils who have a permanent or temporary residence permit valid for at least a year must attend school.</p> <p>The right to education applies even if notification has been given of a refusal decision or to deport. Undocumented children and young people also have a right to education on the same terms as asylum seekers.</p> <p>The right to education after primary school applies if it is commenced before the child reaches 18 years of age.</p>	<p>Child asylum seekers shall receive education within four weeks of having applied for asylum either in the mainstream school system or through an education offer from Iceland's immigration service.</p> <p>All child asylum seekers shall join the mainstream education system no later than 12 weeks after applying for asylum.</p>

## Education in preparatory or mainstream class

Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Iceland
<p>Child asylum seekers go to special schools attached to asylum centre. When children are granted a residence permit, they are transferred to a municipality and receive tuition either in a school class with special support or in a reception class with adapted tuition.</p>	<p>Preparatory tuition for the first year is the most common. Then ordinary tuition is received. It is the local authority that organises basic education for the children of compulsory school age living in the municipality.</p> <p>In Swedish-speaking municipalities, it is more common to go straight into a mainstream class.</p>	<p>Children under 16 start at ordinary primary school directly after arriving at the asylum reception centre. In some schools they start in a dedicated introductory class (max. 2 years), while in others they start in a ordinary class with additional Norwegian tuition. Some organise it so that the pupils take part in both introductory courses and ordinary classes at the same time.</p>	<p>Some municipalities organise reception in reception units, where the newly arrived pupils start for the first eight weeks. Usually with preparatory class (max. two years), but also direct integration. No pupil can have all their schooling in a preparatory class, and must be assigned to a mainstream class from the outset.</p>	<p>The larger municipalities have preparatory classes while the smaller ones attach greater weight to individual support in the classroom.</p>

## Special measures

Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Iceland
<p>Children who are bilingual and have the prerequisites to take part in mainstream tuition receive various forms of linguistic support adapted to the child's needs.</p> <p>Bilingual pupils who do not have the prerequisites to take part in mainstream tuition acquire basic knowledge of Danish as a second language in special classes and groups but also as personal tuition.</p>	<p>Children with an immigrant background receive tuition in Finnish or Swedish according to a curriculum in Finnish or Swedish as a second language.</p> <p>Complementary tuition in a child's mother tongue can be received in primary school, secondary school and in basic vocational training.</p> <p>Individual study plans are produced for all children.</p>	<p>Children with another mother tongue have the right to Norwegian tuition until they have sufficient proficiency in Norwegian to follow mainstream tuition. If necessary they can receive tuition in their mother tongue and/or bilingual subject education. There are special curricula in Norwegian for newly arrived immigrants and a curriculum in their mother tongue.</p>	<p>In the first eight weeks in school, an obligatory assessment must be carried out to find out what knowledge the pupil has, so as to be able to plan the tuition based on each person's requirements and to place the pupil in a suitable tuition group.</p> <p>Pupils with a mother tongue other than Swedish have the right to mother tongue tuition.</p> <p>Newly arrived pupils have the right to multilingual classroom assistance in their mother tongue.</p>	<p>There is extra language tuition in most municipalities. In the national curriculum, Icelandic as a second language has its own section with specific competence targets.</p> <p>Pupils with a mother tongue other than Icelandic can have the opportunity to develop their mother tongue and have their proficiency recognised.</p> <p>All schools in Iceland have a reception plan for children with a mother tongue other than Icelandic.</p>

## Other forms of support

Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Iceland
No response	<p>Immigrant pupils at all levels of education that lead to an exam can receive supporting tuition as required.</p> <p>In basic education pupils have the right to tuition according to their religious belief if certain conditions are fulfilled.</p>	<p>Local authorities can offer the pupils an extra year in primary school.</p> <p>Pupils with special language tuition can have the right to two years of extra education in studies at a different level if this is necessary for the pupil to attain educational targets.</p> <p>Since 2016 municipalities and counties can offer more primary education prior to/in combination with secondary school education.</p>	<p>Tuition in Swedish as a second language can be given in place of Swedish as a subject. Gives the same competencies for further studies.</p> <p>Tuition time can be reallocated between different subjects in favour of tuition in Swedish.</p> <p>Extended timetable – opportunity for pupils to receive more hours of tuition in Swedish as a second language than specified in the timetable.</p>	<p>Support forms vary between the local authorities depending on the size, organisation and capacity of the municipalities and schools.</p> <p>The municipalities receive tuition advice from a national specialist in teaching pupils with Icelandic as a second language for teachers in primary school.</p>

