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2018

# EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2017 Sweden



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## EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2017 – Sweden

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## OVERVIEW SUMMARY

This report aims to outline the most significant developments in the area of migration and asylum in Sweden in 2017 as well as relevant public debates, also in the context of European policy development and its impact on the national level.

### Overall trend

As regards migration to Sweden, the year 2017 was characterised by a further decreasing number of people seeking protection while, at the same time, the number of migrants admitted for family reunification purposes increased. Immigration for employment and study reasons grew as well, and Sweden expanded its refugee resettlement quota.

In total, Sweden registered 25 666 new asylum applicants in 2017, roughly 11 percent fewer than in 2016, when 28 939 such applications were lodged. Especially when compared to the record influx of asylum seekers to Sweden in 2015 (almost 163 000), the figure for 2017 represents a very significant decline. Generally speaking, the number of new asylum seekers in 2017 was at the same annual level as during the 2008-2009 period.

As the refugee situation in 2015 caused an overburdening of the Swedish Migration Agency, it took a long time for this Agency to cope with the record number of applications that year. In 2017, the Agency was still handling a huge number of asylum applications that had been submitted in 2015 and 2016, although it managed to reduce the backlog. The average processing time for asylum applications at first instance in 2017 was 496 days, which compares to 328 days in 2016. While the Agency had taken almost 112 000 decisions of asylum cases in 2016, 66 301 decisions were issued in 2017. The share of positive decisions was 41 percent in 2017, which constitutes a lower protection rate than in 2016, when 60 percent of all decisions taken were positive.

The total number of first-time residence permits that were issued during the year 2017 for all purposes of stay (asylum, family reasons, employment, studies, and other purposes) was 135 529. This represents a somewhat lower level of immigration than in 2016, when 151 031 first-time residence permits were issued. The figure for 2016 represented indeed the highest figure recorded in Sweden in modern times.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1 (absolute numbers) and Figure 1 (percentages) show the main categories of residence permits that were granted in 2017. Persons who immigrated to Sweden for purposes of family reunification, family formation or other family-related purposes represented the largest broad category of immigrants (48 046 first permits issued), followed by beneficiaries of protection, i.e. individuals who received a residence permit for protection or humanitarian purposes after an asylum procedure or after resettlement to Sweden (36 531). Labour immigrants (employment reasons) and international students from third countries constituted the third and fourth largest categories of immigrants in 2017, with 32 294 and 13 416 issued permits, respectively.

<sup>1</sup> The statistical data provided by the Swedish Migration Agency go back to 1980.

Another 5 242 people were granted residence permits under EU rules regarding the free movement of persons, such as third-country nationals who had a long-term resident status in another Member State or third-country nationals who were family members of an EU citizen moving to Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1:** Overall immigration trend: First-time residence permits granted in 2015-2017

Reasons	2015	2016	2017
Family reasons	37 262	39 007	48 046
Protection/humanitarian reasons*	36 630	71 562	36 531
Employment reasons**	27 003	24 710	32 294
Study reasons***	11 416	11 423	13 416
Free movement EU/EES	2 793	4 329	5 242
<b>Total</b>	<b>115 104</b>	<b>151 031</b>	<b>135 529</b>

**Notes:**

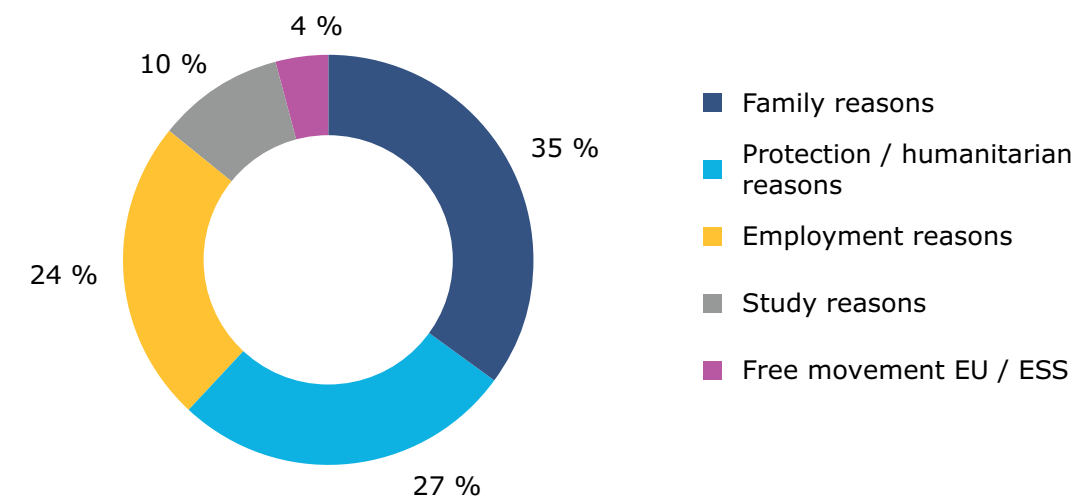
\* This includes protection for refugees, subsidiary protection, resettlement and residence permits granted due to exceptionally distressing circumstances or because a person could not be returned.

\*\* Includes family members of labour immigrants.

\*\*\* Includes family members of international students.

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

**Figure 1:** Overall immigration: First-time residence permits granted 2017



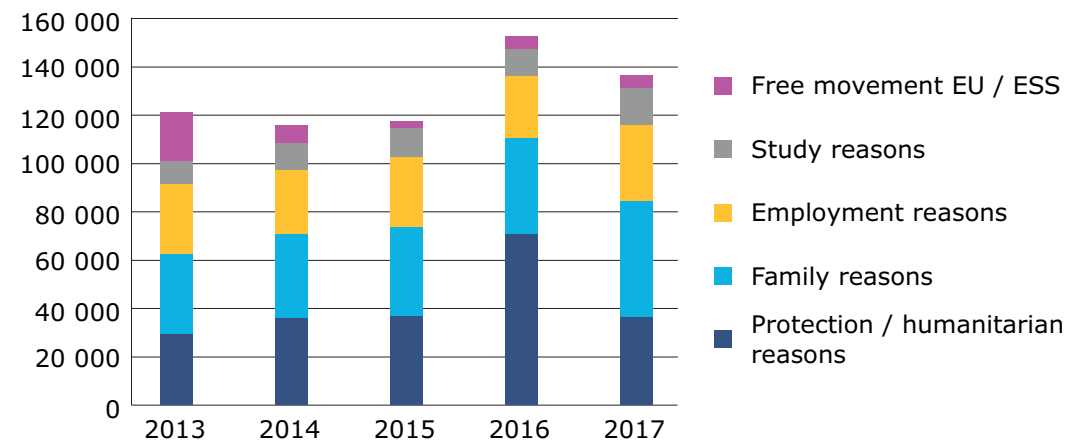
Source: Swedish Migration Agency

<sup>2</sup> Since May 2014, EU- and EEA-citizens do not need to register their right of residence at the Migration Agency any more, which is why the number of permits or residence rights granted under EU free movement rules appears much smaller for 2015 and 2016 compared to previous years.

Figure 2 below shows the granting of residence and work permits in a longer-term perspective. Residence permits granted for protection and humanitarian reasons have increased over the period 2013-2016, and then declined in 2017. In comparison, family-related immigration grew modestly until 2016, and then increased substantially again in 2017. For work-related immigration, the trend also shows a growth in 2017. In fact, over the past ten years, labour migration was never more significant than in 2017. As far as international students (immigration for education purposes) are concerned, a slowly increasing trend is visible over the entire period.

Finally, people coming to Sweden under EU free movement rights are difficult to compare over a five-year period as EU-citizens do not need to register their right to stay any more (since May 2014). While the category "Free movement EU/EES" covered a relatively large group of people until 2014, it now only includes minor groups, as described in footnote 2.

**Figure 2:** Timeline - all first-time residence permits granted, 2013-2017



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### International protection

The number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden in 2017 decreased by 11 percent compared to the year before. 25 666 people applied for asylum, in contrast to 28 939 in 2016, and almost 163 000 in 2015, which was an unprecedentedly high number. Most asylum seekers in 2017 came from Syria (4 718), Iraq (1 887), Eritrea (1 691) and Afghanistan (1 681).

In a European perspective, Sweden continued to be an important destination and receiving country for asylum seekers, but not to the same degree as in during the refugee crisis in 2015 and before. While Sweden had registered the third highest absolute number of asylum seekers of all EU Member States in 2015 (after Germany and Hungary), it was the eighth largest recipient country in 2016 and the seventh largest recipient country in 2017 (after Germany, Italy, France, Greece, the United Kingdom and Spain).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: Eurostat-Database.

When it comes to outcomes of asylum procedures, the Swedish Migration Agency made 66 301 first-instance decisions on asylum cases in 2017. This means 41 percent fewer decisions than in 2016, when 111 979 decisions were taken – an all-time high. The number of decisions in 2017 still represents a high level, however, reflecting the fact that Sweden had received an extraordinarily high number of asylum applicants back in 2015.

27 205 individuals were granted protection in 2017, compared to 67 258 in 2016. Thus, the overall protection rate was considerable lower in 2017 (41 percent) than in 2016 (60 percent). If Dublin cases and other asylum cases that Sweden did not examine materially, e.g. cases that were written off,<sup>4</sup> are excluded from this calculation, the protection rate was 47 percent, compared to 77 percent during the year before.

The lower level of asylum applicants in 2017 and 2016, compared to 2015, is to a large degree considered a result of policy developments elsewhere in Europe, such as an agreement between the EU and Turkey to stop irregular migrant crossings to the Greek islands, and border control measures along the "Balkan route", in Central and Southern Europe as well as Denmark. To a certain extent, legislative changes in Sweden as well as Swedish border controls and ID-checks on transportation from Denmark may also have contributed to this development. Among other measures, the Swedish Parliament passed a temporary law in 2016, introducing temporary residence permits for beneficiaries of international protection (instead of permanent ones) and restricting the right to family reunification. The identity checks on travellers between Denmark and Sweden (introduced in January 2016) were abandoned in May 2017, but the controls at Sweden's borders (primarily towards Denmark, introduced in December 2015) were still in place in 2017.

### Resettlement and relocation

The Swedish resettlement programme was expanded in 2017, from 1 900 resettlement places in 2016 to 3 400 in 2017. Sweden also participated in the EU emergency relocation scheme. Between June and the end of the year 2017, Sweden received 1 657 asylum seekers that were relocated from Greece, and 1 161 from Italy. The number of relocated asylum seekers is included in the total number of asylum seekers mentioned above, i.e. 25 666, but the number of resettled refugees is not included.

### Unaccompanied minors

While the number of unaccompanied minors (UAM) had escalated drastically in 2015, it declined very strongly in 2016 and 2017. While 35 369 applications by UAM had been registered in 2015, their number was 2 199 in 2016 and 1 336 in 2017. Thus, in relative terms, the number of UAM applying for asylum in Sweden decreased even more (-96%) than the overall number of asylum seekers (-82%), if the number of UAM seeking protection in 2015 is compared to the number of UAM registered in 2017.

In 2017, most UAM came from Morocco (235). This represents a significant change of pattern when compared to previous years, when Afghanistan was by far the largest nationality group among UAM coming to Sweden. Afghanistan became the second

<sup>4</sup> An application is written off, among other reasons, if the applicant absconds or withdraws his or her application. In 2017, 5 094 applications were written off. 3 200 cases were handled under the Dublin regulation.

most important country of origin in 2017, however, with 222 applicants. Somalia and Syria remained significant nationality groups, too, with 159 applicants each.

UAM often lack documents that can prove their age. In April 2016, the Swedish Government decided that the National Board of Forensic Medicine in Sweden would start to carry out medical age assessments of UAM asylum seekers in cooperation with the Migration Agency. Medical age assessments in accordance with the new guidelines started in spring 2017. The methods used (examination of the applicants' teeth and knee joints) triggered a politicised debate among experts and civil society.

#### **Increased immigration for family reasons**

Mostly as a consequence of the high number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden in 2015, family-related immigration increased in 2016 and 2017. Back in 2015, the Migration Agency granted 37 262 first-time residence permits for family reunification and family formation. This number rose to 39 007 permits granted in 2016, and 48 046 in 2017. Among all possible grounds for residence, family-related permits represented the largest share (35%).

A new temporary law restricting the possibility of being granted a residence permit in Sweden, and the right to family reunification, entered into force on 20 July 2016. Under this temporary law, refugees who have well-grounded prospects of obtaining a permanent residence permit continue to have a right to family reunification with their spouse, cohabitant and/or minor children, and children who are refugees have a right to reunification with their parents. By contrast, a beneficiary of subsidiary protection who has submitted his/her asylum application after 24 November 2015 has no right to family reunification under the temporary act. The temporary act also introduced stricter maintenance requirements as a condition for family reunification by extending them to include both the sponsor him-/herself and support to the family member. It is reasonable to assume that without these restrictions, family-related immigration to Sweden in 2017 would have grown even more than it did.

#### **Labour-related immigration**

The number of immigrants coming to Sweden for employment purposes increased considerably from 24 710 in 2016 to 32 294 in 2017. These figures also include accompanying family members of labour immigrants.

IT architects, systems analysts, and test managers (4 029), berry pickers and planters (3,043) as well as engineering professionals (1,082) represented the largest occupational groups among those who received a work permit in Sweden.

On 1 December 2017, an amendment was introduced to the Swedish rules on labour immigration, making it possible for the Migration Agency not to revoke a residence permit for work purposes in cases where an employer has corrected previous deviations from the requirements regarding, e.g., salaries or insurance payments. This amendment came in wake of a political debate regarding third country nationals who had their residence permits revoked because of minor violations by their employers of the legal requirements regarding employment-related immigration.

#### **International students**

The number of people moving to Sweden for study purposes also increased in 2017, from 11 423 in 2016 to 13 416. Among those individuals that were granted a permit in 2017, 9 292 were admitted as students at universities and university colleges, and

1 112 as doctoral students. Another 1 842 were admitted as relatives of international students, and 600 for other educational purposes.

The remaining 562 persons received a residence permit to look for work after their studies in Sweden. The possibility of applying for this type of "job-seeker permit" was introduced in 2014, and the number of permits granted for this purpose has increased ever since. In addition to the 562 students that received a job-seeker permit in 2017, 778 third-country nationals with a residence permit for studies "changed tracks" and received a residence permit for employment purposes.



## SAMMANFATTANDE ÖVERSIKT PÅ SVENSKA

Denna rapport har till syfte att beskriva de viktigaste utvecklingarna inom migration och asyl under 2017 i Sverige och redogöra för relevanta offentliga debatter, även i ljuset av policyutvecklingen på Europeisk nivå och dess betydelse för den nationella nivån.

### Övergripande trender

Migrationen till Sverige 2017 karakteriseras av en fortsatt minskning av antalet människor som sökte skydd samtidigt som antalet migranter som fick uppehållstillstånd för familjeåterförening ökade. Invandring för anställning och studier ökade också och Sverige ökade sin kvot för vidarebosättning av flyktingar.

Totalt registrerades 25 666 nya asylansökningar i Sverige 2017, ungefär 11 procent färre än 2016 när 28 939 asylansökningar registrerades. Särskilt om det jämförs med rekordinstromningen av asylsökande till Sverige under 2015 (nästan 163 000) så utgör siffrorna för 2017 en stor minskning. Generellt sett var antalet nya asylsökande under 2017 i nivå med de årliga siffrorna för 2008-2009.

