

Report from
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Policy Report

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EMN Policy Report Sweden 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

This report aims to outline the most significant developments in the area of migration and asylum in Sweden in 2015 and to comment on 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 2015 was characterised by very strongly increasing numbers of people seeking protection. In total, Sweden registered almost 163,000 new asylum applicants, more than twice as many as during the year before, which had already marked a record. This development created various challenges for different parts of Swedish society, mainly public agencies dealing with immigration and integration, municipalities, and civil society organisations. Towards the end of the year, the Swedish government reacted to the challenges by proposing a range of restrictive measures, aiming at reducing the number of incoming asylum seekers.

As far as the overall trend regarding immigration is concerned, measured in the number of first-time residence permits issued, the situation was quite stable. The increased number of asylum seekers is not yet reflected in residence permit data for 2015 as most new cases registered during the year were not processed and decided during the same year.

In total, just under 110 000 individuals were granted first-time work and/or residence permits in Sweden. This represents one of the highest annual figures to date in Sweden (see Table 1). It is however important to note that the comparison over the period 2013-2015 can be misleading as, since May 2014, EU- and EEA-citizens do not need to register their right of residence at the Migration Agency any more.¹ As a result, statistically speaking, only a small number of EU-/EEA-citizens were included in the Migration Agency's statistics for 2014 and 2015 – those who fell outside the scope of ordinary free-movement rights and applied for a residence permit in order to settle in Sweden. If the statistics for 2014 and 2015 included all categories of foreigners that were included in 2013, then the total number of permits granted in 2014 and 2015 would have been considerably higher than in 2013.

Table 1 (absolute numbers) and figure 1 (percentages) show the main categories of residence permits that were granted in 2015. Persons who immigrated to Sweden for protection or humanitarian reasons and those that came on the basis of family reunification or on other family-related grounds constituted the largest broad categories of immigrants in 2015, as during the year before. Residence permits issued for protection and humanitarian reasons, such as to refugees, persons in need of subsidiary protection or with humanitarian needs, represented the largest group (36 645), and

persons immigrating for family reasons were the second largest group (32 043). Both categories increased, as compared to 2014. Labour immigrants (employment reasons) and international students from third countries constitute the third and fourth largest categories of immigrants, with almost 27 000 and close to 11 000 people, respectively.

Table 1: Overall immigration trend: First-time residence permits granted in 2013-2015

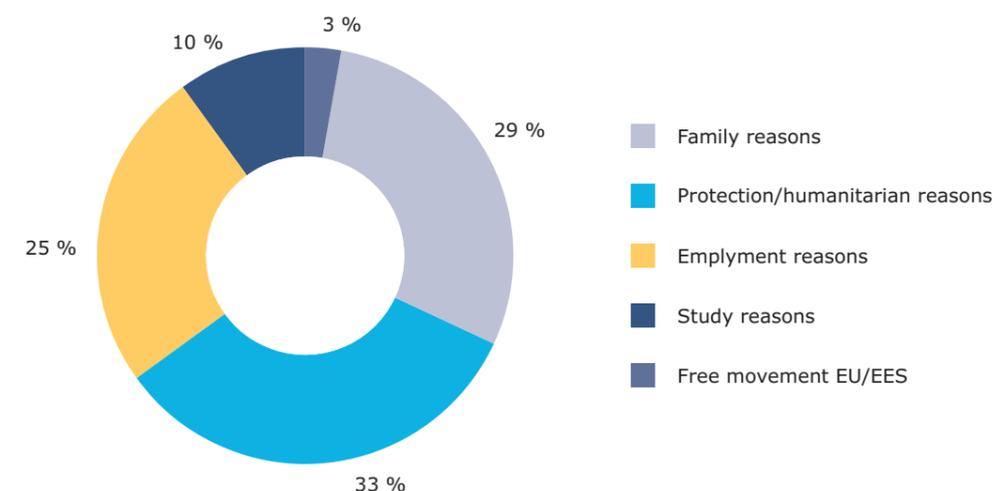
Reasons	2013	2014	2015
Family reasons	29 457	31 400	32 043
Protection/humanitarian reasons*	28 998	35 642	36 645
Employment reasons**	28 917	25 570	26 998
Study reasons***	8 503	10 604	10 758
Free movement EU/EES****	20 712	7 394	2 791
Total	116 587	110 610	109 235

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

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.
- **** Please note that, as described above, these numbers are not comparable over the period.

Figure 1: Overall immigration: First-time residence permits granted 2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

¹ Instead, registration is directly done at the Swedish Tax Office, which is responsible for the population registry.

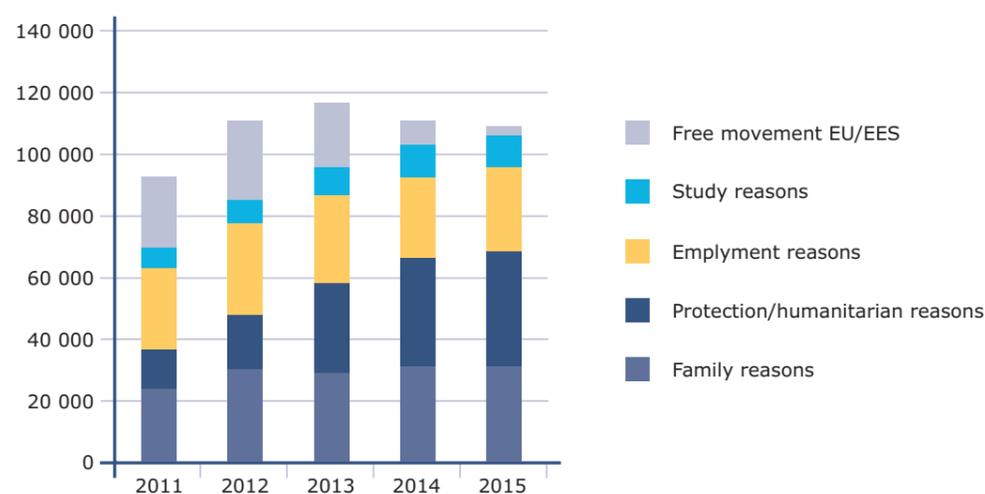
Figure 2 below shows the granting of residence and work permits in a longer-term perspective. It can be seen that residence permits granted for protection reasons have increased strongly in 2013, 2014 and, to a lesser degree, also in 2015.

As far as international students (immigration for education purposes) are concerned, their immigration decreased substantially in 2011, as a result of the introduction of tuition fees for free-mover students from outside the EU, but then slowly increased again.

Family-related immigration grew stronger in 2012, as compared to 2011, and then remained largely stable. Work-related immigration was, within the period 2011-2015, strongest in 2012.

People coming to Sweden under EU free movement rights are difficult to compare over time 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 large group of people until 2014, it now only includes minor groups, such as third-country nationals who are family members of EU citizens, or third-country nationals who hold a long-term residents' status issued by another EU Member State.

Figure 2: Timeline: All first-time residence permits granted, 2011-2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

International protection

The number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden in 2015 was at an unprecedented level. In total, almost 163 000 people applied for asylum, more than twice as many as in 2014. Most asylum seekers came from Syria (32%), Afghanistan (26%) and Iraq (13%).

In a European perspective, Sweden continued to be a primary destination and recipient country for asylum seekers. Among EU Member States, only Germany (476 510)

and Hungary (177 135) received an even higher number of asylum applicants.² In relative numbers Sweden ranked second after Hungary.³

When it comes to outcomes of asylum procedures, the Migration Agency made a total of 58 802 decisions in 2015. This represents a small increase as compared to 2014, when 53 503 were taken. It also shows that most asylum requests that were lodged in 2015 could not be decided during the same year. This is to a large extent due to the fact that particularly many applications were handed in during the months of October, November and December 2015.

More than 32 600 individuals were granted protection.⁴ Thus, the overall protection rate was 55% in 2015, slightly lower than in 2014 (58%). If Dublin cases and other cases that Sweden did not examine materially, e.g. cases that were written off, are excluded from this calculation, the protection rate was 77%, the same percentage as in 2014.

Unaccompanied minors

The number of unaccompanied minors (UAM) escalated drastically in 2015, with almost 35 400 individuals applying for asylum, more than five times as many as in 2014 (7 049). This also means that in 2015, almost 40% of all unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in one of the Member States of the EU (88 245 UAM according to Eurostat) came to Sweden. Afghanistan continued to be the most important country of origin of UAM coming to Sweden (66% of all UAM), followed by Syria (11%), Somalia (6%) and Eritrea (5%).

The large increase of the number of UAMs coming to Sweden in 2015 was a serious challenge for many municipalities in Sweden, as UAMs need more resources and care than adult asylum seekers. By amending the Swedish Social Services Act, the Swedish Parliament introduced a new type of accommodation for UAM, "supported accommodation" (stödboende). This type of accommodation is intended for those UAM who require a somewhat lower level of care than others.

Increased immigration for family reasons

Mostly as a consequence of the rising number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden, family-related immigration also increased in 2015, however rather modestly. The Swedish Migration Agency granted 32 043 residence permits for family reasons in 2015, as compared to 31 400 in 2014.