## Other initiatives, new legislative proposals

Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Iceland
No response	The Ministry of Education and Culture has an action plan, Meaningful in Finland, to prevent hate speech and racism and to foster social inclusion (2016). The aims include e.g. improving the skills of teachers and other professionals who work with children and young people	<p>Long-term measures that deal with building up the competence of teachers, e.g. further education in second-language pedagogy, the Skills for diversity action (2013-2017) and county courses for those working in the tuition of asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>New legislative proposal about the right to education as soon as possible and within one month.</p>	<p>Newly arrived children's learning must not be "put on hold".</p> <p>The National Agency for Education has been given additional tasks in the form of general interventions in all municipalities and specific interventions in selected municipalities.</p> <p>New law in 2017 gives everyone aged between 17 and 25 with a temporary residence permit the opportunity for a longer residence permit to study at secondary level and for six months after completing secondary school.</p>	During 2017 Iceland worked on an Action plan. According to this, the immigration service shall ensure that newly arrived children shall have access to education no later than four weeks after their arrival.

With thanks to the school experts from each country who answered questions and checked the correctness of the information.



Early intervention by the school's socialworkers prevents more severe problems, says social worker Anna-Marja Kairamo.

# Social workers

provide support in the school environment

**TEXT:** Caroline Jonsson **PHOTO:** Laura Mendelin & Mostafa Mohammad Ali

In Espoo in Finland, social workers work in the school setting to meet unaccompanied and other young newly arrived immigrants. Instead of short courses offered by the employment service, they are permitted to study for a longer period. This is one way to motivate and support them to shape a future for themselves.

At the Omnia school, where social worker Anne-Maarit Pullinen works, she and her colleagues meet unaccompanied young immigrants and other newly arrived young people between the ages of 17 and 25. Here the pupils engage in preparatory studies lasting for a year. The social services in Espoo have been represented in the school for over ten years.

### **Long-term collaboration**

The collaboration between the social services and schools commenced at the end of the 1990s as a project focusing on newly arrived young immigrants without any reading or writing skills. It was made permanent in 2006. Social worker Aino-Marja Kairamo handles matters for unaccompanied and other newly arrived migrants. She believes that previous initiatives such as short language courses offered by the employment service didn't work well for this group.

"It isn't possible to absorb knowledge in the midst of chaos and rapid changes of environment. Here, young people motivated to study and with their whole lives ahead of them find the prerequisites for creating a secure everyday existence. Early intervention by the school's social workers creates the conditions for them to derive benefit from their studies."

### **Eight out of ten continue to further education**

Anne-Maarit Pullinen estimates that eight out of ten go on after primary preparatory studies and language training to basic studies at high school level or to vocational programmes.

"I call absent pupils in the morning. Without my persistent calls many might not pluck up



**When a student requires additional support, Anne-Maarit Pullinen works with the teacher in the classroom. She is there as a resource.**



**Teacher Lenka Harju (standing) can stay focused on teaching when she has access to a social worker, as here Anne-Marit Pullinen.**

the courage to come back to school. I have contacted some pupils every day for a month before the turnaround happens – until the person summons the strength to return to his/her studies."

The school's social workers work with the welfare officers responsible for the pupils. They are part of the same teams and meet every other week. After school hours Anne-Maarit Pullinen is also involved in the pupils' leisure time.

"I arrange a support group with volunteers that organises leisure activities. We also discuss emotions, sleep and other things that

have an impact on mental health and study concentration," says Anne-Maarit Pullinen.

### **Psychological support is often non-existent**

During breaks the school's social workers are there to guide the newly arrived pupils through the Finnish system if needed. When the door to Pullinen's office is open, she welcomes visits. Here they can get help with making a doctor's appointment, filling in forms and get assistance with financial questions. Practical issues are discussed as well as conversations about loneliness, anxiety or bad experiences.

