

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS: SWEDISH CASE STUDY

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Abstract. Integration helps bring together newcomers and natives. While governments are more focused on labour integration, cultural and civic integration often neglected. However, areas like linguistic, educational, cultural integrations are highly important. Women as a group often face specific obstacles when integration is at stake. Women who come from different countries with different religions, culture and tradition often more difficult in integration. This especially relevant if gender-based violence occurs and a woman does not know how to protect herself. Therefore, legal integration can be a safe place and make women feel more empowered. Sweden is a great example of how non-governmental actors and private persons do their best to integrate migrants. Government has a clear gender and integration agenda, however, sometimes it requires a lot of paperwork for a migrant in order to get access to the resource. NGOs make it easier and more enjoyable. However, often the good integration policy could face denial as the newcomers do not want to integrate and change their traditions, culture and lifestyle.

Keywords: migration, women, discrimination, integration, national identity

1 Introduction

Since 2013, Swedish periods of development can be characterized as “the integration issue” and “the refugee challenge” Undoubtedly, the recent immigration peak has posed a challenge to the country. Sweden has been praised as being “the forefront of integration” “Sweden is better equipped than many other countries to integrate refugees, given its strong economy and tradition of welcoming immigrants” (Loshakova, 2011) Sweden has traditionally been a state favourable to women and their rights. Gender equality is a cornerstone of Swedish society (Gender Equality in Sweden, 2012).

Gender issue in the context of migration is a complex nature (Shtileva, 2012). It implies a variety of factors such as forced or voluntary migration, cultural issues, lack of education and intersectional discrimination (Abdurazakova, 2007). Furthermore, women due to the unique health features can more likely face hindrances in the field of healthcare, especially in the case of pregnancy (Shaibakova, 2017). Hence, they could be denied in providing treatment. The article considered how migrants have been integrated in Sweden and whether gender consideration is included in the integration policy.

2 Methods

The research looks at different aspects of integration. In addition, women have a specific integration path due to the existence of gender stereotypes. Consequently, the research question can be formulated as follows: Does Sweden have a positive experience in integrating migrants into society and protecting? Is a gender perspective is included in the integrational policy? The research is of traditional legal nature, meaning that the literature review, international documents, NGOs reports, governmental agency reports are of paramount importance. Notwithstanding, the empirical dimension of the research was added. Thus, representatives of the Swedish Red Cross, Sveriges Kvinnolobby and Civil Rights Defenders were interviewed.

3 Results and discussion

A total of 4.4 million people immigrated to one of the EU Member States during 2017. Among these 4.4 million immigrants during 2017, there were an estimated 2.0 million citizens of non-EU countries, 1.3 million people with citizenship of a different EU Member State from the one to which they immigrated, around 1.0 million people who migrated to an EU Member State of which they had the citizenship and some 11 thousand stateless people (Florinskaya, 2012)

Share of non-nationals in the resident population, 1 January 2018

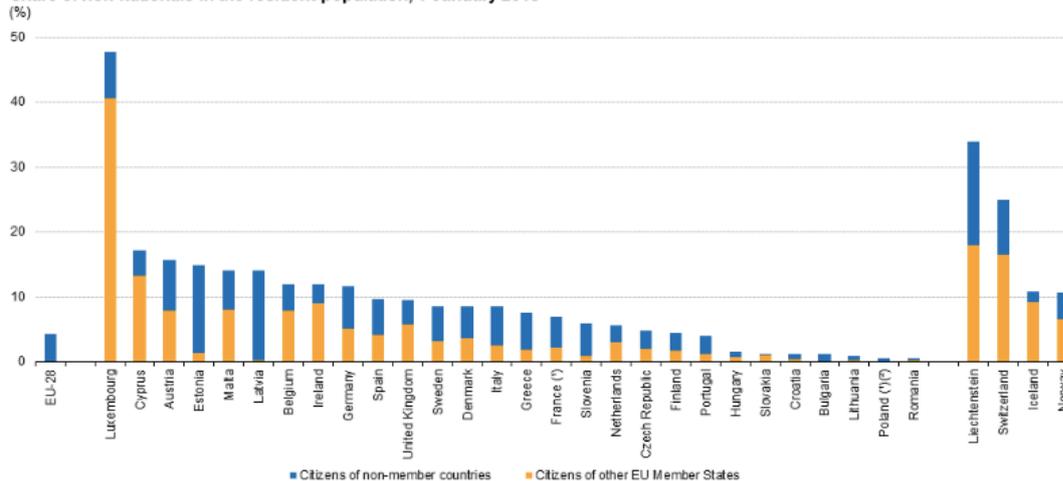


Figure 1. Frequency of immigrants from different countries

To integrate migrants ideally means providing them with rights and duties, opportunities and responsibilities comparable to those of natives. There is an existent perception that integration is only about the labour market and economic fitting in However, social, cultural and civic integration is of paramount importance.