In the autumn, the Swedish Government proposed to limit the right to family reunification in Sweden. According to the proposal, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection

² Source: Eurostat-Database.

³ Relative numbers means that the number of asylum seekers is related to the size of the population that is already residing in a given country. The highest number of registered first time applicants in 2015 was recorded in Hungary (17 699 first time applicants per million inhabitants), ahead of Sweden (16 016), Austria (9 970), Finland (5 876) and Germany (5 441). Source: Eurostat (2016): Asylum in the EU Member States. Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015. Newsrelease 44/2016, 4 March 2016.

⁴ This number also includes individuals (1 309) who were granted a residence permit on humanitarian grounds (particularly distressing circumstances).

will not have a right to family reunification if they had not applied for asylum by 24 November 2015. Recognised refugees will continue to have the right to family reunification, which applies to spouses, cohabiting partners and children under the age of 18. Child refugees will have the right to be reunified with their parents.

Regarding the immigration of family members of other categories of migrants, a tougher maintenance requirement will be applied. The sponsor must then be able to support family members who come to Sweden. Before, the only requirement was that sponsors could support themselves. This even applies to Swedish nationals and EU-citizens who want to be joined by family members who are third-country nationals.

Labour-related immigration

The number of immigrants coming to Sweden for employment purposes increased slightly in 2015, from 25 570 individuals in 2014 to 26 998 in 2015. These figures include accompanying family members (9 698 in 2014 and 10 023 in 2015) of labour immigrants.

Seasonal workers, mainly berry-pickers and planters, continued to represent the largest professional group among all labour-related immigrants (3 784, as compared to 2 885 in 2014), followed by computing specialists (3 252 in 2015, 2 525 in 2014).

The Swedish system for labour immigration from third countries, and especially allegations of wage-dumping and exploitation of foreign workers, has been a topic of frequent debate for several years. In 2015, the Swedish Government appointed a committee on labour migration. It shall survey the extent of exploitation of labour migrants in Sweden and suggest measures to counteract such abuse. The committee will for example consider further control measures related to the work permit process and additional sanctions against employers.

International students

The number of people moving to Sweden for study purposes also increased modestly, from 10 604 in 2014 to 10 758 in 2015. Among those individuals that were granted a permit in 2015, 7 874 came as students at universities and university colleges, and 1 202 as doctoral students. 1 348 were relatives of international students, and 334 received a residence permit to look for work after their studies. The possibility of applying for a job-seeker permit had been introduced in 2014. In addition to the 334 students that received such a permit in 2015, 419 third-country nationals with a residence permit for studies made a direct status change and received a residence permit for employment purposes.

1 INTRODUCTION

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

As in 2014, the EMN Annual Policy Report for 2015 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 March 2016 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.⁵ The same is true for the statistical annex, which was sent to the Commission in early May 2016.

This report represents Part II of the Swedish Annual Policy Report for 2015. 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.⁶

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 3-9 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 1st January to 31st December 2015. However, at some instance, it may also include references to developments that started in 2015 and continued in 2016, as well as references on measures taken in earlier years and their effects. It is the twelfth in a series of such EMN annual reports.

⁵ Please contact emn@migrationsverket.se to obtain the report.

⁶ 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 split between several other ministries but mainly lie within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Employment.

The Swedish Migration Agency and the Swedish Police 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.⁷

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 authorities, 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 in need of 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 Swedish municipalities.

While the Swedish Migration Agency has the responsibility for voluntary returns, the

⁷ 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.

Police 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. According to the instruction for the Swedish National Police Agency, the Agency is the national contact point for the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex).

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 (Utlänningsföreläggningen, 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.

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. Mr. Morgan Johansson, also representing the Social Democratic Party was appointed Minister for Justice and Migration. The institutional responsibility for policies regarding citizenship and naturalisation were transferred from the Employment Ministry to the Ministry of Justice.

Other than that, the general organisation of political and administrative responsibilities regarding migration and integration, as described in the previous section, remained largely unchanged. The Swedish Police, however, has undergone a major reorganization in 2014. Since 1 January 2015, the previous 21 regional policy authorities have been replaced by only one centralized agency.

2.3 Overall developments and debates concerning asylum and migration

Increasing numbers of asylum seekers

In 2015, most public and political debates regarding immigration related to the strongly increasing number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden that year, as well as resulting problems regarding, among other aspects, finding suitable accommodation for asylum applicants, and providing care for unaccompanied minors. Much of the debate was about (the lack of) intra-EU solidarity regarding the distribution and reception of asylum seekers and the fact that Sweden, together with Germany and a few other countries, received most asylum applications among all EU Member States, while others were not concerned by the increased migratory pressure to any greater

extent, and actively opposed EU policies for improved burden-sharing. The refugee situation also mobilised the Swedish civil society to a very high degree, as volunteers stepped in and assisted newly arrived asylum applicants in situations in which the state and its resources were overburdened.

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 played a major role in public and media debates. While only 24 percent of the Swedish population regarded immigration as the most important political issue in 2014, 53 percent found this the main political issue in autumn 2015, according to the Eurobarometer survey. This development in public opinion shows many more people were concerned about asylum, migration and integration than before.⁸

Unaccompanied minors

Among asylum seekers coming to Sweden, the particular sub-group of unaccompanied children and youth travelling without parents received particular attention in public debate. Newspaper articles and radio as well as TV broadcasting often tried to explain the phenomenon. In addition, the particular needs of this group of asylum applicants were also discussed, as was the fact that due to the large number of newly arrived unaccompanied minors, several municipalities exhibited signs of overburdening – at times they were not able to properly follow-up of the housing and care situation for unaccompanied minors within their jurisdiction. An issue of debate was also the fact that by far most UAMs coming to Sweden are boys (see Chapter 5 of this report).

New policies to restrict the number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden

In autumn 2015, the Swedish government as well as the main opposition parties tried to develop measures to better control the arrival of asylum seekers that had transited through Denmark and Germany. At times, it was unclear how many people actually arrived in Sweden and where exactly they ended up. Some appeared to transit Sweden to Finland and Norway. Despite the fact that the Migration Agency had extended opening hours at its asylum application unit in Malmö, to make it possible to quickly register new applicants, and even had a presence at relevant ferry terminals and train stations in the South of Sweden, it became increasingly difficult to have a clear picture of the situation. On 12 November 2015, Sweden reintroduced border controls at its internal borders. This was, according to the Government, due to the threat to public order and internal security posed by the very high influx of migrants to Sweden, with a peak of more than 10,000 people in a single week. Border controls have since been carried out at certain ports, in the police regions South and West, and at the Öresund Bridge, which links Sweden and Denmark. The Swedish Police Authority decides how border controls are to be maintained. The Government also prepared new legislation (effective since 4 January 2016), according to which identity controls have been carried out of all persons crossing the Swedish border by bus, train or boat.

In November 2015, the Government announced a temporary law restricting the possibility of being granted a residence permit for protection purposes in Sweden, and the right to family reunification. According to the announcement, the number of asylum

seekers coming to Sweden had to be drastically reduced. Therefore, the Swedish law would be temporarily adapted to the minimum level according to international law and the EU-acquis. According to the proposal, refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection in Sweden will be granted temporary residence permits. Persons eligible for subsidiary protection who have been granted temporary permits according to the temporary law will not have a right to family reunification if the asylum application was not submitted by 24 November 2015.

To handle the high number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden, the Swedish Migration Agency put temporary simplified operation modes into practice during the months of October, November and December 2015. The aim was to quickly register all asylum applicants and include them into the reception system. The temporary simplified operation modes were primarily used for Syrian citizens, stateless persons from Syria and Eritrean citizens and meant that no initial interviews were held with adult asylum seekers or families.

The measures announced by the government reinforced the Swedish debate about receiving people in need of protection and prompted considerable controversy. While several opposition parties argued that the proposed measures were not sufficient to reduce the number of new arrivals, others criticised that the integration of beneficiaries of protection would become more difficult, as people with temporary stay would be less likely to quickly learn Swedish and establish themselves on the labour market. Regarding the introduction of temporary border controls and ID-checks by train, bus and ferry operators, many politicians as well as companies and parts of the general public, especially in southern Sweden, voiced criticism as they feared that these measures would hamper cross-border commuting between Sweden and Denmark in the Copenhagen-Malmö region.

Other types of immigration

Migration flows other than asylum and refugees received much less attention in 2015. To a certain extent, however, the public debate about the effects and consequences of the Swedish labour immigration policy, especially with regard to cases of foreign workers being exploited by their employers, did continue. The Government appointed an enquiry committee on labour migration, which will survey the extent of exploitation of labour migrants in Sweden and suggest measures to counteract such abuse of the labour immigration system.