Flyktingsituationen under 2015 ledde till en överbelastning av Migrationsverket, det tog lång tid för verket att hantera det rekordstora antalet ansökningar från det året. Under 2017 handlade Migrationsverket fortfarande ett stort antal asylansökningar som lämnats in under 2015 och 2016, även om ärendebalanserna successivt minskade. Den genomsnittliga handläggningstiden för asylansökningar i första instans under 2017 var 496 dagar, vilket kan jämföras med 328 dagar under 2016. Migrationsverket fattade beslut i nästan 112 000 asylärenden under 2016 medan 66 301 beslut fattades under 2017. Andelen bifallsbeslut var 41 procent 2017, vilket innebär en lägre bifallsandel än 2016 när 60 procent av alla beslut som fattades var positiva.

Det totala antalet uppehållstillstånd för förstagångsansökningar under 2017 för alla typer av bosättning (asyl, familjeåterförening, arbete, studier och andra anledningar) var 135 529. Detta innebär en något lägre nivå av invandring än under 2016 när 151 031 uppehållstillstånd till förstagångsansökningar utfärdades. Siffran för 2016 innebar den högsta nivån för Sverige i modern tid.<sup>5</sup>

Tabell 1 (absoluta tal) och Figur 1 (procent) visar de huvudsakliga kategorierna av uppehållstillstånd som beviljades under 2017. Personer som invandrade till Sverige p.g.a. familjeåterförening, familjebildning eller andra familjerelaterade anledningar var den största kategorin av invandrare (48 046 beviljade förstagångsansökningar), följt av personer som fick uppehållstillstånd med anledning av skyddsbehov eller humanitära anledningar efter att ha ansökt om asyl eller vidarebosatts till Sverige (36 531). Arbetskraftsinvandrare (arbetsmarknadsskäl) och internationella studenter från länder utanför EU var den tredje och fjärde största kategorin av invandrare under 2017 med 32 294 respektive 13 416 beviljade uppehållstillstånd.

<sup>5</sup> Migrationsverkets statistik går tillbaka till 1980.

Ytterligare 5 242 personer beviljades uppehållstillstånd enligt EU-regler om fri rörlighet för personer, såsom tredjelandsmedborgare som har status som varaktigt bosatta i ett annat EU-land eller tredjelandsmedborgare som är familjemedlemmar till en EU-medborgare som flyttar till Sverige.<sup>6</sup>

**Tabell 1:** Beviljade uppehållstillstånd för förstagångssökande 2015-2017

Anledning	2015	2016	2017
Familjeskäl	37 262	39 007	48 046
Skyddsbehov/humanitära grunder*	36 630	71 562	36 531
Arbetsmarknad**	27 003	24 710	32 294
Studier***	11 416	11 423	13 416
Fri rörlighet EU/EES	2 793	4 329	5 242
<b>Totalt</b>	<b>115 104</b>	<b>151 031</b>	<b>135 529</b>

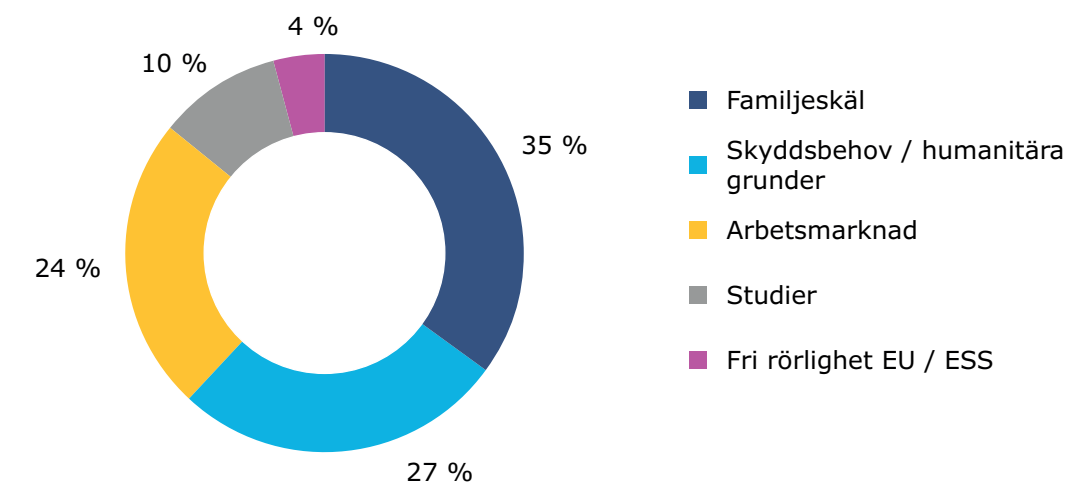
\* Detta inkluderar skydd för flyktingar, alternativt skyddsbehövande, vidarebosättning, skyddsbehövande i övrigt och uppehållstillstånd beviljade p.g.a. synnerligen ömmande omständigheter eller för att personen inte kan återvända.

\*\* Inkluderar familjemedlemmar till arbetskraftsinvandrare.

\*\*\* Inkluderar familjemedlemmar till internationella studenter.

Källa: Migrationsverket

**Figur 1:** Beviljade uppehållstillstånd för förstagångssökande 2017



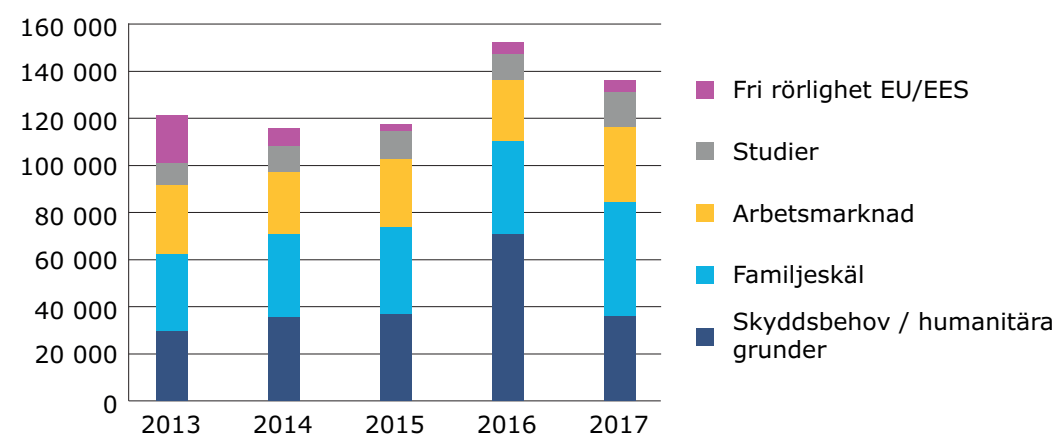
Källa: Migrationsverket

<sup>6</sup> Sedan maj 2014 behöver EU- och EEA-medborgare inte längre registrera sin uppehållsrätt hos Migrationsverket vilket är anledningen till att antalet tillstånd eller uppehållsrätter p.g.a. EU:s regler om fri rörlighet verkar mycket lägre för 2015 och 2016 jämfört med tidigare år.

Figur 2 nedan visar beviljade uppehållstillstånd och arbetstillstånd i ett längre tidsperspektiv. Upphållstillstånd av skyddsskäl och humanitära skäl har ökat under perioden 2013-2016 för att sedan minska 2017. I jämförelse ökade familjerelaterad invandring långsamt fram till 2016 och ökade sedan betydligt under 2017. För arbetskraftsrelaterad invandring är trenden också ökande under 2017 och nådde den högsta nivån på tio år. Vad gäller internationella studenter (invandring för utbildning) finns det en svag ökande trend för hela perioden.

Vad avser personer som kommer till Sverige grundat på EU:s fria rörlighet för personer är det svårt att jämföra över en femårsperiod eftersom EU-medborgare inte längre behöver registrera sin bosättning i landet (sedan maj 2014). Medan kategorin "fri rörlighet EU/EES" täckte in en ganska stor grupp personer fram till 2014 inkluderar den numera bara mindre grupper, såsom beskrivs i fotnot 2.

**Figur 2:** Tidslinje – beviljade uppehållstillstånd för förstagångssökande 2013-2017



Källa: Migrationsverket

### Internationellt skydd

Antalet asylsökande som kom till Sverige 2017 minskade med 11 procent jämfört med året innan. 25 666 personer ansökte om asyl jämfört med 28 939 under 2016 och nästan 163 000 under 2015, vilket var ett extremt högt antal. De flesta asylsökande 2017 kom från Syrien (4 718), Irak (1 887), Eritrea (1 691) och Afghanistan (1 681).

I ett europeiskt perspektiv fortsatte Sverige att vara ett viktigt destinations- och mottagandeland för asylsökande, men inte i samma utsträckning som under flyktingkrisen 2015 och dessförinnan. Medan Sverige registrerade det tredje högsta antalet asylsökande under 2015 (efter Tyskland och Ungern), var Sverige det åttonde största mottagarlandet under 2016 och det sjunde största mottagarlandet 2017 (efter Tyskland, Italien, Frankrike, Grekland, Storbritannien och Spanien).<sup>7</sup>

När det gäller avgjorda asylärenden fattade Migrationsverket 66 301 beslut i första instans under 2017. Detta innebär 41 procent färre beslut än 2016 när 111 979

<sup>7</sup> Källa: Eurostat-Database.

beslut fattades – det högsta antalet någonsin. Antalet beslut 2017 är dock på en hög nivå vilket beror på att Sverige fick ett extraordinärt antal asylsökande under 2015.

27 205 personer beviljades skydd 2017, jämfört med 67 258 under 2016. Således var den totala bifallsandelen betydligt lägre under 2017 (41 procent) än 2016 (60 procent). Om Dublinärenden och andra asylärenden där Sverige inte gjorde en materiell prövning, t.ex. avskrivna ärenden,<sup>8</sup> exkluderas från beräkningen var bifallsandelen 47 procent jämfört med 77 procent året innan.

Det lägre antalet asylsökande under 2016 och 2017 jämfört med 2015 anses till stor del vara ett resultat av policyutveckling på andra håll i Europa, såsom överenskommelsen mellan EU och Turkiet om att stoppa irreguljära migrationsströmmar till de grekiska öarna, och gränskontrollinsatser längs "Balkan-rutten", i Central- och Sydeuropa, men också i Danmark. Till viss del kan ändringar i svensk lagstiftning, svenska gränskontroller och id-kontroller för transporter från Danmark också ha bidragit till denna utveckling. En av de vidtagna åtgärderna var att Riksdagen 2016 antog en tillfällig lag som införde tillfälliga uppehållstillstånd för skyddsbehövande (istället för permanenta) och som begränsade rätten till familjeåterförening. Id-kontrollerna för resenärer mellan Danmark och Sverige (som infördes i januari 2016) avskaffades igen i maj 2017 medan de svenska gränskontrollerna (framförallt gentemot Danmark, vilka infördes i december 2015) fortfarande fanns kvar under 2017.

### Vidarebosättning och omfördelning

Det svenska vidarebosättningsprogrammet utökades under 2017, från 1 900 platser för vidarebosättning 2016 till 3 400 under 2017. Sverige deltog också i EU:s omfördelningsprogram. Från juni och fram till slutet av år 2017 tog Sverige emot 1 657 asylsökande som omfördelades från Grekland och 1 161 från Italien. Antalet omfördelade flyktingar ingår i den totala siffran för antalet asylsökande, 25 666, medan vidarebosatta flyktingar inte ingår i denna.

### Ensamkommande barn

Medan antalet ensamkommande barn ökade drastiskt under 2015, minskade det väldigt mycket under 2016 och 2017. 35 369 asylansökningar från ensamkommande barn registrerades under 2015 medan antalet var 2 199 under 2016 och 1 336 under 2017. Således, i relativa termer, minskade antalet ensamkommande barn ännu mer (-96%) än det totala antalet asylsökande (-82%) om antalet asylsökande ensamkommande barn under 2015 jämförs med det antal som registrerades under 2017.

2017 kom de flesta ensamkommande barn från Marocko (235). Detta är en stor förändring av mönstret jämfört med tidigare år när Afghanistan varit den klart dominerande nationaliteten för ensamkommande barn som kommit till Sverige. Afghanistan var dock det näst vanligaste ursprungslandet under 2017 med 222 asylsökande. Somalia och Syrien fortsatte också att vara viktiga nationaliteter med 159 asylsökande ensamkommande barn vardera.

Ensamkommande barn saknar ofta dokument som kan bevisa deras ålder. I april 2016 beslutade Regeringen att Rättsmedicinalverket skulle börja göra medicinska åldersbestämningar av ensamkommande asylsökande barn i samarbete med Migrationsverket. Medicinska åldersbestämningar i enlighet med de nya riktlinjerna bör-

<sup>8</sup> En ansökan avskrivs bland annat om den som ansökt avviker eller återtar sin ansökan. Under 2016 avskrevs nästan 14 300 ansökningar.

jade utföras under våren 2017. Metoden (undersökning av den sökandes tänder och knäleder) utsattes för hård kritik från experter och från civilsamhället.

### Ökad invandring av familjeskäl

Till stor del som en konsekvens av det höga antalet asylsökande som kom till Sverige under 2015 ökade familjerelaterad invandring under 2016 och 2017. 2015 biföll Migrationsverket 37 262 förstagångsansökningar om familjeåterförening och familjebildning. Detta antal ökade till 39 007 beviljade under 2016 och 48 046 under 2017. Bland alla möjliga anledningar till bosättning var familjerelaterade anledningar den största (35%).

En ny tillfällig lag som begränsade möjligheten att beviljas uppehållstillstånd i Sverige och rätten till familjeåterförening trädde i kraft den 20 juli 2016. Enligt denna tillfälliga lag har flyktingar som har välgrundade utsikter för att få permanent uppehållstillstånd fortfarande rätt till familjeåterförening med sin maka/make, sambo och/eller minderåriga barn, och barn som är flyktingar har rätt att återförenas med sina föräldrar. I motsats till detta, har en person som fått uppehållstillstånd som alternativt skyddsbehövande och som lämnade in sin asylansökan efter den 24 november 2015 ingen rätt till familjeåterförening enligt den tillfälliga lagen. Den tillfälliga lagen införde också striktare försörjningskrav som ett villkor för familjeåterförening genom att utvidga kraven till att inkludera både referenspersonen själv och stöd till familjemedlemmarna. Det är rimligt att anta att utan dessa restriktioner hade familjerelaterad invandring till Sverige under 2017 ökat ännu mer.

### Arbetsmarknadsinvandring

Antalet invandrare som kommer till Sverige av arbetsmarknadsskäl ökade betydligt, från 24 710 under 2016 till 32 294 under 2017. Dessa siffror inkluderar familjemedlemmar till arbetskraftsinvandrare.

IT-arkitekter, systemanalytiker och testledare (4 029), bärplockare och skogsplantärerare (3 043) och ingenjörer (1 082) är de vanligaste yrkeskategorierna bland dem som fick arbetstillstånd i Sverige.

I December 2017 infördes en ändring av de svenska reglerna för arbetskraftsinvandring vilken gjorde det möjligt för Migrationsverket att inte återkalla ett uppehållstillstånd för arbete i de fall där en arbetsgivare hade rättat till ett tidigare avsteg från kraven rörande lön och försäkring. Denna förändring kom som ett resultat av en politisk debatt rörande tredjelandsmedborgare som fick sitt uppehållstillstånd upphävt p.g.a. mindre regelbrott av deras arbetsgivare rörande kraven för arbetskraftsinvandring.

### Internationella studenter

Antalet personer som flyttar till Sverige för att studera ökade också under 2017, från 11 423 under 2016 till 13 416. Bland de personer som beviljades tillstånd under 2017 var 9 292 antagna som studenter vid universitet och högskolor. Ytterligare 1 842 var släktingar till internationella studenter och 600 kom av andra studieskäl.

