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# Country Report Sweden

## Validation – a question of time and timing – the case of Sweden

by

Heather MacKay, Ida-Maja Lindström, Olof Stjernström



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UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore



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## SWEDEN

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*By*

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Umeå University





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*The European approach to immigration is traditionally characterized by a sort of “schizophrenia”, generated by the attempt to keep together two contradictory philosophies: the “economicistic” philosophy on which the system of entry (and stay) is regulated and the philosophy of solidarity and equal opportunities. To overcome this paradox, three major changes are necessary: shifting from the perception of migrants as contingently instrumental resources to the conception of their human capital as a structural resource for the economic and social development of European societies by exploiting their skills, knowledges and competences (hereafter SKC); promoting a wider awareness, among different types of organizations (profit, non-profit and public), of the importance and potentialities of Diversity Management strategies; improving the social participation and the civic and voluntary engagement of Third Country Nationals (hereafter TCNs) in view of the construction of an inclusive European society and in order to change the common perception of immigrants as people needing to be helped and assisted.*

*These three ambitions constitute the challenges addressed by the project **DIVERSE – Diversity Improvement as a Viable Enrichment Resource for Society and Economy** – supported by the European Commission through the European Integration Fund (Grant Agreement No. HOME/2012/EIFX/CA/CFP/4248 \*30-CE-0586564/00-20).*

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*This volume presents the findings of the research activity carried out in Västerbotten (Sweden). The final report of the full project, including a synthesis of the ten national reports and of the transnational analysis, is published in the volume “The Diversity Value. How to Reinvent the European Approach to Immigration”, McGraw-Hill Education, Maidenhead, UK, 2015 (freely accessible at <http://www.ateneonline.it/zanfrini/>). A detailed presentation of the project, of its results and of the rich set of materials produced can be found in [www.ismu.org/diverse](http://www.ismu.org/diverse). Both the present report and all the other texts produced reflect the view only of the Authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

Milan, January 2016

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## 1 INTRODUCTION: A GENERAL LANDSCAPE OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS MIGRATION

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The chapter provides a brief overview of the history of immigration to Sweden in general. Since the end of World War II Sweden has experienced a net-immigration. The reasons to immigrate has varied over time and the recent development has resulted in a high share of refugees and family immigration. The labour market integration and the importance of the process of validation with a regional focus on Västerbotten region illustrates the measures and the shortcomings of the labour market integration in Sweden. Many parts of the validation process show high ambitions however some of the problems shown in this chapter is time and complexity. It takes time to validate and to find a job for an immigrant. The system of validation is also somewhat hard to grasp and understand. A strong recommendation is therefore to strive for to shorten the time in the process as well as making the process of validation more transparent or easier to grasp.

### 1.1 HISTORY OF TCNs' MIGRATION IN SWEDEN AND IN VÄSTERBOTTEN REGION.

The most concise description of Sweden's migration is revealed in the fact that its population has increased ten times since the net migrant flows reversed from being a sending country to being a net receiver of immigrants in the 1930's (figure 1.1). These 80 years of rising in-migration contain differences, however, in the composition of the migrants, that is, their origin, reason for migration, internal circumstances, and their legal status and permits. How far back it is necessary to go to describe the history of third country migration to Sweden depends on which countries are considered. Movement between some of the closest neighbouring countries has historically been significant, leading up to agreements of free movement between the Nordic countries<sup>1</sup> in the early 1950's (LO-rapport, 2013). Migration from outside of Europe began much later and is still surrounded by regulation. Quite recently, as the EU has expanded, some of the major sending countries within Europe have changed status from being a third country to that of a member state with its citizens thereby offered greater possibilities and freedom of migration. Public debate in Sweden was concerned about a massive influx of immigrants to the country from Eastern Europe when countries in that part of the globe were integrated into the EU, yet huge migrant waves were not realised (Nilsson, 2013; Gerdes and Wadensjö, 2013) For the sake of clarity it is simpler to separate migrants into Nordic, European and non-European (ie. third country nationals (TCN))

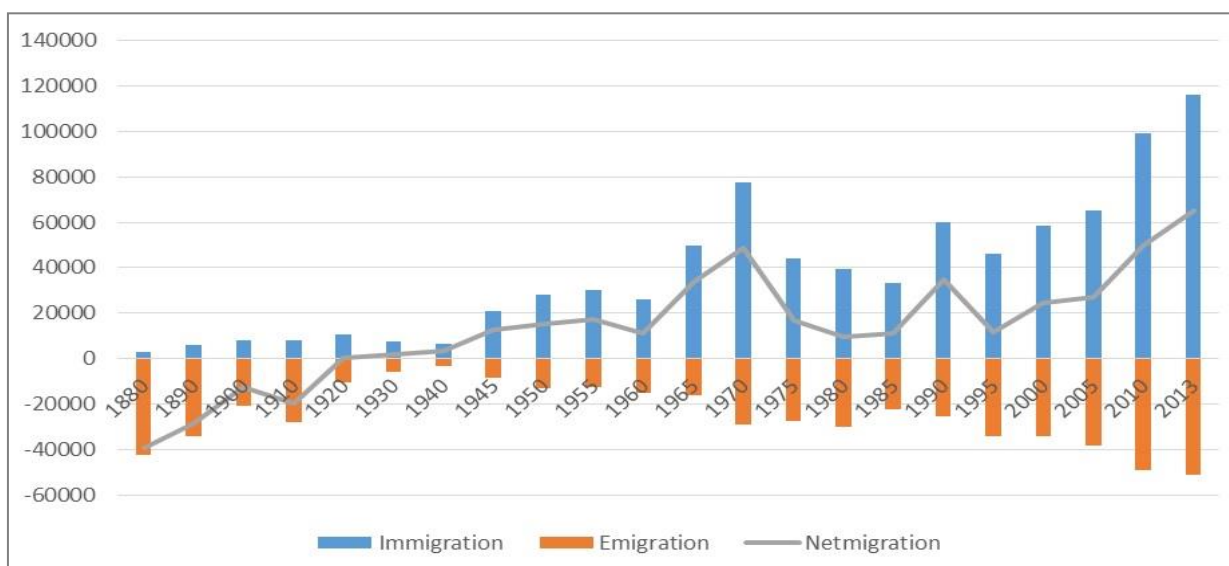
<sup>1</sup> Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, of which Norway and Iceland are not EU members and would according to the definition be considered TCN's.



groups, even though some countries moved category at certain time points and thus changed from TCN to EU.

Up until the 1930's Sweden had been an out-migration country but due to the great depression Swedish migration to America stopped<sup>2</sup>. Instead return migration from North America Swedes turned the history of net emigration to a net flow of immigration (figure 1.1), with a net migration of almost 39 000 for the decade of the 1930s, refer to table 1.1 (Ekberg, 2009:27). Due to persecution and violence leading up to the Second World War Sweden became a destination for refugees from many European countries. At 1940 the foreign born population in Sweden was still only 1% (Ekberg, 2009:23) and during the war period approximately 200,000 refugees found shelter in Sweden, which amounted to approximately 3% of the Swedish population in 1945 (ibid). Many of them were placed in work outside of the larger cities (Olsson, 2005:V) and many returned or moved onto other countries after the war (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012:14). This can be seen in figure 1.1 as immigration increased significantly from 1940, whilst increased emigration occurred after 1950.

**Figure 1.1 - Historic migratory trends for Sweden , 1880-2013**



Source: Statistics Sweden 2014

The inflow during the war can be considered the start of immigration to Sweden after which the levels of migration increased and remained high until the 1970's (Ekberg, 2009:23). As shown in table 1.1 the net migration almost doubled from the 1940's to the 1960's. This inflow is sometimes called the first wave of migration (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012) and consisted mainly of labour migration which arrived to cover the demand for labour during a period of rapid Swedish industrial and economic growth

<sup>2</sup> This had already lessened in the early 1900's due to restrictions in migration laws.

(ibid.). During times of political unrest Sweden also received political refugees, mainly from Poland (1981), Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). The flow of labour migration was facilitated by a liberalisation of migration policy (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012:14) where the economic situation seemed to regulate the flows to increase during growth years and decrease in “slower” years (LO, 2013:57). A large part of this migration came from other Nordic countries as free movement and a free labour market between them had been established in 1954. Another large share came from eastern and southern European countries and were often recruited directly in their home country by Swedish companies (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012:14). At the end of this period, in 1970, the foreign born population had grown to 7%, of which 62% came from the Nordic countries, 30% from other European countries and only 8% had descent from outside of Europe (Ekberg, 2009:23).

**Table 1.1: Numbers of In and Out migrants during 1931-2008, Sweden**

Period	Invandring	Utvandring	Netto
1931-1940	64 622	25 763	38 859
1941-1950	195 715	61 722	133 993
1951-1960	256 364	150 355	105 949
1961-1970	424 333	188 853	235 480
1971-1980	385 650	299 156	86 494
1981-1990	413 920	241 256	172 664
1991-2000	529 038	327 731	201 307
2001-2008	612 956	310 497	302 459

Källa: SCB befolkningsstatistik och Statistisk årsbok olika årgångar.

Source: Ekberg, 2009:28

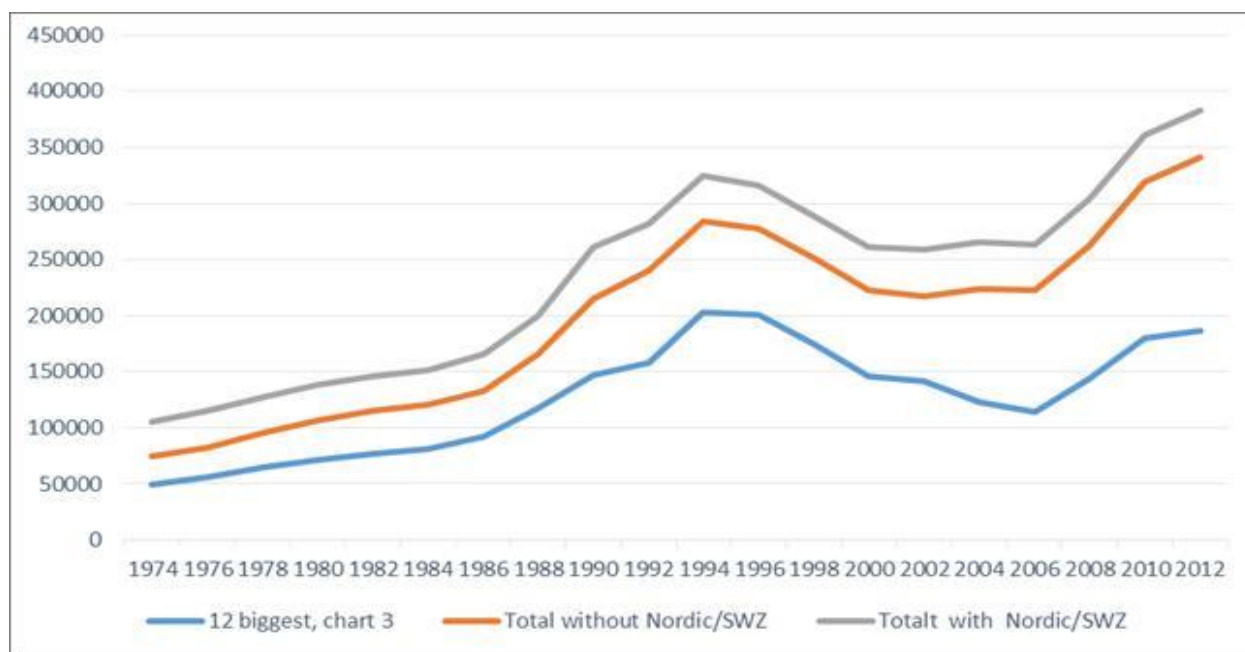
### 1970's and 1980's – Structural changes in the Second wave

As seen in figure 1.1 a dramatic shift in migration flows occurred from 1970, referred to as the second wave of migrant. Labour migration was restrained by the economic situation with rising unemployment, and by migration policy that followed the economic downturn. From 1968 a much more restricted policy towards labour migration was set in place to restrict it to those sectors where a shortage of internal labour existed. Labour migration continued to arrive from Nordic countries as earlier Nordic agreements guaranteed free movement, but this did also slow somewhat (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012:14). Not only did the flow of labour migrants from Europe almost cease, those who had migrated earlier began to return in larger numbers. This explains why although the number of immigrants were kept quite stable (table 1.1), the net migration went down to one third for the whole 1970's compared to the decade before, and some single years show a negative net-migration. Such flows of emigration has

been noted to follow waves of immigration, where for example in 1970 75% was made up of return migrants (Ekberg, 2009:30). Explanations for this have been sought in the fluctuations of labour demand, that post-war labour migrants only ever intended to migrate temporarily, or that changing family structures after a few years in Sweden pushed for a return to the homeland (Ekberg, 2009:30). Due to this great outmigration, the foreign born population only increased to 9% of the total Swedish population in 1990 (Ekberg, 2009:23).

The second wave of migration also refers to the changing composition and origin of the migrants. The continuous level of immigration while labour migration from Europe ceased was filled by migrants who came as refugees or as tied movers, and to an increasing degree by those from outside of Europe, or TCNs. From 1974-1990 the number of third country nationals, excluding Nordic and Swiss citizens, more than doubled (see figure 1.2). Besides geographically closer countries like Yugoslavia and Turkey greater streams of migrants were received from politically unstable countries like Chile, Ethiopia and Iran (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012), figure 1.3.

**Fig 1.2 Number of TCN-born to Sweden 1974-2012**



Source: Statistics Sweden 2014

### Increase and diversification from 1990

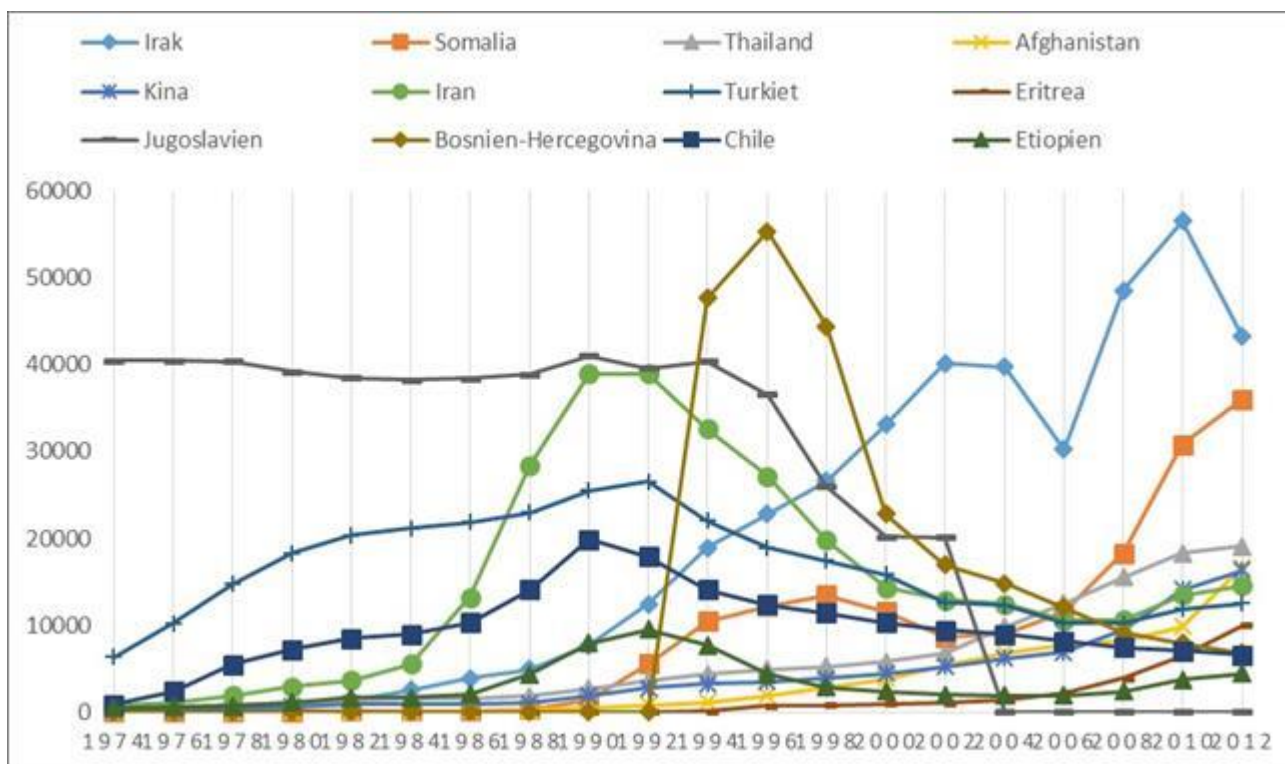
The second wave could be said to have continued and gained strength from the 1990's as migration increased to levels at and above those of the 1960's, with a net migration of more than 300 000 in first decade of 2000 (see table 1.1). Chart 2 shows that the number of third country nationals in Sweden almost quadrupled between 1974 and

2012. This amounted to a quite different composition of the foreign born population in Sweden by 2004 in comparison to the 1970's. Before the second wave Nordic citizens were in the majority, but during the second wave the ratio turned with those of origin from outside of Europe becoming the largest group of foreign-born at 43%. The share of those with Nordic descent declined to 21% and those from EU countries remained similar at 36% (Ekberg, 2009:29). This development is shown in figure 1.2 where the share of TCN-born from Norway, Iceland and Switzerland decreased from about 25% in 1974 to around 10% in 2012. The overall proportion of foreign born in the population increased to 14% in 2010 (Ekberg, 2009) from 9% in 1990.

Considering foreign citizenship as a measurement of migration from that country, figure 1.3 depicts the development of migration from some of the largest sending countries of TCNs since the 1974. The figure foremost shows at what times migrants from these countries have started to arrive in greater numbers. Over time, a decrease of foreign citizens from a country can either mean that migrants have attained Swedish citizenship or migrated out of the country (back home or to a third country). Patterns of global political instability can clearly be seen affected the origins and flows of the migrants. For example, figure 1.3 clearly shows the sharp rise in Bosnia-Herzegovinian citizens during 1992-94 dropping off sharply after 1996 as a result of both return migrants, reclassification of citizenship to new countries, and due to some gaining Swedish citizenship. Today the biggest non-European migrant groups to Sweden are refugees from Iraq and Somalia.

Fig 1.3 Figure 0.3: Migratory Trends of the Main TCN migrants within Sweden, 1974-2012

Note: Selection made by considering the largest groups with foreign citizenship in 2012 and including countries which have sent more than 10 000 emigrants to Sweden during the time period



Source: Statistics Sweden 2014

The latest event taking place within Swedish migration policy has been a liberalisation of labour migration in 2008. This has been the start of a short term labour migration that had been practically absent since prior to 2004 but began within the EU's expansions in 2004 and 2007. The remnants of the history of migration in Sweden can be seen in Table 1.2, where large parts of the foreign born population originate from Iraq, Iran, Yugoslavia/Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Somalia. The neighbouring Nordic and EU countries remain, nevertheless a considerable part of the foreign born population with Finland being the single largest country of origin. Total EU and Nordic Origin foreign born residing in Sweden in 2013 was 374,012 or 3.9% and the total from the ten largest third country nation origin countries amounted to just over half a million or 5.8% of the population (table 1.2).



**Table 1.2: Number of Foreign Born in Sweden by Country of Birth in 2013 (15 largest)**

EU and Nordic Origin		Third Country Nation Origin	
Finland	161,129	Iraq	128,946
Poland	78,175	Yugoslavia	68,554
Germany	48,987	Iran	67,211
Norway	42,523	Bosnia-Hercegovina	56,804
Denmark	43,198	Somalia	54,221
		Turkey	45,676
		Syria	41,748
		Thailand	36,974
		Chile	28,341
		China	27,923
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>374,012</b>		<b>556,398</b>
<b>Percentage of the 2013 Swedish population</b>	<b>3.9%</b>		<b>5.8%</b>
<i>Total 2013 population: 9,644,864</i>			

Source: Statistics Sweden 2014

If excluding migrants from Nordic countries, and those European countries that have later joined the EU, the migration of third country nationals can be said to mainly belong to the second wave of migration to Sweden. Although migrants differ in more ways than origin and reason for migration, the division of first and second wave is important since comparing the two groups' integration and opportunities in Sweden show some stark contrasts. While labour migrants of the first wave have in some cases had higher employment rates than native swedes (especially considering women), the second wave migrants, as well as their children, have lower levels of employment and lower average incomes. This difference is most pronounced for non-European migrants (Ekberg, 2009).

One stark difference between the first and second waves is that the earlier labour migrants often had job offers before then even entered Sweden. They could therefore integrate into the labour market from day one. The reason for migration can be seen as a cause for dissimilarities between the two waves: those migrating for refuge purposes and family/relational purposes are migrating for other reasons than work and thus can be expected to integrate into the labour market at a slower pace than labour migrants. One could also look towards the internal economic restructuring that has occurred in Sweden over the same decades as laying the framework for migration and integration. Due to the overall restructuring of the economy from first (resource) and second (refining/manufacturing) sector to the third (service) sector since the 1970's the demand for unskilled and manual labour that was prevalent in the post-war era has lessened. This has inevitably affected work opportunities for native and foreign labour alike. In addition, the service sector demands more socio-cultural and language-based skills meaning jobs in this sector present a greater obstacle for people of non-Swedish background.

Research has also suggested that cultural and ethnic discrimination has been more of an obstacle for the second wave of migrants. Since the first wave of migrants came predominantly from geographically and culturally closer countries they could be more easily absorbed into Swedish society. Those with TCN origins have greater cultural and linguistic barriers to bridge, as well as economic barriers. The generational persistence of such barriers can even be seen in how children of TCN migrants have continued to have greater difficulties in the labour market compared to those with parents from Nordic and European countries (Ekberg, 2009).

The earlier migration wave was also to a larger extent made by single people, whereby many went on to start a family with Swedish natives after migration. This is in contrast to the second wave of migrants where relatives often followed and intermarriage is perhaps less common (Ekberg, 2009).

## **1.2 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK - A DESCRIPTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVE**

Migration policies have changed over time to adjust to the political and economic situation in Sweden, furthering different types of migration at different times. At present there are three main grounds for receiving a residence permit in Sweden as a third country national: for work/study purposes, as a refugee/asylum, or as a relative to someone resident in Sweden, known as a tied-mover. Nordic and EU citizens are allowed to reside freely in Sweden for three months, and can get longer residence permits in the case that they or their relatives have sufficient funds to cover their costs in Swe-

den. A third country national who has lived in another EU country for at least five years is considered to be a permanent EU resident (*varaktigt bosatt*) and can migrate to Sweden on the same basis as an EU citizen. In general Swedish citizenship can be applied for after 5 years of legally residing in Sweden. A summary of the different residence permits and their conditions can be found in Table 1.3.

### *Work and Study*

The policy on labour migration based on need/shortage of labour laid out in 1968 have, until recently, restricted labour migration from outside of the Nordic countries and the EU. The assessment of need laid in the hands of the Migration Board, which consulted the national and regional Labour Board to determine for every case whether or not such a shortage could be seen within that sector and region. The work permits issued were temporary and could only become permanent if there could be assessed to exist a need within that sector in the long run. The wage levels and working conditions also had to be in par with the Swedish standards set in agreements between labour unions and employers, and the employer was responsible for housing the labour migrant.

In 2008, the policy on labour migration was liberalised considerably, with the greatest change being the rescindment of assessment of labour shortage. The Labour Board is no longer part of the process and instead, the idea is that each employer will be free to assess their own needs and apply for work permits for foreign labour. This has opened up the possibility of labour migration to sectors assessed as having a balanced supply of labour within the country and may even stimulate greater competition for jobs. To apply for a work permit, the migrant has to have an employment offer from an employer in Sweden and apply for the permit at a Swedish embassy outside of the country. Exceptions exist for asylum seekers in the case where they have worked six months or more before they have been denied asylum, and for non-EU Nordic citizens. This new work permit is temporary and connected to the specific employer. If the employment ends prematurely the migrant must leave the country and reapply from outside of Sweden, unless a new job is found within three months whereby the permit can be transferred to the new employer. The work permit is given for up to two years at a time. The Migration Board has a general processing time of 11-15 months for a work permit, although a few larger employers have an agreement with the board which allows for a considerably shorter processing time of one week (LO, 2013).

Unchanged from earlier legislation is that the wage and working conditions must be on par with the Swedish standard, which is intended as a measure to prevent international labour migration having a wage dumping effect on the internal labour market. After 2012, harsher demands were put in place for employers in the fields of cleaning,



hotel and restaurants, commerce, construction, forestry, car services and staffing services due to increasing difficulties within these sectors to keep to the regulations. Now the employer must be able to show that they have the financial assets to pay the standardised salary throughout the duration of the employment. Also when applying for extensions of work permits, the actual payments made during the previous period must be declared. Early statistics show that the number of work permit extension applications declined after these demands were put in place (LO, 2013).

The situation for students is similar, whereby a residence permit can be applied for in the case of being admitted to a Swedish educational institution on a full-time basis. Duration is given in accordance with the length of the studies. Guest students do not have to apply for a separate work permit in order to take on employment during their stay. A rise in TCN-origin students occurred during the 2000's as a consequence of the fact that Swedish higher education was free of charge to all, regardless of origin. However, in 2011 legislative amendments limited free tertiary education to those of Swedish, Nordic and EU origin. Annual tuition fees for a Master course are decided by individual universities but lie between SEK 80,000-140,000 (approximately Euros 1,900-15,000 p.a.) for non-EU, non-Nordic students are now in place (Study in Sweden, 2014). Since this time there has been a 75-80% decline in the number of students in Sweden from third country nations (Migrationsinfo, 2013).