Integration of new arrivals

Due to the increased arrivals of asylum seekers in Sweden, the public debate about failures and successes regarding integration were also discussed rather frequently. Frequent topics of the debate related to the lack of housing in many Swedish municipalities, especially the larger metropolitan areas, deficits and a shortage of teachers within the education system, especially regarding language courses for beneficiaries of protection (Swedish for immigrants), and problems among newly-arrived beneficiaries to find regular jobs. Reacting to such criticism, the Government launched a number of new integration-related initiatives in 2015 and increased the funding for such measures. The improvement of the Swedish system for recognising qualifications obtained abroad became a priority, as well as offering asylum seekers meaningful activities while they are waiting for a decision on their cases. The Swedish Migration Agency and other actors were given additional resources to arrange language courses for asylum seekers and to offer other activities, such as internships, early in the process. Last but not least, the Government also proposed a new act for an ef-

⁸ European Commission (2016): *Standard Eurobarometer 84, Nationell Rapport Sverige, Brussels*.

fective and solidarity-based refugee settlement system. According to the proposal, all municipalities can be required to receive newly-arrived beneficiaries of protection for settlement, based on the municipalities' respective situation and capacities, as well as the local labour market, characteristics of the population and other reception services provided. The new act entered into force on 1 March 2016.

3 LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

3.1 Economic migration

Labour immigration to Sweden

The number of third-country nationals coming to Sweden as labour migrants modestly increased in 2015, as compared to the year before. In 2015, Sweden granted 26 998 first-time residence permits for work-related reasons. This number was 25 570 in 2014. These broad figures include not only persons coming to Sweden because they found employment there (13 789 in 2015), but also their family members (10 023) as well as self-employed people (306), visiting researchers (1 083) and people who work in Sweden under special rules, e.g. as au pairs, trainees, artists or sportsmen (1 797).

Table 2 shows the overall development regarding labour immigration to Sweden for the period 2011-2015. As the Table shows, the number of incoming employees has been rather stable, varying between a minimum of 12 521 people in 2014 and a maximum of 17 011 in 2012. Regarding self-employed immigrants, there has been an increasing trend over the years, but at a comparatively low level.

Table 2: Labour immigration to Sweden, 2011-2015

Broad category	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Employees	15 158	17 011	15 974	12 521	13 789
Family members of labour immigrants	8 242	9 679	9 625	9 698	10 023
Self-employed	108	350	300	233	306
Visiting researchers	870	1 219	1 129	1 126	1 083
Work in Sweden under special rules	1 741	1 356	1 889	1 992	1 797
Total	26 119	29 615	28 917	25 570	26 998

Source: Swedish Migration Agency.

Table 3 shows the ten main occupational categories among incoming workers from third countries in 2015. Please note that 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 (13 789 in 2015, as mentioned above) and the number of work permits issued (13 313). In some cases, an immigrant will need a work permit, but not a residence permit, and in other cases, a residence permit is needed, but the person is exempted from the requirement to have a work permit.

Exact comparisons between the main occupational categories in 2015 and earlier years are difficult, as the Swedish Migration Agency's definitions for some of the various areas of work and occupations have changed. An overall trend is, however, that the number of immigrating workers in occupations requiring a high level of skills has tended to increase, while the number of third-country nationals coming to work in low-skill jobs has decreased. Specialists and technicians and associate professionals are now the largest broad categories of incoming workers. This can be seen as a result of the stricter requirements for employers who recruit workers for low-skilled occupations that were introduced in recent years.

Table 3: Work permits granted to workers from abroad, 2015, main areas of work

Area of work	2015
Specialists	4 751
Technicians and associate professionals	4 672
Service, care, and sales	1 105
Construction and manufacturing	612
Professionals	599
Agriculture, gardening, forestry and fishery workers	466
Managerial professions	410
Administration and client information	194
Service workers and shop sales workers	129
Machine manufacturing and transport	109
Area of work not classified	96
Elementary occupations	94
Craft and related trades workers	48
Clerks	16
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	9
Military professions	3
Armed forces	2
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	2
Total	13 313

Source: Swedish Migration Agency.

Since December 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 now recruit anyone, regardless of nationality or profession. The rules also provide opportunities for migrants to get a permanent residence status after four years of stay with a work permit in Sweden.

The most common nationality groups engaging in labour market-related migration to Sweden in 2015 were India (5 894), Thailand (4 341), and China (1 868). These three countries have been the most relevant ones in the context of labour immigra-

tion to Sweden over several years, with Indian nationals often working in the IT sector and Thai nationals in the seasonal berry-picking business.

Table 4: Labour immigrants (including family members), 2009-2015, top-10 nationalities

Nationality	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Thailand	6 253	3 613	2 944	5 860	6 517	3 062	4 341
India	3 110	3 016	3 821	4 643	5 132	5 572	5 894
China	1 978	2 404	2 325	2 125	2 004	2 151	1 868
Syria	243	749	1 338	1 477	2 574	2 794	1 401
USA	814	867	1 052	1 213	1 201	1 181	1 211
Ukraine	1 559	906	986	918	749	833	931
Turkey	499	1 130	1 312	1 203	840	912	825
Iraq	256	658	1 008	980	751	728	1 521
Iran	434	634	1 016	1 208	998	744	672
Pakistan	264	374	864	1 003	821	632	652

Source: Swedish Migration Agency.

Control and verification measures to prevent exploitation

In recent years, the current Swedish system for labour immigration has often been criticised for not sufficiently preventing untrustworthy employers to exploit foreign workers. The Swedish Migration Agency has therefore been applying stricter control measures for work permit applications within certain sectors of the economy (such as the cleaning business, hotels and restaurants, service, construction, staffing, commerce, agriculture and forestry, and the automobile repair sectors) the since January 2012. Since 2014, the Migration Agency has had a mandate to conduct follow-up checks and revoke residence permits if the conditions of the work permit (e.g. the requirements concerning the terms of employment) are no longer met or if the employment does not begin within four months after the issuing of the permit. Also in 2015, the work on combatting exploitation and wage-dumping has continued. Most importantly, the Government appointed a committee on labour migration, which shall survey the extent of exploitation of labour migrants in Sweden and suggest measures to counteract such abuse of the labour immigration system. The committee shall also consider further control measures related to the work permit process, or additional sanctions against abusive employers.⁹

⁹ Government Offices of Sweden (2015): *Åtgärder för att stärka arbetskraftsinvandrares ställning på arbetsmarknaden*, Stockholm.

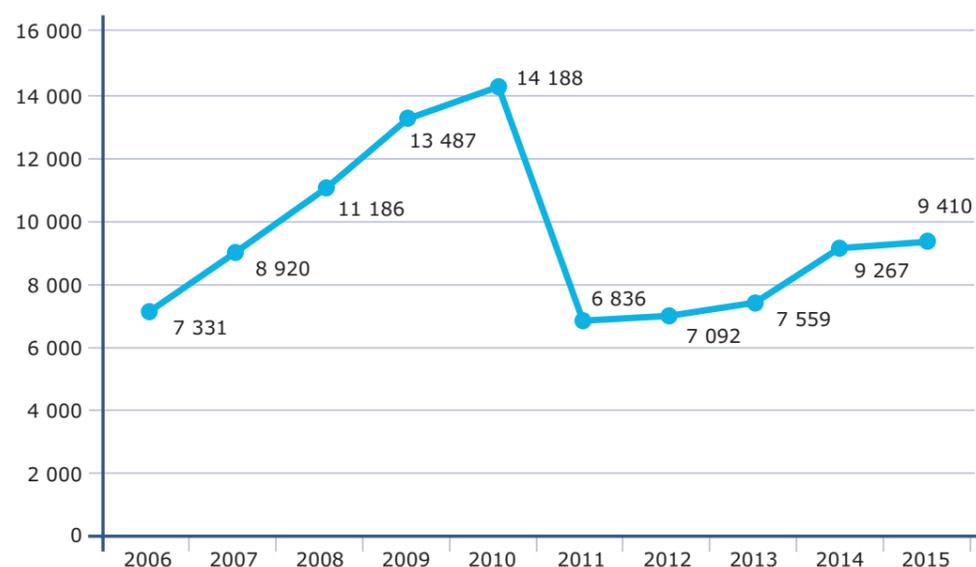
3.2 International students and visiting researchers

Third-country national students

The entry and stay of international students from third countries has been an important channel of legal migration to Sweden. Migration for study reasons is 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 2010, a total of 14 188 residence permits for study reasons were granted. In 2011 and 2012, however, the number of third-country nationals who were granted a residence permit for study reasons was at a much lower level, mainly due to the introduction of tuition fees. In 2011, only 6 836 permits were granted. Since that year, however, the numbers have been rising again. In 2014, 9 267 residence permits were granted, and 9 410 in 2015.

Figure 3: First-time residence permits granted for study reasons, 2006-2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency. These figures do not include family members of international students, but they do include doctoral students.

As Table 5 shows, the by far most important nationality group among international students in Sweden has been Chinese, both in 2013, 2014 and 2015. The second and third largest nationalities in 2015 were India, the USA, Pakistan and Canada.

Table 5: First-time residence permits granted for study reasons, main nationality groups, 2013-2015

Nationality	2013	2014	2015
China	1 679	1 882	2 155
India	574	814	902
USA	502	698	615
Pakistan	260	408	583
Canada	345	365	389
Singapore	350	384	386
Iran	308	378	358
South Korea	268	323	345
Brazil	192	258	324
Australia	310	343	304
Other	2 376	3 039	2 761
Total	7 559	9 267	9 410

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. 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, a total of 456 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, and 334 in 2015.