As far as this article looks at the Swedish approach to the integration, it is important to define the integration from the governmental point of view. The press secretary of Minister for

Employment and Integration Ylva Johansson stated: “...integration means people coming to Sweden being given the right conditions to establish themselves within and become a part of Swedish society” According to the Swedish government, the goal of integration policy in Sweden is equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background (Swedish Integration Policy 2009).

Migrant integration is a complex process that can be done in different dimensions. A. Unterreiner and A. Weinar put together a table including a number of actors that could affect the integration of migrants. They include the following spheres of integration: economic integration, education, religion, access to nationality, civic and political participation, language, social interaction, spatial integration. In all of the aforementioned spheres, the non-governmental organization played a crucial role in addition to the governmental bodies and the government itself. Importantly, the media has also been mentioned as an integrational actor.

Language is one of the most important tools of integration of a person. Undoubtedly, if a migrant is capable of speaking the language of a host state, then he/she expands the communication circles by the inclusion of people who are not able to speak international languages. It has been underlined that women are particularly vulnerable when it comes to a new language learning process. The language is of a paramount necessity for entering the job market. However, if a woman is not planning to get a job due to the mothering or the cultural or religious specificity that does not allow women to work, she does not find an incentive for learning a new language. Simply, frequently, she does not possess financial independence to spend money on educational courses or there is no opportunity to finance or allow a babysitter, or to seek permission from a husband. For more isolated women, their weak network and ignorance of the host country make them unaware of organizations and linguistic training. At the same time, mothering can be a source of motivation to learn a language, however, it comes later in a child's life.

In Sweden, Red Cross ("Röda Korset") is an organization that provides anyone who wants to learn Swedish language courses free of charge. There are several time-slots and levels. The courses are run by the volunteers. The Red Cross Swedish courses are also a good way to learn a language without a personal identification number that is often required to be enrolled in a school, a university or courses. Migration Agency provides special training for immigrants, SFI. However, in order to be eligible for it, a migrant has to have a residence permit in Sweden and have registered in the population register. Undeniably, these requirements create a gap in the engagement of those who are undocumented migrants or are waiting for a residence permit. Language cafes are also a very important way to learn Swedish and integrate into society by making friends and network. Those language cafes and other programs aimed to make language learning easier and more fun cooperate with local volunteer organizations, churches. "Building bridges between immigrants and natives" is a program currently run in 160 municipalities all over Sweden. The main results of this program are faster and more efficient language learning and cultural understanding on both sides. The creators of a program claim the evidence of a reduction in ignorance, segregation and prejudice.

Culture is a highly broad notion; therefore, it encompasses a wide range of factors that need to be considered when discussing a socio-cultural integration. "Socio-cultural integration is concerned with the question of whether ethnic minority groups become part of the receiving society or whether these groups remain distinct from the host country" (Gsir, 2017). Sonia Gsir, for example, believes that socio-cultural integration shall be examined through the lenses of social interactions between migrants and natives in different social contexts: intermarriages, interethnic friendships, interethnic relations at workplace and encounters in the neighbourhood (Tejeda & Dominguez, 2019).

Frivillighet för delaktighet (volunteering for participation) was a weekly meeting space where local could interact with the newcomers or anyone who felt that he/she is not included in the Swedish society. Several areas around the big cities are characterized by exclusion and segregation; in many suburbs, some residents feel that they do not feel like part of Swedish society - stated at the *Frivillighet för delaktighet* web page. Thus, the weekly interactions were proposed as a solution. Another Red Cross project includes free access e.g. to a swimming pool. This approach is highly interesting as it involves integration through leisure and activities. Some initiatives come from people

themselves. The United Invitations or Department of Invitation is a good example. It is a non-profit organization founded by Ebba Akerman who was teaching Swedish to immigrants in the suburbs and found out that most of the immigrants are struggling to be part of society. The organization connects locals and newcomers within a community, by having them share a homecooked meal. Both newcomers and natives could invite each other to the dinner using the website database. Starting as a one-person organization, the United Invitations became an international network with the potential to be incorporated in most of the countries (Parvizian et al, 2015).

