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## **Skills, Knowledge, Competence Recognition for TCNs: An Evaluation (Work Package 4)**

### **Policy brief - Sweden**

**Main Authors: Heather Mackay, with Ida-Maja Lindstöm, Department of  
Geography and Economic History, Umeå University**

**Project Leader: Olof Stjernström, Professor, Department of Geography and  
Economic History, Umeå University**

# Wp4 – Skills, Knowledge, Competence Recognition for TCNs: A Policy Brief

**Provide a clearer overview of the whole system of SKC recognition, the roles and responsibilities**

During this evaluation process it became apparent that there was a lack of a clear picture of the system and the stakeholders involved. Not only to our researchers, but also to many of those interviewed who were a part of the system. Many stated that there was an absence of a holistic overview of the entirety of the system and its players. Most people work with, or interact with, a small part of the bigger picture, often split by labour sector. It became no small task to attempt to map out and clarify how the Swedish system of SKC recognition worked, who was involved, and who had ultimate responsibility.

**Reduce the confusion created by the multiplicity of stakeholders involved at varying geographic scales**

The number of stakeholders and organisations involved at different geographic scales is considered as a problem. As the Swedish Government's job support organisation for all who are unemployed, and for those asylum-derived establishment plans, the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, AF) plays a very important role in this web of stakeholders. Their role as a major player in the SKC recognition web has been relatively recent, since 2010. It was at this point that the Public Employment Service was given the mission from the Swedish government to coordinate the country's SKC assessment and recognition process and guide validation efforts, and to be held accountable for the country's efforts in this arena (whether it be for Swedes of Swedish heritage or those of immigrant background).

**Work more actively with employers to reduce barriers to immigrant employment**

Experience from actual validations were, overall, positive in the way it is managed, the support from project managers within AF, how the TCN felt going through the process. Findings also reveal, however, that SKC recognition is not being widely used at this stage, is not accessible to all immigrants, cannot help to overcome all the barriers facing an immigrant seeking employment. The system is however, generally well-designed with high and good ambitions and the individual sectorial models have been well-developed. Great opportunity is apparent. More work on the employer side is needed.

**Reconsider the three-year subcontracting strategy which currently limits competence-building and long-term planning**

Another problematic dimension is the strategy of subcontractors engaged by the Public Employment Service. This is regulated by the public procurement regulation. The problematic dimension relates to the contract time, which is normally three years. In a new round the old subcontractor may lose the contract and a new actors enters the scene which might slow down the process.

**Raise the**

Findings from this research focussing upon the SKC recognition for non-EU immigrants suggests that it is overwhelmingly through an individual's advisor within the Public Employment Service (AF) that people are directed and filtered into the SKC validation system (with the possible exception of foreign application directly to educational institutions). This means the person must be applicable to be registered as unemployed, or be on one of the Government's

awareness of the Public Employment Service Advisors about SKC options

establishment plans for immigrants who have come through the asylum channel. According to the interviews held with TCNs, if coming through other channels, such as for study, work or as a tied-mover, they may never even get to hear about a possibility for SKC recognition.

Commit to better monitoring and evaluation of SKC effectiveness

There is a general lack of overview and feedback of the system which makes evaluation and improvement difficult, and limits the ability of stakeholders to claim SKC as a success story. Problems are seen in the lack of consistency in funding and actors involved. Suggestions for improvement target the coordination between actors as well as the desire for more long-term economic support for validation, and better information to, and engagement from, the Public Employment Service's contact officers.

Recognise, and work to reduce, the barriers to employment that lie outside of SKC recognition

The findings outlined in this report suggest that difficulties and barriers to the wider integration of TCNs within the host society and the labour market are found largely **outwith** the specific SKC evaluation procedure. They relate more to the organisational and implementation system, the competence of the evaluator, the national standards to be attained, or to broader societal circumstances, employer suspicion, and to the personal characteristics of the person being assessed (their linguistic competence, their understanding of the value of the process, their commitment, their attitude).

Methodologies for skills recognition are insufficient to solve problems of labour market integration- work must be broader

These are not the kind of factors that specific new evaluatory tools or models for the recognition of TCNs' SKC would be able to have much influence over. Such an emphasis on methodology alone would miss the bigger picture in the Swedish context. Opportunities to make real improvements to the Swedish system, if the ultimate aim is to better integrate immigrants into employment and the wider Swedish society, do exist, but go beyond skills evaluation tools. There remains some work to do.

In conclusion four main factors needs to be better considered:

Failure to recognise, or work to overcome, the importance of local contacts for integration is counter-productive

1. Provide a clearer overview of the SKC-system and how it operates.
2. Time: SKC recognition, and the almost essential complementation, greatly lengthens the time individuals spend in the system. This must be effectivised.
3. Overcome the problems with continuation created when subcontractors run part of the system for three-year blocks.
4. Proficiency in the Swedish language is an important key to access the labour market and create better opportunities for integration into the society but it is insufficient on its own. Contacts are a crucial component of labour market access, for anyone in Sweden regardless of background. Failure to recognise and facilitate this is counter-productive.