De återstående 562 personerna fick uppehållstillstånd för att söka arbete efter att de avslutat sina studier i Sverige. Möjligheten att ansöka om denna typ av "jobbsökartillstånd" infördes 2014 och antalet tillstånd som beviljats av denna anledning har ökat sedan dess. Förutom de 562 studenterna som fick jobbsökartillstånd under 2017 fanns det 778 tredjelandsmedborgare med uppehållstillstånd för studier som "bytte spår" och fick uppehållstillstånd för arbete.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 9(1) of Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing the EMN, each National Contact Point of the network is required to provide every year a report describing the migration and asylum situation in the respective Member State. The report is structured so as to present relevant information on each aspect or dimension of migration and asylum.

As during the past three years, the EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum for 2017 consists of two parts and a statistical annex. Part I was designed as a questionnaire and is primarily intended to inform policy-makers within the European Commission about national developments that are relevant to them when analysing and evaluating the impact of EU legislation and policies. The Swedish contribution to Part I was completed in February 2017 and sent to the Commission. Due to its rather technical nature and limited use for the general public, it remains unpublished but is available from the Swedish EMN NCP upon request.<sup>9</sup> The same is true for the statistical annex, which was sent to the Commission in early May 2017.

This report represents Part II of the Swedish EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum for 2017. It is primarily intended for audiences that are interested in an overview of the asylum and immigration situation in Sweden and specific national audiences, such as policy-makers, researchers, the media and the general public. It is published on the national website of EMN Sweden.<sup>10</sup>

Section 1 introduces the report. Section 2 provides an overview of asylum and migration policy developments, to set a general context for the developments to be described in more detail further below. It includes an overview of the general political developments, as well as main policy and legislative debates, broader developments in asylum and migration, plus institutional developments. Sections 3-8 describe specific developments in the main areas of asylum and migration. Some sections are sub-divided into more specific, thematic sub-sections.

The Report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2017. However, at some instance, it may also include references to developments that started in earlier years and continued in 2017. It is the 14th report in a series of such EMN annual reports. Until 2015, however, the EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum had a different title, "EMN Annual Policy Report".

<sup>9</sup> Please contact [emn@migrationsverket.se](mailto:emn@migrationsverket.se) to obtain the report.  
<sup>10</sup> [www.emnsweden.se](http://www.emnsweden.se).



## 2 OVERVIEW OF ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

### 2.1 Organisational structure of asylum and migration policy

In Sweden, the Government sets out the general guidelines for migration policy by proposing bills. It is the responsibility of the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) to pass or reject proposed bills and amendments. The Government can supplement laws with ordinances. The Ministry of Justice is the Government body responsible for migration policy. It is also responsible for certain aspects of integration policies, which are shared between several other ministries but mainly lie within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Employment.

The Swedish Migration Agency and the Swedish Police Authority report to the Ministry of Justice and there is considerable cooperation at various levels between the ministry and these authorities. However, the authorities are formally subordinated to the Government as a whole and not a single Ministry.<sup>11</sup>

Within the area of migration and asylum, the Swedish Migration Agency is the responsible administrative agency concerning residence permits, work permits, visas, the reception of asylum seekers, return, acquisition of citizenship and repatriation. Also active in the area of migration are the Migration Courts, the Migration Court of Appeal, the Police Authority, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish missions abroad and the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen). In addition, the County Administrative Boards negotiate with the municipalities on the reception of individuals who have been granted protection.

Legal provisions pertaining to the tasks of the Swedish Migration Agency are found primarily in the Aliens Act, the Aliens Ordinance and the Ordinance with Instructions for the Swedish Migration Agency. The Government also manages the Agency by means of annual budget appropriation directives that specify the operational budget and objectives.

The Migration Agency has the main responsibility for the reception of asylum seekers, from the date on which an application for asylum has been submitted until the person has been received by a municipality after being granted a residence permit, or has left the country, if notified that the application has been rejected. The integration of recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is a responsibility of the Public Employment Service Arbetsförmedlingen and the 290 Swedish municipalities.

<sup>11</sup> *The Swedish system is based on independent administrative authorities. No public authority or minister may determine how an administrative authority is to decide in a particular case involving the exercise of public authority vis-à-vis a private subject or a local authority, or the application of law.*

While the Swedish Migration Agency has the responsibility for voluntary returns, the Police Authority is the main responsible authority for border control and forced return. The Customs and the Coast Guard are required to assist the Police in the control of third country nationals' entry and exit and the Coast Guard shall control the vessel traffic at sea borders.

The legal system pertaining to migration in Sweden is governed by the Aliens Act (Utlänningslagen, Statute 2005:716), and emanating from that law, the Aliens' Ordinance (Utlänningsförordningen, Statute 2006:97). The current Aliens Act took effect on 31 March 2006 and has subsequently been amended many times. The Administrative Judicial Procedure Act (Statute 1971:291) governs with regard to appeals. The Administrative Procedure Act (Statute 1986:223) contains certain general statutes that govern all administrative agencies. Since July 2016, a temporary act restricting the possibility of being granted a residence permit in Sweden, and the right to family reunification, has been in force. It is scheduled to expire in 2019. This temporary act was adopted in reaction to the extraordinary refugee situation in 2015.

The Swedish migration system and asylum procedures are also regulated by the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others Act (Statute 1994:137) and the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others Ordinance (Statute 1994:361).

Border control is governed by the Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 establishing a Community Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

### 2.2 Political and institutional developments

Since the last general elections, which took place on 14 September 2014, Sweden has been governed by a minority coalition consisting of the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party. The Prime Minister, elected by the Riksdag, is the Social Democrat Mr. Stefan Löfven. The institutional responsibility for policies regarding citizenship and naturalisation were transferred from the Employment Ministry to the Ministry of Justice. Mr. Morgan Johansson, also representing the Social Democratic Party, was appointed Minister for Justice and Migration. In July 2017, the Government was partly reorganized, and Mr. Johansson was appointed Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. Ms. Heléne Fritzon, also a Social Democrat, became new Minister for Migration and Deputy Minister for Justice. The next general elections are scheduled to take place in September 2018.

On 1 January 2017, the task of allocating recognized beneficiaries of international protection to municipalities for settlement was transferred from the Swedish Employment Service to the Swedish Migration Agency, as a consequence of a new act for an effective and solidarity-based refugee reception system, which had entered into force 1 March 2016. The law demands that all municipalities can be required to receive

newly arrived refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection, as well as their family members, for settlement.<sup>12</sup>

Within the Swedish Government, the Prime Minister has widened the mandate of the Minister for Employment and Integration, Ms. Ylva Johansson. Since February 2016, she has had a mandate to coordinate and direct the Government's work regarding the reception and integration of newly arrived beneficiaries of international protection.

### 2.3 Overall developments and debates concerning asylum and migration

#### Consequences of the high number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden in 2015

In 2017, many public and political debates regarding immigration to Sweden still related to the consequences of the refugee situation in autumn 2015. In 2015, the number of asylum seekers had reached the record level of almost 163 000 people applying for protection. While the number of new asylum seekers declined strongly, the effects of the inflow of 2015 continued to affect many parts of Swedish society.

In particular, there were still challenges relating to the backlog of pending asylum cases and applications for family reunification at the Swedish Migration Agency. Problems for municipalities to uphold and improve their various services (social services, schools, pre-schools, etc.) for their residents, and difficulties of the Swedish Police to enforce the return of rejected asylum applicants were still visible, as well. Many debates circled around these broad topics.

The temporary act to restrict the possibility of being granted a residence permit for protection purposes in Sweden, and the right to family reunification, which had entered into force on 20 July 2016, also prompted controversial debates, especially as regards the open question whether the law might be extended or abandoned once it is set to expire in July 2019. Critics argue that temporary residence permits and restricted family reunification rights represent an obstacle to the quick and successful integration of new arrivals in Sweden.<sup>13</sup> Others have argued that Sweden cannot grant beneficiaries of protection permanent residence permits (while other European countries only grant temporary permits) as this would represent a pull-factor.<sup>14</sup>

#### Unaccompanied minors and asylum seeking youth

A major topic of debate in 2017 were unaccompanied minors and youth, especially from Afghanistan. During the refugee crisis in 2015, over 35 000 unaccompanied mi-

nors came to Sweden and applied for asylum. A majority (23 480) were from Afghanistan. As a result of long asylum processing times at the Swedish Migration Agency, many of these unaccompanied minors came of legal age in 2016 and 2017.<sup>15</sup> Unaccompanied minors cannot be returned if there is no orderly reception in the country of origin, but single male adults from Afghanistan are often rejected and ordered to leave.<sup>16</sup> This means that many Afghan asylum seekers who were initially registered as 16 or 17 years old unaccompanied minors might have been granted a residence permit if their cases had been handled quickly. Instead, as processing times stretched over long periods of time, many became single adults in 2017 and were rejected. Several human rights groups and large parts of civil society as well as politicians have therefore demanded an amnesty for this group.

While the Swedish Government ruled out any larger, collective amnesty, it proposed legislation to make it possible for unaccompanied minors and youth (aged 17 to 24) to stay in Sweden, provided that they study at upper secondary level schools (gymnasium). The respective law entered into force in June 2017, covering individuals who at some point have been granted a temporary residence permit after an asylum application, whether or not the grounds for that permit have remained valid. As only 160 youth managed to receive a residence permit under the new law in 2017, the new provision was widely criticised for being inefficient and too strict. The Government therefore declared its willingness to expand the provision in 2018.

In addition to this, the Swedish approach to asylum seekers from Afghanistan was even debated in more general terms, i.e. not only in relation to minors and young people. The Swedish Migration Agency, but also the Migration Courts, received criticism from civil society for its decision-making practice regarding Afghan asylum seekers. Among other issues, it has been argued that Afghans have better chances of receiving protection in other EU countries.<sup>17</sup>

#### Reform of the Common European Asylum System

Another frequent topic of debate in 2017 was the ongoing process to reform the Common European Asylum System, including the Dublin regulation, and the consequences of the possible outcomes of this reform process for the reception of asylum seekers in Sweden. The Swedish Government argued strongly for a more balanced responsibility-sharing for the reception of asylum seekers among the Member States. Solidarity and greater harmonisation were declared priority issues for Sweden. According to the Government, the EU's future asylum system "must provide legal certainty and be sustainable, protect the right of asylum and at the same time achieve a more equal distribution of asylum seekers between Member States".<sup>18</sup> Against this background, the fact that some EU member states refused to accept asylum seekers to be relocated there from Italy and Greece was discussed negatively.

Much of the EU-related debate on asylum focused on the issue whether Sweden would be able to return to its earlier practice of granting beneficiaries of international protection permanent residence permits, and to have more generous family reunifica-

<sup>12</sup> According to the law, the assignment of such persons to municipalities shall be based on each municipality's local labour market, its population size and the overall number of newly arrived immigrants, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers already living in the municipality. Previously, the settlement of beneficiaries of protection was optional for municipalities, but this had created an unequal distribution of new arrivals across Sweden. The new law represents a challenge for many municipalities, especially those that suffer from housing shortages.

<sup>13</sup> "Pinsamt av S att ta hårdare tag mot utsatta människor", *Dagens Nyheter*, 30 March 2017.

<sup>14</sup> "Heléne Fritzon (S): Svårt att få gehör för permanenta uppehållstillstånd", *Sveriges Radio*, 21 October 2017.

<sup>15</sup> The average processing time (first instance) for asylum cases involving Afghan nationals was 636 days in 2017.

<sup>16</sup> The asylum recognition rate for Afghans (first instance) was 38% in 2017.

<sup>17</sup> "How other EU countries are handling forced returns to Afghanistan" (News release), Swedish Migration Agency, 6 December 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *Sweden's migration and asylum policy, Fact Sheet*, February 2018.

tion rules again. As already mentioned, a temporary law is in place in Sweden, which restricted the grounds for residence permits, prescribed the granting of temporary permits (instead of permanent ones) and restricted family reunification. This temporary law is set to expire in July 2019, but observers have argued that Sweden might not be able to grant permanent permits again as reform of the CEAS might produce an asylum qualification regulation that prescribes temporary permits.<sup>19</sup>

### Foreign workers losing their right to stay

Another recurring topic in the media were reports about labour immigrants losing their residence permits in Sweden and being expelled because their employers violated the conditions for employing workers from third countries. Even minor breaches, such as a monthly salary not being fully in line with collective agreements or insufficient insurance coverage of workers, could lead to expulsions, and the Swedish Migration Agency was criticised for being narrow-minded or pedantic regarding its interpretation of the existing rules.<sup>20</sup> As even urgently needed high-qualified specialists, e.g. in the IT business, were among those losing their right to stay, the debate about the so-called "expulsions of competence" (kompetensutvisningar) involved employers' associations and business leaders, who directed strong criticism towards the Migration Agency and the Government. Reacting to the problem, the Government amended the Swedish Aliens Act, making it possible for the Migration Agency not to revoke a residence permit for work in cases where an employer has corrected previous deviations from the requirements.

### Border control and id-checks

In response to the extraordinary refugee situation in the autumn of 2015, Sweden had reintroduced temporary border controls at internal Schengen border crossing points on 12 November 2015. In addition, on 4 January 2016, a new Government ordinance introduced extraterritorial identity checks on travellers on public transportation (busses, trains and boats) from Denmark, meaning that persons without ID-documents could not travel to Sweden from Denmark, using public transport.

Both measures, and especially the id-checks on travellers, prompted controversial debates. While they were considered useful and effective to monitor and restrict the inflow of asylum seekers, they were also criticised for making trans-border commuting between Denmark and Sweden more time-consuming. In August 2017, the Danish-Swedish knowledge centre Øresundsintituttet published an analysis, which concluded that the border and id-checks had slowed down economic growth in the border region and even had a negative impact on longer-term settlement patterns, as Danish residents in southern Sweden increasingly moved back to Denmark due to the longer travelling times across the border.<sup>21</sup> In May 2017, the id-checks were abandoned, but border controls were still carried out.

### Integration policies

Challenges regarding the integration of new arrivals in Sweden, such as the lack of affordable housing in many regions and municipalities, and slow labour market

integration, also continued to play a major role in public and media debates. The Government launched several initiatives to improve the job situation for newly arrived beneficiaries of protection, alleviate the shortage of teachers and improve the situation of schools that were particularly challenged by high numbers of newly arrived pupils, and facilitate language learning, among other policies and measures. Despite these initiatives and measures, problems surrounding the integration of beneficiaries of protection were a frequent topic of debate.

<sup>19</sup> See for example: *"Bedömningen: Ingen framtid för permanenta uppehållstillstånd"*, SVT Nyheter, 25 October 2017.

<sup>20</sup> *"Kompetensutvisningar kan stoppas i september"*, Svenska Dagbladet, 10 August 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Øresundsintituttet (2017): *Fakta - Effekterna av gränskontrollerna mellan Skåne och Själland – avskaffade id-kontroller ger förbättringar i tågtrafiken*, 9 August 2017.

## 3 LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

### 3.1 Economic migration

#### Labour immigration (employees)

The number of third-country nationals coming to Sweden as labour migrants increased significantly in 2017, as compared to the year before. Sweden granted 32 294 first-time residence permits for work-related reasons. This number was 24 709 in 2016, and 26 998 in 2015. These broad figures include not only persons coming to Sweden because they found employment there (16 178 in 2017), but also their family members (12 233) as well as some self-employed people (221), visiting researchers (1 222) and people who work in Sweden under special rules, e.g. as au pairs, trainees, artists or sportsmen (2 440).