Researchers

In addition to international students, Sweden also admits researchers under the EU Researchers' Directive.¹⁰ Their number has increased substantially over the past ten years, but remained stable in 2014 and 2015. In 2014, 1 126 researchers from third countries were granted a residence permit, and 1 083 in 2015. The main citizenships of researchers coming to Sweden in 2015 were China (264), India (167), USA (106), Iran (70), and Russia (46).

¹⁰ Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research.

Figure 4: First-time residence permits granted to researchers, 2006-2015

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

3.3 Family reunification

In Sweden, as in many other EU member states, immigration on the basis of family ties accounts for a large share of the overall immigration flows. About 40% of all residence permits granted by Sweden in 2015 were granted for family reasons. This percentage was 34% in 2013 and 38% in 2014.

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. 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.

It should also be noted that the Swedish regulations pertaining to third country national workers and international students are family-friendly. International students and labour migrants, for example, may enter the country with close relatives. In the case of labour immigration, there is no requirement for third-country nationals to financially support their family members.

Financial support requirements

The provisions governing the right to immigrate to Sweden on family grounds have not undergone any major changes in recent years, apart from the fact that Sweden introduced a financial support requirement in the Aliens Act as a condition for family reunification in 2010. According to this requirement, the sponsor has to show

sufficient income to support himself/herself and suitable accommodation for the family members who want to settle in Sweden. There are several exemptions from this requirement, however, for instance when the sponsor is a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection. Exemptions also apply when the sponsor has spent at least four years in Sweden with a permanent residence permit, when he/she is a Swedish or EU national, or where there are other special reasons.

In 2015, the Government announced its intention to introduce tougher maintenance requirements, also in response to the increased number of refugees coming to Sweden that year. Until 2016, the only requirement was that sponsors (the person in Sweden that wants to be joined by a family member living abroad) can support themselves. Since 20 July 2016, sponsors must also be able to support their family members who want come to Sweden. The maintenance requirement does not apply, however, when the sponsor is a refugee or a person eligible for subsidiary protection and his/her relative applies for a residence permit within the first three months after the sponsor has been granted a permit. Nor will the maintenance requirement apply if the sponsor is a child.¹¹

Statistical trends in 2015

In 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency and the Swedish missions abroad granted 15 792 first-time residence permits for family reunification.¹² This means a decrease by roughly 14% compared to the year 2014, when 18 300 such permits were granted. Table 6 below shows all residence permits that were granted for family reasons in 2015. In addition to the 15 792 permits that were granted for family reunification (shown in the left column), the table also displays the number of permits granted to dependents of newly-arrived refugees or persons otherwise in need of protection, of persons immigrating for employment reasons and of third-country national students. When all these categories of permits are taken together, a total of 43 414 residence permits were granted for various family-related reasons. This figure was 42 435 in 2014.

The number of persons that were granted residence permits as family members of refugees increased substantially, from 10 673 in 2013 to 13 100 in 2014 and further to 16 251 in 2015. This increase is a natural consequence of substantially increased protection-related immigration to Sweden.

The most prominent nationality groups among the persons immigrating for family reasons (all family-related reasons taken together) in 2015 were Syria, India, Iraq, stateless persons and Somalia. While most Syrians came as family members of refugees and other beneficiaries of protection, most Indian nationals came as family members of labour immigrants. Iraqis came both as family members of labour migrants, and for joining family members that had already been living in Sweden.¹³

¹¹ Government Offices of Sweden (2016): Proposal to temporarily restrict the possibility of being granted a residence permit in Sweden. Stockholm.

¹² This figure does not include family members of refugees, other persons in need of protection, workers or students who come to Sweden. It does include adopted children.

¹³ Figures for "Family reunification (general)" in the Table include both persons that have joined a family member living in Sweden in order to continue a relationship that had already existed in the country of origin or a third-country and persons who have established a new relationship with a person living in Sweden.

Table 6: Residence permits granted for family reasons, 2015

Nationality	Adoptions	Family reunification (general)	Family members of refugees	Family members of labour immigrants	Family members of international students	Total
Syria	0	989	9 053	14	356	10 412
India	5	2 369	1	90	255	2 720
Iraq	0	1 126	197	22	1 138	2 483
Stateless	2	54	1 913	2	236	2 207
Somalia	0		1 845		245	2 090
China	59	763	7	107	695	1 631
Afghanistan	0	65	1 168	19	334	1 586
Eritrea	1	7	949	2	257	1 216
Thailand	6	19		1	1 162	1 188
Pakistan	0	415	31	350	345	1 141
Other	82	4 216	1 087	741	10 614	16 740
Total	155	10 023	16 251	1 348	15 637	43 414

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

3.4 Citizenship and naturalisation

Policy changes

Regarding the acquisition of Swedish citizenship, a number of changes to the Citizenship Act entered into force on 1 April 2015. The most important changes were:

- The introduction of a preamble to the Act, stating that Swedish citizenship stands for affinity with Sweden and links all citizens. Swedish citizenship consists of rights and responsibilities.
- All municipalities are obliged to hold annual citizenship ceremonies for new citizens in order to celebrate their new citizenship.
- Rules regarding the automatic acquisition of citizenship at birth change so that a child always acquires Swedish citizenship at birth if one of the child's parents is a Swedish citizen.
- Children and young people's opportunities to obtain Swedish citizenship are facilitated through shorter requirements for domicile and permanent residency in Sweden.
- The time-periods for notification of citizenship for stateless children and young people are extended.
- The possibility to recover Swedish citizenship for persons, who lost their citizenship in accordance with an earlier law that sought to limit dual citizenship, is introduced without time limitations.

Statistical trends

As far as statistical trends pertaining to citizenship and naturalization are concerned, approximately 28 850 immigrants acquired Swedish citizenship through naturalization

in 2015. This represents an increase as compared to the year before, when roughly 26 665 immigrants naturalized. Also the number of people who acquired Swedish citizenship by registration, which is a simplified procedure for certain groups of immigrants, increased from roughly 2 600 in 2014 to 6 300 in 2015. The strong increase regarding registrations can be seen as a result of the policy changes mentioned above.

The largest groups among those who became Swedish citizens in 2015 were immigrants from Somalia, Iraq, stateless persons and immigrants from Thailand and Poland.

3.5 Visa Policy and Schengen co-operation

Visa Information System

Sweden has implemented the EU Visa Code and the Visa Information System (VIS). The VIS allows Schengen States to exchange visa data. It consists of a central IT system and of a communication infrastructure that links the central system to national systems, connecting consulates in non-EU countries and all external border crossing points of Schengen States. The VIS processes data and decisions relating to applications for short-stay visas for visiting or transiting purposes. For several years, the VIS was gradually rolled out across the world. The year 2015 saw the completion of the roll-out.

Consular representation

In 2015, Sweden signed some new representation agreements with other Schengen countries. Representation is used, when a Schengen state does not operate an embassy or consulate in a third-country. Another Member State's mission abroad may in such cases represent this state. Since 2015, Belgium has been representing Sweden in the DR Congo, Finland represented Sweden in Petrozavodsk (Russia), and Denmark represented Sweden in Bhutan. For a short period of time (June-August 2015), Poland represented Sweden in Lebanon. Sweden represented Portugal and Estonia in Zambia and Poland in Zambia and Tanzania.

Statistical trends: Schengen and national visas

As far as statistical trends regarding the issuing of visas for visiting purposes are concerned, Sweden issued 170 654 Schengen visas (mainly type-C visas) in 2015, and 5 543 national visas (type-D). Both figures represent an increase compared to 2014, when 162 724 Schengen visas were granted, and 5 031 national D-visas.

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 visas are used, for example, when the reason for travelling to Sweden does not correspond to any of the purposes outlined in the EU Visa Code, or when a foreign national wishes to stay in Sweden for more than 90 days. Generally, Sweden issues visas for visiting purposes and residence permits for immigration purposes.

Most visas were granted for tourism purposes (roughly 55 350), visits to family members (49 500), and business purposes (45 700). Most visas were issued to Chinese, Indian, and Russian travelers.

4 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

In 2015, the asylum situation in Sweden was in many ways extraordinary. Compared to the year before, it was characterized by an even larger number of incoming asylum applications. In fact, the number of applications doubled from around 81 000 people in 2014 to almost 163 000 in 2015. This situation required a high degree of flexibility to handle fluctuating pressures. The Government continued to increase the budgetary means to the Swedish Migration Agency, both to expand the Agency's asylum examination and application units, and for the provision of temporary accommodation for asylum seekers. Despite this, during the year, it became increasingly difficult and at times almost impossible to arrange even emergency housing for incoming applicants, and to process their asylum applications. In October and November, the Government announced a number of drastic measures to reduce the number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden.

Contingency planning and flexibility measures

To handle the high number of asylum seekers, the Swedish Migration Agency put temporary simplified operation modes into practice during the months of October, November and December 2015. The aim was to quickly register all asylum applications and include them into the reception system. The temporary simplified operation modes were primarily used for Syrian citizens, stateless persons from Syria and Eritrean citizens and meant that no initial interviews were held with adult asylum seekers or families. However, the asylum seekers had to leave their fingerprints and have their photographs taken. Also, no appointments for asylum interviews were scheduled at the time of registration. Instead, all asylum cases were stored to be scheduled for appointments/interviews at a later point in time.