### *Asylum*

Many of the largest migration groups in Sweden have come as asylum seekers. Although having roots in the Second World War, as described in section 0.1, in-migration for asylum purposes has been most prominent since the 1970's in Sweden and remains so today. The basis for being given asylum is if the person risks prosecution or threat to their life in their homeland based on their race, nationality, religion, political stance, gender, sexual orientation or other societal grouping (Migrationsverket, 2014). The legal way to reach Sweden as a refugee is through the UN refugee quota, which for Sweden is between 1700-1900 refugees per year (Migrationsverket, 2014) which can be contrasted with the 24,500 asylum granted in 2012 (Migrationsinfo, 2014). 'The total number of applications for asylum in 2013 was 54,000 (ibid). This translates to the fact that the majority of asylum immigrants arrive through illegal channels. Asylum applicants in Sweden are generally given a permanent residence permit allowing for the migrant to work. During the processing time, whilst waiting for a decision on their application, an adult asylum seeker is allowed to work if they have a passport and/or documentation proving who they are (meaning those 'paperless' applicants are not allowed to work) (Migrationsverket, 2013). If the asylum application is later denied their employment can be used as grounds for receiving a work permit instead. For this to be valid the migrant must have worked for at least six months prior to being denied asy-

lum, otherwise a work permit must be sought as usual from an embassy outside of Sweden.

Once a refugee is granted asylum, he or she is entitled to access the full Swedish social security system such as housing and health care. They can also access benefits directed towards integration into Swedish society such as language classes and cultural training with the aim of facilitating a transition in to the labour market. The responsibility lies at the municipality level which means that the conditions differ across the country, but the municipality is compensated by the state for the reception of asylum seekers. From 1985-1994 the policy was to spread the asylum seekers more evenly across the country, which in many cases meant placing them in regions with weaker economic development such as rural municipalities with ageing and/or declining population and high unemployment (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012:25). Yet since 1994 migrants have been free to settle in a region/municipality according to their own preferences. This has helped increase their chances of employment but has also served to increase the pressure on the larger city regions and southern parts of the country (ibid).

#### *Tied Mover*

In the 1960s the policy on family reunion was liberalised. According to Bevelander & Dahlstedt (2012) this was spurred from a debate about integration and the need to make the labour migrants of the first wave feel more at home in Sweden. It has been utilised in reality, however, more by refugees from the second wave of Swedish immigration. The policy on family reunion offers residence permits in Sweden based on kinship or other economically or socially dependent ties with Swedish residents. In general the relative to an adult migrant applicant has to be a Swedish citizen or have a permanent residence permit, while children can be tied to temporary permits. The family members are usually allowed the same status as their relative, which means that if the family member residing in Sweden has a permanent permit, the tied migrant can also get a permanent permit. If partners have lived together at least 2 years outside of Sweden a permanent permit is often given, otherwise residence permits are given for at least 1 year, but often 2 years, at a time. In case a relationship ends while the migrant has a temporary residence permit, the migrant can still apply to stay in Sweden if other links to the Swedish society and culture can be presented, such as children or permanent employment. For work and study permits of at least 6 months, the immediate family ie. spouse and children (under 21 years for work permits and under 18 years for student permits) can be allowed a residence permit for the same time period and with the same right to work as their relative.

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### *Temporary, permanent residence permit and citizenship*

In general, if granted a residence permit of at least one year, the migrant is given a Swedish social security number and registered as a resident in Sweden. This gives the migrant access to social benefits and the healthcare system, similar to Swedish citizens. After two years of residence in Sweden migrants are eligible to apply for financial benefits to allow study. After four years of legal residence in the country the migrant can apply for a permanent residence permit. As with work permits in general, to transform a temporary work permit to a permanent permit before 2008 was based on the assessment of long-term shortage of labour in that sector. The permanent residence permit is valid as long as the migrant is living in Sweden. A permanent resident is entitled to vote in local elections. Only with Swedish citizenship is the right to reside in Sweden really permanent for TCNs. Citizenship also allows for voting in the national elections, to be elected to government and to work in the police or the military.

In general, Swedish citizenship can be applied for after residing in Sweden legally for five years, but is shorter if the migrant is considered stateless, or of refugee status (four years), or if the migrant has lived with a Swedish citizen for a minimum of three years. The time period should be consecutive without long periods of residing outside of Sweden and the migrant must not have economic debts or a criminal record. If crimes or debts exist citizenship can only be applied for after the appropriate time period once the debts have been settled or the punishment carried out. Children become Swedish citizens automatically if they are born to a Swedish mother (inside or outside of Sweden), if they are born in Sweden to a foreign mother with a Swedish father or Swedish registered partner, or if a foreign mother marries a Swedish citizen (before the child is 18-years old).

**Table 1.3: Types and Conditions for Swedish Residence Permits**

Reason	Conditions for applying	Length	Work	Social Security	Eligible for integration measures	Processing time web/ paper
<b>Work</b>	Apply for permit from outside of Sweden. Need to contain employment offer from employer in Sweden. Wage and work has to be at same level as Swedish standard.	Depending on employment conditions, temporary up to 2 years at a time	Allowed to work within sector for which permit is given. Allowed to change employer	Yes, if permit is at least one year, otherwise need own insurance	No	In general: 11 / 15 months first time, 11 15 months for extension, for employers with agreement with the Migration Board: 5 working days For own employment: 18 months
<b>Study</b>	For full time studies at Swedish educational institution.	Depending on length of study, temporary up to 2 years at a time	Allowed to work, no extra permit needed	Yes, if permit more than one year, otherwise need own insurance	No (?)	5 month first time, 6 months for extension
<b>Asylum/Refugee</b>	Humanitarian, risk for prosecution or violence due to religion, ethnicity, political belonging, sexual orientation, gender?	Usually permanent residence	Allowed to work if permit is given. Also allowed to work during processing time	Yes	Yes	3 months as goal, but dependent on amount of information and applications and whether there is an appeal
<b>Tied Mover</b> i.e. relative with Swedish citizenship or permanent residence permit	Close family bonds, relationship with or economically dependent on relative. Apply from outside of Swe	Often permanent, otherwise at least 1 year and usually 2 years at a time	Allowed to work same as relative	Yes, if permit more than one year	Depends on status of relative (?)	11/16 months first time, 5 working days / 15 months for extension
<b>Tied Mover</b> Relative with temporary permit at least 6 months	Spouse and children up to 18 for study permit and 21 for work.	Same as relative	Allowed to work same as relative	Yes, if permit more than one year	Depends on status of relative (?)	

### 1.3 STATISTICAL OUTLINE OF TCNs IN THE REGION

The geography department at the University of Umeå houses a database containing information on the entire Swedish population, known as ASTRID. From this data it was possible to undertake a detailed analysis of the characteristics of Västerbotten region's Swedish and immigrant population, as reported in this section. It is necessary, however, to first qualify the data presented and to consider the implications of how the focus population for this research, that is, third country nationals (TCN) is defined.

It is important to note that the department's ASTRID database records the land of birth, and the land of citizenship into grouped categories of countries, for example those born in country code "7" are classed as Eastern Europe and include people born in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary. At the date of this data, 2010, all these countries except Albania were EU member countries. This group of people are therefore recorded in this analysis as being "EU" i.e. not TCN, even though Albanians should actually be TCN. This means that those Albania citizens living in Västerbotten will not be recorded from this data analysis as being TCN. Although the numbers concerned are likely only a handful or fewer (there were 689 Albanian citizens in the whole of Sweden in 2010 according to SCB (2010)) it is important to bear such small anomalies in mind when considering the data presented here.

The other important qualification to note concerns the definition of "Third Country National (TCN)" that is the focus of this study. TCN refers to those countries that are not EU member countries. In the Swedish case this is somewhat problematic because Norway and Iceland should thus be classed as TCN since they are not in the EU. This is significant because Sweden has a relatively sizeable population of resident Norwegians (34,949 [SCB, 2010]) and since these countries are close neighbours geographically, but also linguistically and culturally. This shared heritage and socio-cultural background means that Norwegians in particular become very quickly assimilated and integrated with the Swedish population and they do not face the same kind of unknown cultural norms, hidden social rules, or labour market prejudice that many of the other TCN citizens face in trying to integrate into the host society. The Norwegians living in Västerbotten, and Sweden as a whole, have an almost identical educational, age and professional profile to Swedes and, as the data shown below reveals, their mean annual salary and overall income levels tend to be equivalent to, or sometimes even exceed, the Swedish average. This is in contrast to the other TCN residents who usually have a much greater wage gap. Indeed in the more educated professions (law, accounting, economics, academics) and among business leaders, directors and CEOs Norwegian salaries are equal or, in the case of medical doctors even higher, than Swedes at the Västerbotten level (see figures 1.11 and 1.13). For all these reasons the research team engaged in this DIVERSE project took the decision to therefore exclude the non-

EU but Nordic member states from the analysis of TCNs as it was felt that their shared Nordic heritage overrode any TCN status. As a result, all the analysis in this report discusses TCNs as excluding Norwegian and Icelandic. In some figures and graphs data for Nordic citizens may be explicitly shown separately to illustrate the points outlined above but this category thus also includes Finland and Denmark whom are Nordic countries but also EU members. Västerbotten had, in 2010, 3,400 Finnish citizens resident and 700 Norwegians (ASTRID, 2010). Recognition that these differences exist between the TCN Nordic residents and other TCN residents also provides clues as to, at least some of the reasons why differences in labour market integration and social assimilation may arise.

Another implication of the TCN definition for this study is that the definition focuses on the citizenship held by a person. This is somewhat disingenuous in the Swedish context because it is relatively quick and straightforward for TCNs here to apply for and obtain Swedish citizenship (as described in the preceding section 1.2). This focus on citizenship means that a full 46% (or 5,617 people) of the potential study population for the region (as revealed in the statistics in 0.3.1 below) fall outside the focus group and thus must be ignored. This is unfortunate because this group of Swedes with a TCN background tend to face many of the same circumstances and challenges in terms of societal and labour market integration as those people who retain TCN citizenship. Holding host country citizenship does not instantly mean a person becomes absorbed. This is a relevant and important distinction to bear in mind when reading this report and viewing any statistics contained within. It is especially relevant to those findings within section 2.1 concerning diversity management within the workplace because it was found during the interviews that the Human Resource Managers and Organisational Leaders often described and referred to their employees or colleagues as being TCNs because their family heritage or country of birth was from a TCN country e.g. Somalia, or Bosnia, even though those people may actually have held Swedish citizenship, or may even have been born and raised entirely in Sweden. A person's actual official citizenship status may not always even be known by an employer, or a skills evaluator. Thus there is an important blurring of the data here that should be borne in mind.

Another reason why it is important to give some attention to such definitions and distinctions is that the Swedish statistics that are collated by the central statistical bureau known as Statistics Sweden Statistics Bureau (SCB), which are extremely comprehensive and have a long history, have traditionally not focussed much upon citizenship status (*medborgare*). The majority of Swedish statistical reports and extracts that can be generated from the national database are categorised by "foreign-born" (*utlands född*) instead. Many foreign-born, of course, hold Swedish citizenship. The foreign-



born category in the national statistical database is also not usually subdivided by Nordic country, EU country and non-EU country. This means it is more difficult to extract information on TCNs, according to this project's definition, from the national statistics. Nevertheless, the team were able to overcome these difficulties by drawing upon the detailed demographic data held by the Department of Geography and Economic History at Umeå University. This data allowed finer-grained analysis that was able to identify TCNs in accordance with the DIVERSE project's definition, and further exclude Norwegian and Icelandic citizens, as reasoned above.

*Distribution by nationality, gender, age and level of education*

Västerbotten County was home in 2010 to 6630 residents (or 2.5% of its population [ASTRID, 2010]) with TCN citizenship. For comparative purposes, the percentage of TCN citizens resident in the whole of Sweden in 2010 was 3.1% (SCB, 2010). This puts the Västerbotten region below the national average. The region, however, contains a further 5617 (2.2%) Swedish citizens who were born in third country nations (ASTRID, 2010). This means that 46% of all those born in a TCN country fall outside of this project's definition of TCN. The total number of TCN-born residents in the region (regardless of citizenship held) was 12,247 people, which amounts to 4.7% of the region's total population (total population: 259,278) (ASTRID, 2010). This is just below half of the national statistic where 9.7% of the Swedish population were TCN-born in 2010 (908,542 people out of a 2010 population of 9,408,320 [SCB, 2014]).

Figure 1.4 presents the historic migratory trend of TCNs to the region. From this it is clear that TCN in-migration has been a phenomenon of the region mainly in the past 14 years. The graph shows a sharp rise in the numbers of people coming from African, and Asian, Turkish and Oceanic countries since about 2005. This pattern of origin is greatly influenced by global affairs and conflict situations). Iranians and Iraqis also began arriving

Figure 1.4: Historic Trend of TCN in-migration to Västerbotten, Sweden

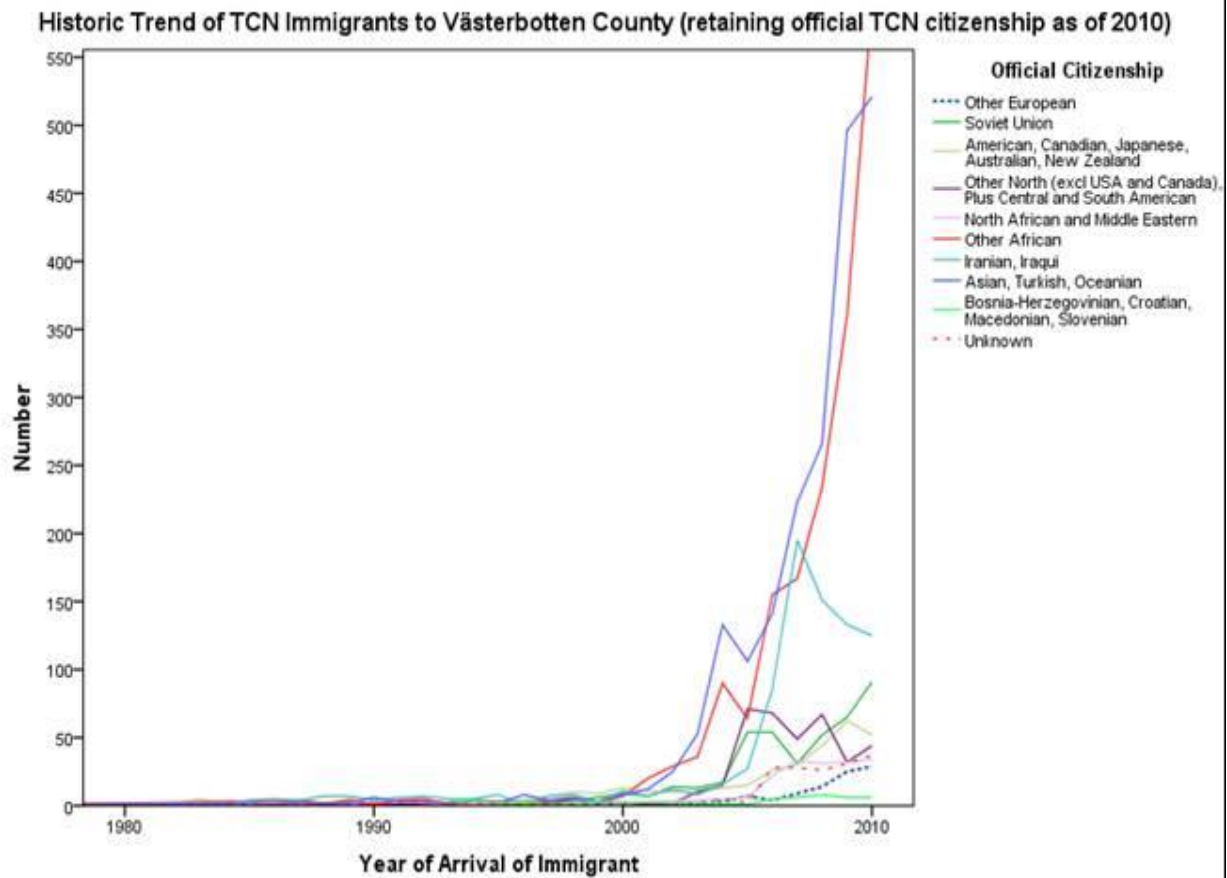
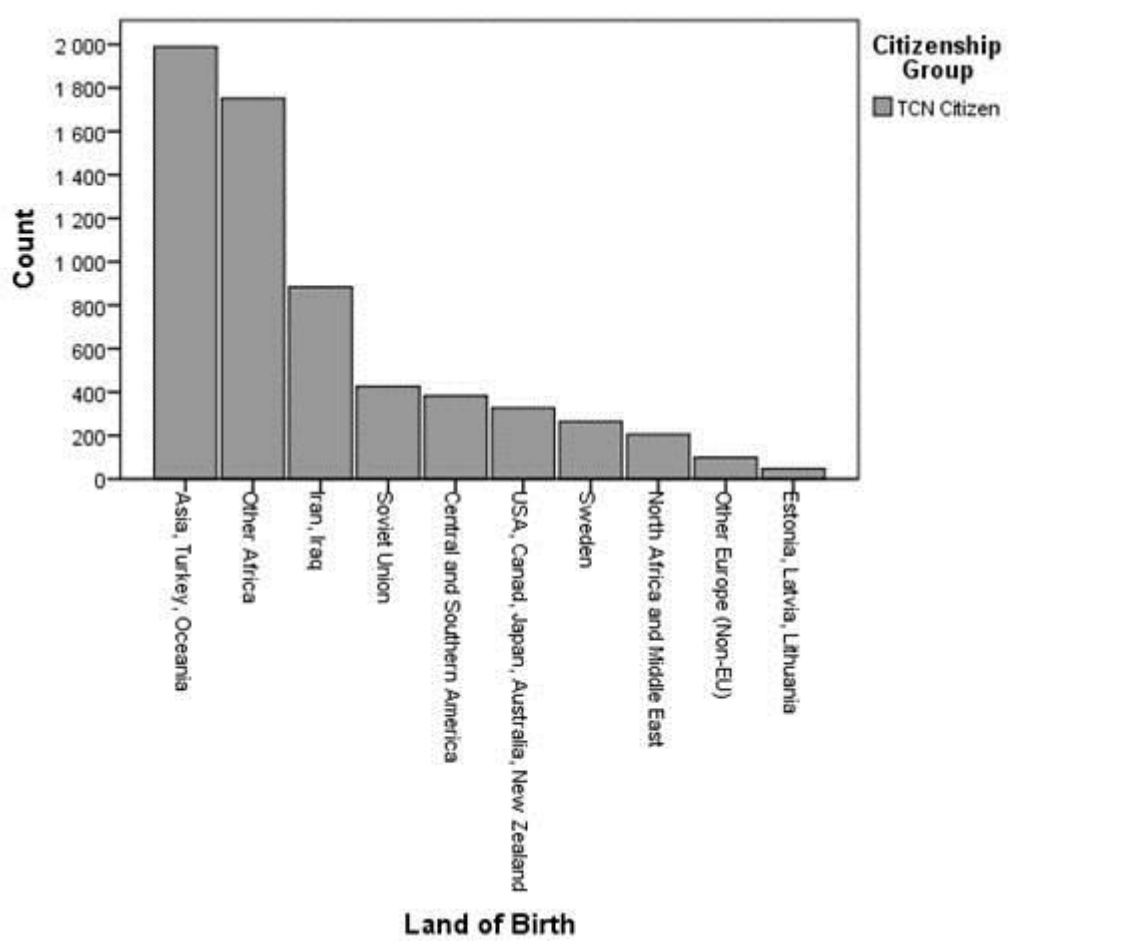


Figure 1.5, below, shows the actual numbers of TCN residents in Västerbotten in 2010 (total: 6,630) and the country that they held citizenship in. Clearly in the lead with almost 2000 people are those with Asian, Turkish and Oceanic background, and 1700 of Other African heritage. Note that some people have been born in Sweden but are officially TCN citizens. It should also be noted here that Sweden allows citizens to hold dual citizenship. However if the dual citizenship includes Swedish then that person is recorded as being a Swedish citizen in the national statistics and in the ASTRID database. If a person has an EU country passport and a TCN country passport they will be recorded in official statistics by their EU citizenship and thus their TCN relationship will not be detected in statistics.

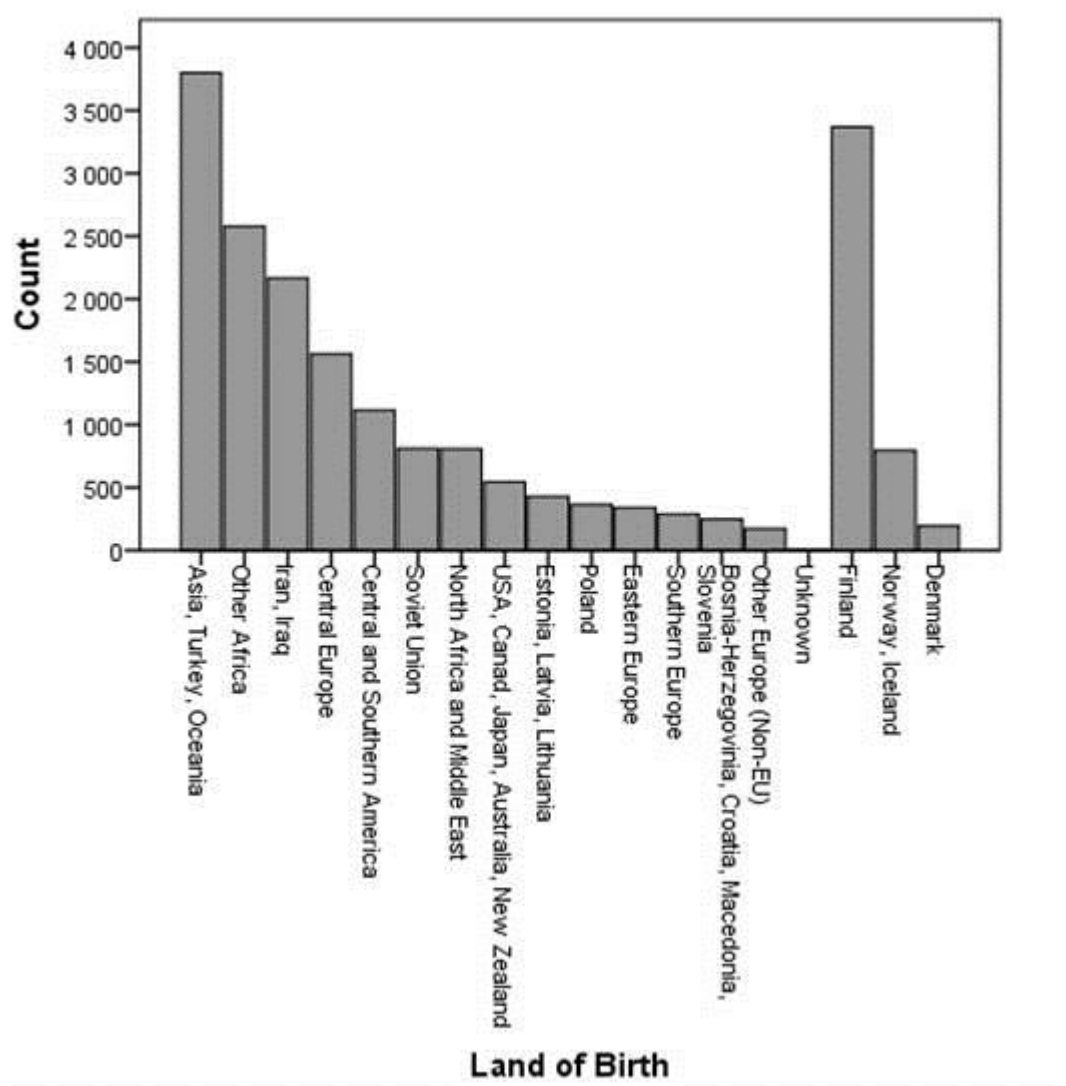


Figure 1.5: Number and Origin of TCN residents in Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)



For comparative purposes figure 1.6 shows all the immigrant residents in Västerbotten in 2010 and their birth country regardless of their official citizenship i.e. includes Swedish citizens (total: 12,247). This figure displays also those residents who originally came from a Nordic country such as Finland (approx. 3400), Norway (approx. 700) and Denmark (approx. 100). These figures show the discrepancy between the previous graph which revealed only TCN citizens (in accordance with the project definition) and those 5,617 people who have the same TCN immigrant background but whom have gained Swedish citizenship, and who may well face many of the same challenges and characteristics of the TCN focus group but whom are not part of this study. This graph shows, for example, approximately 3700 immigrants with an Asian, Turkish background, compared to the almost 2000 in the previous graph. This means that in 2010 there were at least another 1700 Turkish Asian Västerbotten residents who held Swedish citizenship, and thus are not part of the focus of this study.

**Figure 1.6: Residents of Immigrant Background regardless of Citizenship, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**



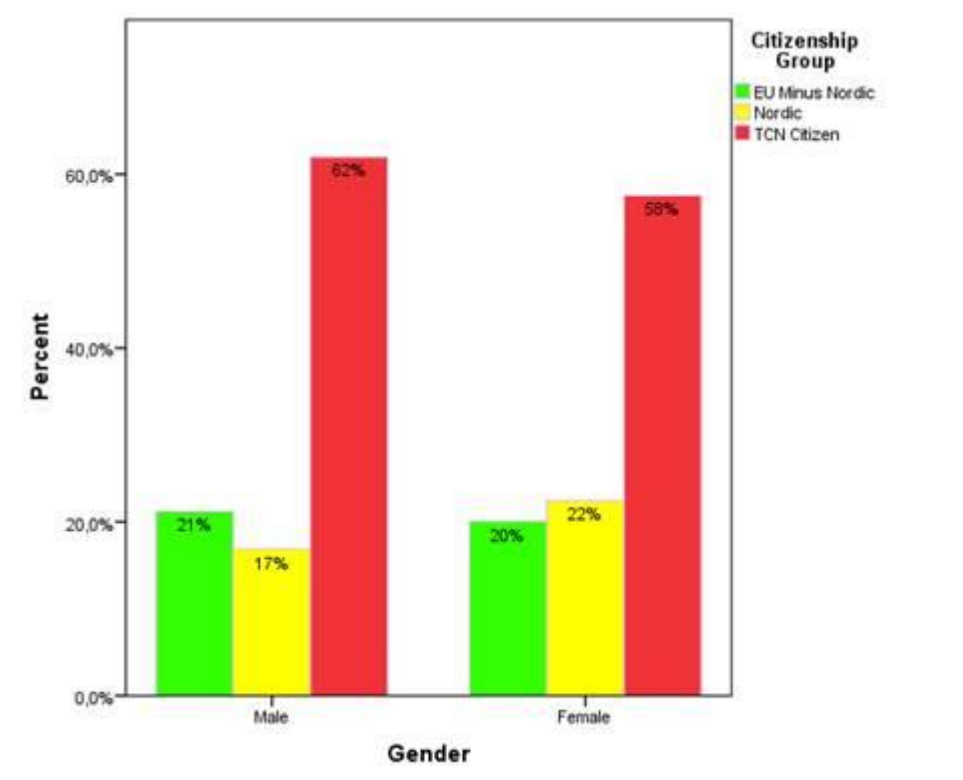
### Gender

When the gender profile of the entire population of Västerbotten (total population: 259,286) is analysed it is clear that the proportional representation of immigrants of any background is small overall with only 3% of the region's men holding TCN status (in accordance with this project's definition of TCN, but excluding Nordic), and 2% of the women (figure 1.7). This amounts to 3,477 TCN male residents, and 2,932 TCN female residents.