Table 2 shows the overall development regarding labour immigration to Sweden for the five-year period 2013-2017. The number of incoming employees decreased in 2016 and then increased significantly (by almost 25%) in 2017. Immigration for self-employment purposes has been very modest in size over many years, and the year 2017 was no exception. Attracting migrants for self-employment purpose has not been a policy priority in Sweden.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 2:** Labour immigration to Sweden, 2013-2017

Broad category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Employees	15 974	12 521	13 789	12 985	16 178
Family members of labour immigrants	9 625	9 698	10 023	8 628	12 233
Self-employed	300	233	306	174	221
Visiting researchers	1 129	1 126	1 083	907	1 222
Work in Sweden under special rules	1 889	1 992	1 797	2 015	2 440
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 917</b>	<b>25 570</b>	<b>26 998</b>	<b>24 709</b>	<b>32 294</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

Since 2008, Sweden has pursued a liberal and demand-driven approach to immigration of third country nationals for employment purposes. With the 2008 reform, the previous agency-based labour market test was phased out. Since then, the overall point of departure has been that it is the individual employer who best knows the recruitment needs of his or her business. The possibility to recruit foreign workers has been significantly facilitated. Provided that the working conditions are in line with Swedish collective agreements or established practice and that certain additional conditions are met, the employer can in principle recruit anyone, regardless of national-

<sup>22</sup> *Migrationsverket (2015): Admitting third-country nationals for business purposes: Sweden, Report from EMN Sweden 2014:4. Norrköping.*

ity or profession. The existing rules also provide opportunities for migrants to get a permanent residence status after four years of stay with a work permit in Sweden.

Table 3 shows the ten main occupational categories among incoming workers from third countries in 2016 and 2017. These figures are based on the number of work permits granted. There are certain differences between the number of immigrants who have received a residence permit for work reasons as employees (16 178 in 2017, as mentioned above) and the number of work permits issued (15 552). The main reason for this is that in some cases, an immigrant will need a work permit to work in Sweden, but not a residence permit, while in other cases, a residence permit is needed, but the person is exempted from the requirement to have a work permit.

The number of work permits issued in 2017 shows an increasing trend over almost all the top-10 occupational groups among labour migrants. This is true for occupations requiring high skills but also for a number of low-skilled jobs. Only for seasonal work as berry-pickers and planters, there was a slight decrease. Over a longer period of analysis, it can be observed that the number of incoming labour migrants with high skills has grown stronger than the number of people working in low-skilled jobs. The category "IT architects, systems analysts, and test managers" has been the largest group in recent years, but also engineers and cooks have been increasingly popular occupations among labour migrants.

The trend towards more a highly skilled immigration can be understood as a result of stricter requirements for employers who recruit workers for low-skilled occupations. Another factor is that Sweden has received many asylum seekers in recent years. They often look for jobs with low qualification requirements; hence the need for employers to recruit such workers from abroad may have declined.

**Table 3:** Work permits granted to workers from abroad, 2016 and 2017, 10 main occupational groups

	2016	2017
IT architects, systems analysts, and test managers	3 737	4 029
Berry pickers and planters	3 199	3 043
Engineering professionals	790	1 082
Cooks and cold-buffet managers	532	849
Fast-food workers, food preparation assistants	397	781
Cleaners and home service personnel	192	513
Physical and engineering science technicians	335	431
Nursing auxiliaries, custodians, and personal assistants	234	268
Forestry workers	142	257
Operations, support, and network technicians	31	246
Others	2 937	4 053
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 526</b>	<b>15 552</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

The most common nationality groups engaging in labour market-related migration to Sweden in 2017 were India (8 483), Thailand (3 512), and China (2 226). These three countries have been the most relevant ones in the context of labour immigration to Sweden over many years, with Indian nationals often working in the IT sector and Thai nationals in the seasonal berry-picking business. The number of Thai labour migrants has decreased, however, while Indians have increased.



**Table 4:** Residence permits granted for work purposes (including family members), 2013-2017, top-10 nationalities

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
India	5 133	5 573	5 896	6 818	8 483
Thailand	6 517	3 062	4 341	3 616	3 512
China	2 005	2 151	1 868	1 689	2 226
USA	1 201	1 181	1 211	924	1 406
Ukraine	749	833	931	846	1 255
Iraq	751	728	1 521	982	1 250
Turkey	840	912	826	690	1 162
Pakistan	822	632	652	485	847
Iran	998	744	673	513	801
Mongolia	363	230	255	244	700

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### Legal and policy changes to the Swedish labour immigration system

In recent years, the current Swedish system for labour immigration has often been criticised for not sufficiently preventing untrustworthy employers from exploiting foreign workers. In 2015, the Swedish Government appointed a committee on labour migration, aimed at improving the situation of labour migrants in Sweden. In December 2016, the committee published its final report and made a number of policy suggestions.<sup>23</sup> Among other issues, it suggested additional sanctions against employers who intentionally do not abide by the laws regulating the employment of third country nationals. Preparatory legislative work was also carried out in order to enable the Swedish Police to carry out risk-based inspections at work places to detect illegal work more systematically.

There was also a debate, in 2017, regarding third country nationals who had their residence permits revoked because of minor violations by their employers of the legal requirements regarding employment-related immigration, such as insufficient insurance payments or too low salaries during a limited period of time. Against this background, an amendment was introduced to the Swedish rules on labour immigration, making it possible for the Migration Agency not to revoke a residence permit for work purposes in cases where an employer has corrected previous deviations from the requirements (e.g. salary on par with relevant collective agreement, correct insurance coverage, etc.). Such corrections must however be made before the Migration Agency notifies an employer about not fulfilling the requirements.

<sup>23</sup> Statens Offentliga Utredningar (2016): *Stärkt ställning för arbetskraftsinvandrare på arbetsmarknaden - Betänkande av Utredningen om åtgärder för att stärka arbetskraftsinvandrarens ställning på arbetsmarknaden. SOU 2016:91, Stockholm.*

Also in 2017, the Swedish Government made preparations to implement three EU-directives on legal migration into Swedish law; the ICT-Directive,<sup>24</sup> the Seasonal Workers Directive,<sup>25</sup> and the Students and Researchers Directive.<sup>26</sup>

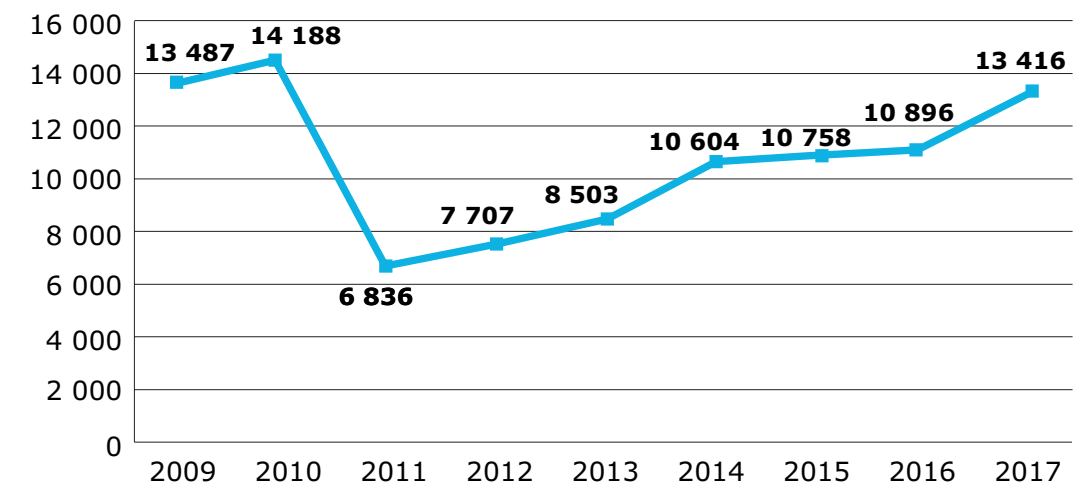
## 3.2 International students and visiting researchers

### Third-country national students

Migration to Sweden for study reasons is generally seen very positively, not least because international students contribute to the internationalisation of the Swedish higher education system and help to make Sweden known abroad. Between 2005 and 2010, study-related immigration increased strongly and steadily. In 2011, the number of third-country nationals who were granted residence permits for study reasons fell sharply, mainly due to the introduction of tuition fees for incoming third-country students. Since 2012, however, the numbers have been rising again.

In 2017, a total of 13 416 residence permits were granted for study reasons, including doctoral studies and accompanying family members of international students. Compared to 2010, when there were still no tuition fees, this still represents a somewhat smaller number, but over the past seven years, the gap between 2010 and numbers for subsequent years has tended to close.

**Figure 3:** First-time residence permits granted for study reasons (including accompanying family members), 2009-2017



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

<sup>24</sup> Directive 2014/66/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer.

<sup>25</sup> Directive 2014/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers.

<sup>26</sup> Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing.



As Table 5 shows, the by far most important nationality group among international students in Sweden over the past five years has been Chinese. The second and third largest nationalities in 2017 were India and Pakistan. Overall, since the introduction of tuition fees, the share of students from developing countries has decreased, and the share of students from relatively wealthy countries (such as the USA, Singapore and Japan) has increased.

**Table 5:** First-time residence permits granted for study reasons, top-10 nationality groups, 2013-2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>China</b>	1 840	2 081	2 339	2 327	2 466
<b>India</b>	650	917	1 005	1 218	1 577
<b>Pakistan</b>	393	635	943	849	952
<b>Iran</b>	502	628	628	572	884
<b>USA</b>	666	821	804	752	874
<b>Bangladesh</b>	162	300	330	350	653
<b>Singapore</b>	352	385	389	357	416
<b>Turkey</b>	414	386	306	308	395
<b>Canada</b>	378	416	420	408	384
<b>Japan</b>	233	268	270	252	336

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### Possibilities for international students to remain in Sweden to look for work

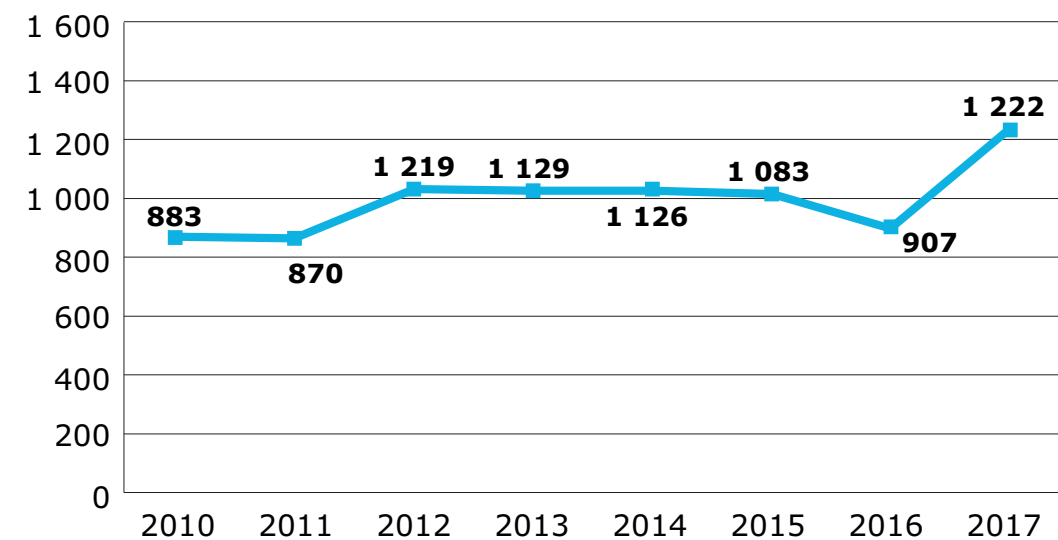
There was an important policy change regarding international students in 2014, which started having some impact in 2015 and subsequent years. Students who have carried out studies at a Swedish higher education institution for at least two terms can now receive a residence permit for the purpose of looking for employment or investigating opportunities to start a business. According to a provision in the Aliens Ordinance, this permit can be valid for a maximum of six months. Previously, international students were only allowed to stay in Sweden when they had found work already during their studies in the country and applied for a residence permit for work reasons before the study-related permit expired. Since this amendment took effect, almost 1 500 third country nationals who previously had a residence permit for studies in Sweden received a new residence permit to stay and look for work. 122 such permits were granted in 2014, 334 in 2015, 445 in 2016, and 562 in 2017.

The stay of international students is increasingly related to the immigration of labour migrants. Among all third-country nationals that were granted a residence permit for work purposes in 2017 (as analysed in the previous section of this report), 778 were former students at Swedish universities and university colleges.

### Researchers

In addition to international students, Sweden also admits researchers under the EU Researchers' Directive.<sup>27</sup> Their number reached a relatively high level in 2012 (1 219) but has been declining since. In 2016, 907 third-country nationals were granted a permit as researchers. In 2017, the trend turned upward again, with 1 222 permits granted. Statistically, visiting researchers are not included in the above-mentioned data on students; they are however included in the data on labour immigrants.

**Figure 4:** First-time residence permits granted to researchers, 2010-2017



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### 3.3 Family reunification

Immigration on the basis of family ties accounts for a large share of the overall immigration flows to Sweden. Taken together, the reunification of family members in Sweden, family formation, adoptions, and accompanying family members of labour immigrants or incoming foreign students, stood for more than 48% of all first-time residence permits granted to non-EU nationals in 2017. Compared to previous years, this percentage was very high. Family-related grounds represented 34% of all permits granted in 2016, and 40% of those granted in 2015. In absolute numbers, Sweden issued 65 677 residence permits for family reasons in 2017, compared to roughly 52 000 the year before. These figures comprise all above-mentioned sub-categories of family-related grounds for residence.

A particular feature regarding family-related immigration to Sweden is that unmarried partners enjoy the same rights as married couples as far as the granting of a residence permit for family reunification is concerned. This is also true for same-sex couples. An unmarried partner who has co-habited with the sponsor in the home country, and can prove this, has the same right to family reunification as a spouse.

<sup>27</sup> Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research.

Persons arriving for the purpose of family reunification have the right to receive language tuition (Swedish for Immigrants), and municipalities are obliged to offer social orientation and may also extend other introduction activities to this group. The Swedish immigration rules for third country national workers and international students are family-friendly, as well, as they may bring members of their core families to Sweden.

### Stricter financial support requirements for family reunification

Recently, however, the rules for family-related migration were tightened considerably. In 2010, a financial support requirement was introduced in the Aliens Act as a condition for family reunification. According to this requirement, the sponsor (i.e. the person that wants a person residing abroad to join him/her) has to show sufficient income to support himself/herself. He/she also needs to have suitable accommodation for the family members who want to settle in Sweden. There were several exemptions from this requirement, however.

In 2016, the Parliament adopted a temporary law restricting the possibility of being granted a residence permit for protection purposes in Sweden, and the right to family reunification. It will be valid at least until 19 July 2019. Regarding maintenance requirements, the temporary law demands that the sponsor in Sweden (who wants to be reunited or joined by family members) must not only be able to support him-/herself but also his or her family members.<sup>28</sup> Before, sponsors only needed to prove that they could support themselves.

### Family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection

The same law also states that refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection in Sweden will be granted temporary residence permits instead of permanent permits (which is the main rule under the Aliens Act). Refugees who are granted temporary residence permits under the temporary law and who are deemed to have well-grounded prospects of obtaining a permanent residence permit will continue to have a right to family reunification with their spouse, cohabitant and/or minor children, and children who are refugees will have a right to reunification with their parents. By contrast, a beneficiary of subsidiary protection who submitted his/her asylum application after 24 November 2015 has no right to family reunification.

### Numerical trends in 2016-2017

In 2017, the Swedish Migration Agency and Migration Courts granted 48 046 first-time residence permits for family reunification and family formation purposes, which means an increase by over 23% compared to 2016, when around 39 000 such permits were granted. These numbers include family reunification and family formation in general, family members of refugees and other persons with international protection status, adopted children, and children of third-country nationals with permanent residence status in Sweden. Conversely, accompanying family members of labour immigrants or foreign students and third-country nationals who were granted a residence permit as family members of EU citizens or persons with long-term residence

<sup>28</sup> The maintenance requirement will not apply, however, if the sponsor is a child. In addition, family members of beneficiaries of international protection are also exempt from the maintenance requirement if the family member applies for family reunification within three months of the date when the beneficiary of protection obtained his/her residence permit.

rights in other EU Member States are not included. All categories are, however, shown separately in Table 6.