The Migration Agency also started to develop a new process for handling asylum cases. The aim is that a larger part of the asylum interview will be done initially, taking into account particular needs in individual cases at an early stage in order to facilitate further processing.

Policy initiatives to reduce the number of asylum seekers

On 12 November 2015, Sweden reintroduced border controls at its internal borders. According to the Government, this was due to the threat to public order and internal security posed by the very high influx of migrants to Sweden. The Government also prepared new legislation (effective since 4 January 2016), following which identity controls are now carried out of all persons crossing the Swedish border from Denmark by bus, train or boat. This means that persons without ID-documents cannot travel to Sweden by public transport (busses, trains or boats).

In a report published in September 2016, the Migration Agency analysed the possible impact of the identity controls on persons who travel from Denmark to Sweden. The overall conclusion is that these controls, together with travel restrictions imposed by other European countries and the agreement between the EU and Turkey, have con-

tributed to a drastic reduction of the number of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden. However, the report also states that it is not possible to isolate the effect of the ID controls from other factors that may have had an impact on the number of incoming asylum applicants.¹⁴

In November 2015, the Government announced a temporary law restricting the possibility of being granted a residence permit for protection purposes in Sweden, and the right to family reunification. According to the proposal, refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection in Sweden will be granted temporary residence permits. Persons eligible for subsidiary protection who have been granted temporary permits according to the temporary law will not have a right to family reunification if the asylum application was not submitted by 24 November 2015. The proposal also included tougher maintenance requirements for family reunification / family formation. A maintenance requirement would in the future be applied to all categories of family reunification except when the sponsor is a refugee or a person eligible for subsidiary protection and the family member applies for a residence permit within three months after the sponsor was granted this status. In addition to the earlier maintenance requirement, which only required the sponsor to support him- or herself, it was proposed that the sponsor should also be required to be able to support the family member. In 2016, some of these proposals were modified following consultations with stakeholders. The modified legislation was passed by the Swedish Parliament in June 2016 and entered into force on 20 July 2016.¹⁵

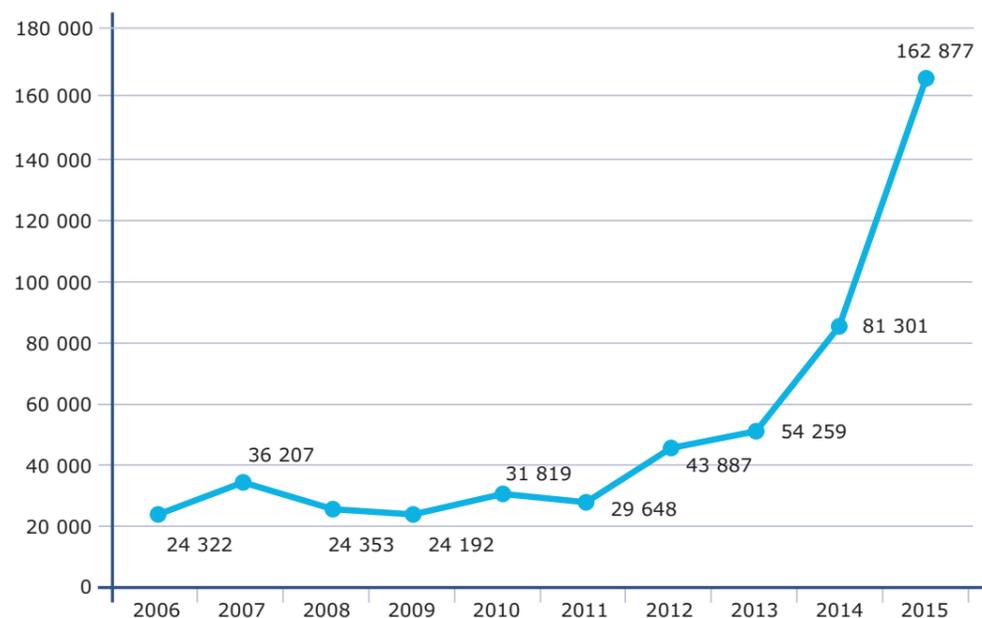
4.1 Applications for international protection and asylum procedures

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, when 81 301 applications were received. The figure of 2014 represented the highest number since 1992, when 84 018 people applied for asylum in Sweden, mainly due to the war in former Yugoslavia. The figure for 2015 represents an all-time record.

¹⁴ Migrationsverket (2016): *Utvärdering av effekterna av tillämpningen av förordningen om vissa identitetskontroller vid allvarlig fara för den allmänna ordningen eller den inre säkerheten i landet, Norrköping, 13 September 2016.*

¹⁵ For more detailed information, see Government Offices of Sweden (2016): *Proposal to temporarily restrict the possibility of being granted a residence permit in Sweden, Stockholm.*

Figure 5: Asylum seekers, 2006-2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

The big increase during 2015 was mainly due to the continued war in Syria, instability throughout the Middle East, and the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. The human rights situation in countries at the horn of Africa also continued to prompt high numbers of asylum seekers, mainly from Eritrea and Somalia.

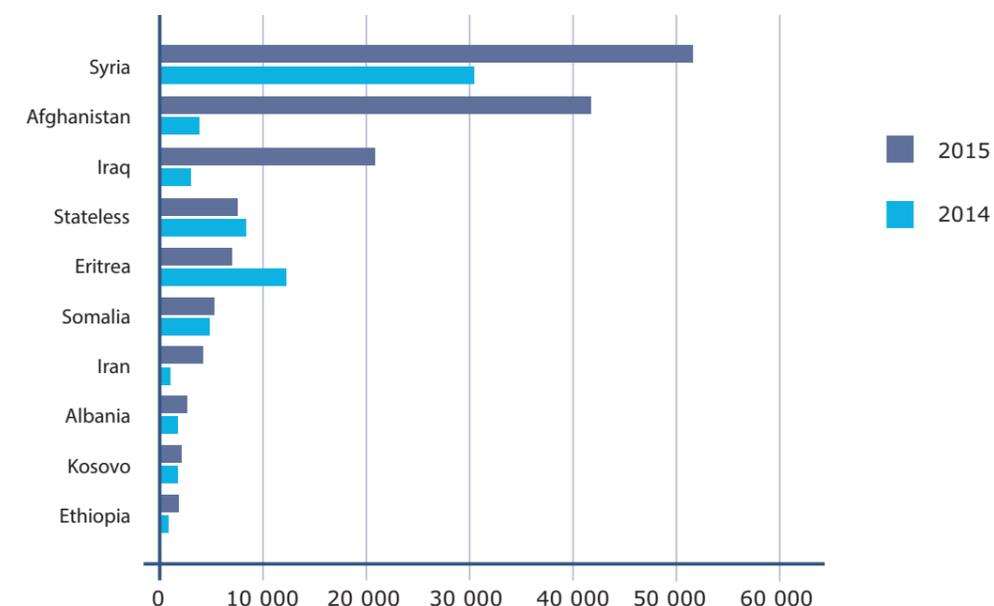
Syria was the single largest country of origin of asylum seekers during the year (51 338), followed by Afghan asylum seekers (41 564). The third biggest group were people from Iraq (20 858), followed by stateless applicants and people from Eritrea. The strongest increase compared to the previous year was seen for Afghan applicants. Among the biggest nationalities, only Eritreans decreased significantly as a group. Table 7 and Figure 6 below display the main countries of origin of asylum seekers for the year 2015, compared to 2014.

Table 7: Asylum seekers, main nationality groups, 2014-2015

Citizenship	2014	2015	Change %
Syria	30 583	51 338	68%
Afghanistan	3 104	41 564	1 239%
Iraq	2 666	20 858	682%
Stateless	7 863	7 716	-2%
Eritrea	11 499	7 233	-37%
Somalia	4 831	5 465	13%
Iran	997	4 560	357%
Albania	1 699	2 615	54%
Kosovo	1 474	1 779	21%
Ethiopia	608	1 716	182%
Other	15 977	18 033	13%
Total	81 301	162 877	100%

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

Figure 6: Asylum seekers, main nationality groups, 2014-2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

Common European Asylum System

The implementation of legislative acts within the Common European Asylum System (the Qualification Directive,¹⁶ the Dublin Regulation,¹⁷ the Eurodac Regulation,¹⁸ the Asylum Procedures Directive¹⁹ and the Reception Conditions Directive²⁰) continued in 2015, with some amendments to the Aliens Act entering into force on 1 January 2015 regarding actors that can offer protection against persecution. Exceptions from the rules on when a person should no longer be considered as in need of protection also came into force on 1 January 2015. Since the same date, the parents of an unmarried child who is in need of protection, and who do not qualify for protection themselves, are entitled to a residence permit on the condition that they have come to Sweden at the same time as the child. The same applies for another adult responsible for the child in the absence of the parents.

Finally, also from 1 January 2015, there are amendments concerning the duration of residence permits after renewal of temporary residence permits for persons in need of protection and their families.