When the Swedish citizens are excluded and the makeup of the non-Swedish citizens are assessed it becomes apparent that 62% of non-Swedish male immigrants and 58%

of all female immigrants to Västerbotten are TCN:s . The EU (non-Nordic) and the Nordic makeup of both genders lie around 20%.

**Figure 1.7: Gendered Composition and Origin of TCNs, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**



When the 2010 TCN residents are analysed by country and gender 31% of these TCN men in the region have Asian, Turkish or Oceanic citizenship, 28% have ‘Other African’ citizenship and 15% hold Iranian or Iraqi passports (data not shown). These figures are mirrored in the female TCN populations as well with only slightly fewer women from Iran or Iraq. The main gendered nationality difference seems to be slightly more female residents of Soviet Union citizenship.

### *Age Groups*

Table 1.4 below shows the actual numbers of TCN citizens that were resident in Västerbotten County as of the year 2010. It can be seen that of the TCN children almost 40% (381) are citizens of an African country. Similarly in the youth category 42% have Other African citizenship and almost 30% hold Asian, Turkish or Oceanic citizenship. This Asian, Turkish group account for the highest proportion of the working age populations. There are very few Elderly (over 65 years) TCN citizens (just 110 across the whole of Västerbotten). The largest proportion of TCN residents are those of working ages ie. between 25 and 64 years old.

**Table 1.4: Number, Age and Origin of TCN Residents, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**

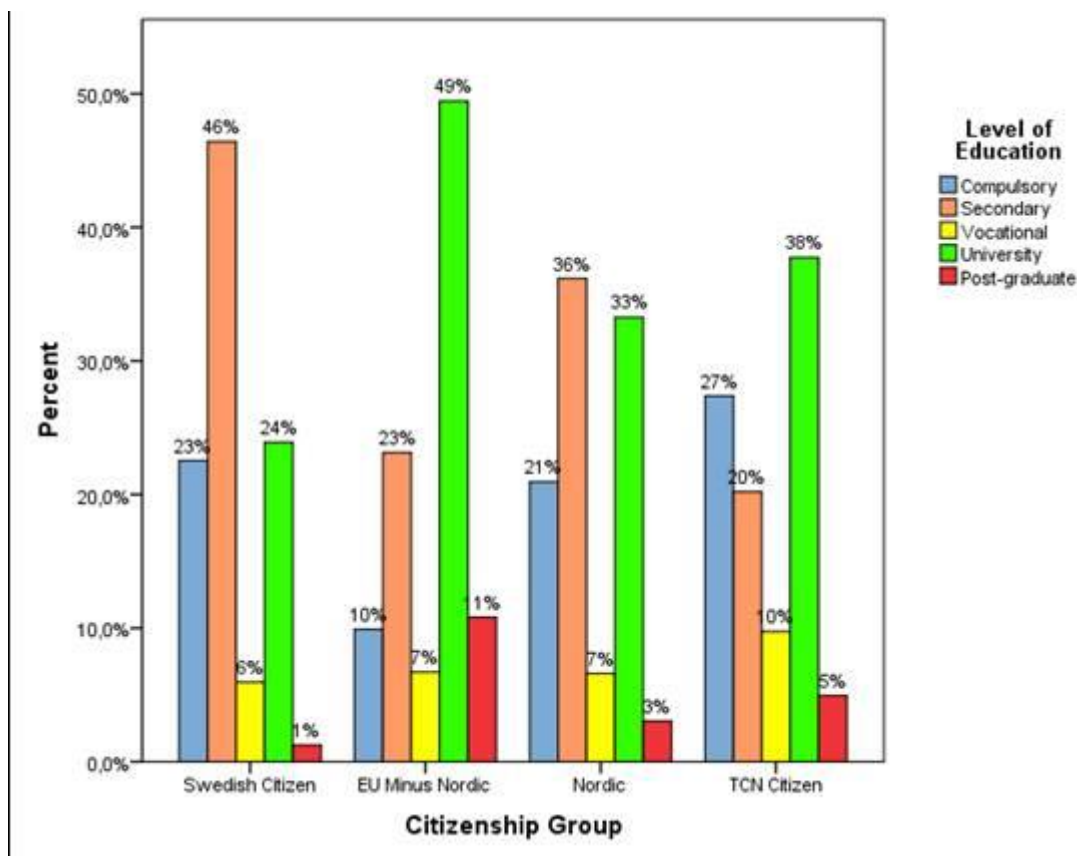
Age Groups	TCN Residents (Official Citizenship of:)										
	Asia, Turkey, Oceania	Africa	Iran, Iraq	Soviet Union	Central and South America	America, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand	Unknown	North Africa and Mid. East	Other Eu (non- EU)	Bosnia- Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia Slovenia	Total
Children (0-15 years)	176	381	145	73	49	26	91	10	6	5	962
Youth (16-24 years)	312	436	134	49	78	6	27	11	5	4	1062
Young Adults (25-40 years)	1208	710	388	203	157	164	60	119	78	24	3111
Older Adults (41-64 years)	364	341	210	110	95	150	41	50	14	10	1385
Elderly (>65 years)	10	21	22	10	6	30	2	1	0	8	110
<b>TOTAL NUMBERS</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>1889</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>6630</b>

This table also shows the proportional age make-up of the country groups, for example from this it can be seen that 41% of the citizens of 'Unknown' origin are children 0-15 years (91 children). This group is likely part of those unaccompanied children who seek asylum in Sweden. In addition, 75% of those coming from other European countries outside of the EU are young adults aged 25-40 years. This probably has some relation to Umeå being a university town.

#### *Level of Education*

It is of value to begin this section by presenting a comparison of the level of educational attainment of all Västerbotten residents, grouped by citizenship held (figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8: Educational Attainment of Västerbotten's Citizens, Sweden (2010)

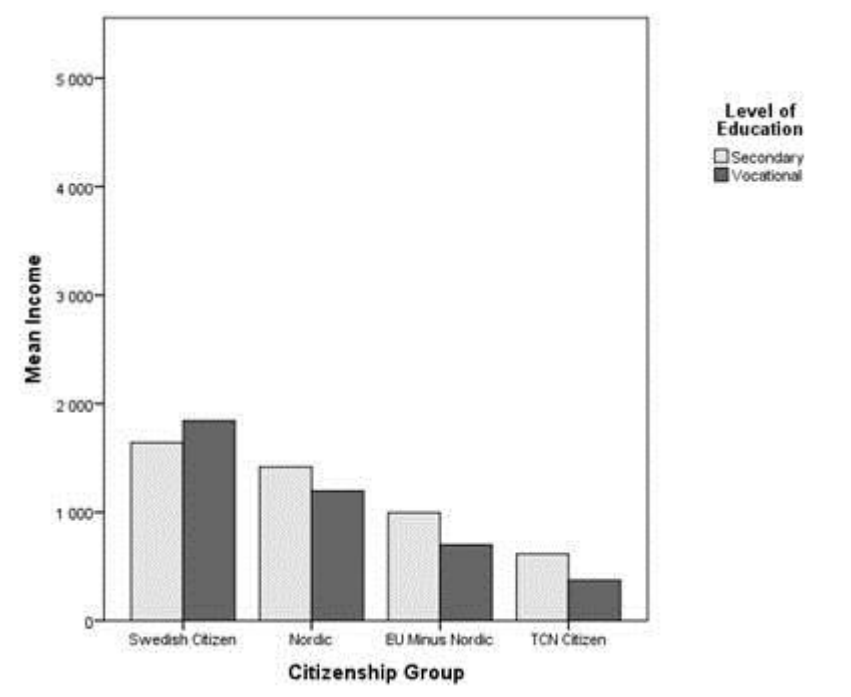


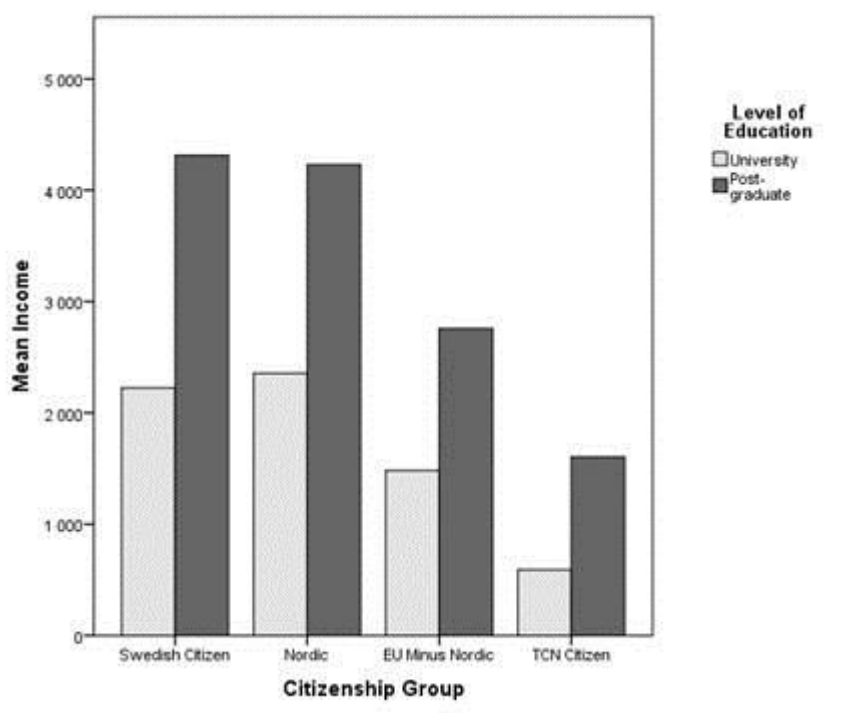
From this it is apparent that 38% of the TCN residents have a university level education compared to the Swedish population's 24%. In fact all the immigrant groupings have a higher percentage of university educated than the Swedish citizens, this probably reflecting the international draw of both the university in Umeå and the international doctors and healthcare specialists who come to work at the major hospital based in the region, the Norrlands University Hospital. This pattern is also mirrored in the representation of post-graduate degrees. Even at the vocational educational level, ie. those who have trained as a, for example, plumber, electrician, hairdresser, carpenter the EU Minus Nordic immigrant group consist of 11% with vocational education, the Nordic group with 7% and the TCN group of 10% in comparison to the Swedish citizens' 6%. Secondary education, however, (ie. high school) dominates within the Swedish population with 46% of Swedes attaining this level compared to around 20% for the immigrant groups. Just over half (53%) of the TCN citizens hold a vocational training or higher level of education compared to just 31% of the Swedish citizens. TCNs nevertheless also comprise a slightly higher than the Swedish average proportion of people with only the most basic level of compulsory education (27% compared to 23% for Swedes).

### *Work Salary and Total Income Patterns*

When this educational analysis is taken further to a comparison of average annual incomes for the TCN population and those who are Swedish citizens it is clear that the higher average educational attainment of the TCNs in comparison to the Swedes does not translate into higher incomes, and that this average wage gap of more than 50% lower for TCNs is even more marked at the more educated end of the spectrum (see graphs in figure 1.9).

**Figure 1.9: Salary Comparison among Citizen Groups and Educational Levels in Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**





Filtering out the children and those under the age of 20 years and those older than 64 years, and excluding those who earn no salary income from the data gives a working age (20-64 years old) and salaried population of 127,647 people in Västerbotten County. The average salary for this entire group is SEK 232,500 (approximately Euros 25,300) per year. However when this population is split by the citizenship group they belong to some clear differences in mean salary become apparent with TCNs earning on average less than half that of Swedish citizens<sup>3</sup> (see table 1.5).

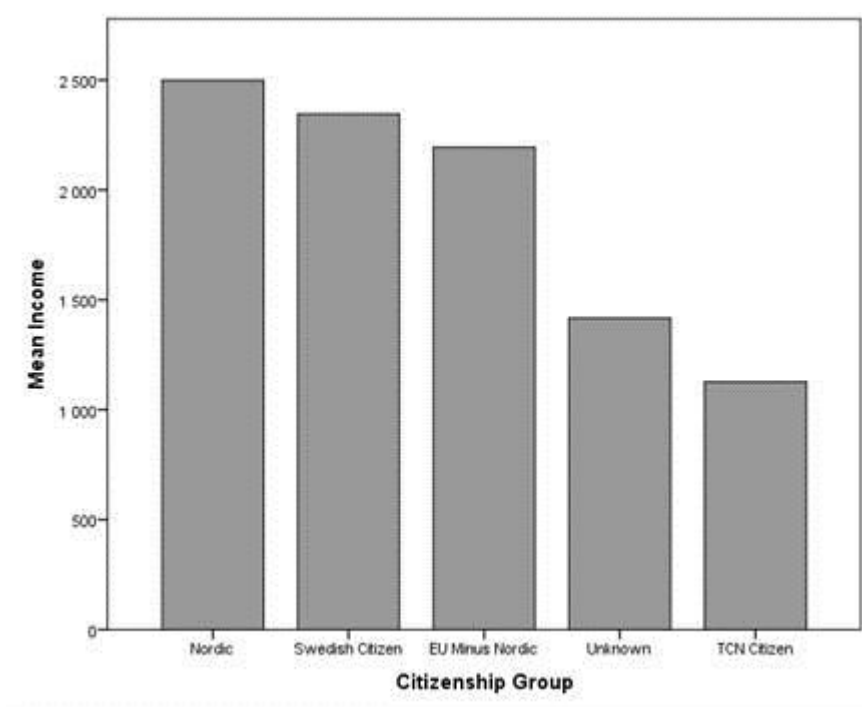
<sup>3</sup> This must be qualified by pointing out that 123,504 Swedish citizens are being analysed compared to just 2,014 TCN citizens and 1,051 Nordic citizens.

**Table 1.5: Mean Annual Salary Differentials among Workers by Citizenship in Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**

Citizenship Group	Mean Annual Salary (00s SEK)	Number of people
Swedish Citizen	2344	123504
EU Minus Nordic	2194	1043
Nordic	2498	1051
TCN Citizen	1127	2014
Unknown	1416	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>2325</b>	<b>127647</b>

These statistics visually show the annual salary gap in figure 1.10.

**Figure 1.10: Mean Annual Salary Differential by Citizenship, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**

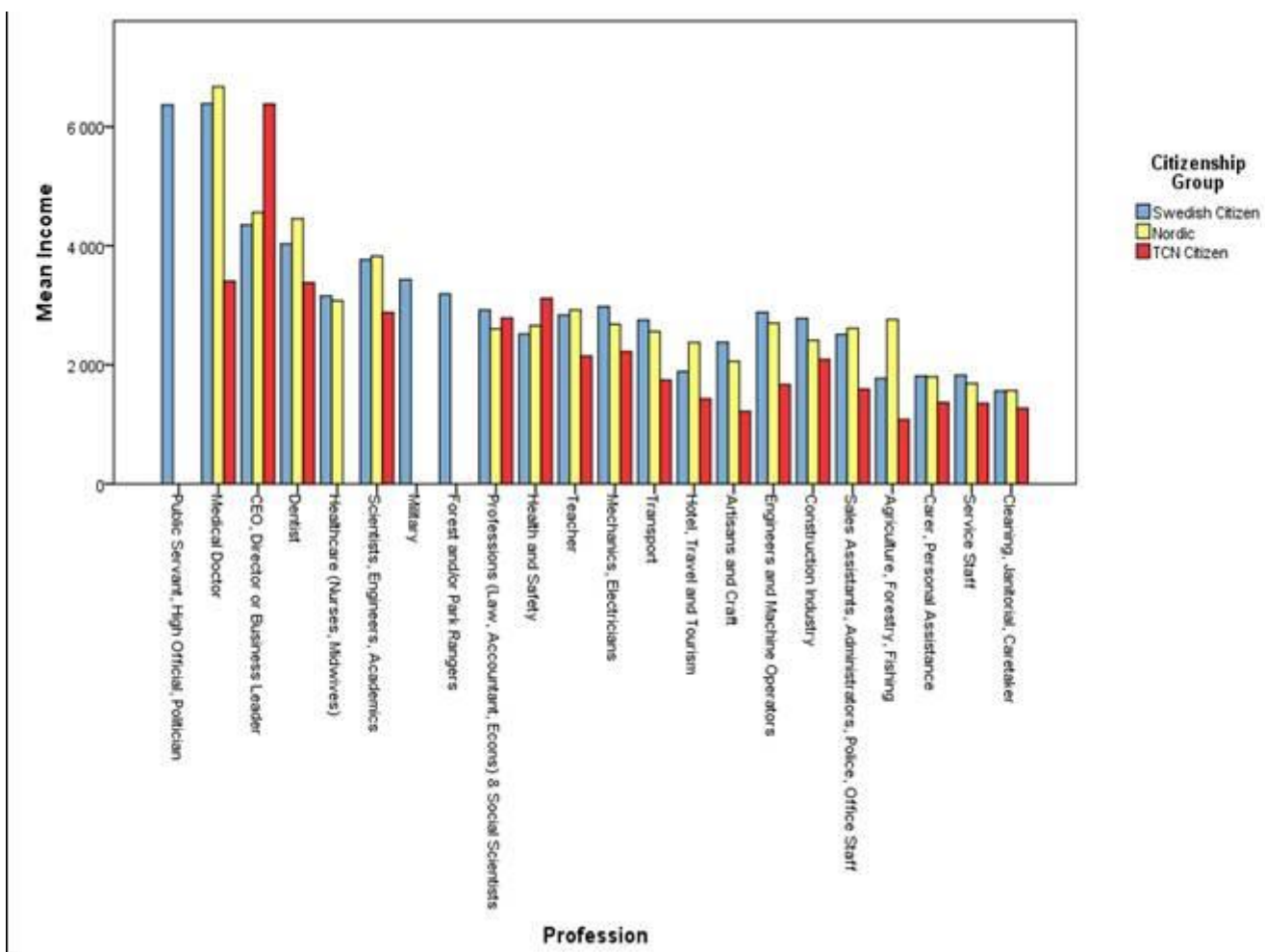


Analysing this group of salaried working age residents by profession and citizenship reveals a general pattern across the spectrum of professions of TCNs earning on average less than Swedish and Nordic citizens (figure 1.11) [exceptions being CEOs, Business Leaders and Health and Safety experts though it is likely that these figures are in-



flated by a couple of outliers]. The income differential between the TCNs and the Swedes is also larger within the more highly educated with the mean total income gap being SEK 45000 p.a. (approx., Euros 5000 p.a.) higher for those with a university degree than for those without a university degree (figure 0.9). TCN medical doctors, dentists and academics received approximately SEK 100,000-400,000 (Euros 10,000-40,000) less per annum than their Swedish counterparts (figure 0.11). Professions where few to zero TCNs are present are also clearly shown in figure 0.11 eg. high officials, military, forest or park rangers.

**Figure 1.11: Mean Annual Salary by Type of Profession and Citizenship, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**



### *Not in Salaried Employment*

The number of county residents not earning a salary in the working age population (20-64 years) was 24,588 people (ie. 16.2% of the total working age population). These people are not working in a regular salaried employment but it is not necessarily the case that they are unemployed: some may be students or receiving other kinds of in-

comes, such as capital income, other than a salary. Some of the social benefits a person may be in receipt of are related to previous income levels but not all. Of this group of 24,588 12% (3,058 people) are TCNs and 82.5% (20,293) are Swedish citizens. Within this group the mean annual total income received ie. a total of social benefits: unemployment benefits, child allowance, sick payments etc received, and/or student allowances, and/or capital gains income was just SEK 80700 per year (approx. Euros 8800). When this is disaggregated by citizenship however table 0.6 reveals stark contrasts with TCNs receiving an annual average of SEK 41400 and Swedish 89200 whilst EU citizens (excluding Nordic) received least at an average of SEK 24000 p.a.

**Table 0.6: Mean Annual Total Income for Non-salaried Residents by Citizenship, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**

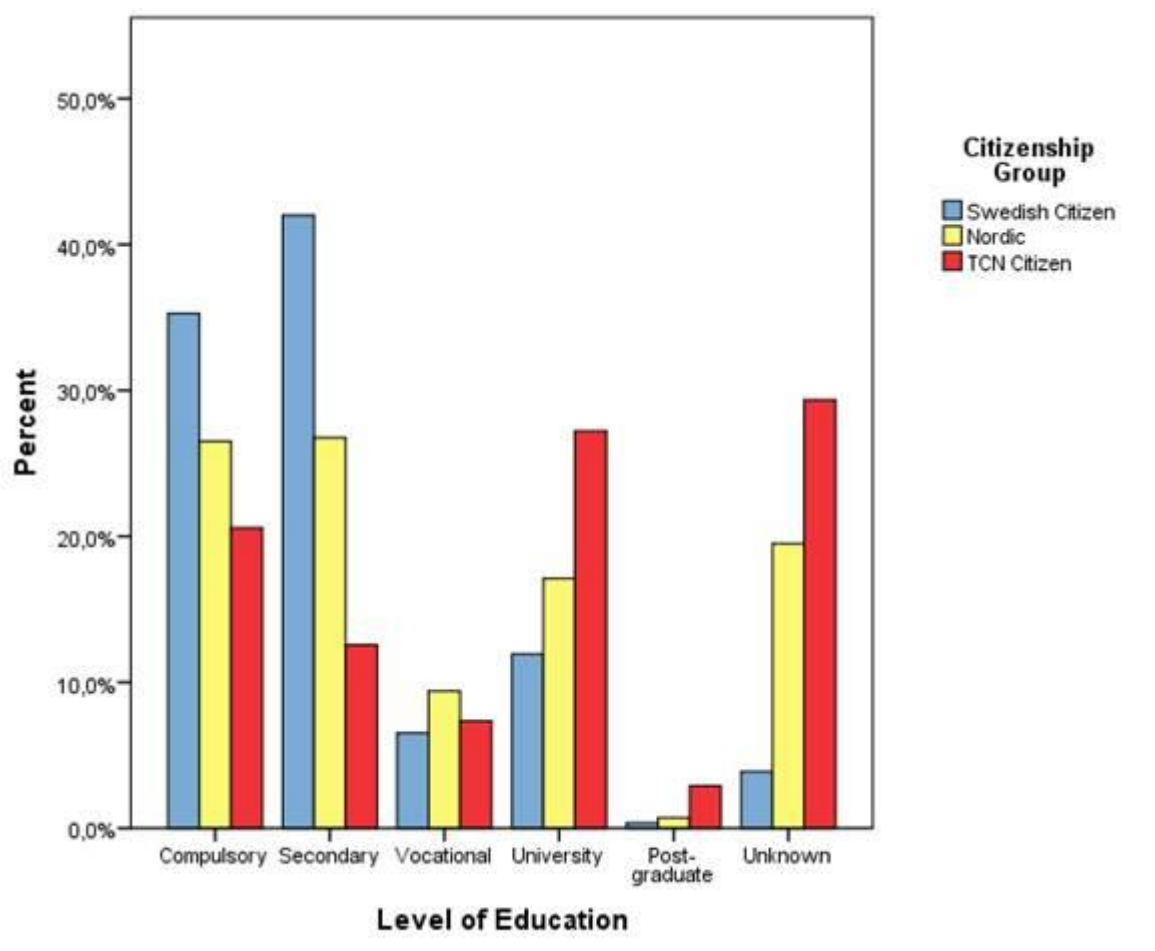
Citizenship Group	Mean Annual Total Income (SEK 00s)	Number of people
Swedish Citizen	892	20,293
EU Minus Nordic	240	743
Nordic	589	415
TCN Citizen	414	3056
Unknown	709	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>24,588</b>

These statistics are difficult to interpret. It could mean that immigrant groups receive fewer or lower financial payments than Swedish citizens. Or it could be that TCNs make less use of the alternative income sources than Swedes either because they rely more on familial and community support, or because they do not claim all that they may be entitled to. Or perhaps TCNs and other immigrants are more likely to rely on salaried income. However, since some of the social benefits available in Sweden are dependent on previous earning capacity and since the previous section revealed that TCNs have lower average salaries than Swedes it is not surprising that the level of overall income for TCNs is so much lower than for native Swedes.

Figure 1.12 provides a view of the educational attainment of this group of residents of working age that did not receive a salary in 2010. This image indicates that more of the less educated Swedes and more of the more educated immigrants were outside of salaried employment. Almost 30% of the TCNs that were not in salaried work hold a uni-

university degree and almost 5% of postgraduates, in comparison to 12% university-educated Swedes and barely 1% of postgraduate Swedes.