"More often than not they don't talk to anyone, not either to other young people in a similar situation. Psychological support is often non-existent. Unaccompanied migrants and other newly arrived pupils might need help to come to terms with traumatic experiences. I often book a follow-up appointment before we part" says Anne-Maarit Pullinen.

### **Classroom presence**

If a pupil requires additional support, Anne-Maarit Pullinen works with the teacher in the classroom. If anyone finds it difficult to stay during a lesson she is there as a resource.

"We sit together in the room for up to an hour. In the classroom I gain a greater understanding of the school situation of the young person

and can provide a clear picture of the pupil's daily life to the responsible social worker."

For teacher Lenka Harju, having continuous access to a social worker means that she can focus on teaching. Good relations between pupil, teacher and social worker create a good study environment, she believes:

"If I see that a pupil isn't doing well, I make direct contact with the social workers. This means that I can then focus my attention on the rest of the pupils in the class. Short courses only create anxiety for the pupils that experience difficulties. Sitting on a chair in the same classroom in a communal setting together with a teacher fosters a sense of security and trust."



# Vinje welcomes refugees

TEXT AND PHOTO: Oddrun Midtbø

**"Vinje needs refugees. We need people to keep the schools and local community running. We want to be part of the world."**



16-year-olds Guled Mohammed and Anne Våle have grown up together. They both have summer jobs, Anne in the canteen at the civic centre, and Guled in the Spar shop close by. They are now on the verge of leaving Åmot.



**Anne Våle is going to study nature use at Ulefoss high school. Her aim is to return to the farm where she grew up.**



**Anders Sandvik came as the school head to Vinje because he wanted "to live in a place where every individual is important and I don't spend my life queueing."**

The man behind these words is the deputy mayor, Anders Sandvik. He came to Vinje 12 years ago as the school head, precisely because he wanted "to live in a place where every individual is important and I don't spend my life queueing." Vinje is a municipality in Telemark in East Norway with just over 3 700 inhabitants..

### **Vinje has room for everyone**

30 years after the first Somalis arrived in Vinje, the refugees have become an integral part of the local community. First came the Somalis, then the Bosnians, who run shops and the abattoir among other things, then refugees arrived from Liberia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Palestine, Syria and Iran. Many have taken jobs in the health and care sector. The far-flung municipality also has room for economic migrants from various European countries.

However, it was in regard to its encounter with Somali refugees in particular that the municipality was elevated as a role model for others. In 2007 it received an award from Amnesty for its efforts. The town council includes a representative with a Somali background, and only one out of 25 elected representatives voted against taking in more refugees. Not surprisingly, this was a member of the Progress Party, which is critical of immigration policy.

"The aim is for immigrants to buy a house and settle down, but access to housing is challenging, as in many other district municipalities," says Anders. The local authority is building 15 new homes for rent to meet the need for housing.

### **Abdi is the key player and role model**

"We direct resources mostly at the refugees. All of them must complete an introductory

course – we don't budge an inch on this. We make demands on and have high expectations of the refugees that come here. We don't spend much time on those coming here as economic migrants.

Early on in the conversation he mentions Abdi – "the key man when it comes to integration work in the municipality". Everyone in Vinje knows Abdi. He was one of two people the municipality chose to send to Oslo when King Harald and Queen Sonja hosted a garden party and all municipalities in the country chose persons deserving of the honour.

He calls and Abdi Ali quickly appears. He is dressed like a lumberjack from the depths of the forests, sporting a singlet under the red checked shirt. He harks back to when he first arrived in Norway as a refugee in 1990.

"It was very difficult at the start. Just a couple of hours of Norwegian tuition a day, no language practice, no activity. We Somali men experienced isolation, we felt that we weren't doing anything beneficial for us. Although I came from a rural community in Somalia, I didn't feel I had anything in common with Vinje. I had to learn everything afresh," he says.

This experience comes in useful when he meets those who are new to the countryside. He understands the shock and all the questions that arise when encountering Norwegian culture. He now works both in the school and in the care centre. He has bought a house, brought his wife and mother to Vinje and has become "the father to an entire football team", as Anders sees it.

The two men laugh readily together. They are at ease with one another; they have many shared experiences.