Even though the number of residence permits granted for family reunification increased in 2017 compared to previous years, it must be assumed that the above-mentioned temporary law has had a decelerating effect on the overall trend. If beneficiaries of subsidiary protection had still been allowed to reunite with family members, the increase in 2017 would very likely have been much stronger. Still, several Swedish missions abroad have been overburdened due to the large number of people applying for family reunification with relatives in Sweden, and processing times at the Swedish Migration Agency have been long, as well. In 2017, the Migration Agency tried to prioritise older and complicated cases, which is why average processing times for first-time permits for family reunification stretched to 364 days. The number of pending cases was however reduced during the year.

**Table 6:** First-time residence permits granted for family reasons, main categories, 2013-2017

Nationality	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Adoptions	243	221	155	129	83
Family members of refugees and other beneficiaries of protection	10 673	13 100	16 251	15 148	19 124
Family reunification and family formation in general	18 541	18 079	15 637	16 472	18 989
Children (of foreign parents) born in Sweden	4 577	4 565	5 236	7 278	9 850
<b>Total</b>	<b>34 034</b>	<b>35 965</b>	<b>37 279</b>	<b>39 027</b>	<b>48 046</b>
Family members of labour immigrants	9 625	9 698	10 023	8 628	12 233
Family members of international students	944	1 337	1 348	1 425	1 842
Family members of third-country nationals with long-term resident status in other EU Member States	516	606	740	1 184	1 606
Third-country nationals who are family members of EU/EEA citizens or Swiss citizens	1 215	908	985	1 672	1 829
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>46 334</b>	<b>48 514</b>	<b>50 375</b>	<b>51 936</b>	<b>65 677*</b>

\* The Grand Total also includes a small number of other family-related permits, which do not fall into any of the main categories.

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

The most frequent nationality groups among the persons immigrating for family reasons<sup>29</sup> in 2017 were Syria, Eritrea, stateless persons and Somalia. Over recent years, there has been a remarkable increase regarding Syrian nationals coming to Sweden for family reasons. This is, however, a logical consequence of the fact that many Syrians had come to Sweden in previous years as asylum seekers. The number of Eritrean family migrants has grown as well, while fewer have come from Somalia or Iraq.

<sup>29</sup> Excluding family members of labour immigrants, of international students, of third-country nationals with long-term resident status in other EU Member States and of EU/EEA citizens or Swiss citizens.

**Table 7:** First-time residence permits granted for family reasons, top-10 nationality groups, 2013-2017

Nationality	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Syria	1 097	5 923	10 129	10 214	12 788	40 151
Somalia	8 016	3 482	2 859	2 594	2 823	19 774
Stateless	1 557	3 150	2 600	2 497	3 155	12 959
Eritrea	1 033	1 454	1 537	2 405	3 913	10 342
Afghanistan	1 773	2 015	1 753	1 371	1 709	8 621
Iraq	1 754	1 651	1 474	1 460	1 912	8 251
Thailand	1 806	1 543	1 179	1 404	1 484	7 416
Unknown	1 129	968	1 576	1 453	2 114	7 240
China	664	702	790	769	928	3 853
Turkey	700	779	686	756	838	3 759
Other	14 490	14 293	12 679	14 084	16 382	71 928
<b>Total</b>	<b>34 019</b>	<b>35 960</b>	<b>37 262</b>	<b>39 007</b>	<b>48 046</b>	<b>194 294</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### 3.4 Citizenship and naturalisation

#### Policy changes

Regarding the acquisition of Swedish citizenship, no major political developments can be reported for 2017, and the Swedish Citizenship Act remained unchanged. The latest changes to this Act came into force in April 2015. Among other provisions, this reform facilitated the automatic acquisition of Swedish citizenship at birth (so that a child now always acquires Swedish citizenship at birth if one of the child's parents is a Swedish citizen), and shortened the minimum requirements for period of domicile and permanent residence in Sweden for children and young people to be able to become Swedish citizens.

#### Statistical trends

In 2017, the Swedish Migration Agency received 50 950 applications for naturalization, which represents an increase by almost 20% compared to 2016, when 42 632 applications were received. 43 817 naturalization cases were decided during 2017, and the share of positive decisions was 87%. This means that around 38 000 immigrants became Swedish nationals by naturalization. Another 11 900 people acquired Swedish citizenship by registration, which is a simplified procedure for certain groups of immigrants.

The strong increase regarding the acquisition of Swedish citizenship can be seen as a result of increased immigration to Sweden, not least by refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection, during earlier years. In addition, a reform of the Citizenship Act in 2015 made the acquisition of Swedish citizenship by registration easier.

The largest groups among those who applied for Swedish citizenship in 2017 were immigrants from Syria, stateless people, as well as citizens of Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq. Many people from these countries had come to Sweden as asylum seekers in earlier years, and were granted residence permits. Most immigrants can become Swedish citizens after five years of legal residence, but for persons with refugee status and stateless people four years are normally sufficient.

### 3.5 Visa Policy and Schengen co-operation

Regarding the issuing of short-term visas for third-country nationals who want to visit Sweden for a limited time for tourism purposes, visiting family members or business activities, there were no significant new developments in 2016. Sweden issues visas in accordance with the EU visa code, and Schengen visas are registered in the Visa Information System (VIS).

Sweden issued 216 910 Schengen visas (mostly type-C visas) in 2017, which represents a strong increase compared to 2016, when 197 347 Schengen visas were granted. The increase is mainly due to a rising number of incoming tourists that are subject to visa requirements. Schengen visas for tourism purposes (roughly 99 500) indeed represented almost half of all visas the Sweden issued in 2017, followed by visas issued for family reasons (52 500) and business purposes (44 500).

In addition to Schengen visas, 4 701 national (type-D) visas were issued, which represents approximately the same number as in 2016. Type-C visas allow the holder a stay of up to 90 days within a period of 6 months for purposes such as tourism, family visits or business. National type-D visas as well as temporary residence permits are used, for example, when the reason for travelling to Sweden does not correspond to any of the travel purposes outlined in the EU Visa Code, or when a foreign national wishes to stay in Sweden for more than 90 days.

Most visas in 2017 were issued to Chinese (92 314, compared to roughly 75 000 the year before), Russian (21 376 – almost the same number as in 2016) and Indian (22 010 – up from 19 000 in 2016) travelers.

#### Schengen borders

On several occasions throughout the year 2017, the Swedish Government decided to prolong the temporary controls at Sweden's internal Schengen borders. They were originally introduced in November 2015, in response to the extraordinary asylum situation at the time, which according to the Government posed acute challenges to vital functions of society. Border checks were in 2017 carried out at the Öresund Bridge (linking Denmark and Sweden) and at the harbours of Trelleborg and Helsingborg in the Police Region South. In the Police Region West, border checks were performed at Gothenburg Harbour.

## 4 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

After the extraordinary asylum situation in Sweden in 2015, the year 2016 was marked by a drastic reduction in the number of new asylum applicants arriving in the country, but also by huge pressures on the Swedish Migration Agency and the Migration Courts to process the applications of the almost 163 000 people that had applied during 2015. These pressures continued in 2017 despite a further reduction in the number of new asylum seekers. While Sweden registered 28 939 new applicants in 2016, which was less than one fifth of the number registered in 2015, the number of new applicants was 25 666 in 2017.

The number of first-instance asylum decisions decreased from 111 979 in 2016 to 66 301 in 2017. However, the fact that this number was still much higher than the number of new asylum applications made during the year indicates that the Migration Agency was still deciding on tens of thousands of asylum requests made in previous years, especially 2015.

### Legislative developments

Reacting to the refugee situation in 2015, the Swedish Government prepared new legislation and a number of changes to the Swedish Aliens Act in late 2015 and 2016, which were eventually adopted by the Parliament and subsequently entered into force.<sup>30</sup> Most importantly perhaps, a temporary act, which introduced temporary residence permits for beneficiaries of international protection (instead of permanent permits), restricted humanitarian grounds for residence in Sweden, and narrowed family reunification entitlements,<sup>31</sup> entered into force in July 2016 and continued to apply in 2017. It is foreseen to be in force until July 2019.

ID-requirements for people travelling to Sweden from Denmark were introduced in January 2016 and abolished again in May 2017. By contrast, temporary controls at Sweden's intra-Schengen borders, which started in late 2015, were upheld throughout the year 2017.

In June 2017, new legislation entered into force that grants young people (aged 17 to 24), who study at upper secondary level (gymnasium), a right to a residence permit. The legislation covers individuals who were at some point granted a temporary residence permit after an asylum application, whether or not the grounds for that permit have remained valid. The respective individuals can be granted a permit with a duration of 13 months to 4 years at a time, and they can apply for an extension if they have reasons for not finishing their upper secondary level education according to their individual study plan. The aim of this legal amendment was to make it possible for young asylum seekers, including young people that were considered unaccompa-

<sup>30</sup> For an overview, please see Swedish EMN Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum for 2015 and 2016, available at [www.emnsweden.se](http://www.emnsweden.se), and Migrationsverket (2018): *The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member States' responses - Country Report Sweden*.

<sup>31</sup> Lag (2016:752) om tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppehållstillstånd i Sverige.

nied minors when they came to Sweden, to finalise an education in Sweden even in the event of their temporary asylum-related residence permit expiring and not being extended.

In December 2017, an enquiry about the preconditions for creating legal pathways to the EU to seek asylum presented its final report. The enquiry, which had been appointed by the Swedish Government in January 2016, found that there are few legal routes to Europe for asylum seekers, and that the number of asylum seekers is very unevenly distributed across the EU. In its report, the enquiry argued that the EU treaties provided support for a new legal instrument in the EU that would create a system of entry permits, to be issued for the purpose of seeking asylum. The report also states that the European Commission should examine whether it is possible to propose such a system as a complement to existing resettlement frameworks in the EU and spontaneous, territorial asylum applications.<sup>19</sup>

Another government-commissioned enquiry proposed in November 2017 that practical impediments to enforcement should be specifically stated in the provisions on impediments to enforcement in the Aliens Act, to clarify the types of impediments that must be considered in an asylum case. The enquiry also proposed that the concept of practical impediments to enforcement be introduced into the Aliens Act's provisions on impediments to enforcement following a final and non-appealable removal order. Thirdly, a new provision should explicitly state that if a removal order has expired, a residence permit may be granted if the individual's own actions are not the decisive reason for the removal order being unenforceable. Finally, the legal status of stateless people and the possibility of introducing a statelessness determination procedure in Sweden should be examined, according to the enquiry.<sup>20</sup>

### Non-legislative developments: Standards for asylum procedures

In May 2015, the Migration Agency implemented a new standard for processing asylum applications, which was further developed and rolled out in 2016. As a part of the new standard, the initial step of the asylum process that starts with the registration of an application has become more rigorous, especially concerning the initial interview. The objective is to screen asylum applications and to determine the necessary steps ahead as early in the process as possible, which shall lead to a more effective and judicially secure process. The new standard means that the Migration Agency, to a higher degree than before, individualizes the asylum process in accordance with the specificities of each application. Asylum applications are now classified and sorted into six different tracks. The overall aim of this internal reform at the Migration Agency was to shorten the duration of procedures by making an early assessment as to whether a case can be subject to quick processing. The subdivision of cases into separate tracks also aims to better direct specialist staff at the Agency to those cases that need it. It thus improves the internal planning and allocation of resources. Overall, the new process is expected to increase both efficiency and quality.<sup>32</sup>

### Appeals procedures

The exceptionally large number of asylum applicants that arrived in Sweden in 2014-2015 led to a rising number of appeal cases at the four Swedish migration courts. In 2017, the migration courts were expected to receive more than 25 000 asylum appeal cases. To improve the migration courts' ability to deal with a rising caseload, new legislative amendments entered into force on 1 January 2017. The amendments have

<sup>32</sup> Migrationsverket, *Processbeskrivning Migrationsverkets skyddsprocess*, 29 March 2017.



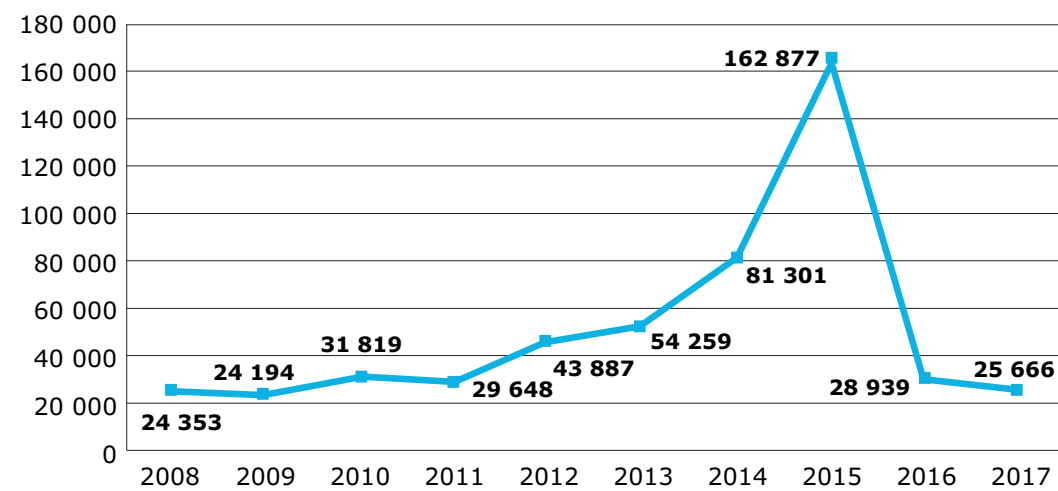
made it possible for the migration courts to hand open appeal cases over to other administrative courts.

#### 4.1 Applications for international protection and asylum procedures

Throughout recent years, Sweden has been one of the principal destination countries for asylum seekers within the European Union. In 2015, almost 163 000 applications were registered in Sweden, an increase by more than 100% compared to 2014. In 2016, the number of new asylum seekers decreased strongly, to 28 939 new applicants, less than one fifth of the number for 2015, and it further decreased to 25 666 in 2017.

Included in the numbers for 2017 are 1 657 asylum seekers that were relocated to Sweden from Greece, and 1 161 relocated from Italy.<sup>33</sup> On 9 June 2016, the Council of the European Union had decided that the obligations of Sweden as a Member State of relocation under the decisions (EU) 2015/1523<sup>34</sup> and (EU) 2015/1601<sup>35</sup> shall be suspended until 16 June 2017. Consequently, Sweden started to receive relocated asylum applicants relatively late, in June 2017.

**Figure 5:** Asylum seekers, 2008-2016



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

<sup>33</sup> Relocation is defined as the transfer of persons having applied for international protection from the EU Member State which is responsible for examining their application to another EU Member State where their applications for international protection will be examined. In the context of the EU emergency response system, relocation means the transfer of an applicant in clear need of international protection from the territory of the Member State initially indicated as responsible for examining their application for international protection to the territory of the Member State of relocation. Following transfer, the latter will become the Member State responsible for examining the application for international protection (see Art. 2(e) of Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 and Art. 2(e) of Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601).

<sup>34</sup> Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece.

<sup>35</sup> Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece.

Refugees that were resettled to Sweden are not included in the numbers of asylum seekers, as their cases are already decided when they arrive in Sweden. For resettlement, see Chapter 4.5.