**Figure 1.12: Non-Salaried by Education and Citizenship, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**



Even though this group gained no salary in 2010 their professional profile can be viewed within the data. A closer inspection of this information suggests that the more traditional blue-collar jobs are most represented in those receiving income other than salary (most likely some form of benefits) (data not shown). However TCN citizens without salaried employment were somewhat over-represented within the Cleaning and Janitorial profession and the teaching, and hotel and tourism professions. At the more highly educated end of the profile TCNs are clearly more represented than their Swedish counterparts in the receipt of other income sources than salary amongst scientists, engineers and academics, as well as medical doctors. This may indicate that more highly educated TCNs are in receipt of unemployment benefits than their Swedish counterparts.

### *Territorial Distribution*

Analysing Västerbotten's 2010 TCN residents by territorial distribution using ASTRID data on the area of residence shows that 57% of the county's TCNs live in an area of Umeå city or its immediate surroundings, and 16% live in Skellefteå or its immediate surroundings. The remaining 27% of TCNs are scattered throughout the region, though many small councils have no TCN residents at all (data not shown).

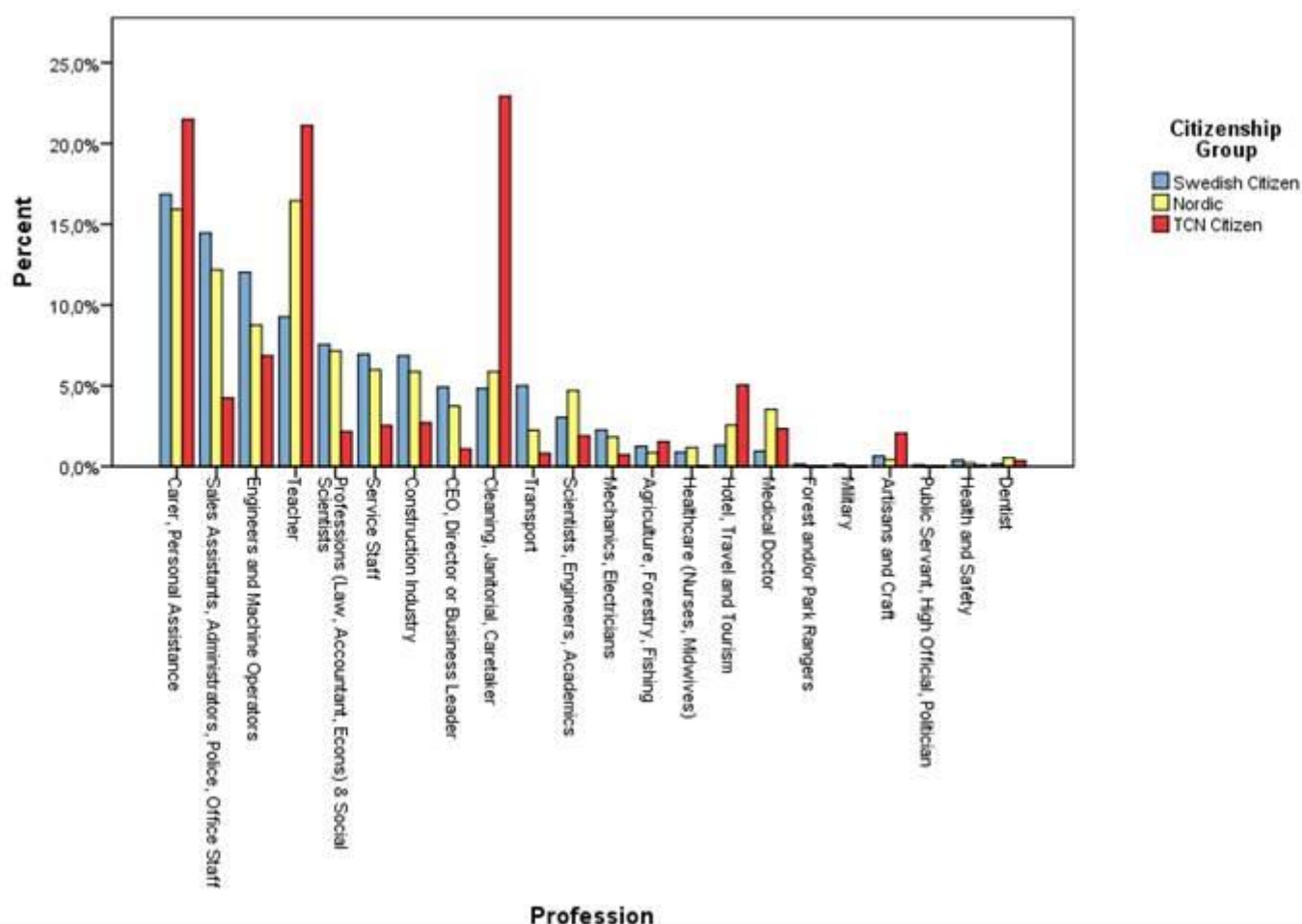
A further analysis of place of residence by level of education reveals that Umeå Ålidhem—a residential area proximate to the university and thus a strong student area—is, unsurprisingly, home to the greatest proportion of the entire region's TCNs, and those with a university or post-graduate degree (data not shown). It is also, however, home to the greatest proportion of TCNs with a vocational education, or an 'unknown' level of education, with Umeå town being a close second. Ålidhem is the area of the city that tends to act as the gateway to the region. It is a common place of arrival for newcomers. This is influenced by the close location of the university and the hospital, major destinations for international residents, and perhaps also by a clustering influence of existing TCN residential patterns.

Of the TCNs living in the Skellefteå region there was a dominance of those with the most basic level of education (compulsory). Such figures likely reflect the fact that Skellefteå lacks higher education facilities, and that the area is a reception region for asylum seekers, particular lone children (they have six or seven homes for supporting such asylum applicants (Skellefteå kommun, 2014). The one town that stands out as an exception with almost equal numbers of TCNs of basic, unknown and university education was Boliden. This can likely be explained by the presence of a mining sector there that requires both unskilled and highly-skilled labour (Boliden, 2014).

### *Distribution by Occupation and Professional Profile*

The professional composition of the working age (20-64 year old) salaried residents of the region by their citizenship is shown in figure 1.13. Proportionally more TCNs than Swedes are represented, in line with much of the literature on this topic, in low-paid and less skilled jobs such as cleaning and janitorial work, carers and personal assistants. Exceptions for the region however are medical doctors (likely due to the situation described in the region's healthcare system that part 2 of this research report describes), and the hotel and tourism industry and the artisanal craft industry. The pattern of Nordic citizen employment mimics relatively closely the Swedish population. The income differentials and wage gaps of the professions were shown in figures 1.9 and 1.11 and table 1.5 in the previous sections.

**Figure 1.13: Professional Proportional Representation of Citizenship Groups, Västerbotten, Sweden (2010)**



#### 1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING PARTS

Although simplistic, the division in to first and second waves of immigration that was described in section 1.1 can be seen as fruitful to capture the differences between migrants over time. Since the liberalisation of labour migration in 2008 that was described in sections 1.1 and 1.2, the debate about migration in Sweden has found new life. On the one hand labour migration has been seen as more favourable since migrants start working immediately, which means they are both contributing to the Swedish society and integrating more quickly than asylum seekers and tied migrants. For those seeking refuge from difficulties in their home country the potential for labour migration also opens up another, legal, route into Sweden, at least in theory. As the findings from the following parts of the study investigating the evaluation and recognition of foreign-acquired skills and knowledge (Part 1), examining diversity within the workplace, and the needs and specificities within different sectors (Part 2), and part 3 which considers more subtle and social aspects of a broader integration of immigrants

into the host society a labour migration in practice is much more difficult than the theory and regulation assumes.

On the other hand labour migrants are considered to be more vulnerable in the labour market since their permits are temporary and tied to a specific employer, making them dependent on that employer for their continued legal stay in Sweden. This situation can thus expose migrant workers to possible poor working conditions. The 2008 tightening of the regulations and requirements from employers led to a decline in the number of applications for work permits for foreign citizens (Nordlund and Pelling, 2013). It also became apparent that many of the work permits that were applied for after the 2008 overhaul of the system were from employers who themselves had a foreign background (ibid). Parts 1 to 3 will further describe and illuminate this cultural, familial and social connection between those of foreign birth or heritage in the face of subtle and structural difficulties in labour market and wider assimilation. There are legitimate concerns surrounding a trend for foreign migrants to work for foreign business owners in terms of a broader engagement with the Swedish host society, particularly in situations where a migrant's work may not afford them much opportunity to interact Swedish colleagues and Swedish ways of operating (Nordlund & Pelling, 2013).

Debate within Sweden is also lively when discussing the asylum seeker social protection side of immigration that has traditionally been quite significant within the country. Such people may come with different motivations, and can be weighed down with fundamental concerns of safety and shelter first and foremost. This group is, by definition, separate from any labour market and employment relationship as the following sections of the study will reveal. Their challenges are many, yet Sweden has focused considerable effort and infrastructure to supporting such migrants' transitions. Some of these systems are put under the spotlight in the following chapters.

It is open to debate whether the migratory trends in Sweden since the turn of the millennia could be described as a "third wave" where clearly dominant are asylum seekers and refugees from the world's conflicts. The Swedish migration board estimates that 80,000 new cases of asylum will be granted during 2014 (Migrationsverket, 2014). These are not insignificant numbers. Findings from this report offer both insights into the great dynamism and energetic resource that such statistics may offer to the Swedish society, but also provide some sobering thoughts about the difficulty in translating admirable political intentions into practice in a real and effective manner.

As a rule, Sweden tends to have been poorer than many EU countries at labour market integration of immigrants, but one of the best at ensuring basic human rights and providing social support from the State (Nordlund & Pelling, 2013). The country is also



near the forefront in its efforts towards validating the skills and qualifications of migrants (this will be described in more detail in part one of this report), and is certainly a pioneer in its efforts to support immigrants to learn the Swedish language, despite its critics, through their Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language training (expanded upon in part one) (ibid).

The main conclusions and implications that can be ascertained from the national and regional statistics and trends presented in section 0.3 of this introductory chapter are that migrant origin and degree of labour market interaction present differing levels of socio-cultural, linguistic and skills applicability barriers. Despite the best ethical intentions of policymakers and decision-makers and the best efforts of skills validators, employment agencies, human resource managers or other involved stakeholders the facts remain: immigrants, and those Swedish citizens with immigrant heritage generally tend to have lower employment rates and a lower average income than Swedish counterparts of Swedish heritage, and those with TCN backgrounds lag furthest behind. The statistics revealing that higher educated immigrants are even more affected by such trends than lower educated migrants also point to uncomfortable truths that those in positions of power too often fail to acknowledge. This is that any relationship, any interaction, any intergration, has two sides, two players. The following sections of this report flesh out multiple aspects of these immigrant-host country dynamics.

## 2 THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS' SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, COMPETENCE RECOGNITION

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### 2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

This first part of the DIVERSE research project focussed on the systems, tools and procedures in place within Sweden to access and validate the formal and informal skills, knowledge and competence (SKC) of immigrants with third country national status (TCNs), that is, non-European Union country citizenship. The research also shone the light on activities and initiatives occurring at the regional level of Västerbotten County in the northern part of Sweden (sections 2.4 and 2.5).

Data for this part of the study was gathered through a combination of literature review, statistical analysis of the national statistical database and via interviews conducted with individuals working at various evaluating organisations. Literature review included analysis of official reports from government bodies such as the Swedish National Audit Office (NAO or Riksrevisionen in Swedish), the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets och högskolerådet, UHR) provided key information on

the Swedish regulatory system guiding and informing SKC assessment processes. Analysis of information from Västerbotten's regional bodies such as the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (Västerbottens Länsstyrelsen) informed on the regional framework. Other national stake-holder groups closely involved in the SKC process, also known as *validering* in Swedish, provided valuable information, for example the website [www.valideringsinfo.se](http://www.valideringsinfo.se) which is operated by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan, MYH) held invaluable information on the national guidelines but also regarding the actual SKC models being used in Sweden by different sectors.

The questionnaire guideline used during the interviews is shown in annex 1. Interviews were conducted in Swedish, as this was the mother tongue for both interviewer and interviewee, and duration was approximately 30-45 minutes. A total of seven interviews were conducted. Umeå University is involved in the validation and recognition of SKCs in several ways, why interviews were undertaken both with the international section of the Admissions office Office (Antagningen) for their experience of validating foreign educational merits, coordinators of the complementary education for teachers with foreign education (utländska lärares vidareutbildning, [ULV]), and the labour market education the Short Path (Korta Vägen, [KV]). Discussion with the regional office of the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, [AF]) provided insight into SKC validation processes and procedures geared towards helping a migrant into the labour market. Insights into the practical experience of the validation process was given by two private actors subcontracted by the Public Employment Office to perform validation in the region, Lernia Education and MedLearn. Interview with the Västerbotten County Council (Västerbotten Läns Landsting (VLL)) with responsibility of organizing the health care revealed specific insights, needs and aims for medically-related sectors concerning foreign competence.

The report begins with a description of the legislative and administrative framework surrounding SKC assessment, before reviewing efforts related to formal qualifications. A difficulty that quickly became apparent was that little information could be found regarding informal and non-formal competences. A focus upon assessment, recognition and translation of foreign formal qualifications (higher and vocational) was clearly in dominance. Section 2.3 outlines existing statistics and studies regarding SKC recognition and describes the assessment procedures in place, the benefits and outcomes of the evaluation process, both for the migrant and for the society as a whole. This section also outlines some of the difficulties and bottlenecks in the system and highlights some recommendations for improvement. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 provide more detail from the regional experience within Västerbotten region.



## 2.2 LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Swedish National Commission on Validation (Valideringsdelegationen) was established in 2003 to take a lead in promoting and developing methods for validating skills, knowledge and competence (Thomson, 2010). Validation is used in connection with a person wishing to start, or continue education, or in order to be able to assess and document skills and competences in support of applications for employment (Valideringsinfo, 2014). The delegation's definition of validation in the 2003 Bill on Validation describes "a process that implies a structured assessment, evaluation, documentation and recognition of knowledge and competence that a person possesses irrespective of how they have been achieved" (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013, p153). In Swedish the term 'validering' is used and translates to English as validation though its meaning is closer to that of assessment, accreditation and recognition than the English use of validating a process (Andersson and Osman, 2008).

An early first attempt in Sweden to assess and validate informal and non-formal learning occurred already in 1997 with the Adult Education Initiative (Kunskapslyftet) (Nikitas, 2005). This programme focused however, on unemployed adults and did not have a specific leaning towards immigrants. In its 2008 snapshot view report CEDEFOP classed Sweden as being at a medium level of development (CEDEFOP, 2008, pp. 27-28) and well on its way to developing a national policy for validation of non-formal and informal learning of immigrant populations (ibid). Prior to 2008 the focus in Sweden, regarding the recognition of Third Country Nationals' (TCNs) skills, knowledge and competences, was geared towards early, fair and transparent validation of formal qualifications (IOM(a), 2013). This was usually conducted during the migrant's introductory phase (ibid).

Since then the focus has shifted to a more labour-market led approach with greater impetus being allowed to the employer side (IOM(a), 2013). Sweden's approach in allowing less-skilled TCNs access to its labour market in this way has been posited as an example of good practice in its intent and due to the fact that the numbers are not capped and do not differentiate by skilled and unskilled (IOM(a), 2013). Regional and local systems of governance are important in identifying labour shortages (ibid). The Swedish system has also been lauded by IOM (ibid, p31) for its provision of information to TCNs about labour shortages, migration procedures and possibilities in 34 different languages already prior to a potential immigrant even arriving in the country through its 'Working in Sweden' website (work.sweden.se).

There is currently no national legal framework enshrining the necessity of validation of non-formal and informal SKC though a number of practical, regional and cross-sectorial initiatives have been trialled (Nikitas, 2005; Thomson, 2010). A proposal for a national structure to validate real competence was put forward in 2012. The Swedish

National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan, MYh) is working with other state agencies such as the Swedish Public Employment Service (Ar-betsförmedlingen), the Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet, UK-ämbetet), the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet, UHR<sup>4</sup>) and the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), and industry stakeholder to develop such national validation guidelines. The website [www.valideringsinfo.se](http://www.valideringsinfo.se) collates in one place more than 28 different validation models that are in use in Sweden today. Many of them are geared towards specific industrial sectors or vocations such as metal workers, construction workers, hairdressers, or retailers.

### *Recognition of formal qualifications acquired in Third Countries*

The Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet [UHR]), established in 2013 through a merger of three related government bodies, is in charge of evaluating and certifying foreign secondary school and post-secondary school academic and vocational qualifications (UHR, 2013). Assessment of formal qualifications obtained abroad as part of an application to an institution of higher education in Sweden (university) is conducted directly as a part of the application procedure, managed by the centralized national university admissions portal ([www.universityadmissions.se](http://www.universityadmissions.se)), yet the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) maintains ultimate responsibility for this process. The separate educational institutions are also part of assessing and validating applications to their own programmes.

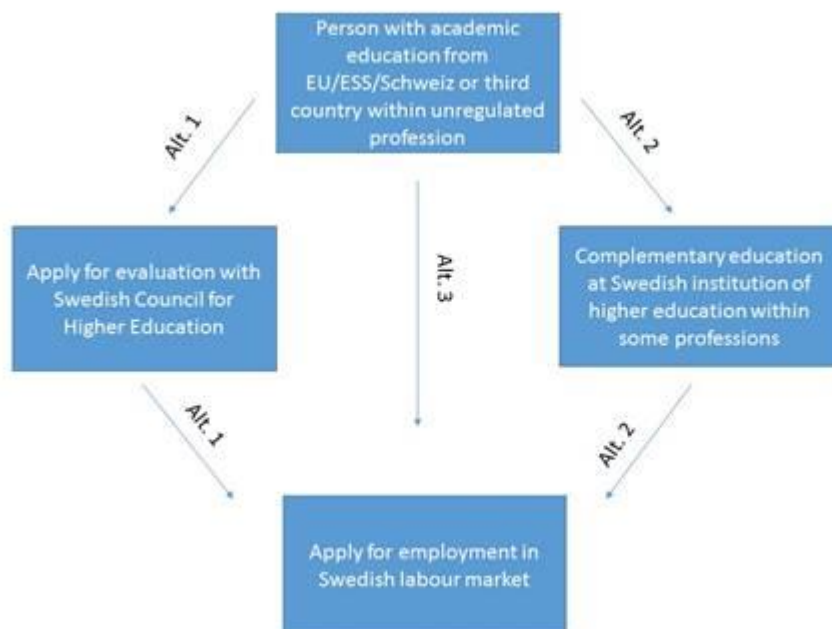
The procedure for obtaining recognition of formal qualifications acquired outside of Sweden is clearly signposted from UHR's homepage (<http://www.uhr.se/sv/>). A strength of this system is its clarity of navigation. A weakness lies in the information currently being only available in the Swedish and English languages with some of the application forms linked to from the English pages being only available in Swedish (UHR, 2013). Applications must be posted, along with translated copies of all certifications and qualifications (except those in English, French, Spanish, German, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish and Icelandic [as part of the Nordic collaboration]), in hard copy to Sweden. Methods of assessment and validation are both quantitative (comparing lengths of time in formal education) and qualitative (evaluating the curricula content and the quality of the education) (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> From 1 Jan 2013 the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket) ceased to exist and its operations were divided between The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet, UK-ämbetet), the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet, UHR).

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been formally in existence in Sweden since 2011 and is in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) complying with the decrees of the Lisbon Convention for a three tiered system (HVE, 2011). Recognition and validation of foreign qualifications, with links to the system described above, is part of the Swedish NQF yet, since its focus is upon the formal system of education, no mention is made of validation of non- or in-formal skills, knowledge and competences.

An assessment determining the Swedish equivalent qualification can also be used for applications in the labour market. Many professions requiring academic education is unregulated in Sweden, and someone with a foreign education can within these professions apply directly to the employer without a formal assessment by UHR, see Figure 1.1. For licensed professions, such as teaching, this assessment is a mandatory step in the recognition process determining if the former education can be deemed to be equivalent to the Swedish standard and allow eligibility to work as a teacher, and if not, what the necessary complements are. A certain proficiency in Swedish is also demanded before eligibility can be approved (NAO, 2011). However, to gain a Swedish teachers license complementary education has to be undertaken (ibid.)

**Figure 2.1. Way in to Swedish labour market for academics with foreign education within unregulated professions**

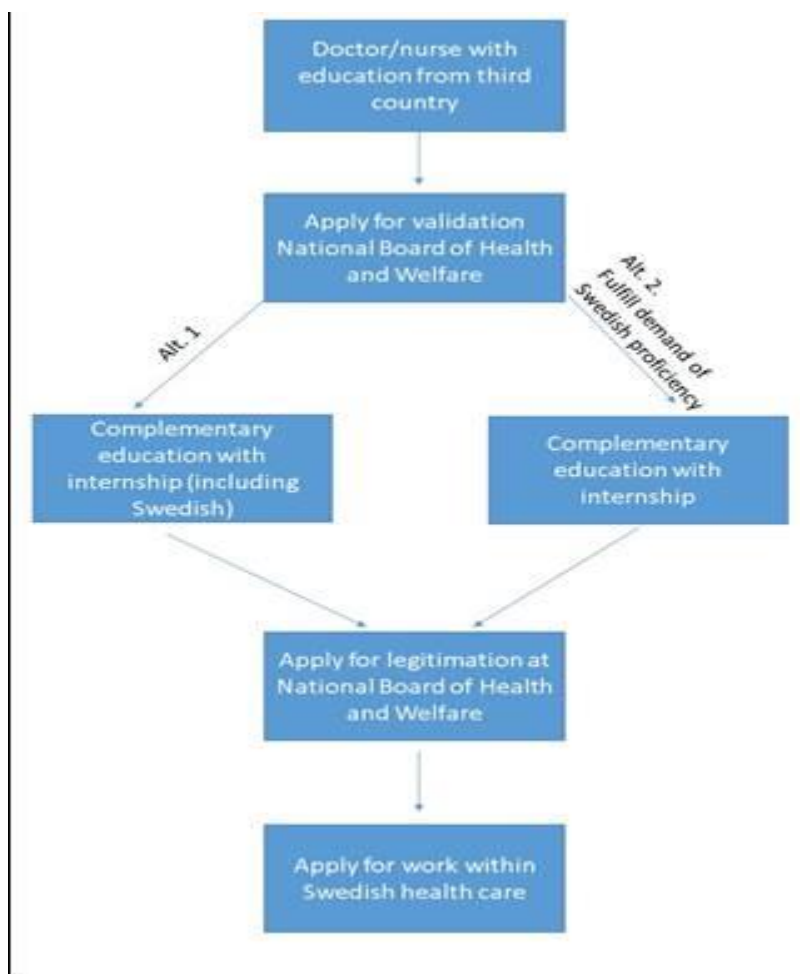


Source: Swedish National Audit Office (2011)

For licensed professions within the medical and pharmaceutical, legal or accountancy sectors, the specific associated authorities conduct the assessment and validation of an applicant's skills, knowledge and competence (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013). For the medically-associated professions it is the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) who has this responsibility. Within medical and pharmaceutical professions, in addition to providing documentation of education and work experience, the candidate must go through theoretical and practical knowledge tests, which are arranged nationally by appointed university hospitals in southern Sweden<sup>5</sup> as well as a period of internship before a license can be approved (NAO, 2011). This part of the validation can be undertaken in any of the health care facilities managed by the county board of health care, but it is up to the applicant to find a placement. The type and length of tests and internships depend on what level of qualification the candidate has (e.g. shorter for doctors who are already specialised). The candidate must also prove a suitable level of Swedish language competence through study and testing (ibid). Specific medically-oriented Swedish language courses and orientation into the Swedish medical legislative framework are offered in most Swedish counties.

<sup>5</sup> Karolinska institutet (KI), Stockholm and Sahlgrenska universitetssjukhuset, Göteborg

**Figure 2.2. Process of validation and in to employment in Swedish health care for doctors and nurses with education from third country**



Source: Swedish National Audit Office (2011)

It is the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, [AF]) who are responsible for purchasing services to validate formal and vocational SKCs. This has been put through a centralisation process since 2008 so that agreements with sub-contractors are now made within a field at the national level (AF interview). The supply of activities aimed at validating and complementing current SKC, however, differ between municipalities (AF interview, Länsstyrelsen Västerbotten, 2013). At the regional level of Västerbotten County validation is performed by at least eight different organisations, for a variety of labour market sectors, though two of these operate from their head offices in the national capital and do not maintain an office within the region (the Association of Swedish Bakers and Confectioners, and the Swedish Vocational Board of Agriculture and Horticulture). These eight performers of validation use a variety of validation models. The providers, sectors and SKC recognition models used in the Västerbotten Region are shown in Annex 2. One of the main providers–Lernia Education–has as

part of its mandate an explicit focus on in-tegration of immigrants. It is a private company but it puts some resources into validation as well as receiving some funding from the Swedish Public Employment Agency and lo-cal municipalities to undertake this work (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013).

Specific details of the steps involved in each of the validation models can be found on the “Validerings” website. In general, however, all the models follow a similar 4-stage pro-cedure. Stage one consists of a general mapping of a person’s knowledge and abilities in the sector. Stage two provides more in-depth competence mapping while stage three en-tails a first level of independent assessment of competence. Stage four includes a formal assessment of level of attainment and may include practical tests, examinations, authori-sation and/or certification (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013). The cost of validation and the time input required are also given on the website and vary widely between the stages and in-dustry concerned.

Dingu-Kyrklund (2013) describes, for the IOM study on the recognition of the qualifications and competences of migrants, three areas of good practice exhibited in Sweden. These were outlined as firstly, the extensive and cost-free infrastructure in Sweden that supports learning of Swedish, including vocabulary geared towards specific professions. Secondly, the apparent shift of approach in the country towards a more practical recogni-tion of immigrants’ knowledge and experiences beyond simply looking at formal educa-tional attainment (though Dingu-Kyrklund state that in practice this requires refinement). Thirdly the legislative protections put in place to prevent excessive ‘dumping’ of cheaper immigrant labour as a way of driving down costs and threatening the employment securi-ty of the local workforce. The author, however, qualifies this statement by noting that any such dumping effects remain “highly theoretical” (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013, p160) at this time in Sweden.