Sex education and gender education is one of the most important things to learn in order to understand the society one is living. It is relevant both for women and men. Women need to learn about the way women in other countries live and perceived. When tackling the question of sex education and gender and related human rights, the question will always come to the universality of human rights. Is it good to impose so-called "western values" and ideas to the people from another cultural background? Is it good to prohibit or criticize traditions that have been followed through the decades and centuries despite the fact they are sexist? Some Swedish organizations undertook those paths partly. *Riksförbundet för sexuell upplysning* (RFSU), Swedish Association for Sexuality Education is an organization that works with information, education and advocacy by arranging courses, conferences and participating in debates. RFSU is not entirely focused on the migrants and their education, it is rather general organization. However, the Swedish government funded the furthering of the project by providing around \$416,000. This project is a series of animated films cover all aspects of sex, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and female genital mutilation. The videos are translated to Arabic, Dari, Somali, Persian, Northern and Central Kurdish, English and other languages.

In my view, a person can feel integrated when he or she feels that a state can protect him/her. Therefore, the integration in a legal framework might contribute to the general integration. Women migrants are more vulnerable when it comes to the protection of their rights. There are several reasons for that including the dependence of a spouse. Sweden is a part of a SWIM project, Safe Women in Migration - is committed to fight against gender violence and contribute to the protection of migrant women, girls and asylum seekers who are victims of violence or find themselves in a situation of risk. The risk of gender-based violence could occur at every stage of migration: at a home state, during the transit to a host state and in emergency and hospitality centres upon arrival. The European Directive 2012/29 /EU enshrines equal access to justice to all victims of violence and abuse, regardless of their legal status. However, migrant feels fear, lack of knowledge, fear of deportation that prevent them from accessing their rights and be protected. The project is unique in that sense that it tackles both migrants and actors who work with them. Thus, the project arranges training for professionals working in the migrant hospitality sector that enable them to identify the situations most at risk and to guarantee adequate support to all women and girls who must access the judicial system in each of the member countries of the European Union.

Undoubtedly, the media plays one of the most important roles in the public perception of migrants. Media also gives migrants an idea of who are they in society, where they stand. Sweden is a highly advance in incorporating social advertisement. The most frequently appearing ads include the immigration, tolerance and sustainable way of living. One of the most recent examples of the ad that was a topic of a conversation is the ad of Swedish department store *Ahlens* it is shown how a father reading a bedtime story to his daughter - a piece from the Swedish children's book *Pippi Longstocking* - in Dari, a dialect of Persian spoken largely in Afghanistan. While the mixed reactions to the advertisement, such advertisements could be perceived as a statement and migrants can feel represented which is a positive move for the integration.

Frequently neglected in the empirical research and in governmental statements unwillingness of migrants to be integrated indeed exists in practice. First and foremost, due to the diaspora and the linguistic community. The people who speak the same language and live in the same area regardless of whether they are relatives and family or strangers from the same country or language-speaking area. Those communities constitute "protective enclaves" which can become "captive spaces over the years" Others are afraid not to be actually accepted in a new community. While the third group thinks that the integration and adaptation to new society and culture might affect their national identity. Indeed, the large-scale migration lead to the diversified world transforming communities challenged the notion of cultural and national identity. Interestingly, the "danger" for national identity exists for both the host state identity and newcomers' culture (Dixon, 2018).

The problem of losing cultural identity often discussed in a political arena as well. Migration Policy Institute and MPI Europe stated that most people fear that the common norms and values that bind societies together will be weakened irretrievably if newcomers do not adapt to the host-country language, culture, and identity. The report shows that the concentration of homogeneous populations of newcomers are seen as more threatening and more likely to emphasize their own subculture rather than integrate into the mainstream (Migration Policy Institute and MPI Europe 2012).

4 Summary

Language, culture, media and education are the main pillars of the social integration of migrants. Learning the language of the host country gives more opportunities to find a job, new friends from the native population and feel more secure. Culture and education can teach about the values and principles the government has undertaken. Media can be regarded as a mirror of societal change and can make migrants more or less welcome. Women are more vulnerable in all of the aforementioned areas due to their status as caretakers, mothers, wives. In addition, they are more like to experience gender-based violence and fell hopeless when it comes to legal protection.

5 Conclusion

Integration is of paramount importance in the era of globalization and people being in a move. However, while understanding the importance of the integrations in the area of employment and general education, governments do not pay the same attention to the cultural and social integration that lead of the absence of feeling of belonging. In order to ensure the protective and inclusive environment, society needs to find a way of connecting natives and newcomers. Sweden is a good example of how integration is incorporated. Nevertheless, some claim that Sweden being a good country with good immigration and asylum-seeking country fails in integrating people came. The article shows that there are areas that need to be paid more attention in regard to integration, e.g. legal integration, social integration. As the article shows sometimes non-state actors and private organizations are capable of providing social integration better than the official authorities.

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