There is certainly no single explanation for the notable decrease in the number of asylum seekers in 2016 and 2017. Border closures in Southern, South-Eastern and Central Europe, the agreement between the EU and Turkey to stop irregular migration flows from Turkey to Greece, restrictive policy turns in various EU Member States may have contributed to this development, alongside the various Swedish policy changes which included ID-checks on travellers from Denmark, temporary intra-Schengen border controls and measures to make Sweden less attractive as a destination country.

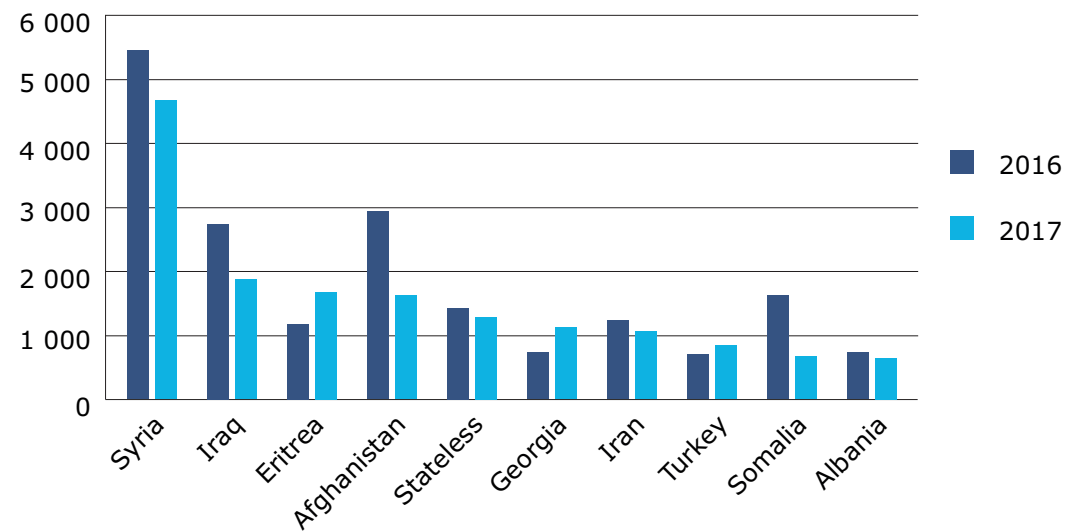
Syria was the single largest country of origin of asylum seekers during the year 2017 (4 718 applicants), as in the previous year, followed by Iraqi (1 887) and Eritrean (1 691) asylum seekers. Other major groups were Afghans, stateless people, Georgians and Iranians. Many major groups decreased in numbers in 2017, compared to 2016, with most notable declines for applicants from Somalia and Afghanistan. Eritrea was a group that increased, as did Georgians, and to some degree Turkish citizens. Table 8 and Figure 6 below display the main countries of origin of asylum seekers for the year 2017, compared to 2016.

**Table 8:** Asylum seekers, main nationality groups, 2016-2017

Citizenship	2016	2017	Change %
Syria	5 459	4 718	-14 %
Iraq	2 758	1 887	-32 %
Eritrea	1 151	1 691	47 %
Afghanistan	2 969	1 681	-43 %
Stateless	1 339	1 201	-10 %
Georgia	737	1 105	50 %
Iran	1 279	1 090	-15 %
Turkey	738	872	18 %
Somalia	1 646	780	-53 %
Albania	785	760	-3 %
Other	10 078	9 881	-2 %
Total	28 939	25 666	-11 %

Source: Swedish Migration Agency



**Figure 6:** Asylum seekers, main nationality groups, 2016-2017

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### Quality of asylum procedures and adjudication

In September 2017, the Migration Agency introduced a new support function for the handling of LGBTI-cases. The function consists of an operational coordinator responsible of coordinating the work of LGBTI-specialists within the Agency. Representatives from the Agency's Quality Department, the Legal Department, the Department for Country of origin information and Human Resources are also part of this new function. Its purpose is to secure the quality and efficiency of the management and decision-making in LGBTI-cases through coordination and support.

The Migration Agency also develop measures to improve the safeguarding of the rights of children in the asylum process. As an example, the development of a tool used to evaluate if an authoritative action is in the best interest of the child started in 2017. In addition, the Agency started to implement a new system for a digitalized processing of asylum cases. Digitalization is expected to make the process more flexible and improve the possibilities to conduct follow-ups through digital registrations.

## 4.2 Reception of asylum applicants

The Swedish reception system for asylum seekers is managed by the Migration Agency. While an asylum application is under consideration, the applicant is enrolled at a reception unit, which will help him/her with accommodation and expenses during the waiting period.

There are two different main types of accommodation:

- In many cases, accommodation is provided by the Migration Agency in an apartment in a normal housing area, rented by the Migration Agency anywhere in the country, or at a reception centre. The asylum applicants may apply for daily allowances if they cannot support themselves. Urgent medical care is provided to all applicants. Families stay together and usually do not share a flat with other asylum applicants. At times of increasing pressures on the reception system, ordinary housing in apartments is often not sufficient to meet the demand. In such

situations, the Migration Agency recurs to different types of interim and emergency solutions, mainly through procurement procedures. It can rent, for example, youth hostels, hotels, holiday cabins, and other facilities. This type of housing is called reception facilities (anläggningsboende, ABO).

- As an alternative to stay in ABO accommodation provided by the Migration Agency, an asylum seeker also has the possibility to arrange his/her own accommodation, which is called eget boende (EBO). Since applicants usually do not have the financial means to pay the rent for a flat, they often stay with friends or relatives in such cases. Asylum seekers that choose to reside with friends or family members can receive the same financial allowance as those staying in accommodation provided by the Migration Agency. An asylum seeker who chooses to stay with friends and relatives can at any time request to be accommodated by the Swedish Migration Agency instead.

By the end of 2017, a total of 76 640 people were enrolled in the Swedish reception system for asylum seekers, which is an decrease by 38% compared to 2016, when 122 708 persons were enrolled. Already at the end of 2016, the reception system had shrunk by 33% compared to the record year of 2015.

In 2017, 33 221 (43%) of the asylum seekers enrolled in the system had arranged their own accommodation (EBO), and 35 496 (46%) relied on accommodation provided by the Migration Agency (ABO). The remaining 10% were accommodated in other, specialised facilities.<sup>36</sup> This means that the share of persons staying in their own apartments increased. In 2016, only 29% (35 449 persons) had their own accommodation, while 51% (63 063 persons) had ABO-arrangements.

During the autumn of 2015, the need for accommodation had increased dramatically due to the strongly rising number of incoming asylum applicants. At times, the need for accommodation exceeded the Migration Agency's capacity. In 2016, following a decrease in the number of new asylum applicants coming to Sweden and the finalization of the asylum procedures of many asylum seekers that had arrived in 2015, the situation gradually became more relaxed. The Migration Agency started to close down some reception facilities that had been used as emergency reception centres during the extraordinary refugee situation of 2015. In 2017, the main development regarding reception was the further decommissioning of most of the additional, temporary housing that had been acquired in 2015 and early 2016. During 2016, nearly 30 000 beds were discontinued and in 2017, a total of 29 687 beds were decommissioned. At the end of 2017, the ordinary Swedish reception system consisted of 47 000 beds. The Swedish Migration Agency is now adapting its operations to an anticipated further decrease in the number of asylum seekers, and to budgetary restrictions.

### Inquiry for a coherent system for reception and settlement

In November 2015, the Swedish Government commissioned an inquiry to propose measures to create a coherent system for the reception and settlement of asylum seekers and new arrivals in Sweden. In 2017, the Government issued supplementary terms of reference to this inquiry, extending its mission. In concrete terms, the inquiry is tasked to

<sup>36</sup> Asylum seekers placed in specialised facilities include unaccompanied minors that are placed in child care facilities or family homes, and asylum seekers that are placed in health care facilities or police arrests.

- propose early integration-related activities for asylum seekers and link the payment of daily allowances to asylum seekers' participation in such activities. According to the Government, daily allowances should be reduced if a person does not participate, unless there are valid reasons for his/her absence;
- review the possibility for asylum seekers to participate in internships and other workplace-related activities that increase contact with the labour market;
- examine the prerequisites for introducing a possibility to reduce the daily allowance in cases of misconduct of an asylum seeker or other action that makes the reception more difficult; and
- suggest how the daily allowance can be designed so that minor income from work does not negatively affect the allowance.

The work of the committee, which was finalized and presented in March 2018,<sup>37</sup> is expected to lead to changes to the current reception system for asylum seekers in Sweden.

### 4.3 Asylum decisions

In 2017, the Swedish Migration Agency made 66 301 first-instance decisions on asylum cases. This represents 41 percent fewer decisions than in 2016, when 111 979 decisions were taken – an all-time high. The number of decisions in 2017 still represented a high level, however, reflecting the fact that Sweden had received an extraordinarily high number of asylum applicants back in 2015, some of which were only decided in 2017.

27 205 individuals were granted protection in 2017, compared to 67 258 in 2016. Also the overall protection rate was considerably lower in 2017 (41 percent) than in 2016 (60 percent). If Dublin cases and other asylum cases that Sweden did not examine materially, e.g. cases that were written off, are excluded from this calculation, the protection rate was 47 percent in 2017, compared to 77 percent during the year before.<sup>38</sup>

13 337 individuals who received a positive decision in 2017 were granted refugee status in accordance with the Geneva Convention. This equals to 49% of all those granted protection (27 205). Another 12 272 persons (45%) received subsidiary protection. In addition to these two main statuses, roughly 6% (1 596 persons) received humanitarian statuses due to "particularly distressing circumstances", residence permits on other, exceptional humanitarian grounds, or a permit on the basis of impediments to the enforcement of return obligations. Compared to earlier years, the share of individuals receiving refugee status increased substantially, while the percentage of persons with subsidiary protection shrunk. In 2016, refugee status was the outcome

<sup>37</sup> *Mottagandeutredningen (2018): Ett ordnat mottagande – gemensamt ansvar för snabb etablering eller återvändande, SOU 2018: 22.*

<sup>38</sup> *The lower protection rate can be related to a changing caseload. In 2017, asylum applicants from countries with low or relatively low protection rates stood for a greater share of all decisions made than in 2016. For example, 54% of all first-instance decisions in 2017 concerned applicants from Afghanistan and Iraq, but these two nationalities only accounted for 20% the decisions taken in 2016. Afghans and Iraqis are however less likely to be granted protection than Syrian nationals. Syrians only represented 11% of all decisions taken by the Migration Agency in 2017, but 43% in 2016.*

of 25% of all positive decisions, and subsidiary protection constituted 70%.<sup>39</sup>

Table 9 below shows the distribution of positive and negative decisions for the ten quantitatively most important citizenship groups in 2017. Among these ten nationalities, Syrian and Eritrean nationals had the highest proportion of positive decisions, 91% and 88%, respectively. If one excludes cases in which the Swedish Migration Agency did not consider the application materially, for example due to the responsibility of another European country for the examination of the application ("Dublin cases"), then 99% of all Syrian applicants and 96% of all Eritrean applicants were granted protection. Another important nationality group with a high share of positive decisions was stateless asylum seekers, with a recognition rate of 66%. By contrast, citizens of Albania were generally not found to be in need of protection, and not a single Georgian applicant received asylum in 2017.

**Table 9:** First-instance decisions in asylum cases, main nationality groups, 2017

Citizenship	Total number of decisions	Positive	Negative (after material consideration)	Negative (Dublin)*	Negative (other)**	Proportion positive decisions of all decisions
Afghanistan	25 562	9 374	15 303	149	736	37 %
Iraq	10 139	3 524	5 425	427	763	35 %
Syria	7 577	6 878	74	328	297	91 %
Stateless	2 524	1 659	602	128	135	66 %
Iran	2 474	1 157	1 033	103	181	47 %
Somalia	2 353	987	938	192	236	42 %
Eritrea	1 965	1 734	76	68	87	88 %
Ethiopia	1 095	478	527	43	47	44 %
Georgia	963	0	579	173	211	0 %
Albania	802	7	493	20	282	1 %
Other	10 847	1 407	5 752	1 569	2 119	13 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>66 301</b>	<b>27 205</b>	<b>30 802</b>	<b>3 200</b>	<b>5 094</b>	<b>41 %</b>

\* "Negative (Dublin)" means that the asylum examination is to be taken over by another State within the framework of the Dublin Regulation.

\*\* "Negative (other)" means that the Swedish Migration Agency has not considered the case materially because the application was written off. An application will be written off, among other reasons, when the applicant absconds or withdraws his/her application.

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### Dublin procedures

2017 also saw a significant shift when it comes to Dublin procedures in Sweden. Compared to 2016, the number of asylum cases handled under the Dublin Regulation decreased strongly in 2017. While 13% (3 386 cases) of all new asylum applications were handled under the Dublin regulation in 2017, this percentage had been 17% (5 003 cases) in 2016. In 2015, 17 258 cases (11%) had been considered Dublin cases.

<sup>39</sup> For details, EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2016 – Sweden, p. 33-35.

As a result of Dublin procedures, the Migration Agency sent roughly 3 700 “take back” or “take charge” requests to other Dublin states, the majority of which were directed to Italy, Germany and France. In 2016, the number of outgoing requests was around 12 100 cases.

While Sweden thus had fewer “outgoing” Dublin cases recently, there has been a notable increase regarding cases in which take back or take charge requests in accordance with the Dublin regulation were addressed to Sweden from other countries. Approximately 7 600 Dublin requests were received, primarily from Germany, France, and Denmark. In 2016, the number of incoming Dublin requests was less than 5 600.

The fact that Sweden now receives more requests than it sends to other countries, which is in sharp contrast to earlier years, can be considered a result of Sweden’s tougher approach towards rejected asylum seekers, who can lose their right to accommodation and daily allowance following amendments to the Act on reception for asylum seekers, adopted in 2016. As the rules are more restrictive now, rejected applicants may increasingly leave the country and apply for asylum again elsewhere, which can result in more take back requests to Sweden.

At the same time, the efficiency of Dublin procedures has improved. The number of days it took the Migration Agency to make a decision in a Dublin case was 87 in 2015 and 143 days in 2016. In 2017, the average processing time was shortened to 75 days.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.4 Integration of persons who are granted protection

In 2017, 68 751 persons who had been granted a residence permit left the reception system for asylum seekers and were settled in a Swedish municipality. This figure is almost the same as for the previous year. It includes asylum seekers that were granted protection, persons that were taken to Sweden under the Swedish resettlement programme, and family members of beneficiaries of international protection.

Since the settlement process still represents a challenge for many Swedish municipalities, especially as a result of the high number of newly arrived refugees in 2014 and 2015, many efforts were made at municipal, regional and national level, to improve the integration process for refugees and other newly-arrived migrants.

On 1 March 2016, a new act for an effective and solidarity-based refugee reception system had entered into force in Sweden. It foresees that all municipalities within Sweden can be required to receive newly-arrived refugees and other beneficiaries of protection, as well as their family members, for settlement. According to the law, the assignment of such persons to municipalities shall be based on each municipality’s local labour market, its population size and the overall number of newly arrived immigrants, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers already living in the municipality. Previously, the settlement of beneficiaries of protection was optional for municipalities, but this had created an unequal distribution of new arrivals across Sweden. Following the new law, the task of allocating beneficiaries of protection to municipalities was transferred from the Swedish Employment Service to the Migration Agency as of 1 January 2017.

<sup>40</sup> See Migrationsverket (2018): *Arsredovisning 2017*, p. 46; *Asylum Information Database (2018): Country Report: Sweden, 2017 update*, p. 27.