For the academic and regulated health professions, the time period to get a foreign education validated and complemented can be very long, longer than the Swedish education for that profession<sup>6</sup>. It has been found that it is not so much the processing time at the dif-ferent institutions (UHR and Socialstyrelsen) but that the tests and complementary cours-es demand such a high level of Swedish proficiency that it takes considerable time to pass them.

#### *Recognition of non-formal and informal learning*

The same institutions that are involved in assessing and recognising more formal qualifications and competences are those that also assess migrants’ non-formal and in-

<sup>6</sup> For example validation of nurses takes in average 4,8 years although the basic swedish education is just three years.



formal learning within the same framework and procedures as outlined in the previous section. In Sweden and the Nordic region non-formal and informal learning is more often referred to as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) (Nuffic, 2008). Sweden's higher education institutions have been obligated by law in the Higher Education Ordinance since 2003 to take in-to consideration the prior and experiential learning of any application to higher education that so requests (Nuffic, 2008). In case documentation of formal qualifications are missing or a person wants some informal or non-formal skills or competences ("reell kompetens") to be considered in the application, a more qualitative evaluation of skills and competences can take place through interviews or other forms of descriptions by the applicant. According to Nuffic's 2008 report on the issue this has occurred in just a very few cases.

The general structure for a job application in Sweden consists of two parts; a mapping of formal qualifications or a CV, and a personal letter. According to the guidelines on the Public Employment Office (AF) website, the personal letter is to be directed specifically towards the suitability for the position applied for, but can also be used to describe skills and competences gained through informal and non-formal learning. Though systemized, this mapping of informal and non-formal skills and competences is a matter between the employer and applicant and is not validated or recognized by any third party. It is up to the individual to recognize and describe their own skills and AF encourages people to enhance this part of the job application through online guides, courses and personal assistance for the unemployed.

#### Strengths:

A benefit of the recognition and validation process can be the personal journey the individual may go on and the help they get in understanding their skills base, "knowledge about their knowledge" as Anderson and Osman (2008) put it. This in turn may help boost confidence and also enable the individual to better target their job search efforts but such a story will vary greatly by individual (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013).

#### Weaknesses:

Sweden has been testing methods of assessing, recognising and validating an individual's competences and abilities garnered through non-formal and informal means, i.e. not through education or vocational training, since 1997 with mixed results (Colardyn and Bjornavold, 2004; Nikitas, 2005). A focus more explicitly on immigrants has been apparent since about 2008 (Thomson, 2010). Colardyn and Bjornavold (2004) and Anderson and Osman (2008) criticise the Swedish approach for being too focused on translating such informal and non-formal competences to equivalent formal educational and vocational skills and standards and not sufficiently focussing on the kind of skills and abilities required in the workplace or within voluntary activity.



Research by Diedrich and Styhre (2013) gives a lot of examples of weaknesses and fallibilities in the validation system and limitations on its effectiveness posed by the level of training and interest of the evaluator and their own motivation and understanding of the labour market needs. Their work suggests that the validation process may even emphasize trends of what they term “ethnic niches” (Diedrich and Styhre, 2013, p779) in the Swedish pattern of labour. Westas, (2013) notes the following limitations of the validation system as it currently is practiced within the country: a) the lack of a sustainable financing structure b) the absence of an overall framework for quality assurance, and the dearth in relevant training for validation specialists.

#### *Procedures or Instruments for TCNs’ SKC recognition*

The recognition of TCNs SKC is largely undertaken under the same institutions and framework as that of the general labour force as presented above, but more and more projects directed specifically towards migrants have been developed over the last decade. This is consistent with the aim of Swedish integration policy for all citizens to have the same rights, obligations and opportunities independent of ethnic or cultural background. This is to be achieved primarily through general efforts directed equally to all citizens, which can then be complemented by directed efforts towards foreign born citizens but then primarily during the first time after their arrival to Sweden (NAO, 2011:18). The two main groups targeted have been newly arrived migrants and migrants with academic backgrounds.

In the new establishment law from 2010 the local Public Employment office (AF) is required to create individual establishment plans for each newly arrived migrant to the municipality. Those eligible for this support are third country nationals<sup>7</sup> who have gained a residence permit as asylum seekers, or for protective reason, and relatives to this category of migrants. This plan should cover support and activities aimed at introducing migrants to Swedish society and labour market and the local AF is responsible for coordinating activities. Before 2010, it was the municipalities who held the overarching responsibility for the establishment of newly arrived migrants, and to a large extent provided the courses and activities themselves. This was considered to lack creditability and legality as it was open for great variations depending on what municipality one arrived at (Länsstyrelsen Västerbotten, 2013). As part of creating a national framework for these processes the coordinating responsibility was handed over to the Public Employment Office.

The process begins with a meeting at the local employment office where the migrant’s educational background, work experience and current social and health situation is mapped, and should result in planned activities equivalent to a fulltime job (40 hours

<sup>7</sup> Except Norway, Iceland and Schweiz (Nordic/ESS agreement)

per week). The migrant receives economic compensation for participation and this can extend for a duration of up to two years. At a minimum plans have to include orientation courses to Swedish society and language courses in Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) which are most often offered through the municipalities' adult education system (Komvux). The regular SFI can also be extended with language courses adjusted for professional use. While attending Komvux for SFI it is also possible to get previous educational merits corresponding to second level education validated (AF, KV interviews). The municipality is also involved in the establishment plans through its provision of social services such as housing.

Within the establishment plan different activities are offered depending on the needs and the background of the migrant. For those with SKC from formal learning, with or without proper documentation, the migrant can be offered validation within their area of work or field of study as outlined above. For those lacking formal training or education, both general labour market education and a more directed effort towards newly arrived migrants called merit portfolio assessment are available. Labour market education is open for all those unemployed who are seen to need better preparation for the labour market. This can entail complementation of their general education with courses such as Swedish language, English language or maths at the secondary school level. It may also include a self-investigation into what possible future professional options exist. Merit portfolio assessment is a more broad investigation of skills and competences, aimed at mapping abilities and investigating potential choices of profession and finding a way towards employment. Lernia Education, a state owned company, is one of the biggest providers of SKC evaluation services (see section 1.2.1). Most activities at Lernia must be applied for through the caseworker at the local employment office, but are cost-free for the individual and are sometimes even eligible for economic compensation from the state.

Migrants with academic education have been found to have difficulties in finding jobs at their level. Critique has been directed towards the system for being too complicated and time consuming. For migrants with an academic education from a third country special efforts have been made to recognise their SKC and support their way into the labour market more quickly. Besides the validation of foreign academic education, academic migrants are also offered different types of education to enable the transition into qualified work in Sweden. This essentially involves complementation of their current education with directed courses and training in the Swedish language and the Swedish context for their field of work.

An early attempt at improving foreign academics path to employment that was initiated in 1995 was aspirant education (Aspirantutbildningar). This comprised of a 1year general education to complement foreign academic education, including Swedish lan-

guage courses, elective courses and internship. This was followed by other initiatives such as the “initiative for integration” (Integrationssatsningen) where complementary educational pro-grammes were designed for foreign academics, mainly lawyers, teachers and healthcare professionals. These are special programmes to enable faster establishment in the labour market and within the right field and level according to the person’s education, which usually consist of 1-2 years of education combined with a period of internship.

A current programme with national spread that is also in place in Umeå is known as The Short Path (Korta vägen in Swedish). This is a labour market education for migrants with an academic education of at least three years. It is arranged by universities or other educational institutions on behalf of the public employment office. It has been developed during the 2000’s to become a national activity from 2010 onwards (Högskoleverket, 2012:21). It combines several activities directed towards shortening the path for foreign academics such as validating and documenting previous SKCs, intensive and occupationally-specific language courses, improving IT-skills and the writing of job applications, as well as general guidance for further studies or employment. The main goal is for the participants to attain employment, but it can also be used as preparation for the complementary educational programmes mentioned above.

### Strengths

Earlier critiques concerning the decentralised nature and a lack of clear responsibility has been addressed. The Public Employment Office has the main responsibility for both validation and migrant establishment plans. This is considered a development towards equal and fair opportunities across the country, making the opportunities less dependent of where the migrant arrives.

The measures directed towards migrants have been primarily developed for the newly arrived as they are considered to be in a weaker position in the labour market. This is the criteria used for determining who is eligible for these measures. Other migrants, such as those coming to work or study in Sweden, are not eligible for these establishment plans and no such clear structure of validating and integrating them into Swedish society and the labour market exists. It could be argued that labour migrants come with an employment offer already in place at arrival, thus they do not require help establishing themselves on the labour market. However, since the services and measures provided by the Employment Office and the municipality is free of charge for the individual anyone with a Swedish social security number can apply for these services at the local employment office in the same way as Swedish citizens. Accep-

tance, however, is still dependent on the assessment of the caseworker at the local employment office (AF interview).

### Weaknesses

Critique has been raised, nevertheless, that although the division of responsibilities have been clarified in the new establishment plan in 2010, there is still some confusion about these responsibilities and a lack of coordination between the actors. It is especially hard for newly arrived migrants when activities and responsibilities are divided between so many different actors. The interaction between the actors, as well as the planning and continuous follow up of progress is formalised within the establishment plans, but not all migrants are eligible for this support. Although other migrants can be eligible for labour market measures, they are not as easily reached as those eligible for establishment plans. Suggestions have been put forward to use the language courses (SFI) which many mi-grants, independent of migration channel, go through, as a port of contact.

The shift from a local structure managed by the municipality (public actor) to a national framework with partly private actors has mounted critique from some municipalities in Västerbotten County (Länsstyrelsen Västerbotten, 2013). For them, the supply of activities outside of the minimum are lacking or offered with great distances to commute. This can mean that validation activities are now less accessible than compared to when the municipality was more active in providing and managing the support locally. In regional consideration, smaller municipalities report lessened supply of courses and services and lack-ing accessibility due to long distances.

## 2.3 RECOGNISING THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS SKCs

Many of the initiatives directed towards validation, and especially towards foreign competence have been small and project based, which means general statistics are hard to come by. Evaluations has been made concerning specific projects or for limited years, from which snapshots of usage and success of SKC recognition have been presented. But to create an image for TCNs specifically is more difficult as they are usually not managed individually but rather as a part of the larger group of non-Nordic migrants. Newly arrived migrants is one targeted group within integration initiatives and support, but they only represent part of the total TCN population. Unless stated specifically, the information presented below therefore relate to this larger group of non-Nordic migrants which is what is usually understood within the Swedish context as “foreign competence”.

### *Statistics and Studies about TCNs' SKC Recognition*

Earlier research has shown how migrants, and especially non-European migrants, have a more difficult position in the labour market with higher unemployment, lower wages and less professional upwards mobility than their Swedish counterparts. A follow-up study of 150 academics who had migrated in the middle of the 1980's found that only 10% had found employment corresponding to their qualifications after five years in Sweden although these five years had been filled with language courses and supplementary education (Knocke, 2000:368). A longitudinal study by Ekberg & Rooth (2005) on the labour market position of male migrants from Chile, Ethiopia, Romania and Iran after living 14 years or more in Sweden show how migration leads to a general drop in professional status considering the first employment attained in Sweden. Migrants with academic background are found to experience a considerable drop in their professional status after migrating, but have a better upwards mobility than migrants with lower educational background. Complementing with a Swedish academic education was found to have a positive effect on the professional upward mobility and salary. But it can take considerable time to reach the same level of their profession held in their home country, with some not even attaining this after more than 14 years in Sweden. This research could be seen as a founding basis for the increased attention now being given in Sweden to the lack of recognition of foreign academics. Newer reports have started to be able to investigate the initiatives taken during the latest decade in response to this.

A more overarching takes on efforts within recognition of academic merits have been made by the Swedish National Audit Office (NAO) in 2011. According to this it can take considerable time for migrants to get established on the labour market in Sweden, with the median time for male migrants being five years and ten years for female migrants (NAO, 2011:13). Concerning migrants with a foreign academic education, they are unemployed to a higher degree, work more part-time and are more often overqualified for their employment than their Swedish counterparts (NAO, 2011:14). Only about half of them have had their foreign education verified/evaluated by any Swedish authority. Even after living in Sweden 10-19 years only half of the foreign academics have a job that requires their level of education (ibid.). This may be taken as a sign that the efforts made so far have not been enough, or have somehow missed their mark.

Concerning the general verification of academic degrees that UHR performs, about one fourth of the applications are not approved. This is usually because the foreign education did not correspond to the Swedish standards, the education had not been completed or that documentation was missing. At the The National Board of Health and Welfare there is also a high occurrence of faulty applications where about 45% of



applications are in need of complementation. Possible reasons for this are the lack of information on how to apply, or the lack of clarity on what is demanded to be able to attain a Swedish degree or legitimation. Increasing the number of languages in which the information is available could be a future improvement strategy.

These shortcomings have an effect on the already long processing time for getting foreign education validated. As mentioned in section 2.2, higher demands are put on regulated professions such as teachers and healthcare professionals compared to getting a general foreign academic education recognised. For teachers, the processing time is generally 4-5 months, while for healthcare professionals with education undertaken in a third country the time from application to attaining a legitimation varies greatly between 2-11 years. The review found that it was not so much the actual processing at the government bodies but the complementary components of the verification, such as language education, knowledge tests and internships that slowed the process down. Especially the need for the longer internships for doctors was found to be an obstacle as there is a great competition for these placements overall in the country, for doctors with foreign and Swedish education alike. Doctors with specialist competence who are considered to need shorter internships of 6 months therefore had a shorter processing time, in average 2,7 years. Those in need of a full internship of 18 months had an average processing time of 6 years (NAO, 2011:45-46). Although a shorter overall education period is required of nurses than doctors the validation and processing of foreign nursing legitimation was found to take a similar or longer duration than doctors, on average 4,8 years, but with a wide spread between 11 months to 11 years in the investigated period (NAO, 2011:47-48). This could be compared to the processing time for education undertaken in EU/ESS or Schweiz which do not demand these complementary components thus leading to a processing time of 9-60 days for doctors and 3-34 days for nurses (NAO, 2011:47,49).

How successful the complementary educations and other labour market measures have been in leading to relevant education for foreign academics differ between different reports. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education investigated the results from complementary education for lawyers, teachers and health care professionals (doctors, nurses and dentists) in 2012. After completing the complementary education, 72% of the lawyers and 75% of teachers were found to have been able to establish themselves on the labour market, whereas about 15% seemingly were working with something not needing such an educational background<sup>8</sup>. The corresponding number for doctors is more difficult to evaluate since many were waiting to perform their in-

<sup>8</sup> Numbers to be interpreted as guidemarks and not absolute as size of group differed, where lawyers were 18 individuals and teachers 189, and evaluating relevance of education is based on the statistical codes concerning occupation.

ternships, leading to about 80% working within health care but only half as doctors<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, 69% of nurses were established on the labour market but less than half worked as nurses and the rest with other types of work in health care<sup>10</sup>.

During the project Foreign Academics (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012) the success rate and interaction between actors concerning labour market measures and complementary education (such as the Short Path and complementary education for doctors and teachers presented in 3.3) was investigated in one of the larger labour market regions in Sweden from 2009-2012. By increasing interaction and cooperation between actors in the region, the initial goal was for 70% of the participants having employment relevant to their educational background after completing the educational measures. At the end of the project period only 35% were found to have work relevant to their education, but as some of the participants of the earlier years had found employment after finishing the education which had ended before the time of the investigation, the total number of participants who had attained relevant employment overall could be considered to have been higher (ibid). Still, the goal of 70% could only be reached if not only work but also internship, further educational measures, as well as having an own company, were considered relevant (ibid). Two thirds of those who had found employment had attained it within 6 months of finishing the education. Overall the time from residence permit into employment had shortened considerably, the average time being 2,7 years for the participants who had found employment (ibid). Looking at the type of employment, only half had secured fulltime employment and the other half either temporary or part time employment (ibid). 60% of the employed experienced the internship as an important aspect for attaining employment, contributing with both experience and references, while 17% had found employment without performing any internship during the project period. (ibid). 20% of participants were found to have continued to other education after the project period. Of these, half stated the need to further complement their education to be able to attain work relevant to their educational background and the other half needed more education to improve Swedish proficiency.

<sup>9</sup> 57% concerning those considered better established with average salary on the labour market and 23% working but with lower salary. Again the low number of individuals make the material difficult to handle, where 20 out of the 27 better established worked as doctors while only one of 11 less established did, out of a group of 47 individuals finishing the education. (högskoleverket, 2012:15-16)

<sup>10</sup> Among the better established almost half worked as nurses while only 20% of the less established did (Högskoleverket, 2012:17)



### *Potential Benefits of TCNs' SKC Recognition*

With the potential to shorten the time taken to relevant employment, the faster and more effective validation of migrants' SKCs, especially for migrants with an academic back-ground, is expected to lead to societal economic gain. Simply shortening the processing time for validation of foreign education has been estimated in the report by the National Audit Office (NAO, 2011) based on the 995 applications for validation and complementary education of doctors, nurses, teachers, economists and civil engineers. The numbers are based on the average incomes of these professions and considering whether 70% find qualified employment faster, are presented in table 1.1 This estimation show a gathered economic gain of 2 million SEK (approximately 216 000 Euros) if the processing time is lessened by one day, around 10 million SEK (approximately 1 million Euros) if shortened by one week and 42 million SEK (approximately 4.5 million Euros) if shortened by one month. Economic gain is found in both lessened costs in the form of unemployment bene-fits, the incomes earned through employment and added demand on services and goods. About one forth is estimated to be in direct gain for the individuals and the rest gain in the public finances. Since only these relatively well-paid professions are considered it should not be taken as an overall economic gain for validation across the occupational spectrum which could be considered lower.

**Table 2.1: Estimation of gathered societal profit of shortening foreign academics' time in unemployment**

<b>Shortened time in unemployment</b>	<b>Societal profits</b>	<i>Whereof: profits for individuals</i>	<i>Whereof: Public financial profits</i>
<b>1 day</b>	2 060 000	515 000	1 545 000
<b>1 week</b>	10 298 000	257 6000	7 722 000
<b>1 month</b>	42 221 000	10 067 000	32 154 000

Source: Delander & Ekberg (2010) within review of complementary education for foreign academics by NAO (2011:90). Based on doctors, nurses, teachers, civil engineers and economists. For doctors and nurses only education from third countries have been considered. In SEK.

Complementary education and labour market measures are considered costly forms of education, but to be of societal economic gain in the long run. Within the project "Foreign Academics" (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012), which coordinated efforts in one labour market region in Sweden, the economic gains of the project were estimated in accordance with the results in shortening the participants' time to employment. The overall assessment was that the project was economically beneficial if the time taken in

to employment was shortened with 2 years. As the average time taken from attaining a residence permit to employment for the participants in this project was 2,7 years (ibid) and the general time taken for migrants with academic background to attain relevant employment has been estimated to be 5-10 years (NAO, 2011) the economic gain could be significant. From the 48% of the 507 participants attaining employment, the project was estimated to have overall economic gain of 72 million SEK (7.8 million Euros) if time to employment was shortened with 2 years, corresponding to 201 million SEK (21.7 Euros) if shortened by 3 years, and 450 million SEK (48.7 million Euros) if shortened by 5 years (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012:36).

The economic gain can be considered even greater in relation to the demographics of migrants. Many of the migrants applying for validation of their academic education are in their 30's which means they have most of their working life ahead of them. As Sweden is facing a demographic challenge with an increasingly elderly population, the addition of qualified labour supply with many years expected in labour could be viewed as a welcome resource (Ekberg, 2009; NAO, 2011). Within the health care sectors, recognising foreign education is of great importance for the labour supply. About half of doctors' legitimations and 5% of nurses' legitimations are given to those with a foreign education, with a greater share from the EU (some of these statistics include Swedish students who have undertaken education in another country). During 2009-2010, 10 217 Swedish legitimations of foreign education (within 21 regulated professions from the National Board of Health and Welfare) was approved, out of which 819 was for doctors with education from within the EU and 253 from third countries, with the corresponding numbers for nurses being 213 (from EU) and 15 from third countries (NAO, 2011:42).

#### *Outcomes of SKC Recognition for TCN workers*

Little research or studies have been undertaken about the outcome of SKC recognition for TCN workers. To shorten the time taken from the time of migration to relevant employment is understood as something of interest to the individual worker. Although the existing statistics seem to suggest that the time might be shortened through complementary education and the Short Path education measure (see section 4.1), the effectiveness of the initiatives are difficult to evaluate since the results cannot be compared to what would have happened without these initiatives nor what in the measures are causing the potential effects. 60% of the participants responding to the follow-up survey in the project "foreign academics" thought the complementary education could have increased their chances to attain employment in their field, while 40% answered "no" or "do not know" (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012:35). The share acknowledging the educational measures as important for attaining employment was higher among participants who had attained employment, 75% (ibid). As seen in

section 4.1, although 70% of the participants were working in a related sector relevant, only 35% were working within their field of study. The type of employment attained was also to a large extent either temporary or part-time. Of those employed in something not corresponding to their educational back-ground, one third saw possibilities of attaining such employment at their current employ-er, while one forth did not (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland,, 2012:33).

Validation has been conceptualized as to have potential for furthering social justice in re-lation to individual opportunities, but also for the individual to increase self-confidence and self-esteem of the individual (Andersson and Osman, 2008:45). But studies have found that the validation process can have the opposite effect for TCNs. Some have claimed that SKC recognition has unintentionally enabled discrimination processes to persist and have thus weakened an immigrant's standing in the labour market (Diedrich and Styhre, 2013; Andersson and Osman, 2008). Diedrich and Styhre (2013:777) claim that "Immigrants have not usually ended up in permanent employment any quicker, or on a larger scale, and the role of validation in integrating immigrants into Swedish society has proven difficult to assess".

The weaker position of TCNs in the labour market has also been found to be carried on the the next generation, persons born in Sweden but with one or both parents with foreign descent. After considering language proficiency, education, place of residence and family background, having one parent born abroad means a 30% higher risk of being un-employed (Knocke, 2000:371), suggesting a structural discrimination in the labour market towards people with foreign descent irrespective of where educational merits have been attained.

#### *Problematic Issues and Possible Improvement Strategies*

The time taken to go through a validation process and into employment is seen as a prob-lematic aspect. The extensive process concerning regulated professions within healthcare has its intention rooted in guaranteeing the safety of patients. Yet looking, for example, at nurses it seems problematic that the process on average takes longer than going through the corresponding Swedish education where 4.8 years in valida-tion process and comple-mentary education is compared with a simple 3 years to be-come a nurse from scratch within Sweden, (NAO, 2011). Partly, the long processing time or incomplete validations have been the result of family and economic conditions for those undertaking the valida-tion. As the complementary education and intern-ships are not paid (except for internships for doctors) many choose to work extra at the same time, and together with family re-sponsibilities it has been found to create too much of a workload for some (NAO, 2011:51-52). The complementary education for academics have been criticised for being more di-rected towards the needs of the la-

bour market than the individual. Possible improvement measures may lie in offering greater individual flexibility in intensity, location and direction of studies (Högskoleverket, 2012). Later education programs such as the Short Path where more individual study plans are created, is seen as a development in this direction (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012). Besides causing problems and frustration for the individual, the time aspect can, in turn, have a negative effect on the SKCs as competence can diminish or can be lost if the individual is away from relevant work for a long time.

As seen in the review by the NAO it is not so much the processing time at the public body in charge but the complementary education, internships and demands on Swedish proficiency that prolongs the process. The overall lack of internship placements across the country, and especially in the larger cities, is an obstacle for doctors and nurses both with foreign and Swedish education to attaining legitimation faster. Swedish language skills and the necessary knowledge about Swedish society is important to be able to work in Sweden, especially within regulated professions such as doctors and teachers where understanding the Swedish system and organisation is crucial to maintaining Swedish legal standards. Efforts have been taken to develop opportunities to undertake language courses parallel to other measures as well as in providing specialised Swedish courses for academics. Still, from what was seen in the project Foreign Academics about 20% of participants continued in education after these specific efforts, half of them stating the need to improve their Swedish proficiency (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012:34).

Many of the reports from government bodies have stressed the need for coordination between actors to simplify the process. The establishment plans are a tool envisaged to structure clearer division of responsibilities and provide an easier overview of the process for the individual migrant. Problems have been voiced about plans being undertaken too quickly, starting before the migrants has been settled in a municipality and had time to process sometimes traumatic situations leading up to seeking asylum. Critique has also been voiced against the new division of responsibilities as municipalities have less insight into individual establishment plans and private actors contracted to guide migrants spend more time on social and administrative aspects than working on validation (Länsstyrelsen Västerbotten, 2013). Establishment plans are also limited to migrants with refugee status, no clear division of responsibility or natural gate of entrance to the system of validation exists for other immigrants. The Swedish language courses have been suggested as a first point of contact and information about options since it is a path which many migrants take. For academics, initiatives such as the Short Path project have been developed to fulfil the role of centralising efforts and competence within one actor (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012).

Studies have shown that discrimination against immigrants, or those with non-Swedish sounding names, has been occurring in the Swedish labour market and indeed increased since the economic downturn following 2008 (IOM(a), 2013, p38). Anonymous job applications, the same report suggests, could be a method of attempting to overcome such discrimination at little cost. Nevertheless, despite all these efforts at supporting validation of foreign-gained competence and mastery of the Swedish language research has found that the most successful strategy for those educated abroad to combat employer mistrust remains to complement their professional qualifications, or work experience, with Swedish qualifications, often at the Masters level (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013; Rooth and Edberg, 2006). As described further in section 3.3 this has also led to specific programmes directed to-towards complementing foreign academic qualifications. Researchers such as Dingu-Kyrklund (2013) and Rooth and Edberg (2006) have described this as an inherent structural discrimination where the norm is the Swedish system of education and trusting and valuing anything outside of this 'norm' is something the labour market still grapples with (ibid).