"We dare to discuss subjects like where Islam meets Norwegian culture; young people and how they dress, Ramadan and work. It is important to have people like Abdi around when debating such subjects. As an ethnic Norwegian my views don't carry the same weight, even though I was received into the Isaaq clan after I visited the country," says Anders. He explains that local Somalis and the Vinje municipality played a part in building 19 schools in Somaliland, and have a good reputation in the international Somali community. "Everyone has heard about our work and associates Vinje with something really positive."

Abdi finds that Somalis call him for advice and help with moving to Vinje and getting jobs and housing. They want their children to grow up in the safe environment of Vinje.

### **Young people planning for the future**

It is precisely this aspect that the 16-year-olds highlight as a strength of Vinje: "It is nice and safe living here," say Guled Mohammed and Anne Våle. They have known one another since they went to day nursery. After ten years in school they are now on the point of going out into the world. Both are moving from their home town after the summer holidays, to move to a small apartment and go to boarding school.

A talented footballer, Guled is going to specialise in elite-level sports at Bø Secondary School. His aim is to become a profes-

sional footballer at national level. He now plays in the first team for Åmot in Division 5, a meeting place he shares with other young boys and men up to the age of forty.

Anne is going to spend two years studying land management at Ulefoss Secondary School prior to a two-year apprenticeship.

"My aim is to return to the farm I grew up on, work in forestry and live close to my parents, sisters and grandparents," she says. She doesn't want to live in the big city and is making a secure choice for the future.

Åmot is no place for a football pro. Maybe Guled will become a lawyer like his friend's brother, although his parents would prefer him to become a doctor. Guled is looking three years ahead to begin with.

*What is it like to be an immigrant in Vinje?*

"When I was little, I thought that I was like everyone else. All the kids played with each other, we didn't perceive any differences in one another. Children are not racist. It wasn't until school that other parents and teachers made me aware that I wasn't like the Norwegian kids. But now there are lots of Somali families here, so it is no longer so special. I also feel that it is a little divided, that there are different social sets," he says, and refers to the Somali community as "my people".

*Why do you say that?*

"I was ten years old when I first visited Somalia. Even though they have much less than in Norway, they took care of one another. It also made me think how fortunate I am that Mum



**Football talent Guled Mohammed will begin his studies at leading sport line at Bø high school. He wants to be a football player at national level.**

and Dad came here to Vinje, where we all have a good, secure life. All the same, I gradually feel more Somali than Norwegian; all my family is in Somaliland. Now I think that it is great having two cultures. I identify with many thoughts and emotions in the Carpe Diem singing group.

### Good advice from Vinje:

- **Work experience.** The local authority takes responsibility for establishing posts where refugees gain the necessary work experience to advance in the employment market.
- **An "inclusion car"** has been purchased by the local authority so that refugees can get driving practice when they are going to take the driving test. They also receive financial support. Having a driving licence is necessary in a place like Vinje.
- **Free school meals** for everyone, every day. Social equality and halal food are a natural element of this.
- **Inclusive religious holidays** like Christmas celebrations are organised as a candle-light service with a minister.
- **Integration committee** with representatives from the local authority, school, day nursery, culture, health, technical sector and Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.
- **Consumer Advice** is a formal and informal platform for the municipality and the refugees.
- **Cross-community gatherings** at which it is possible to discuss everything from whether it is haram to get a bank loan to how to live and dress when the mercury creeps down to minus 20. It also leads to

They are second-generation immigrants with good, meaningful lyrics," he says.

The two young people know that the time when they had a lot in common has gone. New challenges now beckon, as has always been the case for 16-year-olds leaving home.

people from different cultures being able to work towards a solution that suits them.

- **A women's council** that has been a multicultural meeting place for women only for over 20 years. Experience has shown that women have the greatest need for this type of initiative; men meet in various environments.
- **Living book.** The library is an important forum. Refugees talk openly about the life they had before they came to Norway. Simple meetings announced in advance with coffee and cake and good conversations between locals and immigrants.
- **Humour** is an important part of life; it works best when people feel comfortable in each other's company.
- **The success factor** is to look for common denominators. People are more alike than we think initially.
- **Deliberate use of words:** the title of refugee coordinator was changed to integration coordinator because the intention is to include all categories of immigrants.
- **Very clear requirements** and expectations and no misunderstood kindness. Unauthorised absence from the introductory programme results in wage deductions from the first hour.