The Swedish Government decides how many beneficiaries of protection each Swedish county will have to accept. The 21 County Administrative Boards then decide how to distribute the beneficiaries of protection among the municipalities within their respective jurisdictions. They shall also facilitate cooperation among municipalities within each region and follow-up on integration measures at regional and local level. Even under the new law, however, beneficiaries of protection may choose to arrange their own housing and decide by themselves where within Sweden to settle.

In 2017, the Swedish Government continued to prioritise reforms and measures to improve the integration of newly arrived beneficiaries of protection, in particular with regard to labour market integration, language acquisition and newly arrived students’ and pupils’ achievements in the education system. The following initiatives were launched, continued or stepped up in 2017.

#### Education and labour market participation

The Government aimed at making the integration of newly arrived immigrants in working life and Swedish society more effective. Providing support at the earliest possible moment is considered essential to speed up the integration process. In 2017, the responsibility for coordination and organising activities for asylum seekers was transferred from the Swedish Migration Agency to the County Administrative Boards. The aim of these activities is to help new arrivals acquire knowledge of the Swedish language, Swedish society, the labour market, and to promote health.<sup>41</sup>

The unemployment rate in 2017 was 15 % among foreign-born residents in Sweden compared to 4 % among Swedish-born residents. There is also a mismatch between the supply and the demand of labour in Sweden. An upper secondary school graduation is needed for a majority of jobs in Sweden, but many unemployed foreign-born residents have relatively low levels of education, while the current education system cannot sufficiently address this problem. The government has therefore tasked the Swedish National Agency for Education to present proposals regarding upper secondary school and adult education.<sup>42</sup> The government’s objective is that all youths start and complete their upper secondary school education. Another key measure is to facilitate the matching, connecting foreign-born job seekers with employers.

A new regulation for the integration of new arrivals in working life and Swedish society entered into force on 1 January 2018. The regulatory changes will harmonise the regulation of new arrivals’ integration in working life and Swedish society with the regulations that apply to other jobseekers. This means that the right of new arrivals to an introduction plan will be removed and replaced with a referral to a labour market programme, and that a proportional system of measures will be introduced for new arrivals corresponding to what currently applies to other jobseekers.

As of 1 January 2018, the Government introduced stricter requirements for all unemployed people who are considered to be in need of education and training to undertake training offered within labour market policy. It also introduced an education and training obligation for newly arrived immigrants. This obligation means that all newly arrived immigrants involved in the Public Employment Service’s introduction measures, and who are considered in need of education and training to find work, can be

<sup>41</sup> *Förordning om länsstyrelsernas uppdrag avseende insatser för asylsökande och vissa nyanlända invandrare, SFS 2016:1363.*

<sup>42</sup> *Regeringens beslut om uppdrag om sammanhållna rkesutbildningar i gymnasieskolan, U2017/01930/GV, 20 April 2017.*

instructed to apply for and undertake education and training. The Government also declared its intention to raise the standard compensation by the state for municipalities' reception of newly arrived immigrants.

Subsidized employment is still seen as an efficient way of getting people with weaker links to the labour market into work and to speed up the integration process. The Government therefore proposed that the current forms of subsidised employment be merged and simplified. Five different forms of support are planned to become one, so called "introductory jobs".

### Health care

Additional funds have been allocated in 2017 to municipalities in order to strengthen the capacity of authorities working in the health sector. Measures have as well been taken to support the municipal social services in their work with children and youths to prevent mental ill health.

In the budget bill for 2018, the Government continued to allocate resources for specialized care for victims of war and torture. It was also announced that the Health and Social Care Inspectorate will be allocated temporary additional resources for the processing and supervision of homes for care or residence for unaccompanied refugee children. The Health and Social Care Inspectorate will also receive extra funding for staffing costs and to strengthen its supervision and licensing for personal assistance providers.

### Integration of women

Employment rates are significantly lower among foreign-born than among the Swedish-born population. Especially among foreign-born women, the unemployment rate is higher and labour force participation and employment rates are lower than among Swedish-born. This has remained a particular area of concern for the Swedish Government, especially regarding women with low education levels and limited working experience. The Government has introduced a number of targeted measures in order to help newly arrived immigrants to more quickly enter the labour market, such as subsidized jobs, fast track initiatives, internships, complementary education, and programs for validation and work placement. It also commissioned the Public Employment Service to create activities to promote gender equality and combat gender divisions in the labour market.

The Swedish parental leave entitlement has been identified as one of the obstacles for newly arrived migrant women to enter the labour market in Sweden. In order to encourage earlier labour market entry of newly arrived women, the Government introduced a limit to the number of days of parental benefit entitlements for children entering Sweden after the age of one. In the budget bill for 2018, the Government proposed support to municipalities to offer newly arrived migrants on parental leave language and introduction courses with parallel child care. The budget bill also foresees increased funding to the "Swedish from day 1" initiative, which is aimed at Swedish Study associations to offer guidance about the labour market and to asylum seeking women as well as motivational activities for employment. Another new initiative is support to newly arrived women's entrepreneurship through guidance and financial support. The government has also given the Swedish Public Employment Service a special mission to improve the efforts of newly arrived women in order to increase the employment of foreign-born women.

### Activities against segregation

In July 2016, the government presented a long-term program for 2017-2025 how to counteract segregation.<sup>43</sup> Problems that will be addressed are criminality, long-term unemployment, poor achievements in schools and segregation in housing.

As of 1 January 2018, a new authority has been set up in Sweden, the Delegation against segregation (Delmos). The Authority will work to improve the situation in areas with socioeconomic challenges and counter structural causes of segregation. Delmos shall promote increased cooperation between authorities, county councils, municipalities, civil society organizations, industry, researchers and other relevant actors; contribute to the exchange of knowledge and experience between relevant actors and support them in conducting a strategic and knowledge-based work; and follow research and contribute to knowledge-development on segregation issues. The Authority will also analyse the underlying causes of segregation and disseminate knowledge about methods and actions that can help reduce and counter segregation. Furthermore, it shall assist the Government with analyses, investigations and follow-ups on segregation issues, and distribute state grants.

### Local activities and civil society engagement

To extend their ongoing work with asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants, the Government provided more funding for civil society organisations. In early 2017, a new structure for coordination and a new means for financing early integration measures for asylum seekers was implemented.

In the beginning of 2017, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society assembled and published information and guidelines regarding good practises on how the young civil society creates meeting places and networks between newly arrived young women and men and other young women and men.

During 2017, the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations coordinated and educated youth organizations and provided contacts between organizations with regard to activities directed towards asylum seekers and young newly arrived immigrants. The aim is to promote meeting places, networks and mentorship between newly arrived youths and other youths.

In February 2017, the Delegation for the Employment of Young People (DUA) was tasked by the government to address not only youths but as well newly arrived migrants. The function of DUA is to reinforce the impact of labour market policy measures on the local level by promoting cooperation between municipalities and the Swedish Public Employment Service, and to develop of new forms of cooperation.

## 4.5 Resettlement

Apart from being a major destination for persons seeking asylum, Sweden also engages in global resettlement efforts. Resettlement is considered to be a way of sharing responsibility with countries hosting large groups of refugees and to safeguard access to asylum for people in need of protection. Following a cross-party agreement of 2015, Sweden is gradually increasing the number of places in its resettlement

<sup>43</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *Promemoria Långsiktigt reformprogram för minskad segregation år 2017-2025, 1 August 2018.*



programme. While approximately 1 900 spots were available in 2015 and 2016, the annual quota was increased to 3 400 for 2017, and shall further increase to 5 000 persons in 2018. Contrary to beneficiaries of protection that have come to Sweden as asylum seekers, resettled refugees are still granted permanent residence permits.

Resettlement is regulated by the Aliens Act in which specific criteria are mentioned. The Act serves as the legal basis for resettlement selection and procedures. An annual spending authorization from the Swedish Parliament and an annual Government decision for the responsible authority, the Swedish Migration Agency, regulates the operation of the program. The Migration Agency decides on the allocation of the places within the resettlement quota in consultation with UNHCR and after consultation with the Ministry of Justice.

The Swedish resettlement programme consists essentially of two streams: dossier processing and selection missions. Residence permits are granted to persons classified as refugees under the Aliens Act or as persons in need of subsidiary protection. Sweden resettles upon request from the UNHCR, and in exceptional cases from a Swedish embassy.

### Resettlement in 2017

In 2017, Sweden allocated 3 400 places for resettlement submissions, in accordance with the adjusted national quota. In total, 4 846 persons were granted a residence permit under the resettlement framework. This number is higher as the actual quota, because it includes persons who were already selected already in 2016 as well as persons who received a positive decision but will only be transferred to Sweden in 2018 under the expanded quota for that year (5 000).

The main nationalities resettled in 2017 were Syria (2 606), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (803), Eritrea (619), Afghanistan (285) and Somalia (50). The number of persons from Syria, the DR Congo, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Sudan, Burundi and South Sudan has increased over the past three years, while the number of refugees resettled from Somalia as well as stateless people have decreased.

**Table 10:** Resettlement, main nationalities 2015-2017

Citizenship	2015	2016	2017	Total 2015-2017
Syria	686	606	2 606	3 898
DR Congo	231	332	803	1 366
Eritrea	160	169	619	948
Afghanistan	161	182	285	628
Somalia	215	237	50	502
Stateless	174	141	30	345
Ethiopia	102	108	109	319
Sudan	43	12	134	189
Burundi	3	26	61	90
South Sudan	3	8	38	49
Other	102	68	111	281
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 880</b>	<b>1 889</b>	<b>4 846</b>	<b>8 615</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

During the year 2017, Sweden experienced further increased efficiency in finding placement in municipalities for resettled refugees. This was mainly a result of new national legislation entering into force in March 2016, instructing all municipalities to share the responsibility of receiving newly arrived immigrants, including resettled persons (as mentioned in Chapter 4.4). Within Sweden, municipalities in the Västerbotten region received the largest number of refugees that were resettled to Sweden (227 persons), followed by Västernorrland (202) and Jönköping (174).

Compared to earlier years, the Swedish Migration Agency took a greater responsibility for the issuance of travel documents to refugees to be resettled, as Swedish foreign missions abroad often were extremely busy and therefore not in a position to receive resettlement candidates to take fingerprints and photographs.

### Resettlement under EU frameworks

Within the framework of the Swedish resettlement programme, the Migration Agency also contributed to resettlement initiatives under EU-initiatives. 480 Syrians in need of protection were brought to Sweden from Turkey under the so-called "1:1 mechanism". This mechanism foresees that for each Syrian who is sent back from Greece to Turkey, another Syrian national shall be transferred to an EU Member State.

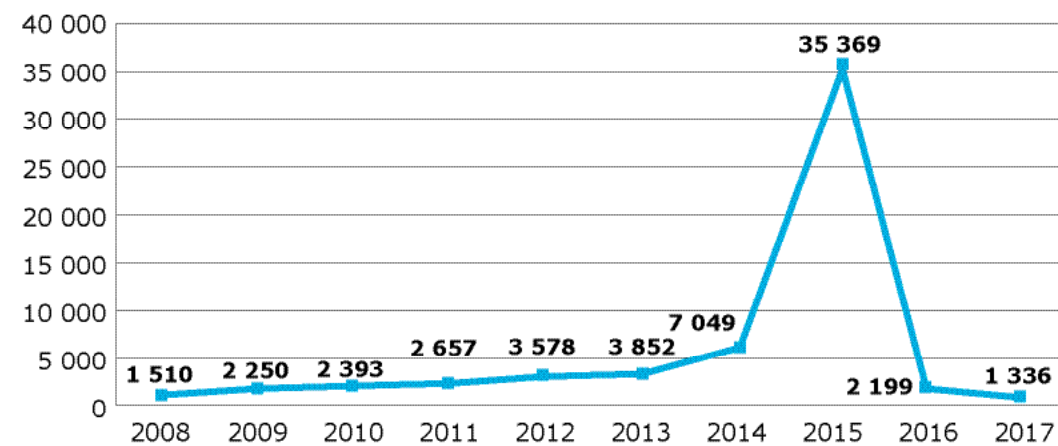


## 5 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

### Reception and accommodation of unaccompanied minors

The number of unaccompanied minors (UAM) seeking asylum in Sweden has increased remarkably over recent years, up to and including the year 2015. In 2016 and 2017, there was a very significant drop, see Figure 7 below. While as many as 35 369 UAM applied for asylum in Sweden in 2015, their number was only 2 199 in 2016, and 1 336 in 2017. In 2017, UAM accounted for roughly 5% of all asylum seekers that came to Sweden that year. This percentage was 8% in 2016 and as high as 22% in 2015.

**Figure 7:** Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Sweden, 2008-2017



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### Countries of origin and protection rate

In contrast to previous years, Afghanistan was no longer the dominating country of origin of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden in 2017. UAM from Morocco constituted the largest nationality group in 2017, with 235 asylum applicants, and Afghanistan only came second, with a share of 17% of all UAM arriving in Sweden. Earlier, Afghanistan was by far the dominating country of origin, with shares of 30% of all UAM in 2016 and as many as 66% of those UAM applying for asylum in 2015. Apart from Moroccans and Afghans, UAM from Syria and Somalia were also relatively frequent groups in 2017.

**Table 11:** Unaccompanied minors, main nationalities 2015-2017

Citizenship	2015	2016	2017	Total 2015-2017
Afghanistan	23 480	665	222	24 367
Syria	3 777	180	159	4 116
Somalia	2 058	421	159	2 638
Eritrea	1 939	74	52	2 065
Iraq	1 097	93	52	1 242
Ethiopia	891	133	53	1 077
Morocco	403	144	235	782
Stateless	530	45	39	614
Albania	208	104	78	390
Iran	166	28	20	214
Other	820	312	267	1 399
<b>Total</b>	<b>35 369</b>	<b>2 199</b>	<b>1 336</b>	<b>38 904</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

As in previous years, UAM were more frequently granted protection than adult asylum seekers. Whereas the protection rate (at first instance) for all asylum seekers in 2017 was 41% (down from 60% in 2016), the protection rate for UAM was 73% (72% in 2016). With cases in which the Swedish Migration Agency did not consider the application materially, for example in "Dublin cases", excluded, the protection rate for UAM was 79%.

The majority of UAM coming to Sweden in 2017 were boys (78%, compared to 80% in 2016), and most of them were registered as being between 13 and 17 years old.

**Table 11:** Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum, age and gender, 2017

Age ranges	Girls	Boys	Total
0-6 years	24	23	47
7-12 years	43	110	153
13-15 years	109	391	500
16-17 years	117	519	636
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>1 043</b>	<b>1 336</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

### Residence permits for studies at upper secondary schools

In June 2017, a new law entered into force in Sweden that under certain circumstances grants young people (aged 17 to 24), who study at upper secondary level (gymnasium), a right to a resident permit. The legislation is relevant to young asylum applicants who had come to Sweden in earlier years as unaccompanied minors. It covers individuals who were at some point in time granted a temporary residence permit after an asylum application, irrespective of whether the grounds for that permit have remained valid since. Under the new law, the respective individuals can be

granted a permit with a duration of 13 months to 4 years at a time, and they can apply for an extension if they have reasons for not finishing their upper secondary level education according to their individual study plan.

Between the entry into force of the new law and the end of the year 2017, only 160 individuals were granted a residence permit for upper secondary studies under the new law. The situation of unaccompanied minors who came to Sweden in 2015 and who, in 2017 and later, were still in the country without a realistic prospect of legal residence or return, therefore continued to be a topical issue in 2018.