This leads succinctly to the main area of difficulty in integration of migrants to the Swedish labour market amounting to a continuing reticence, and even distrust, of migrants' knowledge and abilities by Swedish public and private employers alike (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2013; Knocke, 2000). Andersson and Osman (2008) express surprise over the lack of recognition among actors within the validation process of migrants being discriminated in the Swedish labour market. Overcoming such attitudes and misconceptions may be one of the biggest challenges. Others suggest that the Swedish system remains a facilitator of segregation in the labour market due to its focus on the requirements of employers and the assessor's understanding of the Swedish labour market's needs (Diderich and Styhre, 2013).

Anderson and Osman (2008) are rather sceptical of the validation process and the assessment of prior learning claiming that the Swedish system could be interpreted as a divisionary tool serving to pick out the immigrants considered by Swedish standards, and the Swedish labour market needs of the time, to be more competent and support their incorporation into the labour market whilst excluding others. They highlight that, despite the often best intentions, any process of selection and assessment is inevitably influenced by wider power dynamics and special interests. They also claim that many of the organisations and/or individuals conducting the validating ignored or were not aware of the discriminatory processes, both conscious and sub-conscious, that a non-European immigrant faces during their journey towards employment, and ultimately, integration. These areas (a bias towards the Swedish labour market needs rather than an immigrant's previous profession or vocation; disregarding the discrimination still faced; and the omissions and oversights that occur when translating infor-

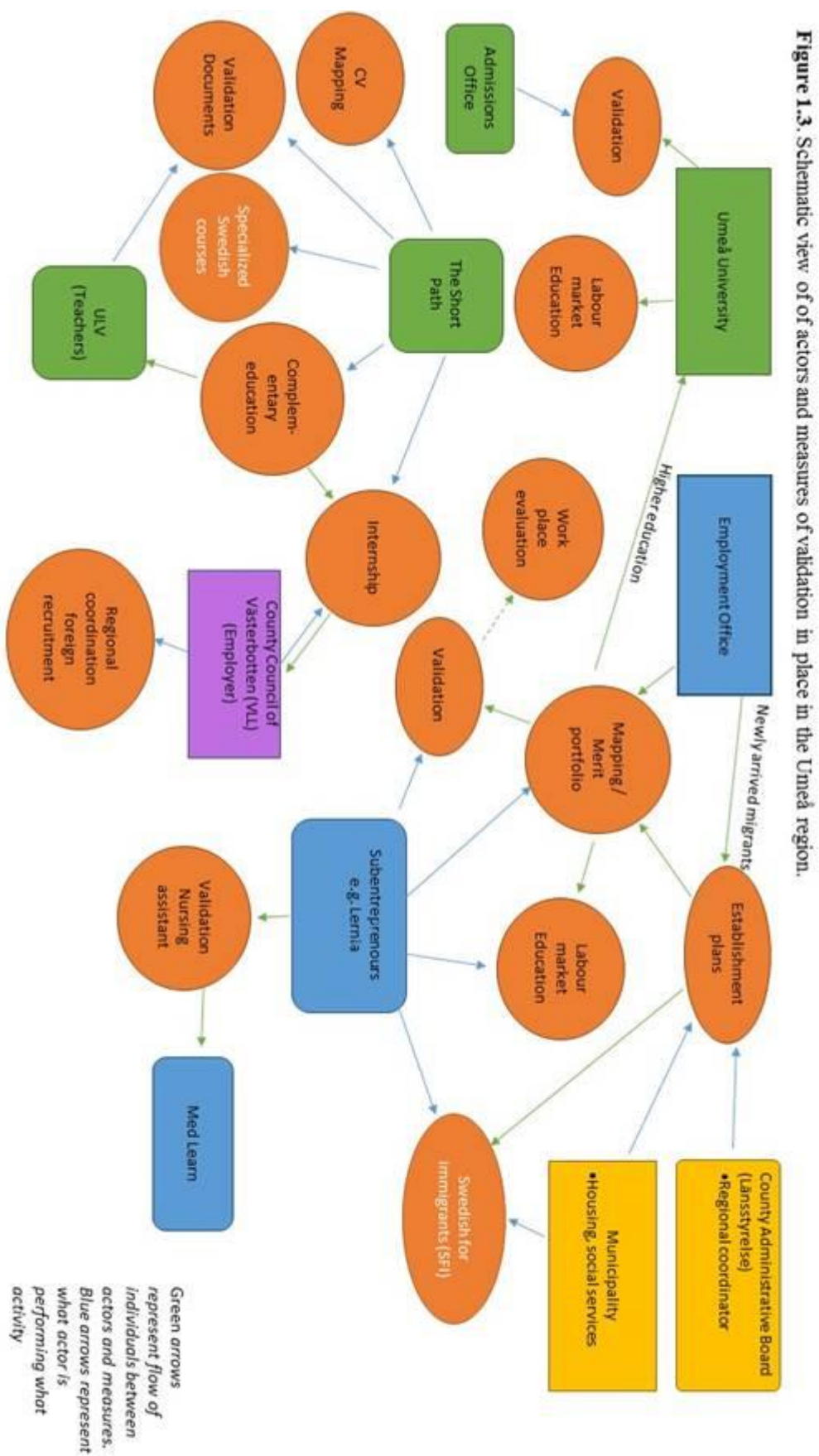
mal and on-the-job skills and knowledge to equivalent Swedish formal qualification levels) are crucial areas of policy and methodology that Anderson and Osman suggest require further creative input in order to improve any validation system.

## 2.4 REGIONAL EXPERIENCES RECOGNISING FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS

### *Regional and Local Stakeholders*

Figure 2.3 (next page) shows a schematic view of the regional and local stakeholders involved in the process of recognition and validation of TCN's SKC.







The Employment Office is one of the main stakeholders in the region with offices at municipality level. Their general assignment, by the Swedish government, is to work as a mediator to match SKC's of the local labour force with the labour market. A primary mapping of third country nationals SKC's is made at the employment office, after which the individual can become eligible for different types of measures to improve employability. Validation has been seen as a part of this assignment as evaluation and formalisation of previous experiences are seen to illuminate the individual's SKC's to shorten complementary education and the road to employment. It is not only aimed towards TCN's but for anyone who has incomplete documentation of SKC within a field of work since an incomplete documentation, Swedish or foreign, can hinder employment within that field (AF interview). For newly arrived migrants a more elaborate establishment plan is created in collaboration with the municipality and county board to coordinate housing and social services as well. The county board coordinates the reception of migrants on the county level while the municipality is responsible for social services such as housing and school for the newly arrived migrants as well as provide Swedish courses for migrants as a part of their adult education service (Komvux). A form of recognition and validation of foreign education and experiences has traditionally been performed as a part of the general guidance services within the adult education centre. But with the restructuring of the responsibilities the employment office is now in charge and purchase these services from the market.

It is through the individual caseworker at the employment office that a person can access different measures for validation and labour market education. Depending on the outcome of the initial mapping, other measures might be found fitting to complete documentation and certification of SKC's, such as labour market education, validation and work placement practice in those fields where validation has not been contracted. A more detailed mapping of experiences, skills and competences are often made in connection to these measures. These services are bought from subcontractors in the market. Larger contracts are signed with actors at the national level, but in case a certain area or field of work is missing from the national subcontractor the local offices are able to sign their own local contracts. One of the major national subcontractors within the field of validation and labour market education is Lernia which has an office in Umeå. Within some fields Lernia also subcontracts other actors for parts of their validation process, such as Med Learn within the field of health care.

For higher education, Umeå University is an important actor. Validation of foreign students' education is undertaken within the unit of admissions in connection to applications for higher education at Umeå University. For those with incomplete education a new general labour market education directed towards academics has been established, known as the Short Path (Korta vägen, [KV]), which is contracted by the em-

ployment office but undertaken at the centre for study guidance. This initiative can be a step leading further to more specialised labour market education such as courses specific for teachers, or specialised language courses for medical personnel.

Within regulated professions such as doctors and nurses, the legitimisation process of foreign education and qualifications is made at the national level by the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen). The first step in the validation process is therefore above the local level, but the local work places within the health sector can become part of the validation process as it demands a period of work training/internship before legitimisation. Since 2013 one person is employed to coordinate their foreign recruitment, some of which is connected to the Short Path initiative at Umeå University.

### *Initiatives Implemented and Results Achieved*

A regional mapping of the use of validation in the Västerbotten region was undertaken jointly by the Employment Office and municipalities in Västerbotten in 2007. Overall, validation was found to be used to a low extent in the region, only slightly more in the larger cities like Umeå and Skellefteå, and mainly in the healthcare sector. Validation was not utilized systematically as a tool, but undertaken individually by caseworkers at the Employment Office or by guidance counsellors within the adult education system in connection with applications and only in few cases engaging external actors or experts. A large problem was seen in the internal lack of knowledge about the validation process and its actors as it made caseworkers hesitant to initiate this measure, both as they felt unsure how to guide and inform the person, and it was seen as time-consuming. Many of the representatives from the municipality and local Employment Offices that were met during the course of this research found the system of validation too decentralised, with too many actors and too many steps to keep track of. They asked for a type of centre that could gather knowledge about the process and actors to turn to and common procedures across the region so as to be able to purchase validation services between municipalities. Västerbotten County also took part in a project in 2008 to evaluate and test the four-step model from the Validation Delegation with the aim to create a joint procedure for validation within the Public Employment Office. Out of the 62 persons who went through the initial mapping at the Employment Office in Västerbotten, only one was a newly arrived migrant. 47 went onto the second step of an in-depth mapping at an external actor. Out of these, 39 were found fitting for a structured validation for the purpose of attaining documentation or certification within the field. The project was deemed successful as 65% of applicants had employment after the given time and highlighted the need for collaboration with external actors for validation.

Both of these projects have resulted in more contracts for external validation being made in the region. A joint data system developed in Skellefteå called “ValiWebb” has been introduced in the municipalities as a tool to make the validation process more easily handled. Currently there are possibilities for validation within the fields of construction, electrical, healthcare and catering. Validation is found to be a beneficial and secure method for evaluating SKC as it uses the corresponding Swedish education plan or national models for validation constructed within each field of work.

Validation is encouraged because it is expected that SKC’s that have been documented and compared to the Swedish standards will shorten the way to employment. In case the individual does not have the demanded skills and knowledge, the validation process is also thought to enlighten what aspects are lacking and shorten the education or training needed (AF interview). There is no conclusive evaluation or statistics of validation in the region since the mapping in 2007. Yet interviews with external actors performing the validation seem to concur with the expectations. Being evaluated can give greater confidence in knowledge and abilities to the individual and can boost employment opportunity (MedLearn interview). As the work within the electrical sector is dictated by safety measures, employers would not hire people without the proper education. Validation is here considered to offer employers secure documentation as the practical aspects of the validation is performed at Lernia, but the process results, evaluation and certification is handled by the branch organisation in collaboration with the department in charge of the safety regulation. Most applicants that have been validated for the electrical sector at Lernia have been in need of complementary courses. Yet compared to the basic 1 year education that is needed for certification, the validation process for electricians take between 5-10 days to complete and the complementary courses and internships offered can usually be undertaken within 10 weeks, depending on how much skill is lacking. If considerable knowledge is lacking, which according to the validator at Lernia is usually the case for those who have no formal education, the recommendation is usually to go through the whole basic education. (Lernia interview).

Except for the establishment plans concerned specifically with those in the asylum channel, there are few initiatives within validation directed specifically towards migrants, and these have mostly been directed towards migrants with higher education (see section 1.3). The Short Path is a labour market education paid for by the Employment Office and performed by the guidance of the counselling unit at Umeå University. At the beginning it was directed specifically towards TCN’s (especially newly arrived migrants) as they have been seen to be in greater need of support, but in Umeå the resources have been sufficient to now be open to migrants from the EU as well (KV interview). They perform in-depth mapping of SKCs, translation and validation of do-

cuments and help with applications to other instances. During a period of 26-35 weeks, lectures and seminars are held about the Swedish history, culture, society and labour market, basic IT, communication and computer skills and guidance services such as finding a career path and writing CV and job applications, practice with job interviews and internships etc. The primary goal is for the participants to find employment, and in the case of such an opportunity arising during the course they are encouraged to take it. Another outcome might be to go further with complementary education within their field, such as teaching, engineering or medicine.

Umeå University is one of the six Swedish universities that offer the nationally-conceived complementary educational initiative for teachers trained outside of Sweden known in Swedish as *utländska lärares vidareutbildning* (ULV) and literally meaning foreign teachers' further education. According to the coordinators at Umeå University, the participants have experienced difficulty finding employment without the Swedish legitimation for teachers and hope to feel more on par with their Swedish colleagues if they have the same legitimation. Individual study plans are created depending on the background of the applicant and can contain courses corresponding to two years of full time studies and offers flexibility in distance, part-time studies or a possibility to change focus subject. Applicants may need to complement subject specific knowledge to some extent, but generally what is lacking in foreign teachers' competence is knowledge about the Swedish educational system such as grading, ethics, curricula and pedagogical measures—all of which are crucial for working as a teacher in Sweden. The ULV coordinators, therefore, see longer stays and knowledge about Swedish culture and language, and especially experience of teaching in Swedish schools to sometimes be more beneficial than formal education. The characteristics of the applicants have changed over the years where they earlier were middle-aged women who had lived in Sweden about 10-20 years while they are now younger and have lived for a shorter period in Sweden, which has often meant a lower proficiency in Swedish (ULV interview).

A general finding has been that applicants have questioned the extent of courses needed to complement their sometimes extensive work experience as teachers. Yet in the opinion of both the coordinators at ULV and at the county administration, the more extensive validation process might actually be beneficial as it better prepares the applicants for working in Sweden. Although education within the EU is to be deemed equal to a Swedish education in line with EU regulation, and thus the validation process for EU-trained teachers to attain legitimation is faster, these migrants might have greater difficulties working as a teacher (the same sentiment was also found among those interviewed within the healthcare sector applied to nurses or doctors) in Sweden as they might not be familiar with the organisational and cultural aspects of Swedish

education. The value of the ex-tensive complementation in ULV is also usually recognised by the participants after-wards. The results have also been positive when it comes to employment as the coordina-tors estimate that about 90% of their students have found a job after completing the pro-gramme.

Regarding the validation of formal qualifications the Admissions Centre at Umeå University, experienced that there are greater differences between countries and regions in general than between EU versus non-EU countries. Education from non-European countries that have, for example, a French or English education system as a result of them being former colonies, can be easier to evaluate than an education from those European countries that haven't adjusted to the Bologna process (Interview with the Admission Office Umeå University). The process to validate foreign education has been improved as country specialists have been designated across the country. Instead of every local application centre having to evaluate the education from all regions, they can focus on evaluating the courses in relation to needs at the specific education applied for. During a project in 2002 they were successful in getting more applications from outside of the EU, but this ended with the culmination of the project: a limitation of project-based ways of operating.

Although much of the validation of foreign education within regulated professions in healthcare is undertaken above the regional level, the county health administration has taken an initiative to promote and coordinate the recognition and recruitment of foreign knowledge. Since 2013 one person is employed specifically to coordinate, guide and promote foreign recruitment by acting as a middle-man between migrants with foreign health care education and the potential work places within the organisation (interview with VLL).

#### *Problematic Aspects and Actionable Levers*

All actors interviewed speak of language proficiency as one of the greatest hindrances for TCNs to have their SKC validated and to attain suitable employment. Swedish proficiency is not only an important aspect within the validation process in itself where it is needed for the applicant to be able to understand the terminology and showcase their knowledge, but permeates the whole process from mapping to communication with employers, to being able to work in a Swedish work place. At the same time, language has been found to be one of the aspects holding up people from getting through the validation process. This valuable time away from relevant work can in itself further diminish the work-related SKCs. To speed up the process, efforts have been made to increase and specialise Swedish training and to perform any validation simultaneously (KV, AF interview). Since the introduction of establishments plans in 2010, some actors have seen an increase in applicants coming for validation before at-



taining proficiency in Swedish (as establishment plans span over 2 years). This demands a high level of engagement from the individual to succeed in these simultaneous studies and activities. The practical experience at both Lernia and Medlearn is that if validation is undertaken too early it might instead disrupt the process as the applicant will not be able to communicate their skills well to the person performing the validation, nor work within the field. Language is therefore a significant obstacle and no general solution in balancing between allowing time to learn Swedish, towards speeding up the validation process, has been found.

Many of the problems encountered in the validation system are related to the process being relatively new. Although the possibilities exist many actors noticed a lack of knowledge, which leads to it being utilised less than desirable. The low frequency of utilisation of the validation system also means that feedback from the actual validation process has been hard to come by. It is spoken of as a consistent problem that the contracts are short and there is a regular shift between actors. This means that no gathered knowledge in the field exists. That validation is not used to a larger extent is also mentioned as a reason for not having a coordinated knowledge about the impact of the process.

Similarly, the decentralised organisation and decision making about recruitment within the healthcare sector in the region makes it difficult for foreign applicants to get internships. The possibility has been dependent upon the individual knowledge and competence of each person in charge of a hospital or healthcare unit which are many. Lacking knowledge of the process, and lacking a relevant network hinders foreign recruitment.

Overall the validation process can be seen to put a lot of pressure on the individual. There is an overall demand put on the individual to be motivated to study and engage in the validation process (AF interview). The local experience is similar to what has been found in the national studies that insufficient economic support during the validation process can be a hindrance for completing it. Some might take up employment simultaneous to their studies, creating a greater workload on the individual, especially in combination with family responsibilities. One way to overcome this is to offer flexible arrangements such as in the ULV project where the pace, extent and location of the studies can be flexible to suit the needs of the individual to a greater extent, enabling the process to be better combined with work and family.

Economic compensation is also seen to be needed for the validation-hosting institution as the assessment and guidance of the migrant takes up considerable time and resources. By offering economic compensation more organisations might be willing to host and speed up the process. As foreign qualifications must be manually handled,

these applications for higher education places take up more resources than assessing those applicants with Swedish qualifications. But this is seen as a temporary cost compared to the long-term gain for society in getting more migrants into proper employment (Admission Office Umeå Univ. interview).

## 2.5 REGIONAL EXPERIENCES OF INFORMAL/NON-FORMAL COMPETENCES

### *Regional and Local Stakeholders*

Validation is understood as a structured process of evaluation of skills independent of how they have been attained. This means that the validation of SKCs attained through informal or non-formal learning are to be imbedded in the same structures for validation as presented in section 5.1. But the understanding of what informal SKC actually means and the ability to take them into account in the validation process differs between actors and is highly dependent on what type of work is intended. While validation of formal knowledge can mean validating documentation of this knowledge, the validation of informal knowledge seldom has documentation to lean on. Yet validation can be a way of formalising informal SKCs through the documentation which is the result of the process. The possibility to validate these SKCs are therefore dependent on the migrant telling about them. The opportunity for this is usually given within the activity of mapping, undertaken as a first step in most measures presented in section 5.1 and figure 2.3.

### *Initiatives Implemented and Results Achieved*

When formal skills are lacking or the overall professional background is unclear, a measure called merits portfolio has been developed for newly arrived migrants<sup>11</sup>. This in-depth mapping takes a holistic perspective to detect both formal and informal SKCs and find possible career paths for the individual. If some skills or experiences are found to be especially suited for a type of work it could lead to the applicant being able to go through validation within that field of work. The purpose is to describe and document SKCs gained both through formal and informal training or education to be used both as a base in further measures such as validation or presented to employers directly. In comparison to structured validation, mapping is seen to be more flexible in taking into account individual differences and circumstances (AF, interview).

Within the fields where no structured validation model exists or no actor is providing it in the region, the Employment Office can offer a less structured workplace evaluation called 'work competence evaluation'. This is performed at a workplace and the output is a written evaluation by a supervisor knowledgeable in the field. This written

<sup>11</sup>[http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.756b80a8129b5ece2e480002218/aterrapp\\_etableringssamtal\\_100802.pdf](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.756b80a8129b5ece2e480002218/aterrapp_etableringssamtal_100802.pdf)



evaluation, as well as the supervisor at the work site, can then be called upon as a reference about the applicants' ability. Although less structured, this measure is still seen as useful as it can give the participant insight into the working conditions and demands and measure their own competence within the Swedish context, in similar ways to validation. According to the representative of the Employment Office in Umeå, this evaluation is not only aimed at testing formal SKCs, but also to give an overall evaluation and recommendation about the applicants SKC in connection to this type of work. The contact with an actual work site might also improve the chances of employment, even more than the structured evaluation, as labour market connections and networks are important factors for finding employment (AMS, interview).

The actual validation procedures differ in the ability to take into account informal SKCs. Although the procedures of validation for electricians and nursing assistants are similar with initial steps of mapping of previous experiences followed by theoretical and practical test of the work, the experiences and views on how informal SKC was recognised in the validation process differed. Within validation of nursing assistants, the representative from Medlearn performing the validation understood the initial mapping and in-depth interview as an important step of the process having the purpose of highlighting informal SKCs such as experience of care work of family members in the home. Within the field of electricians, the mapping of previous skills and informal competence seemed to come second to formal qualifications and knowledge. That is, although the validation process allowed for comments and descriptions of general SKCs, there were little room given for the possibility to take into account the informal SKC. The format of validating skills by ticking in whether a person's knowledge of a procedure existed or not, or within a scale, strongly connects to formal knowledge, according to the interviewee within the electrical validation sector, as it was usually lacking when an applicant had no formal education in the field. It could be argued however, that both the theoretical and practical test are opportunities for informal skills to become formal, as they are measured towards the needs/standards in the field.

Differences can also be found in the systems for validation and recognition of higher education. In applications to higher education, an applicant can call upon "real competence" to be considered in the application in case formal qualifications are missing. The applicant must send descriptions of, and documents proving, previous experiences thought to qualify for higher education. These are evaluated at the individual application centre at the university applied for and in relation to the specific education applied for, which means approved competence is only eligible for that specific education and not in general. At the Admissions Centre at Umeå University they feel they have had time to establish routines for handling evaluation of real competence, but are

waiting for results from the current work at Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) aiming at developing more ways of validating informal SKCs to further their procedures.

Within the complementary education for teachers (ULV) initiative, informal SKCs are captured in the initial interview and mapping sessions. Background mapping is of importance to create the study plan to complement the current skillset in order to attain a teachers' legitimization. Evaluators try to take a wider view on SKCs by looking not only at the amount of experience of working as a teacher, but under what conditions, what type of school, the level and subject, as well as the informal knowledge and experience of Sweden and the Swedish education system that can be garnered by living in Sweden. Knowledge and experience of the Swedish education system may come, for example, from having contact with it through one's own children. This attempt to recognise informal SKCs can be compared to the validation of doctors and nurses where the procedure is completely based on the formal knowledge and the ability to show them in practical and theoretical tests. The informal or non-formal SKCs could be understood to be tested after these procedures with the mandatory internships, where the actual ability to perform the work is evaluated by the supervisor.

The Short Path project operates in a similar manner when trying to capture the informal and non-formal SKCs of the applicants. Besides the more in depth mapping of previous experiences, the Short Path also tries to help the applicants to be able to communicate these skills themselves such as in writing a CV and personal letter. The aim for the applicants is to be able to communicate their general and specific informal SKCs so as to improve their chances on the labour market. These courses try to improve the applicants' ability to describe and present their whole skill set. This is aimed to support a migrant during the job seeking process to be able to "sell oneself" in a socio-culturally acceptable manner, to be able to promote one's skills and personal abilities through the personal letter, the part of job applications that provides scope for presentation of informal skills (the CV is usually reserved for formal accomplishments). Results are sparse and not thoroughly evaluated (newly introduced), but the Short Path has been appreciated by attendants (KV, interview).

The Human Resources Coordinator (the person involved in SKC validation) at the County Council of Västerbotten (VLL) has also recognised problems of foreign recruitment coming from lacking trust in what the organisation can gain by taking in interns and their work aims to combat this suspicion. A ward or hospital unit might be hesitant to hire an intern with foreign education in the belief that this person does not intend to stay long and continue to work within that organisation afterwards. However if the Coordinator has already engaged with and learnt more about the candidates, some departments can be reassured and be persuaded to overcome their hesitation,

especially in cases where the migrant can convince that they have a desire to build a stronger local connection. This can increase the migrant's chance of securing long-term employment and thus committing themselves to becoming a local resource.

### *Problematic Aspects and Actionable Levers*

There was a general agreement among the actors that it is more difficult to evaluate and validate informal SKC than formal. They are experienced as more subjective and open for interpretation, less easy to measure and in that way less transferrable and safe to "guaran-tee". Within the regulated professions, priority is on factual knowledge guaranteed with-in the formal qualifications out of security reasons. Informal knowledge is thus less recognised in the validation process. The question was also raised of who would have the mandate to evaluate informal skills such as social competence (AF interview).

A general problem encountered was how to validate SKC when documentation is lacking. It demands a greater effort in describing these SKCs qualitatively. Efforts have been made to do this through interviews and methods have been tested in proving these, for example with photographs. The local actors are turning to the organisation at national level for development of general methods and procedures in this matter.

Language and cultural knowledge could be seen as a greater problem for recognising informal and non-formal SKCs. Without documentation, the description of informal SKCs is dependent on the TCNs ability to describe these. It was voiced that it might not be validation of the formal knowledge within a profession that hinders employment for TCNs but the way the whole set of SKCs are communicated to the employer (KV interview). Informal and non-formal SKCs are usually not recognised in any formal way in Sweden but up to the individual to describe in the personal letter of a job application, which not only demands a greater language proficiency but cultural understanding of the work conditions and expectations from the employer. That migrants may have more difficulties with this aspect has been recognised and effort made within the merits portfolio and the Short Path initiative to focus on how SKCs can be communicated to employers.