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 standard 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

¹⁶ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted ("Qualification Directive").

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person ("Dublin III").

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, and amending Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 establishing a European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice ("Eurodac Regulation").

¹⁹ Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection ("Asylum Procedures Directive").

²⁰ Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection ("Reception Conditions Directive").

asylum applicants. In 2015, because of the extraordinarily high pressure, several types of emergency housing solutions were arranged by the Migration Agency, please see below.

- As an alternative to stay in accommodation provided by the Migration Agency, an asylum seeker also has the possibility to arrange his/her own accommodation. 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 receive a financial allowance similar to the financial allowance of those staying in accommodation provided by the Migration Agency. An asylum seeker who chooses to stay with friends and relatives can at any time ask to be accommodated by the Swedish Migration Agency instead.

By the end of 2015, a total of 181 890 people were enrolled in the Swedish reception system for asylum seekers, which is an increase by 129% compared to 2014, when 79 387 persons were enrolled. 47 724 (26%) had arranged their own accommodation, and 101 120 (55%) relied on accommodation provided by the Migration Agency. The remaining 19 % were accommodated in other, specialised facilities.

During the autumn of 2015, the need for accommodation increased dramatically due to the strongly rising number of incoming asylum applicants. At times, the need for accommodation exceeded the Migration Agency's capacity. While at the beginning of the year, the Migration Agency could provide accommodation for 56 000 people, this number was 53 000 during the late summer. Between August 2015 and January 2016, the number of available places was stepped up by roughly 50 000. To drastically increase the capacity of the Swedish reception system on short notice, the following measures were carried out:

- In September 2015, the Migration Agency decided to reduce the minimum space per person in reception facilities from five to three square meters, in order to make space for more beds.
- Municipal emergency facilities were activated to accommodate asylum seekers. This type of accommodation was used between autumn 2015 and spring 2016.
- Emergency accommodation in tents was used in co-operation with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.
- Other state agencies offered and prepared accommodation.
- Regarding the procurement of new facilities on the private housing market, the Migration Agency lowered its normal quality requirements for accommodation.
- Despite this massive step-up, the accommodation capacity became insufficient in November 2015, and approximately 300 asylum seekers could not be accommodated. On 19 November 2015, the Migration Agency announced that it could no longer offer all asylum seekers accommodation.

Since the turn of the year 2015-2016, the pressure on the Swedish reception system has eased off following a strong decline in the number of new asylum seekers, and temporary reception facilities could be closed.

4.3 Asylum decisions

In 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency made first-instance decisions on 58 802 asylum applications, roughly 5 300 more than in 2014. This means that while the number of incoming asylum applications more than doubled in 2015, compared to the year before, the number of decisions only increased very modestly.

In 32 631 cases (55%), the decision was positive. The protection rate was thus three percentage points lower than in 2014, when 58% of all decisions were positive. The still strong positive share is mainly due to the fact that many decisions concerned asylum seekers from

Syria, Eritrea, or from stateless persons. These applicants have long had rather high protection rates due to the situation in their countries or regions of origin. If asylum applications by people who were to be taken over by another Member State in accordance with the Dublin regulation and applications that for various reasons were written off are excluded from the calculation of the share of positive decisions, the protection rate would have been even higher, roughly 77%.

12 746 people who received a positive decision were granted refugee status (39% of all those granted protection), while 18 180 received subsidiary protection (56%). In addition, 1 309 people were granted a residence permit due to particularly distressing circumstances (4%). A further 396 people received a residence permit for other humanitarian reasons (1%).

Table 8 below shows the distribution of positive decisions and negative decisions for the ten quantitatively most important citizenship groups in 2015. Among these ten nationalities, Syrian nationals had the highest proportion of positive decisions, 90%. 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 almost 100% of all Syrian applicants were granted protection. Also Eritreans had a very high protection rate, roughly 100% in cases in which the application was examined materially in Sweden. Another important nationality group with a high share of positive decisions was stateless asylum seekers (79%). These are often Palestinians. By way of contrast, citizens of Albania and Serbia were in almost all cases not found to be in need of protection, and applicants from Kosovo and Ukraine also had a very low protection rate.

Table 8: First-instance decisions in asylum cases, main nationality groups, 2015

Nationality	Total number of decisions	Positive	Negative (after material consideration)	Negative (Dublin)*	Negative (other)**	Proportion positive decisions of all decisions
Syria	20 677	18 523	36	1 206	912	90%
Eritrea	7 450	6 542	6	711	191	88%
Stateless	3 954	3 142	167	409	236	79 %
Afghanistan	3 071	1 088	376	533	1 074	35 %
Somalia	2 907	958	385	1 148	416	33 %
Iraq	2 797	546	397	499	1 355	20 %
Albania	2 628	27	1 679	58	864	1 %
Kosovo	2 170	60	1 303	418	389	3 %
Serbia	1 451	13	807	85	546	1 %
Ukraine	897	29	459	167	242	3 %
Other	10 800	1 703	3 909	2 063	3 125	16 %
Total	58 802	32 631	9 524	7 297	9 350	55 %

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

* "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.

Dublin procedures

The number of asylum cases handled under the Dublin Regulation increased strongly between 2014 and 2015, from roughly 9 700 to 17 000 cases. The Migration Agency made almost 14 000 take back or take charge requests to other Dublin states, mainly to Italy, Hungary, and Germany. In approximately 8 000 cases, the Swedish request was accepted. The average time between the registration of an application and a decision to transfer an applicant to another state under Dublin rules was 87 days, which also represents an increase compared to 2014, when the average handling time was 71 days.

4.4 Integration of persons who are granted protection

In 2015, 49 500 persons that had been granted a residence permit left the reception system for asylum seekers and were settled in a local municipality, almost 11% more than in 2014 (44 621). The figure includes persons that were granted protection, resettled persons and family members of beneficiaries of international and humanitarian protection.

Since the settlement process represents a challenge for many Swedish municipalities, the Government made efforts to improve the integration process for refugees and other newly-arrived migrants. First and foremost, it proposed a new law for an effective and solidarity-based refugee reception system. According to the proposal, all municipalities can be required to receive new arrivals for settlement, based on the municipalities' respective situation and capacities, as well as the local labour market, characteristics of the population and other reception services provided. The new act entered into force on 1 March 2016. Before, it was voluntary for municipalities to accept beneficiaries of protection for settlement.

The Government also continues to closely monitor the Introduction Act of 2010 and to ensure its effective implementation. The Act itself remained largely unchanged in 2015. However, the Government has made amendments and implemented supplementary measures in order to create more opportunities for newly arrived immigrants to quickly find work or begin an educational programme. The following initiatives were launched in 2015:

- The Government held talks with the social partners, the Public Employment Service and other relevant Government agencies about opening up "fast tracks" into the labour market. The aim is to create more rapid ways into the labour market for newly arrived immigrants with education or skills in shortage occupations. To pave the way for fast track provisions, the social partners will be given the opportunity to apply for funds for promotion and development measures. At the time of writing this report, fast tracks had been established for chefs (cooks), butchers, teachers and preschool teachers and several regulated professions within the health care sector, e.g. for doctors, nurses and dentists.
- In the Budget Bill for 2016, the Government proposed higher state compensations to municipalities for the reception of newly arrived immigrants, and to increase the Public Employment Service's administrative capacities. It also proposed reforms to speed up the introduction of newly arrived immigrants. For example, it set aside funds for early measures for individuals who have been granted a residence permit but who still stay in the Migration Agency's accommodation system for asylum seekers, in order to use waiting times in a more meaningful way and to speed up labour market integration. Such activities could be e.g. early skills identification measures or studies of the Swedish language.

- The Government allocated funds to improve the validation of skills. The Public Employment Service will be given the possibility to offer brief supplementary education within the introduction system. Thus, it is hoped that newly-arrived immigrants with qualifications equivalent to Swedish higher education will be integrated more quickly into the labour market. The Government also established a validation delegation with instructions to monitor, support and coordinate intensified development work in this area.
- The Government has established the "100 club". Through this initiative, the Public Employment Service can offer special package solutions to major companies that want to contribute to the introduction of refugees while at the same time managing their labour demand. The purpose is to create new opportunities for major companies to employ or offer work placements for at least 100 new arrivals per company within three years.
- The Government has abolished the private introduction guides that were a part of the original labour market integration reform of 2010. The measure was found not to have worked as intended, and several evaluations suggested that the guides were ineffective. Newly arrived individuals with an introduction plan are now obliged to accept an appropriate job offer.
- The rules regarding the introduction allowance were changed in order to encourage newly arrived immigrants to combine introduction activities with employment. An individual covered by the Introduction Act can now have a salaried job as part of the introduction plan and still receive introduction benefits up to six months without incurring income loss.
- The starting point of the introduction period has been put forward so that it starts when the individual is settled in a municipality, rather than within two months after the individual has been granted a residence permit. The purpose is that individuals with residence permits, who are waiting in reception facilities, should not use up part of their introduction period before they are actually settled.
- The Government committed an additional SEK 30 million to activities in the civil society and local government sectors aimed at creating better conditions for new arrivals to establish themselves in society. The initiative encompasses activities that aim to make it easier to become established in society, create networks, support language learning or provide social support to unaccompanied minors. Examples include social activities, study circles, activities to support language learning, mentorship and activities of sports associations.