### Age assessments

In 2017, amendments were made to the Aliens Act, entailing that the Swedish Migration Agency now assesses an alien's age earlier in the asylum process. The law now states that a temporary age assessment should be carried out immediately, and that a temporary (appealable) decision regarding the age of an asylum applicant should be taken in the initial phase of the asylum procedure. There are various methods – both medical and non-medical – that can be used to assess the age of a young applicant. The National Board of Forensic Medicine in Sweden performs the medical age assessments on behalf of the UAM asylum seekers, with their consent, in cooperation with the Migration Agency, which formally handles the administration. The methods used include examining the applicants' wisdom teeth (with panoramic x-ray), and the knee joints (with an MRI examination).

Regarding the reliability of these methods, discussions have arisen in 2017 within the scientific community in Sweden, internally as well as in the media. Sweden was apparently the first country to adopt an MRI-based method (regarding the examination of knee joints), which naturally has been the main focus point of these discussions. Also the other method of examining the age of a person, x-ray of the wisdom teeth, has been debated.

### Improvement of protection and care of unaccompanied minors

The Government commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) to establish and host a national Knowledge centre on unaccompanied minors and young adults (Nationellt kunskapscentrum om ensamkommande barn och unga). The centre, which started operations on 1 April 2017, was set up with a view to reinforce practices and policies on UAM and young adults by increasing knowledge and knowledge-sharing. The aim is to stimulate national knowledge development in a vital area and create the conditions for good-quality reception.

### Reception of unaccompanied minors in municipalities

On 1 July 2017, a new compensation scheme was implemented for municipalities receiving unaccompanied children and adolescents. According to the new system, the municipalities will normally not be compensated for unaccompanied youth who have reached the age of 18 years. As the state is responsible for the reception of adults during the asylum process, applicants who have reached the age of 18 are expected to move to accommodation provided by the Migration Agency. However, the Government decided to distribute extra funds to the municipalities, based on the number of unaccompanied children and adolescents, who have applied for asylum and who are waiting for a final decision on their asylum case. The extra funds make it possible for municipalities to let unaccompanied adolescents, who are still waiting for a final decision, stay in the municipality where they have been residing as minors, instead of transferring them to the state-operated reception system for adults.

## 6 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

### Trends regarding the identification of trafficking victims

Trafficking in human beings seems to be a growing phenomenon in Sweden, although rising numbers of suspected cases can also be a result of increased awareness and resources made available to and by competent authorities.

The Migration Agency identified 444 individuals as potential victims of trafficking in human beings in 2017, compared to 341 in 2016 and 195 in 2015. Among those identified as potential victims in 2017, 256 were women and 188 men. 107 were underage. When the Migration Agency suspects trafficking, it informs the Police and contacts municipalities' social services. Not all of the reported cases relate to trafficking offences within Sweden, however. Around half of the cases reported in 2017 concerned cases in which trafficking happened before a person reached Sweden, or in the country of origin. The reported cases concerned citizens of Nigeria (48), Afghanistan (41), Vietnam (33), Cuba (30), Iraq (18), among other nationalities.

The Migration Agency also processes cases in which the person in charge of a preliminary criminal investigation applies for temporary residence permits for suspected victims or witnesses of crimes. This includes trafficking victims that cooperate with law enforcement authorities. In 2017, the Agency issued 60 such permits. 12 suspected traffickers were arrested or otherwise involved in criminal proceedings during 2017, and 8 were convicted.

### Policy developments regarding trafficking

In 2017, work was initiated within the Government Offices to develop a National Action Plan for combatting prostitution and trafficking in human beings (THB) for sexual and other purposes. The Action Plan will focus on preventive work, stronger protection for victims, strengthened knowledge, and the development of methods for professionals who meet victims of THB. The Government adopted the Action Plan in February 2018.

Also in 2017, preparations were made for setting up a Gender Equality Agency and to transfer tasks relating to THB to that new Agency. In September 2017, the Government decided to transfer all functions related to co-ordinating action against THB from the County Administrative Board of Stockholm to the new Agency, which started operations on 1 January 2018. The Gender Equality Agency's task encompass the co-ordination of national action against trafficking in human beings, regarding all purposes of exploitation.

In December 2017, eight authorities were given a Government mandate for 2018-2020 to develop their methods for joint control to counteract violations and crime within the area of work and employment, including human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. The Swedish Work Environment Authority co-ordinates this assignment. In December 2017, the Government also gave the Police Authority a special government mandate to further strengthen and develop its ability to combat human trafficking.

## 7 IRREGULAR MIGRATION

The Swedish Government's objective is to ensure a sustainable migration policy that safeguards the right of asylum and, within the framework of managed immigration, facilitates mobility across borders, promotes demand-driven labour migration, harnesses and takes account of the development impact of migration, and deepens European and international cooperation.<sup>44</sup> An efficient regime aimed at preventing illegal entry or stay is seen as a precondition to achieve this objective of regulated migration. In 2017, according to Eurostat, 880 persons travelling irregularly were refused entry into Sweden at the external borders, i.e. considerably fewer than in 2016, when 1 405 persons were refused entry. In addition, 2 145 third country nationals were found to be illegally present on Swedish territory in 2017, which is a much higher number than in 2016 (1 210).

One basic element in tackling irregular immigration is to ensure a well-developed, efficient and reliable system of checks on persons in order to prevent foreign nationals from travelling into or staying in Sweden in contravention of the relevant regulations. Checks on persons are carried out both at the EU external borders and within the Swedish territory. Sweden's geographical position, however, means that there are no external land borders. Most irregular migrants who arrive in Sweden have travelled via another EU Member State or by air.<sup>45</sup>

In 2017, Sweden experienced a sharp increase in the number of manifestly unfounded asylum applications by nationals of Georgia. It total, over 1 100 Georgian asylum seekers were registered during the year, compared to approximately 700 in 2016. The asylum recognition rate for Georgians in 2017 was zero percent. The number of refused entries at the border by Georgian citizens also increased, with 127 cases, up from 55 the previous year. Some of the Georgian citizens who were refused entry subsequently applied for asylum.

In November 2017, a public enquiry into the right of foreign nationals to stay in Sweden, internal checks on foreigners, and the misuse of identity documents, was presented.<sup>46</sup> The enquiry emphasized the importance of verifying a person's identity. When the identity of a person is unclear, this can cause difficulties for the examination of asylum cases and/or the enforcement of a refusal of entry or expulsion order. The enquiry looked into increased possibilities for the Police Authority to take fingerprints and confiscate passports or identification documents when a person is intercepted in the context of an internal check on foreigners. It was also found that it is particularly important that a minor is identified by the authorities at an early stage. The enquiry will be followed-up within the Government Offices and may lead to legislative changes.

<sup>44</sup> Government Offices of Sweden / Ministry of Justice (2018): *Sweden's migration and asylum policy, Fact sheet, February 2018.*

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Swedish Migration Agency/EMN (2012): *Practical responses to irregular migration into Sweden, a study produced by the European Migration Network (EMN).*

<sup>46</sup> *Betänkande av Återvändandentredningen (2017): Klarlagd identitet - Om utlänningsars rätt att vistas i Sverige, inre utlänningskontroller och missbruk av identitetshandlingar, SOU 2017:93. (The inquiry report includes a summary in English.)*

## 8 RETURN

In order to ensure the sustainability of the Swedish asylum system, those who, following an examination, are found not to be in need of protection must return to their countries of origin. A rejection of an application for a residence permit is usually accompanied by a refusal-of-entry or expulsion order. In the first place, the persons concerned should return on a voluntary basis, if needed with the support of the Swedish Migration Agency. In cases where the obligation to return to one's country of origin is not respected, the Police is responsible for implementing the refusal-of-entry or expulsion order.

The year 2017 was challenging with regard to return. Third-country nationals who received a return decision in 2017 had often been waiting for a long time for a decision on their asylum application, which is a result of the large number of asylum applicants in 2015. The decrease in number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden in 2016 and 2017 had consequences on return, as an ongoing downscaling of the operations of the Swedish Migration Agency to lower numbers of asylum seekers has led to fewer resources and a loss of competence. Moreover, the majority of persons who received a return decision had Afghanistan as their destination, which is a country where the rate of voluntary return has been low. In addition, a new challenge regarding effective returns appeared, as new legislation entered into force in June 2017, which grants young people (aged 17 to 24), who study at upper secondary level (gymnasium), a right to a resident permit (see Chapter 5). As a consequence of this new provision, even persons that were not entitled to such a residence permit sometimes applied for it, which has led to delays in return procedures. The new legislation might also have reduced the incentives for rejected asylum applicants to return, as new opportunities to stay in Sweden seemed to emerge.

The Migration Agency is continuously looking into how to improve the support provided to persons with return decisions. One key measure is the procurement of travel documents, to ensure that a travel document is available when a return decision enters into force. This involves meetings with asylum seekers to engage them in establishing their identity. Return counselling is another important measure, to engage the person to reflect on return, to inform about support to facilitate re-integration in the country of destination, and to help returnees prepare while they are still in Sweden.

The Migration Agency was tasked by the government to increase the number of people with return decisions to comply with such decisions and return voluntarily. Another aim is therefore to reduce the number of people who abscond following return orders. Supervision or detention are used in cases where there is a risk of absconding.

### Detention and alternatives to detention

Regarding detention, there have been some structural problems in Sweden in 2017, mainly consisting of an occasional lack of detention capacity. This is currently being addressed by the actors involved. At the end of 2017, the Swedish Migration Agency had 357 places in detention centres at its disposal, and there were five detention centres. The number of places is planned to increase in 2018-2020, and an additional detention centre is expected to open. In 2017, the time limit for the temporary placement of a detainee in a correctional

facility, a remand prison or a police custody (while arrangements are made for his or her transportation to one of the Migration Agency's detention centres), has been explicitly codified, and extended to three days. Before this change, the authorities often found it difficult to carry out transports of detainees within the given (shorter) time frames, due to e.g., geographic and practical factors.

In the budget bill for 2018, the Migration Agency has been assigned the task to further develop the use of supervision as an alternative to detention, and to make it more effective. Supervision means that a person is obliged to report to the police authorities or the Migration Agency at regular intervals. The Migration Agency has implemented pilot projects on how supervision can be used in a more structured way. In the framework of one of these pilots, the Agency combines supervision with meetings with the returnee. At such meetings, his/her return can be discussed, and the person can be given concrete assignments related to the return (e.g., to arrange travel documents).

### European Reintegration Network and deployment of Return Liaison Officers

In June 2016, the Migration Agency joined the European Reintegration Network (ERIN), and in December 2016, it began implementing the programme. During 2017, the Agency actively offered reintegration measures to persons returning to Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, and Somalia. Within the scope of the programme, a broad range of reintegration measures are offered, depending on the needs of each returnee. The measures offered include assistance with starting a business, job counselling and help with entering the labour market, education (including vocational training), temporary accommodation, assistance in contacting public authorities, legal counselling, medical care, and reception on arrival at the airport upon return. There has been significant interest in the program, particularly amongst returnees to Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Migration Agency also deployed three return liaison officers at the end of 2016 and early 2017. Their placements are Amman, Jordan (with responsibility for Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Israel and Iraq), Tbilisi, Georgia (with responsibility for Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Ukraine), and Nairobi, Kenya (with responsibility for Somalia and Eritrea). These return liaison officers are able to build relationships with the authorities in the relevant countries. This allows them to develop and improve procedures for obtaining travel documents and ensuring that those who have been issued with a return decision can be returned.

The Migration Agency also deployed an EU Return Liaison Officer (EURLO) in Kabul, Afghanistan at the end of 2016, and via the Agency's EURLO in Morocco, a new procedure has been put in place whereby fingerprints are sent directly to Moroccan authorities via the EURLO, with a request to verify the person's identity. So far, around 50 cases have been submitted to the Moroccan authorities and around half of these cases have resulted in positive identification of the returnee.

### Reintegration support

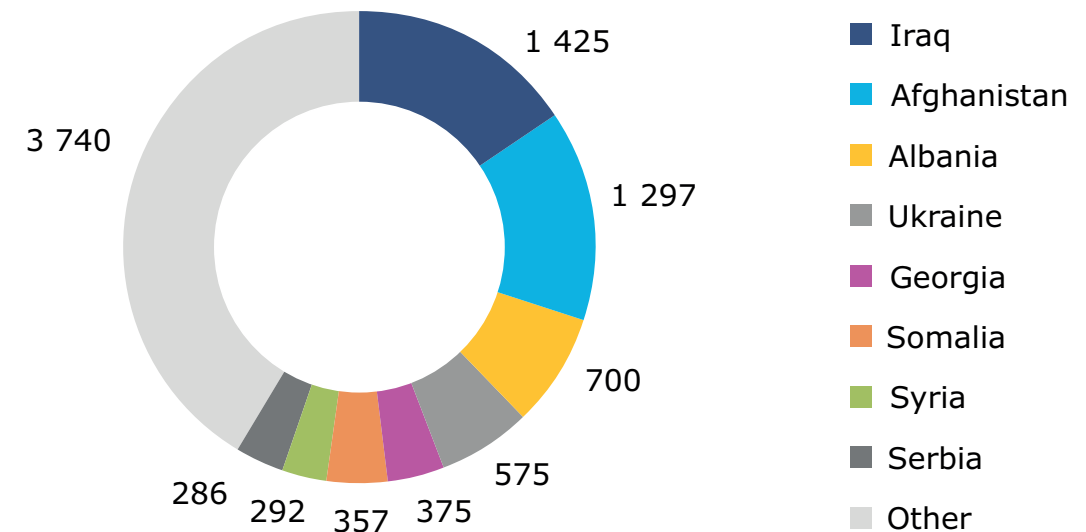
In order to facilitate return and to strengthen the incentives for voluntary return, economic reintegration support can be granted to persons who have received a final decision or withdrawn their application and choose to return voluntarily to a country with very limited opportunities for re-establishment. In 2017, 1 552 persons applied for reintegration support, fewer than in 2016, when 3 235 persons applied. 1 284 (compared to 2 527 in 2016) received a positive decision on their application. The decreased number of applications for reintegration support is a consequence of fewer persons withdrawing their application for asylum and returning in 2017, compared to

2016. The overall number of people who returned was also smaller in 2017 than in 2016.

### Voluntary and forced returns

In 2017, 9 047 persons returned from Sweden to their home countries (5 204), to other member states of the EU or the EEA (3 377), other countries (460) or to unknown destinations (31) on a voluntary basis, assisted by the Migration Agency. Overall, the number of voluntary returns was considerably lower than in 2016, when 16 414 persons left the country voluntarily. The most important nationality groups among those who returned voluntarily in 2017 were nationals of Iraq (1 425), Afghanistan (1 297), and Albania (700).

Figure 8: Voluntary return, main citizenship groups, 2017



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

The Police Authority carried out 2 772 forced returns, slightly more than in 2016, when 2 504 forced returns took place. 1 811 forced returns went to the respective persons' home countries. The main nationality groups among those who were returned by force to their home countries were Albania (340), Georgia (184) and Ukraine (181).

Notable for 2017, compared to 2016, is an increase of returns (both voluntary and enforced) to Georgia. The number of Georgian asylum seekers increased substantially in 2017, compared to 2016, but there was not a single case in which a Georgian applicant was granted protection. The Swedish government held talks with the Georgian government expressing its concerns about the increased number of manifestly unfounded asylum applications and growing criminal activity.

By contrast, the number of returns to Afghanistan has decreased considerably (from 2 457 voluntary and 155 forced returns) in 2016 to 1 297 voluntary and 116 forced returns in 2017, despite the fact that negative decisions (rejections) of asylum applications by Afghan nationals have increased substantially during the same period.

### About the EMN

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an EU funded network, set up with the aim of providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum for institutions of the European Union, plus authorities and institutions of the Member States of the EU, in order to inform policymaking. The EMN also serves to provide the wider public with such information. The EMN was established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC adopted on 14 May 2008. The Swedish Migration Board is the Swedish National Contact Point (NCP) for the EMN.

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