Cultural differences between countries means that experience from working as for example a teacher or doctor in one country might be very different in another. This is a type of informal cultural knowledge which can't be taught and must be experienced. The time lived in Sweden is therefore seen as an important aspect as the experience from living in Sweden can increase the cultural understanding both in general, and of how the organisations relate to and operate within the wider society. Experience gained from simply being a patient, a student or a parent in the country is valuable but difficult to assess and measure. The experience gained through more time spent living

in Sweden might be difficult to affect, but it can be recognised in the validation process such as within the complementary education for teachers where teaching and living experiences in Sweden can be taken into account in creating the study plan.

## 2.6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PART 1

It seems as if the increased attention towards both integration problems for migrant within the Swedish labour market, and to validation as a tool for recognising human capital in the last decade has led to more systemised ways of TCNs' SKC recognition on both the national and regional level. The experience from Västerbotten is that validation of vocational skills in the middle of the 2000's was undertaken more as an evaluation by managers at the local Employment Office, or in relation to adult education. It was seldom performed with the utilisation of external actors or experts, while today's system consists of more clearly structured validation models developed in accordance with industrial organisations and nation actors, but performed locally.

The practical experiences among the subcontractors performing the validation was generally positive. The process was seen as giving immigrants the opportunity to test their skills against the Swedish labour market's standards and to shorten the time required to be spent in complementary education and ultimately to speed the path to qualified employment. Nevertheless, validation is so new that it is undertaken to such a low extent that the actual effectiveness of the system is mostly anecdotally gathered from the experience of individual actors with little cross-analysis. As with the national reports, the local measures such as complementary education and the Short Path seem to have had a positive impact with participants finding relevant employment faster. Yet it is difficult to evaluate if and what aspects of these efforts have resulted in this outcome. Historically, employment rates among migrants have been dependent on the general economic development (Knocke, 2000, Ekberg, 2009), and some investigations have seen seasonal changes in employment opportunities affecting the results (such as in temporary employment during the Christmas holiday season affecting the measurement of employment during the project on foreign academics (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, 2012), making existing statistics less reliable.

Many efforts have been directed towards migrants with an academic background, considering it a underutilisation of human capital (NAO, 2011). Although the system aims to be open for foreign education being validated and recognised on par with the Swedish standard, many foreign merits are deemed in need of complementation. The initiatives directed at improving foreign academics' road to relevant employment have also taken the shape of further education, either for specific professions such as teachers and doctors or general preparatory labour market education aimed at improving the employability of the migrant. As raised in research (Diedrich and Styhre, 2013)) into

the subject, this could be understood as the Swedish labour market not trusting foreign competence and merits, strengthened by the findings that Swedish educational merits seem to have a strong effect on improving a migrant's position in the labour market.

From the local experience, the greater demands put on people with education from outside of the EU could be understood as something positive. For teachers and healthcare professionals, working in Sweden it is understood to entail conditions, cultural codes and organisational aspects that cannot be attained through formal education or via work experience from another country. As these aspects are not formalised in the simpler recognition process for EU country-gained education, the assessment of competence to actually work is transferred to individual employers. Both at the County Health Administration Board and the complementary education for teachers (ULV) at Umeå University, the more extensive process for these migrants to attain the Swedish legitimation is considered to make them better prepared for working within their profession in Sweden. The question could therefore be raised if the lengthy process for third country nationals to have their education recognised for employment in Sweden is problematic or actually leading to better quality for both the migrant and the employer compared to simpler processing that might not be deemed sufficient for sustainable employment.

Competence in the Swedish language is the single most important aspect voiced among the interviewed actors, seen as both the key and the greatest obstacle in the recognition process, and counteract the aspect of time. Proficiency in Swedish has been found to extend the validation process considerably, either out of formal demands on a certain language proficiency (such as in complementary education and legitimation of regulated professions) or as lacking language proficiency hinders the SKCs that can be communicated within the validation process. Time in itself is seen to further this aspect as a longer time lived in Sweden is thought to have positive effects on both Swedish proficiency and cultural understanding gathered through the lived experience of Swedish society. But the time taken from arrival, or attaining residence permit, to validation and employment is seen as problematic, as the time away from the occupation might diminish the SKCs as well as the trust and engagement in the process. Letting the individual undertake several activities parallel has been one solution, for example in the Short Path project. This was experienced both as positive for the development of skills and connectivity to the process but also as more demanding for the individual, and thus something that might not be possible to expect from all (and therefore not the best general solution).



The development could also be criticised for depending too much on the formalisation of individual SKCs. The validation process risks becoming a sifting effect between those who are able to get through the process and those who cannot. Finding solutions for hindrances in the employability of the migrant could overshadow greater and more intangible aspects of integration in the labour market, such as ethnic discrimination. Cultural differences in communication with employers could be improved by teaching immigrants about the expectations of the Swedish labour market, overcoming distrust in foreign merits by complementary Swedish education. The discussion on informal skills is also strongly directed towards immigrants to understand and adjust to Swedish norms, only occasionally was it mentioned in the interviews that the migration experience in itself could be seen as a source of SKCs. To better target structural hindrances the focus could need to be shifted from how to increase immigrants' employability and adjustment to the labour market to how TCNs' SKCs are met in the labour market, and to better connect them to wider issues of integration and ethnic discrimination.

With the relatively new opening up of labour migration, the composition of migrants as well as their opportunities in the labour market, can be expected to diversify. As work references in themselves are seen as an important entry point to the labour market, labour migrants can be thought to be more easily integrated into employment and in less need of labour market measures. But as discussed in section 0.2, it is still too early to say what effects it will have on integration to the wider Swedish society and for finding qualified employment.

## 2.7 SUMMARY OF PART 1

This first part of the DIVERSE research project focussed on the systems, tools and procedures in place within Sweden to access and validate the formal and informal skills, knowledge and competence (SKC) of immigrants with third country national status (TCNs). The research also shone light on initiatives occurring at the regional level of Västernorrland County in the northern part of Sweden. Data for this part of the study was gathered through a combination of literature review, statistical analysis and seven interviews conducted with individuals working at evaluating organisations within the region. The report describes the legislative and administrative framework surrounding SKC assessment and investigates the assessment tools and procedures in place. The benefits and outcomes of an SKC evaluation process, both for the migrant and for the society as a whole, were considered and difficulties and bottlenecks within the system were highlighted.

Sweden defined the SKC validation process in its 2003 Bill on Validation where 'validation' was considered to incorporate a detailed assessment, documentation and eval-



valuation of the formal and informal knowledge, skills, experiences and qualifications that a person possesses. Early experience applied to migrants in Sweden was largely geared towards the fair and transparent validation of foreign formal qualifications, usually to enable entry at the appropriate level into the Swedish higher education system. More recent efforts have, however, begun to shift towards improving the labour market integration of immigrants. There is currently no national legal framework enshrining the necessity of validation of non-formal and informal SKC though a number of practical initiatives have been trialled. Initial studies show that it can take considerable time for migrants to become established on the labour market in Sweden: The median time for male migrants is five years and ten years for female migrants. Migrants with a foreign academic education remain, at the current time, unemployed to a higher degree, more represented in part-time work and more often overqualified for their employment. Only around half of foreign academics have had their education verified/evaluated by any Swedish authority according to a study by Riksdagen (2011).

SKC recognition in Sweden is the responsibility of the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, AF). They, in turn, sub-contract validation services from the private or semi-private sector. The system is centralised so that agreements with subcontractors are made at the national level, within sectors such as medical, teaching, engineering. The actual supply of validation services at the regional level however can differ with a number of players being involved. At the Västerbotten County level validation is performed, for example, by at least eight different organisations, for a variety of labour market sectors.

There are a number of different validation models in operation however all models follow a similar 4-stage procedure. Stage one consists of a general mapping of a person's knowledge and abilities in the sector. Stage two provides more in-depth competence mapping, while stage three entails a first level of independent assessment of competence. Stage four includes a formal assessment of level of attainment and may include practical tests, examinations, authorisation and/or certification. The cost of validation and the time input required vary widely between the stages and the sector concerned.

Sweden has been held as an example of good SKC practice by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with regards to its extensive and cost-free infrastructure supporting migrants to learn Swedish; its efforts towards a practical recognition of immigrants' knowledge and experiences beyond formal education; and its legislation to protect wage dumping effects and to limit threats to the employment security of the local workforce. More projects have been directed in the last ten years specifically towards migrants. The two main groups targeted, however, have been newly arrived

migrants coming through the asylum channel, and migrants with academic backgrounds.

The country has made significant efforts within the SKC competence arena. Stakeholders within the system that were interviewed saw value in the process. The process can not only, in their view, help immigrants into employment more quickly but it can also serve as a confidence-boosting and self-awareness raising tool for the individual being assessed. An SKC process, even if it directs a person into the Swedish education system to update their knowledge or learn about the Swedish context, it was felt still offers a win-win to both the Swedish State and the immigrant as it can shorten the amount of time, and thus cost, a person needs to spend in education and speed their pathway to employment. There are of course significant sectorial differences however, where doctors or lawyers or electricians for example require a longer period of “Swedish-sizing” their competence, than perhaps an nursing assistant, care worker or computer engineer.

Statistics and studies on the effectiveness and success, or otherwise, of the SKC recognition system in getting immigrants into permanent employment faster are few at this stage and initial suggestions are lukewarm. Researchers such as Dingu-Kyrklund (2013) and Rooth and Edberg (2006) have described an inherent structural discrimination where employers find it difficult to assess the competence of someone from outside the Swedish ‘norm’ of education and training. Overcoming such attitudes and misconceptions may be one of the biggest challenges. This highlights the potential value of SKC systems but also acknowledges that tools, procedures, systems, legislation are not sufficient on their own. Attitudes, familiarities, socio-cultural norms and subtle assumptions all play a significant role.

A major blockage in the Swedish validation system is the long time it can take to get a foreign education validated, and the bias in the system which tends to encourage foreign qualifications to be complemented by Swedish qualifications. Other observed shortcomings in the system include a lack of sustainable financing, the absence of an overall framework for quality assurance, and a lack of relevant training for validation professionals. Other criticisms of SKC within the country include the time and resource input required from a trained evaluator; the suggestion of inherent bias towards the needs of the Swedish labour market rather than an immigrant’s previous professional or vocational competence and employment preferences; a lack of recognition of discrimination faced; or the oversights that occur when translating informal and on-the-job skills and knowledge to equivalent Swedish qualifications (Anderson and Osman, 2008). These are crucial areas where policy and methodologies require further creative input in order to improve the effectiveness of any validation system.

At the Västerbotten region level there had been few specific TCN-related SKC recognition initiatives and validation was still in the early stage. All the regional practitioners interviewed emphasised the importance of the migrant's competence in the Swedish language for the success of a recognition evaluation. A preliminary perception of the stakeholders engaged with this project, nevertheless, were that those migrants who get through an evaluation do stand a better chance in the labour market, and those found to be in need of Swedish complementation to their knowledge can greatly shorten the education time required, saving the immigrant time and effort, and the state funds. The system requires a lot of commitment and drive from the immigrant however. Interviewees also agreed that one of the weakest parts of the current SKC system is its inability to deal with informal/non-formal competence and experience. Respondents also emphasised that whilst SKC recognition can bring opportunities and benefits, it can take more than specific subject knowledge to work in the Swedish, or any country's, context. This applies especially to sectors that work with the public, or that must deal with Swedish legal and/or health and safety standards. The informal knowledge of cultural codes and social relationships (eg. teacher-student; patient-doctor) is important. Such knowledge requires time, familiarity and understanding. It can be taught to some degree, but experiential learning is also required.

The outstanding conclusion remains, nevertheless, that sufficiency with the host country's language is of significant importance to SKC success in the way the system is currently structured. However, as is re-emphasised in Parts 2 and 3 of this report, language alone is not the whole story. This can be seen in the persistence of lack of labour market and societal integration across migrant generations where Swedish born and bred (fluent in Swedish) people of immigrant background remain below national averages.

A final conclusion regarding the SKC process within Sweden relates to the great many players and layers within the system that create confusion, a lack of transparency and a lack of coordination. Practitioners within the system themselves acknowledge this confusion. A person seeking out SKC recognition as a strategy to employment cannot fail to be somewhat puzzled.

### 3 DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED BY PROFIT, PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDIES AND EXPERIENCES AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

##### *National Context*

Diversity management (DM), in the context of this study, refers to the process of including a variety of skills, ages, religions, socio-economic status, genders and nationalities of people within an organisation in order to benefit the working of the organisation and to better realise the talent base of its employees (Marvin and Girling, 2010). The concept has been both purported to be a better way of managing people (Marvin and Girling, 2010), but also criticised as legitimising a more limited approach to equal opportunities where the business case for corporate benefit is centralised over and above the social and moral rights to inclusion (Marvin and Girling, 2010). The approach stems from American management consultants and, according to Omanovic (2009) Republican administrations in the 1980s, whereby handling multiplicity “became an economic and demographic imperative since diversity was seen as an asset, instrumental in organisational success” (Omanovic, 2009, p355). DM takes a departure from previous equal opportunity/anti-discrimination efforts which were necessitated and enforced by law within EU countries by dressing itself as non-punitive, as rather offering rewards to implementers, ultimately in terms of the business bottom-line (Marvin and Girling, 2010). Such a switch in emphasis has been viewed with suspicion by some, particularly trade unionists, as being a “cover-up” or “window dressing” (Wrench, 2005) which diminishes the equality efforts. Wrench (2005) however goes on to conclude that, despite these cautions, not all that is undertaken in the name of diversity management should be dismissed but he emphasises that equality and anti-discriminatory policies enshrined in law should form a central component of any DM practices.

In Sweden the concept of plurality in the society and the workforce, and the management of diversity, has been promoted largely by the Swedish immigration policy and the growing recognition throughout the 1990s that the ninth of the population that were born outside of Sweden had markedly higher rates of unemployment and faced greater discrimination in the labour market (Omanovic, 2009). The word diversity (mångfald) first appeared in a Government Bill in the 1997-98:16 bill on ‘Sweden, future and diversity—from immigration policy to integration policy (Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden – från invandrarpolitik till integrationspolitik) where the demographics and difficulties were recognised and the focus was shifted towards integration. Within this document can be found the first stirrings towards a management of diverse employees for the benefit of a company or organisation:

“In Sweden there is a growing realisation of the significance of diversity. Globalisation and increasing competition between countries requires that all the resources in a country are utilised, not least the resources that exist within people with experience and background knowledge not acquired in Sweden. A greater diversity of activities can lead to an increased market share, greater profitability, higher productivity, etc. Several Swedish companies have embraced this approach and changed their recruitment policy in order to increase diversity at the company. The Swedish Government welcomes this development and looks forward to the benefits of diversity spreading within the business world, and in the general society. (Prop. 1997/98:16, p46, authors translation)”

Sweden has been charting ways to navigate its internal constellation of diversities and societal and labour market needs by passing laws against ethnic discrimination in working life (1999:130 as described in Omanovic, 2009, p356) and focusing on integration strategies. In addition, Sweden has been influenced by the EU, as with all EU member countries, and the EU’s directives regarding anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and racial, social, religious and sexual equity rights. Over and above these policy and regulatory frameworks came a joint public-private initiative (ten of the largest private companies and ten public sector entities) entitled The Sweden 2000 Institute (Sverige 2000-institutet, originally known as The 20 Club) established in 1995 (Omanovic, 2009). This organisation describes itself as a consulting company that works with strategic diversity management and sustainable development (Sverige 2000, 2014) and has an interest in developing strategies and methods for “effective diversity programs” (Sverige 2000, 2014 [translated from Swedish])<sup>12</sup>. The emphasis here, as Omanovic (2009) also notes is on efficiency gains, effectiveness, and business benefits.

Sweden has invested effort and funds into improving the integration of diverse actors within society and particularly within the labour market. This report has described in detail in part one the initiatives implemented to help establish newly arriving immigrants, to better assess and recognise the skills, qualifications and experiences of foreign residents, and to achieve greater equality in access to education, housing, political influence and mastery of the Swedish language. The country has also put in place a national action plan to combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and discrimination (Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, 2002). This introduction provides insight into the Swedish context and policy and governance of diversity-related issues at the national level. At the regional level however geographic and demographic contextual differences are apparent across the country.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly the website of this organisation working on diversity management issues is only available in Swedish.



### *Regional Context: Västerbotten*

As noted in section 1.2 and 1.3 within the introduction to this report the Västerbotten con-text has its own specificities that deserve a closer description. As will become apparent when reading the findings from the organisational diversity management research the context of the region plays an important role, and ultimately explains why a focus on third country nationals tended to be either something Västerbotten organisations had little experience of, or simply a demographic issue not felt to be greatly pertinent for their context and operation.

The area of Västerbotten region is large, covering 55,190 km<sup>2</sup> (Region Västerbotten, 2010). It is geographically the second largest county in Sweden yet it contains just 2.7% of Sweden's population resulting in an average population density of 4.71 people per km-square (compared to a 23 person per km<sup>2</sup> average for Sweden as a whole [Trading Economics, 2013]). The region is the second northernmost region of Sweden lying at 65 degrees north (GeoView, 2014) thus being located towards the northern periphery of the European Union nations (refer to maps in Annex 3).

As first described in the introductory section to this report (section 0.3) Västerbotten County is home to 6630 residents (or 2.5% of the population [ASTRID, 2010]) with TCN citizenship. For comparative purposes, the percentage of TCN citizens resident in the whole of Sweden in 2010 was 3.1% (SCB, 2010). This puts the Västerbotten region below the national average. The region, however, contains a further 5617 (2.2%) Swedish citizens who were born in third country nations (all statistics from ASTRID, 2010). Total regional TCN born (regardless of citizenship held) was 12,247 people, which amounts to 4.7% of the region's total population (total population: 259,278), or about twice as many as TCN-only citizens since it is relatively easy and quick to obtain citizenship in Sweden in comparison to many other countries. This is important because such people fall outside of the definition of TCNs that this project is focussing on yet they can face similar labour market and societal integration challenges. It is also relevant because it was found during interviews that respondents describe their employees or colleagues as being TCNs because their heritage, or country of birth is from a TCN country, even though those people may hold Swedish citizenship, or may even have been born and raised entirely in Sweden. A person's actual official citizenship status may not always be known by an employer, or a skills evaluator. There is an important blurring of the data here that should be borne in mind.

Such statistics nevertheless help to explain why ethnic diversity within organisations in the region is not a highly discussed nor controversial topic. In addition it is essential to describe the demographic trend that is occurring in the northern, rural and peripheral regions of Sweden and stimulating much discussion: this is one of a generally de-



clining and ageing population, where the young out-migrate in search of jobs, the traditional industries of the boom years of the 1950s and 60s are closing, and technological and transportation advances and systemic changes have facilitated changed employment patterns, and the remaining forestry and mining industries employ fewer staff, where many are not locally based (Pettersson, Ö, 2010; Hedlund, 2013).

An important contextual aspect relevant for this project is that research and statistical analysis in Sweden has found that those communities that tend to have higher employment levels amongst their foreign-born residents are those that have strong local groups or civic associations and many small private businesses. Foreign-born immigrants who are Swedish citizens but who find it difficult to obtain employment in Sweden often re-sort to establishing their own businesses (Tillväxtverket, 2013). There are advisory and financial services in place which encourage and support such entrepreneurial activity. These small enterprises of foreign-born nationals are also often better at employing immigrants than Swedish-owned enterprises, due to experiential and of familial or relational ties and social capital (ibid).

A final important but regionally very significant, and statistically invisible, group of TCNs are those that come here for short-term seasonal work (6000-8000 migrant workers nationally [Eriksson and Tollefsen, 2014])(as described in section 0.1 of the Introduction to this report). Västerbotten region is one of the main destinations in Sweden for these seasonal berry pickers or forest workers with 3750 migrants arriving in 2009 in late summer (Eriksson and Tollefsen, 2013). A large majority of these workers come from Thailand, mainly males from a poor farming area of the north-eastern province of Isan, with others coming from India, China and Vietnam (ibid). Since these people only stay a few months and are not present at the end of the year when the statistical databases are updated in Sweden they are not registered in the general Swedish data. This sector of marginalised semi-formal non-timber forest product harvesting has attracted national and international media attention in recent years exposing claims of exploitation and a new channel of, often undocumented, labour migration (Eriksson and Tollefsen, 2013). Although this project was not able to interview anyone involved in this sector, and the numbers and implications are not visible in Swedish labour statistics, these seasonal workers represent the largest number of labour migrants from third countries in Sweden (ibid) and they reveal another dimension to diversity-related labour movements, with associated tensions.

The focus of this second part of the report is upon those TCNs who have already obtained employment within organisations. It thus does not consider the needs and experiences of those TCNs who are outside of formal employment, or those asylum seekers who are awaiting decisions on their status. Part 1 which concerned the assessment of skills and experience contained more of relevance to these groups, and Part 3,

which will investigate wider aspects of societal integration, will also highlight issues with some relevance to TCN groups not included in this section's focus on employees.

#### *Experiences/Policies At the Regional Level*

At the regional level in Västerbotten there has been a lot of focus on equality issues, both related to gender and to accessibility of infrastructure (Umeå Kommun, 2014). Umeå city council offers an annual prize to the company that shows the most progress in evening out gender inequalities (ibid). Polarbröd, one of the companies interviewed, was awarded this gender equality prize in 2013.

Umeå City Council ran a pioneering project between 2009 and 2012, funded partly by the European Union, which focused on integration through involvement in volunteer associations called "Get into Umeå (In i Umeå). More details on this initiative will be given in Part 3 of this report. Their experience supports the assertion that engagement in civil society through involvement in volunteer associations can offer an important pathway towards improved integration of immigrants (Sjöberg, Sydh and Bjühr, 2012).

### **3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE AND THE DATA COLLECTION**

#### *Selection of the Organisations*

The research team conducted an initial brainstorming session of public, private and non-profit organisations that were known to be local or have local representation, or organisations that were known to have worked with diversity issues. From this initial list contacts were attempted by telephone and emailed and the right person to speak with was tracked down, if the organisation was willing to take part in the study. This process led to a snow-balling effect where other organisations were picked up along the way. Public organisations such as Umeå University and actors of governance tended to be willing and interested to be involved in the study. Non-profit organisations, as will be elaborated below, do not take the same organisational form within the Swedish context in comparison to other countries. The pool of choice was therefore smaller, especially in this regional context on the northern edge of Sweden. Nevertheless it was possible to work with the Church of Sweden, who have an interest in integration, and a key local player in the non-profit scene called PREI-Project for Integration. This group was started by six immigrant women who found themselves isolated and locked out of the Swedish labour market. The for-profit companies were more difficult to engage since the topic is a little outside their normal business operations and was not seen as so pertinent for the region due to demographic realities. Those private businesses that were engaged were those that have a particular interest in the topic, or the member of staff the project contacted had a personal interest, or those that the project

team had a network connection to. This concurs with findings from discussion with immigrants themselves, and from those familiar with the circumstances facing immigrants, that net-works and contacts can take someone quite far in Sweden. It was not so different with the process of engaging organisations for this study.

### *Description of the Sample*

In total, the project was able to interview six public institutions, two non-profit organisations, and two for profit companies, equalling ten interviews. The sectors covered ranged from a large family-run bakery to industrial engineering and electrical services, religious guidance, immigrant integration, state-run unemployment services, university tertiary education provision to a number of public and private actors in the personal home or dis-ability assistance and/or healthcare and medical services (see Table 3.1). The smallest organisation had 245 employees in the region and the largest had 11000 regional employees. National organisations of course had a greater number of total employees in the whole country. Table 3.2 shows the location of the interviewed organisations as well as indicating the geographic area they served. More detailed information on the stakeholders in the project is provided in Annexes 4 and 5.

**Table 3.1: Sectorial Spread of Interviewed Organisations**

Public	Non-profit	Private
Personal care and Assistance	Religious	Bakery
Regional development and sustainability	Immigrant integration	Industrial engineering
Unemployment assistance and job support		
Healthcare and medical services (x 2)		
Tertiary Education		

**Table 3.2: Geographic Focus and/or Service Area**

National (Sweden)	Västerbotten or Norrbotten Base (may have international market area)	Local (Umeå)
Public Employment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen)	County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (Västerbotten Länsstyrelsen)	Umeå Municipality (Umeå Kommun)
Church of Sweden (Svenska Kyrkan)	Västerbotten County Council (Västerbotten Läns Landstinget)	PREI
	Norrland's University Hospital	Umeå University (local location but serves a national and international group of students and research)
	Polarbread (Polarbröd)	
	Goodtech Products and Services	

### *The Process of Data Collection*

Data collection began with initial contacts by telephone and email to establish interest and book a time for interview. An interview took approximately one hour and was conducted as much as possible in person, but some were, by necessity, conducted over the tele-phone. Then followed a period of data processing and assimilation, followed by report compilation. In the event of any lack of clarity further questions were exchanged via email or telephone.

### *Organisations Interviewed*

Annex 4 provides an overview of the characteristics of the organisations that were interviewed regarding their diversity management experiences and practices. Annex 5 pre-sents their organisational arrangement where this was obtained.

## **3.3 TCN PERSONNEL**

### *Reasons for Resorting to TCNs*

Primarily it is necessary to highlight here that in this region, and in much of Sweden with-in most sectors, it has not been necessary to “resort” to TCNs. The main exception might be within the healthcare sector where doctors and nurses may have TCN, and certainly European, origins, and within the personal assistance and homecare sector where a lack of staff, particularly in inland and ageing areas of the country, has meant that TCNs may have a higher chance of obtaining employment (interview findings). A

third sector where there may be some resort to TCNs, at least at the national level but less visibly within our regional focus area, is that of engineers with training in automation and the programming and maintenance of computer-driven machinery. There is a lack of Swedish capacity in this sector and evidence that engineers are being recruited from India (personal communication with interview respondent). Importantly this is a sector where the programming language of operation is generally English so lack of knowledge of the Swedish language becomes less of a barrier.