4.5 Resettlement

Apart from being a major destination for persons seeking asylum, Sweden also engages in resettlement. 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.

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. For the past years, the annual quota for resettlement has been set at 1 900 persons. A number of places are reserved for emergency cases under a special emergency quota, 450 in 2015, and 350 in 2014.

The Swedish resettlement programme consists of two streams: dossier processing and selection missions. Residence permits are granted only 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. A total of 30 individuals were resettled following a submission from a Swedish embassy in 2015.

Resettlement to Sweden in 2015

In 2015, Sweden allocated 1 900 places for resettlement submissions from Kenya (200), Iran (150), Sudan (150), Uganda (150), Somalia (50), Yemen (50), the Middle East and North Africa (700 from Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt), as well as unspecified locations globally (450 cases, mainly emergency cases). Cooperation with host countries has generally worked well. Actual resettlement departures in 2015 were: 344 from Kenya, 205 from Iran, 9 from Sudan, 170 from Uganda, 6 from Somalia, 71 from Yemen, 94 from Jordan, 182 from Lebanon, 77 from Egypt, 208 from Iraq, 142 from Turkey, and 394 from other countries/regions. To prepare quota refugees for settlement in Sweden, cultural orientation was carried out in the form of traditional programmes, lasting 1.5 days, and shorter information sessions. Table 9 below shows the main nationalities of resettled refugees in 2015.

Table 9: Resettlement, main nationalities 2014-2015

Citizenship	Number of persons 2014	Number of persons 2015
Syria	714	686
DR Congo	226	231
Somalia	162	215
Stateless	77	174
Afghanistan	328	161
Eritrea	229	160
Ethiopia	20	102
Sudan	8	43
Iraq	9	22
Kenya	0	19
Other	198	67
Total	10971	1 880

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

Settlement of quota refugees in municipalities

Within Sweden, the placement of resettled refugees has been based on agreements between municipalities and the Migration Agency. Remoter regions of Sweden that are scarcely populated and often face depopulation, mainly in the north and north-west of the country, are especially active in providing housing for resettled refugees. In 2015, municipalities in the region of Västerbotten accepted the largest share among all resettled refugees (227 out of the total of 1 897 persons that were placed in municipalities that year), followed by Västernorrland (202) and Gävleborg (176).

The EU-FRANK project

EU-FRANK is a Swedish resettlement initiative co-financed through the Migration, Asylum and Integration Fund aimed at providing operational support to EU member states in order to increase their capacity to design, establish and increase resettlement programs. This will be done by setting up a resettlement training programme, including elements of 'buddying' between more and less experienced states and close practical cooperation and exchange of experiences between colleagues in different member states. Joint tools and expertise will be developed, collected and shared. The project will be carried out in close consultations with UNHCR and EASO and its partners, consisting of the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary, Italy and Switzerland.

5 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

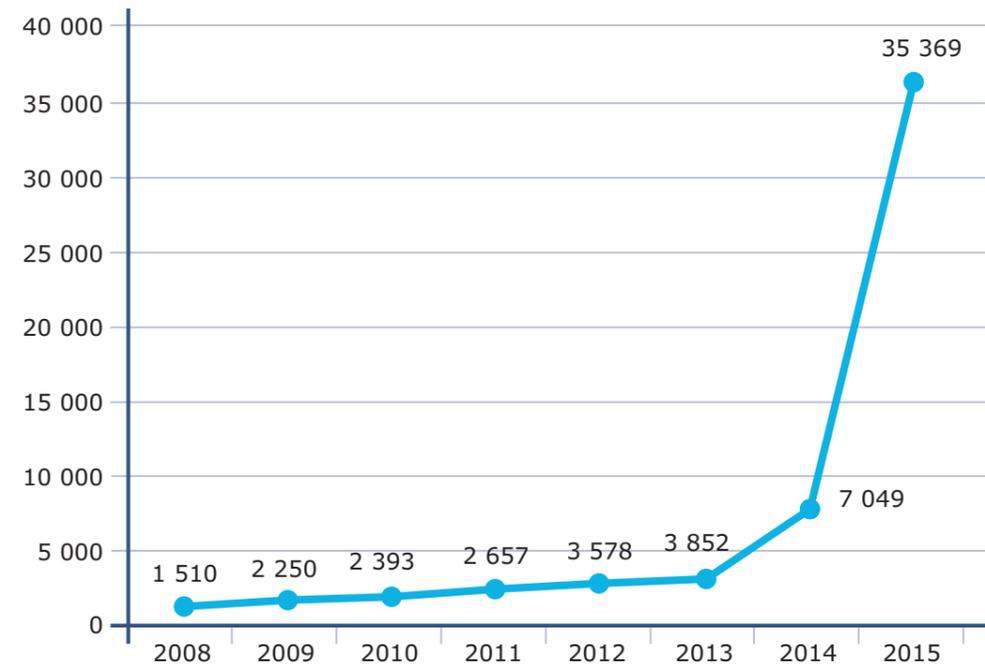
Reception and accommodation of unaccompanied minors

The number of unaccompanied minors (UAM) seeking asylum in Sweden has increased remarkably over recent years, see Figure 7 below. While the refugee situation in 2015 was extraordinary altogether (see Chapter 4), the statistical trend regarding UAM was even more outstanding, with the number of new UAM increasing by more than 400%, from 7 049 in 2014 to 35 369 in 2015 (see Figure 7 below).

The asylum applications of UAM are dealt with exclusively at selected units within the Swedish Migration Agency, where case officers have specialist skills. In 2015, UAM accounted for 22% of all asylum seekers coming to Sweden. This share was 9% during the year before, and 7% in 2013.

Due to the extraordinarily high number of new UAM in 2015, their asylum applications were during the months of October, November and December handled according to temporarily simplified operation modes. No appointments for asylum interviews were scheduled at the time of registration. Instead, all asylum cases were stored in order to be scheduled for appointments/interviews at a later point in time. As previously, however, an initial interview was held with each UAM and the social services were notified.

Figure 7: Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Sweden, 2008-2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

In 2015, most UAM in Sweden came from Afghanistan (23 480), Syria (3 777), Somalia (2 058), Eritrea (1 939) and Iraq (1 097).

Asylum outcomes for UAM

Overall, UAM are more often granted protection than adults. Whereas the protection rate (at first instance) for all asylum seekers in 2015 was 55% (as compared to 58% in 2014), the protection rate for UAM was 66%, the same as in 2014).

The majority of UAM in Sweden were boys (92% in 2015, compared to 81% in 2014) who declare that they are between 13 and 17 years old, see Table 10 below for details.

Table 10: Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum, age and gender, 2015

Age ranges	Boys	Girls	Total
0-6 years	157	155	312
7-12 years	421	1 830	2 251
13-15 years	1 057	14 181	15 238
16-17 years	1 212	16 356	17 568
Total	2 847	32 522	35 369

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

Age assessments

Establishing exactly how old they are remains a challenge due to the fact that many UAM arrive in Sweden without any identity documents that indicate their age. During 2015, the Migration Agency developed new standards in relation to UAM. Among these is one regarding the registration of age at the time of application and one on medical age assessment. The standard on registration of age at the time of application foresees that the age that a child states should generally be registered in the system. However, if it is obvious that the person is not a child, the Migration Agency can register the person as above 18 years. Later on in the asylum process, further investigation is conducted regarding the age. The content of the standard on medical age assessment is that the Migration Agency no longer initiates any medical age assessments, but is obliged to inform the unaccompanied minor about the option to undergo a medical age assessment and hand it in to the Migration Agency as evidence to support the stated age. The unaccompanied minor and his/her legal guardian must themselves decide on whether to make use of medical age assessment, and book an appointment. The Migration Agency will reimburse the unaccompanied minor for the cost of the examination when he/she submit the results.

6 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Development of a referral mechanism

In 2015 and early 2016, the County Administrative Board in Stockholm has been finalising a project on guidelines for the identification and referral of trafficked persons in Sweden. The guidelines have been developed in the course of the project "Development of a Transnational Referral Mechanism for Sweden (SE-TRM) - Targeted support to County Administrative Board of Stockholm", funded by the County Administrative Board of Stockholm and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in 2014 and 2015.

The general objective of the SE-TRM project is to strengthen the links and cooperation between the anti-trafficking stakeholders in Sweden by way of developing a national referral mechanism (NRM) and a transnational referral mechanism model (TRM-SE) to facilitate and provide necessary support to potential victims of human trafficking as well as to operationalise the existing legislative and administrative procedures.

On 30 October 2015, the Swedish Police Authority took a decision to reinforce its capacity to combat trafficking in human beings. The decision foresees that the Police shall continuously follow and collate nation-wide situation pictures on trafficking and related crimes and that the coordination with the National Operative Department within the Police authority shall be improved in order to reinforce efforts to support and protect crime victims and "evidence persons" as well as further enhance the coordination with other relevant actors, including the national coordination at the County Administrative Board in Stockholm. It also foresees a dialogue with civil society.

Trends regarding the identification of trafficking victims

As regards the Police, identification of possible victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) can be made by any officer that comes across a suspicion of THB. It is therefore important that there in general is a high level of knowledge and awareness on how trafficking manifests itself. There are examples of identification of trafficking victims taking place both on the basis of intelligence gathering operations evolving into criminal investigations and on the basis of observations made by patrolling, front-line officers. Another starting point for identification of victims is surveillance of the Internet.

Officials at the Migration Agency are encouraged to report suspicions regarding THB to the Police. In 2015, case workers of the Migration Agency reported 195 cases of suspected trafficking, 66 of which concerned minors. These numbers represent a clear increase of possible THB cases. In 2014, there were 111 suspected cases, 16 of which regarded minors. Most reported cases in 2015 concerned migrants from Nigeria (19), Afghanistan (19), Morocco (15), Mongolia (13), Somalia (13) and Eritrea (9).

During the year, the Migration Agency granted 50 temporary residence permits for residence permits to persons involved in preliminary criminal investigations. 29 of these were granted in connection to cases of suspected trafficking.

7 MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between international migration and development has been a topical issue in Sweden, and the Swedish Government has devoted much attention to it. With changes to the Aliens Act that entered into force in 2014, Sweden has tried to facilitate international mobility and circular migration.²¹

Global Forum on Migration and Development

As a measure of Sweden's interest in furthering policy coherence on migration and development at the global level, Sweden chaired the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in 2013-2014. In 2015, it also actively participated and financially supported the GFMD during the Turkish chairmanship. In addition, financial support is provided to the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Migration and Development in order to support coherence and cooperation between the SGSR's mission, the GFMD and the Global Migration Group (GMG).

Preventing exploitation of migrant workers and unethical recruitment

A prerequisite for migration to contribute to development is that migrants' rights are protected and that they are not exposed to exploitation. On 2 July 2015, the Government appointed a commission of inquiry to propose measures to strengthen labour migrants' rights in Sweden and to prevent them from being exploited. The Government also provided financial support to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the development and establishment of the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) instrument, which aims to bring change to part of the recruitment industry pertaining to international recruitment where the business model is largely based on the exploitation of migrant workers. By promoting ethical recruitment standards, IRIS seeks to promote transparency within the industry to prevent negative consequences that affect supply chains and labour markets and protect migrant workers.²² On November 3, 2015 the Government invited Swedish companies, trade unions, and employers' organizations to a seminar on ethical recruitment and International Recruitment Integrity System in order to promote ethical recruitment and highlight the IRIS instrument.

²¹ For details, please see the Annual Policy Report for 2014.

²² For more information on IRIS, see <https://iris.iom.int/>.

Working with diasporas

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) provides funding to the Swedish NGO Forum Syd, amounting to approximately SEK 20 million per year during 2015-2017, for a programme regarding the Somalian diaspora. The aim of the program is to enable the diaspora to contribute with knowledge and expertise to sustainable development in Somalia. Sweden has been an important destination country for refugees from Somalia. By the end of the year 2015, more than 60 600 people who were born in Somalia had their usual residence in Sweden.²³

²³ Source: Statistics Sweden (scb).

8 IRREGULAR MIGRATION

The Swedish Government's objective is to secure long-term, sustainable migration policies that maintain the right of asylum and that, within the framework of regulated migration, facilitate mobility across borders. An efficient regime aimed at combatting illegal entry or stay is seen as a precondition to achieve this objective.

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 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.²⁴ Therefore, in working against organized irregular migration and trafficking in human beings, Sweden is heavily dependent on EU, and international, cooperation. Sweden has focused on developing this cooperation, predominantly through EUROPOL, FRONTEX and the Nordic law enforcement liaison officers stationed around the world.

Due to the exceptional refugee situation in 2015, the Government introduced temporary border controls at its internal borders. It also prepared new legislation (effective since 4 January 2016), according to which identity controls are carried out of all persons crossing the Swedish-Danish border by bus, train or boat.

In 2015, according to Eurostat, 615 persons travelling irregularly were refused entry into Sweden at its external borders. This figure represents an increase compared to the year before, when 345 people were refused entry, and the 2013, when this figure was 185. Compared to other EU Member States, the Swedish figure is small, however.

²⁴ Cf. Swedish Migration Agency/EMN (2012): *Practical responses to irregular migration into Sweden, a study produced by the European Migration Network (EMN)*.

9 RETURN MIGRATION

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, 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. People must always be returned under humane and dignified conditions.

Amendments to asylum seekers' right to assistance

In October 2015, the Swedish Government announced, together with several other proposals in the context of the extraordinary refugee situation, a tougher approach regarding rejected asylum seekers who do not leave Sweden voluntarily. It was proposed that adults without children would lose their right to a daily allowance once a negative asylum decision is final and non-appealable. As soon as the time period for leaving Sweden voluntarily had elapsed, rejected asylum seekers (again without children) would also lose their right to accommodation provided by the Swedish Migration Agency.²⁵ A law implementing this approach was adopted by the Swedish Parliament in April 2016 and entered into force in June 2016. Before these amendments came into force, an asylum seeker's right to assistance normally ceased only after the person left the country, even if there was a refusal-of-entry or expulsion order that had become final and non-appealable. The new approach is expected to prompt more voluntary returns, and to make it less attractive for rejected asylum seekers to try to prolong their stay in Sweden.

Re-establishment support

In order to facilitate return and to strengthen the incentives for voluntary return, economic re-establishment 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 2015, 609 people applied for re-establishment support, and 216 received a positive decision on their application, exactly as many as in 2014. Among those who received re-establishment support, 94 persons were Iraqi nationals, 36 were Afghans, and 23 had Somali nationality.

Voluntary and forced returns

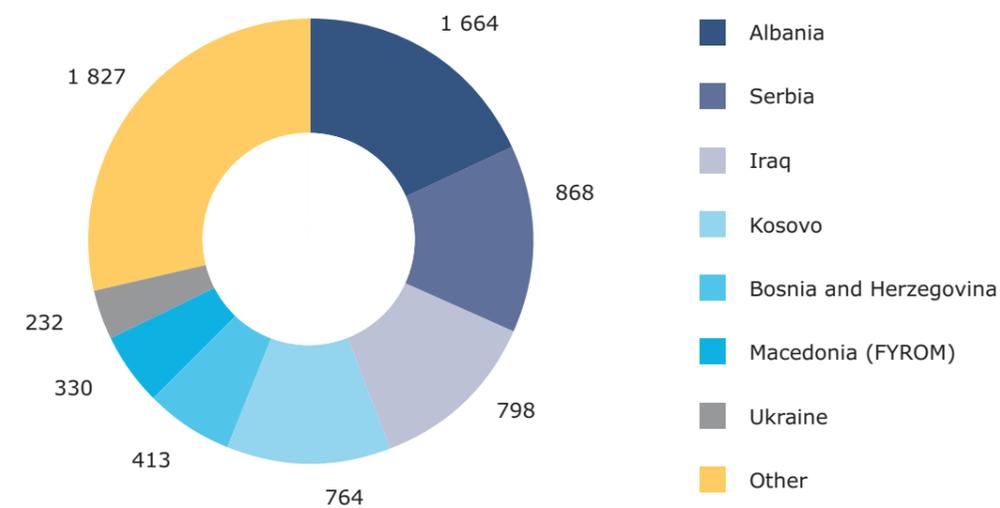
In 2015, 10 633 persons returned voluntarily to their home countries (6 896), to member states of the EU or the EEA (2 671, most to states responsible under the Dublin regulation), other countries (980) or to unknown destinations (86). Overall,

²⁵ Government Offices of Sweden (2016): *Government proposes amendments to asylum seekers' right to assistance, Stockholm*.

the number of voluntary returns was considerably higher than in 2014, when 8 006 rejected asylum seekers left Sweden voluntarily. The most important nationality groups among those who returned voluntarily to their home countries in 2015 were nationals of Albania (1 664), Serbia (868), Albania (606) and Iraq (798), see Figure 8 below.

The police carried out 2 628 forced returns in 2015, which is a lower number than in 2014, when 2 766 forced returns were carried out. The main nationality groups among those who were returned by force to their home countries were Albania (345), Kosovo (128) and Serbia (118).

Figure 8: Voluntary return to home countries, main citizenship groups, 2015



Source: Swedish Migration Agency

ANNEX A: METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

A1. Methodology

This policy report has been drawn up in a process of close collaboration between the Swedish Migration Agency and the Ministry of Justice. Information was also provided by the Ministry of Employment and the Swedish Police, via the Ministry of Justice. Within the Migration Agency, different divisions have contributed expertise relating to their respective area. The report is based on internally produced administrative statistics, reports and other data, and also on the fund of knowledge represented by the other organisations involved. The editor has also reviewed official documents, such as Government enquiries and reports, and followed media reporting on migration issues in order to identify relevant debates that should be mentioned in this report.

A2. Terms and Definitions

As far as possible, the terminology and definitions used in this report correspond to the EMN Glossary. Abbreviations and terms that cannot be expected to be commonly known are explained, either in the main text body or in footnotes.

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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