### *Characteristics of TCN Personnel*

It is not easy to generalise a clear picture of TCN personnel since the overall numbers are quite low at the regional level and there is no strong employment-related interaction. The regional pattern of origin, however, does seem to imitate national statistics and run in accordance with mass in-migrations in relation to global conflicts, in accordance with Swedish policies of asylum and refuge. Sweden took a large number of Bosnians during the conflict in former Yugoslavia, Iranians and Iraqis, Somalians and Ethiopians, and, more recently, Syrians. In addition Sweden has had a relatively long-standing relationship with Thailand where many Swedes tend to holiday. This interaction has led to a statistically apparent Thai-Swedish intermarriage (often Thai women with Swedish men) that research suggests is the reason why Thailand today is the country of origin of the majority of seasonal berry pickers (Eriksson and Tollefsen, 2013). Statistics obtained during interview with a branch of Umeå city council showing the country origins of their 800 non-EU country personnel (mostly likely a mix of TCNs and Swedish with TCN heritage) show Iranians, Iraqis, Thai, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali and Bosnian being among the most common. In real numbers no country exceeded a 50-person representation with the median being 22. In these statistics there was almost twice the number of women to men in what is a traditionally female-dominated care sector.

Umeå Council and the Norrlands University Hospital seemed to employ an overrepresentation of TCNs in comparison to the surrounding demographic context with the percentage of staff with third country origin (note: many likely hold Swedish citizenship) being 7% and 15% respectively (interview data). These are also two of the largest employers in the area.

The other large employer in the region with an overrepresentation of TCNs and those of foreign heritage compared to the regional average is Umeå University. The university has a total of 4330 employees with a very even gender balance (Umeå University, 2014). They employ 15% foreign born or foreign parentage. This compares to a national average of 11% and a university average of 17% (interview data based on 2009 stati-

stics). It is estimated that approximately 5% of these are Third Country Nationals, amounting to approximately 200 people (interview data).

The other organisations interviewed tended to range from having 0% TCN staff to approximately 4% (interview data).

#### *Roles and Functions Assigned to TCN Personnel*

Most organisations interviewed as part of this research stressed that their recruitment strategy, and their resulting staff make-up, was determined by the skills and competence required to perform the job. Recruitment targets based on gender or ethnicity or any other delineation are not practiced. Indeed discussion with the Country Administrative Board of Västerbotten acknowledged that their representativeness in terms of ethnic background is not the highest and the main reason for this is that they received very few applications from TCNs. Their requirements are for very highly educated specialities within the agricultural, environmental, forestry, and architectural sectors. This may indicate something about the educational focus areas or attainments of TCNs within the region.

On the other hand the University and Norrlands Hospital both also require very highly educated staff (academics and doctors) and they do have a higher than regional average representation of people with TCN origins. The University however had statistics from 2009 on the positions held by their foreign-born staff and although 17% of researchers, 26.4% of teachers and 16.3% of professors fell within this category and 22% of PhD students (that is, the highly educated category) the highest proportional representation of foreign born or foreign background (note not only TCNs) was found within the cleaning and caretaker occupation to be 29.4% (interview finding).

Interview discussion with Umeå City Council suggested that the majority of their TCN personnel worked in homecare and personal assistance, or within schools and childcare. A few TCNs worked with the cultural sectors of the council and approximately 70 worked within more technical sectors. 67% of the council's TCN personnel were women (in keeping with the female-dominated nature of the workforce where total female staff [including Swedes] makes up 75% of the workforce). A fairly sizeable proportion of the jobs within the care and personal assistance sector are relatively low-skilled jobs with competence in Swedish language being required, but not necessarily to an advanced level.

The majority of the organisations met with during this project did note that their highest levels of management and leadership were generally Swedish people of Swedish background. Many recognised this as an area requiring attention.

#### *Perceptions of personnel towards diversity and TCN personnel*



Swedish society has a positive and open rhetoric towards diversity and everyone's equal worth. It is a pervasive view. Inevitably there are those that are concerned about "too much" diversity, if you like, and there has been a rise in support to far-right parties hostile to immigrants, similar to many other European nations. However it is not easy to find people, within the context of interviewing those with HR responsibility within Swedish organisations, who would express antipathy to a diversity of nationalities, or gender, or of other such 'labels'. Most organisations have an equality and equal opportunity policy and strive, with varying degrees of implementation effort, towards ideals of a diverse and fair workplace.

There were a number of workplaces within this research that perceived TCN personnel as valuable and highly competent staff contributing greatly to the improved operation of the organisation. This was particularly the case in the healthcare sector where staff trained outside of Sweden greatly benefit Swedish society. This was also the case with the Public Employment Service who require staff with cultural and linguistic skills representative of the communities that local offices serve. In certain IT and high-tech and engineering sectors at the national level there has been an essential and beneficial influx of, largely Asian, immigrants contributing their skills. The latter is, however, not so apparent at the Västernorrland regional level at this time.

The other side of this coin may be found within the home and personal assistance sectors, and cleaning sectors where a number of immigrants appear to find jobs (interview data and statistics in section 0.3). Some employers within these sectors are facing a lack of staff. They have positions that they cannot fill. This is especially the case in inland areas of the region which are facing a declining and ageing population in need of home care services. The need for staff resources is foremost and all diversity of staff are welcomed.

*Specific attitudes/competences observed, appreciated/not appreciated, in TCNs*

Particularly in the medical sector, but also within the local council operations, the view was expressed that TCN personnel, and those from European countries, bring new ways of looking at things, and new ideas, and experience of different ways of operating. Such perspectives can benefit organisational operations and combat a tendency to be "hemma-blind (essentially meaning blind to ways other than the local way). The Public Employment Service described their reliance upon the cultural and linguistic capacities of those with TCN background or heritage to help them achieve their mission to provide job-seeking services and advice in languages found within their service areas such as Persian, Arabic, Somali, and Tigrigna.

A difficult dichotomy can occur however in situations where a group of customers or service users of an organisation do not understand or share the view of the organisa-

tion on the value of, or need for, diversity of personnel. This can occasionally be the case in the very personal and very individual care and assistance sector where the majority of clients tend to be elderly or function impaired Swedes of Swedish heritage, who may not speak other languages. Such groups can be hesitant to accept certain aspects of diversity (inter-view data). In these circumstances sufficient mastery of the Swedish language is essential for the TCN employee.

### 3.4 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND HRM PRACTICES

At the outset of the section it is necessary to state that this range of questions on organisational culture and specificities of human resource management practices took a more secondary prominence in the performed interviews. This was due to a priority focus on the diversity-related topics, and in the interests of interview time management. It was also felt that questions within this section did not always fit well with the organisational characteristics and mission of those interviewed in the regional level, nor with Swedish sensitivities and willingness to discuss such delicate topics as the differences in work output, attitude, ability or level of payment or motivation amongst different people, especially amongst different nationalities. This section is thus necessarily briefer than the project guidelines.

#### *Key values in organisational life and their possible formalisation*

The interviewees that described organisational values highlighted qualities such as “co-operative”, “open”, “approachable”, “non-hierarchical”, “open-minded”, and “innovative” (interview data). How such qualities were formalised within the organisation tended to be apparent in their relatively flat hierarchical structure, their approachable management and their open and accessible communication strategies. Such key values are important components in Swedish culture and likely contribute to the general positivity towards all aspects and implications of diversity and equality.

#### *Strategies for personnel motivation and involvement*

This topic of motivation and incentives for personnel was not discussed during interviews. Such lines of questioning were felt to be largely inapplicable to the organisations researched and questions regarding differences within groups of staff, and different incentive strategies were felt to be inappropriate to the organisational structures and social context within Sweden. Such aspects of human resource strategies may fit more appropriately within much larger for-profit companies than those that were involved in this study.

### *Organisational attitudes towards innovation*

The small sample of organisations interviewed as part of this study presented an attitude of openness to, and interest in, new ideas and external contributions. Innovative-ness was a desired characteristic, particularly for the private employers. For sectors that have serious and strict health and safety and legislative re-quirements to fulfil such as within the electrical sector, the scope for innovation and new ideas, especially those brought from other country experiences, must be subservient to the legal requirements for the industry. These take precedence over innovation.

### *Leadership styles*

All of the organisations with whom leadership style was discussed (four) used similar de-scriptions, namely: approachable, open, engaged, good listeners. They also described a high-level desire to be representative of their societal context. This style is also very much in keeping with the Swedish societal ideals of democracy, transparency and openness that are fostered within the population from a very young age. However, as mentioned earlier in section 3.3. few organisations at this more peripheral regional level had non-Nordic representation at their upper management or board levels, though this was openly recog-nised.

### *Communication strategies, styles and practices*

A specific focus on communication strategies, styles and practices, both internally and ex-ternally, was not accorded much attention during the interviews. This was partly be-cause it was felt to detract from the more pertinent focus on diversity-related issues, and partly as a result of the answers being similar to those of the previous section, i.e. com-munication was predominantly very open, approachable and non-hierarchical. This is again very in keeping with Swedish ideas of civil engagement and democracy. Finding something strikingly different from this widespread cultural norm would have been more surprising.

### *Criteria and methods for personnel recruitment & insertion*

Staff recruitment was purported by most of the organisations interviewed to be through a combination of use of their own website and communication media, and the govern-ment's public employment service. The Swedish Church was an exception where they have their own theological training school system for the specialised recruitment to the role of pastor. Mostly there was no difference in recruitment channels in accordance with the type of position to be filled. The Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), however, occasionally used slightly difference cultural and linguistic channels to adver-tise positions requiring specific non-Swedish languages and social empathy.

Informal discussion with TCN people themselves, however, highlighted the pivotal role of personal contacts and personal references from their network. The local contact did not necessarily have to be Swedish, simply someone known to the employer. The importance of social capital and a network as a strategy towards employment thus should not be underestimated.

Methods for staff induction and insertion within an organisation, or an initial training phase were simply led by the needs of the individual and/or the specific job. There are no different rules or approaches explicit for TCNs, although the medical sector had recognised a need for a clearer introduction to the roles and ways of operating in the Swedish context for those trained outside of Sweden as a good way to smooth the landing phase (more details on this are given in section 2.5.4).

#### *Personnel training and development practices*

The demographic and contextual framework outlined in section 3.1 is explanation for the lack of experience found of training and development initiatives geared towards diversity within the interviewed organisations. Umeå City Council leadership staff have been involved in voluntary training events on recognising and continuously challenging our norms (normkritisk behållningsfokus) and our (often unconscious) assumptions about people. The low overall levels of TCNs, or even Swedes with TCN parentage, within the region mean that such exercises would be largely academic and thus of a lower priority than other factors more pivotal to local operations. The training that does occur is open to all and is led by national and EU guidelines of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and gender equality. Evidence for training and development practices specifically related to TCNs was not found.

*Performance assessment practice* None of the organisations interviewed reported having particular performance assessment practices. Such a top-down and hierarchical, authoritative concept runs counter to the core ethos in Swedish organisations and Swedish socio-politics. The idea of singling out a group of staff, such as TCNs, for specific and individualised performance assessment practices is anathema. Most organisations practice a very loose and informal staff-manager annual conversation, and some, such as Västerbottens County Council (VLL) and the University Hospital conduct staff surveys approximately every two years (interview data). Practices do not differ between Swedish staff and TCN staff.

#### *Remuneration and other incentive mechanisms*

This topic was not discussed during interviews due to its sensitivity but data from the department's actual population database (ASTRID), as discussed in section 0.3 of this report, indicate that TCNs on average earn SEK 122,000 (Euros 13,000) per annum less

than Swedish citizens in the Västerbotten region. When the wage differential was analysed by level of educational attainment the findings suggested that tertiary-educated TCNs (those with a university or post-graduate degree) have a greater wage gap from Swedish citizens than those with secondary or vocational education. This could be partly a result of higher educated TCNs failing to obtain employment within the sector they have trained in and thus taking up lower-skilled employment within sectors such as cleaning or driving buses.

### 3.5 DIVERSITY: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

This section was originally conceived, by the DIVERSE project leadership, to describe in greater detail the diversity management (DM) practices and initiatives that were occurring in the interviewed organisations. During research in the Swedish Västerbotten regional context however it became quickly apparent that this assumption of a package of policies and processes of DM being implemented in a clear, necessary and deliberate manner simply was not applicable. Such a strategic and explicit paradigm shift towards DM, especially in its originally American sense as a calculated way to improve the business bottom line and/or operational efficiency, does not exist and is not as relevant for the geographic and demographic context. Research findings have thus forced a reimagining of this section away from describing evolution of DM initiatives, actors, training strategies and implementation difficulties, towards a nuanced analysis of the organisations' perceptions of needs and benefits in relation to diversity, skills shortages, perceptions of future trends, contextual and organisational difficulties with diversity, or perceived barriers to increasing diversity.

#### *Diversity: Regional Experience and Representativeness*

As described in the introduction to this report, diversity, particularly in terms of nationality/ethnicity, has not been felt to be an issue of strong relevance in the regional context of Västerbotten. Regional organisations have been more engaged on issues of gender equality and broader issues of equal opportunities for all. Concepts of openness, approachability, and non-hierarchical workplaces are integral to all the organisations interviewed for this research. Experience with employees from third country nations, however, has been limited to non-existent, except perhaps in the case of medical staff, and academics at the large regional hospital and university (whom are also the largest employers in the region).

It should be noted that the definitional difficulties for 'TCN' that were described at the outset of this report in section 1.3 also exerted a complicating influence on this part of the study. It was found that organisations and individuals interviewed may perceive and describe members of their staff as TCNs if their origins were from a non-EU country, or even if their heritage was TCN, but when it came to citizenship some of these



people may actually have held Swedish citizenship and thus officially would fall outside the TCN focus group of this study. It is not common to know which passport a person officially holds and employers do not always collect such data. Thus, when Umeå City Council, for example, describes having 800 TCN employees (7% of its workforce) it is the suspicion of the research team that a, possibly large, proportion of these are actually officially Swedish (since it is relatively quick to obtain Swedish citizenship). Such suspicion means we must treat numerical statistics with caution. It also points to a weakness in the concept of TCN as designated by this research and highlights that perceptions, and labels, of a person's nationality and ethnic identity do not always go in accordance with official papers.

Statistically Umeå City Council in this case is over-representative in its employment of TCNs compared to the demographic of the region. If official citizenship status is accounted for it is likely that the percentage of TCN employees is lower than this 7% but Umeå City Council would probably still remain a local benchmark of representativeness for the Västerbotten demographic context. The characteristics and most common country origins of these employees was described in section 3.3.

Where country of origin and/or heritage is concerned the expression found in the other interviewed organisations that had TCN employees fits with Umeå City Council's data: that is, TCNs with Bosnian, Serbian, Iranian, Iraqi, Somali, Ethiopian and Thai backgrounds. Some Latin Americans were employed (mainly Colombian or Brazilian) but their numbers tended to be fewer.

In terms of employee representativeness of the regional demographic of just 2.5% of the Västerbotten population holding TCN citizenship (ASTRID, 2010; section 0.3.1) it is difficult to generalise from just ten organisations. Of the two for-profit private companies interviewed one was a specialised industrial engineering and electronics company that had very little TCN experience. Their employee requirements being guided by specific skills background and Swedish regulatory and legislative understanding. The other, which did not have the same needs for specialised training, had a more than twice the representativeness of TCNs. The highly educated public sector employers such as the university, the hospital and the county administration were strongly led by the need for highly qualified staff. This need led to an over-representativeness of TCNs in the university (c. 5%) and the hospital (c. 15% TCN origin [not necessarily current citizen status in both cases however]). It could be argued that these two employees have a global pool for staff recruitment, with very specific and advanced skills. Interviews with those involved in healthcare recruitment also described a skills shortage within Sweden. The medical sectors and the university sector also described an unwillingness of many Swedish people to move to what Swedes perceive to be an isolated northern peripheral region of their country. Consequently they had found that it was



often easier to attract foreign employees than Swedes. Sometimes this is due to lack of conceptualisation and experience of the region for a non-Swedish person, but sometimes due to non-Swedes highly valuing the natural and demographic landscape and weather and leisure opportunities on offer in the northern periphery.

Västerbotten County Council (Västerbotten Läns Landsting, VLL) was the organisation interviewed that had been the most strategic about employee diversity, and seemed to have progressed the furthest with explicit guidelines and goals in their personnel vision and equal opportunities plan. This is likely a result of it having a relatively high (approximately 15% [interview finding]) TCN background represented, and a local skills gap, further emphasised by the southern Swede's lack of willingness to move north that forces them to proactively search for staff internationally.

However the third public employer (The County Administrative Board of Västerbotten [Västerbottens Länstyrelse]) that also had very high qualification requirements within the more environmental, agricultural, and community development sectors had an opposing experience to the hospital and university. The type of sectors they recruit within, and the level of skills and experienced required, was perceived as the reason for the almost negligible number of job applications received from TCNs. Consequently they recognised themselves as having an under-representation of TCNs for the demographic context.

Statistics on staff make-up were not revealed by the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) for the region but interview discussion made it apparent that they have a clear directive to work to represent the society they serve and to provide services in languages other than Swedish. During interview with HR personnel it became apparent that they had found it more difficult to bring men, and a good diversity of ages, into their employ (in a traditionally female-dominated sector) than to bring in people with a foreign background (interview discussion).

Of the two non-profit organisations interviewed it is also impossible to generalise. One was an indigenous religious organisation strongly embedded in the history and culture of Sweden. They perceived themselves as falling behind in terms of ethnic representativeness of the society (interview discussion). This is an area which is beginning to gain importance for the Swedish Church but few active steps have been taken at this stage. The other NGO was an immigrant-born organisation started by TCNs with the mission to support immigrant integration efforts due to an experienced need. They remain today almost exclusively run by TCNs and Swedish citizens from TCN countries or parentage.

### *Experienced and/or Perceived Benefits of a Diverse Personnel*

Section 3.3 is relevant for this section also where it described something of the perceived and experienced benefits of having other points of view, and other experiences of operational practice. Most of the organisations interviewed who had experience of TCN employees described this beneficial impact of other perspectives. Some felt that a diversity of employees made their workplace a more attractive and interesting environment and stimulated new ideas and creativity (Polarbröd Interview).

The Public Employment Service saw real value in being representative of the society they serve viewing it as better enabling them to serve jobseekers, and ultimately achieve their mission. They have increased the number of TCN origin staff during the past three years in line with a new mission to provide immigrant language services (Interview finding). These TCNs have also had a greater male representation. A job offers a vital chance for an immigrant to integrate into the wider society so the Public Employment Service recognise that their employees play a very important role in the integration process (Interview finding).

Those organisations that had a more international staff highlighted the tolerance and acceptance engendered. Staff and management were used to people with different accents, perhaps less fluency in Swedish, and a foreign employment experience which offered valuable lessons. Such an environment can be very fulfilling and stimulating to work in. This kind of environment also makes it easier for other TCNs to join and integrate quickly into the work and social context.

### *Experienced and/or Perceived Difficulties with a Diverse Personnel*

Most organisations cited competence in Swedish language as important in creating a functioning and integral workplace. Language has been a difficulty in the homecare and assistance sector, especially when serving older residents who may not be so familiar with other languages, nor so used to foreign accents. Umeå City Council, for example, has recognised this to be an area of difficulty. They now offer a, currently non-mandatory, language course in 'Care Swedish (vårdsvenska) for their employees. This is being offered in combination with an established organisation with many years' experience of teaching Swedish language to immigrant groups, Viva Komvux.

The City Council also noted that a diversity of levels of education within employees is important. They had noted, however, a tendency that those with higher levels of education felt a greater ability to affect change in their work environment, had a tendency to take responsibility, to lobby for changes. Those that had lower levels of education tended to feel they had less power (Interview discussion).

The University had experienced occasional claims of harassment that, once investigated, turned out to be rather more due to cultural misunderstandings of roles and relations than actual and deliberate harassment. These cases however were not that common but it was stated that a more holistic induction programme that better explains the Swedish codes of behaviour, work practice and unspoken rules could help eliminate even these few cases (interview finding).

### *Diversity-related Conflicts*

The healthcare sector has occasionally experienced conflict among those with different country backgrounds or experience, usually during the initial induction phase. This is usually because doctors and nurses from other countries often come from a medical system where the nurses have less responsibility than in Sweden and the doctors, consequently, perform more tasks. In the Middle East, for example, doctors there performed a number of the duties that nurses in Sweden perform. Those trained from outside of Sweden, or even northern EU countries, require an adaptation phase and a clear introduction to the roles and responsibilities defined within the Swedish system. Some initial conflict has occurred where doctors have felt that the nurses were taking over the doctor's job, for example (interview discussion). This kind of friction regarding roles and responsibilities can usually be easily smoothed over with time and orientation support. This has been an important lesson for Swedish-educated managers to learn: they should not assume that everyone understand all the details of the Swedish system, and they need to make sure they allocate sufficient time and support resources within the orientation phase to be able to clarify roles and responsibilities. Somewhat related to this issue, and also raised during interviews with the healthcare sector, was the situation where some employers have experienced conflict, or at least difficulty, surrounding the role of the Swedish manager. Those with a different country experience often come with knowledge of systems that are more hierarchical, perhaps even deferential, than the Swedish managerial system. The Swedish system is much flatter, and management is generally very approachable and interactive and generally prefer a non-authoritarian style. Swedish managers should not assume that those without a Swedish background intrinsically understand such details. It may be necessary for managers to take time to explain the Swedish cultural approach to working.

A situation that some Swedish employers have experienced that has created diversity-related difficulties and where the attitudes of TCNs are not always appreciated concerns people from conflict-torn regions bringing their conflict with them (interview discussion). Such difficulties are very specific and sensitive and usually involve stressed and trauma-tised people. As a result they must be handled with care. Employers may become a sort of mediator and keeper-of-the-peace in such circumstances. Such tension

may serve to qualify a general tendency to assume that all diversity is intrinsically beneficial.

### *Diversity Supportive or Non-supportive Organisational Factors*

#### Supportive

The attitude and engagement of top management and/owners is an important organisational factor that can influence how diverse an organisation is and how much emphasis it places on diversity and equality (Polarbröd Interview).

Swedish companies often do not have the staff resources to respond to large short-term investment initiatives such as the establishment of a new mine where 200 electricians are required for six months (Goodtech, Personal Communication). In such circumstances Swedish companies tend to partner with foreign companies who can provide the required skilled personnel, regardless of the language spoken, and the necessary translators. After such projects there are usually a few employees who chose to stay in Sweden but this is obviously not a significant immigrant pathway in Sweden (interview finding).

When considering how best to support diversity, Umeå University emphasised the need to fully translate all information and materials, timesheets and policy documents into English as a way of better supporting diversity (interview finding). Much information is still only available in Swedish. The university HR department also noted that a more holistic and coherent induction programme, with a Swedish 'buddy' programme as well, could greatly facilitate the initial landing and establishment period for foreign employees.

#### Non-Supportive

Some of the interviewed organisations recognised that their top leadership presented a very strong indigenous Swedish image that could be a barrier to facilitating greater ethnic diversity. They saw a need to show diversity at this level and signal with their image that all are welcome within their organisation (Umeå City Council Interview; Umeå University Interview; Polarbröd Interview).

### *Diversity Supportive or Non-supportive Contextual Characteristics*

#### Supportive

Those organisations that provide care and health services to the community recognised that there will be a growing proportion of their community in the future who may have need of service provision in their native language if that is not Swedish. Having

a diversity of languages spoken within their staff is viewed as advantageous to serving those groups appropriately.

Language was not described as being a serious barrier within employees at the hospital because the system that is in place in Sweden to allow medical staff to work in the country includes an intensive medical-Swedish language course which trains people to a very high level. Once these non-EU medical and healthcare staff have been through this system and got into a workplace their Swedish language proficiency is sufficiently high that the sector rarely experiences language-related difficulties.

Sectors with an international language of operation (usually English), such as academia or computer automation, can more easily accept and absorb foreign competence (interview finding).

The geographic isolation of the Västerbotten region, the vast expanses of nature (forests, lakes, mountains, rivers, sea) and the leisure and health opportunities such landscapes offer are often perceived as undesirable or not interesting by Swedes (particularly those from further South) and can thus be a deterrent to employing Swedes (interview finding). On the contrary however it is exactly these natural and geographic qualities, and the associated demographic qualities as well, that can serve as a very favourable attraction context for foreign employees. This contributes to explaining how some of the interviewees described it as easier to attract non-Swedes to jobs than Swedes.

The University's HR department noted how the institution's reputation internationally is a very important organisational and contextual factor that can help create a diverse and integrated workplace. The current perception of the University and of the city of Umeå as being not too large and not too small, as being easy to build collaborations in, and offering a young and dynamic population are all factors that particularly encourage non-Swedes to move to the area.

### Non-Supportive

Generally organisations in the region receive very few job applications from non-EU applicants to advertised jobs. Whether this is a result of the inability of non-EU immigrants to find job adverts, an expression of a skills mismatch between those offered by immigrants and those the labour market requires, or a factor of geographic isolation and general demographic homogeneity in the region, or a combination of all these, is open to debate.

The proficiency of employees in the Swedish language is essential across most organisations with the possible exception of the university environment where the interna-

tional language of academia is English and those who speak English but not Swedish are still able to perform their job to a high standard.

As well as linguistic competence, sectors such as electrical, engineering, or mechanical production are very dependent upon a high understanding of the rules, laws and regulations, testing protocols and safety provisions of the Swedish system. This makes it very difficult to employ someone who has been educated outside of this system (Personal Communication, Goodtech).

Within these sectors, the competence assessment and recognition system that does exist tends to falter when confronted with an educational or training background from outside of the EU nations (Personal Communication, Goodtech).

Personal networks are vital in connecting to employers and getting a 'foot-in-the-door' (Interview findings). This makes it more difficult for those brought up outside of Sweden, or those who have not lived in the country long, especially if they have not conducted their education in the country and made connections that way.

One of the newest initiatives within Umeå University is in direct response to the recognition, through feedback from foreign employees, of a serious challenge to the retention and maintenance of a diverse and functioning international staff (interview finding). The initiative is the establishment of a job search network aimed at the partners of foreign academics moving to Umeå for work. This is run in collaboration with the County Administration (Länsstyrelsen). They hope to be able to also extend this to involve a greater number of players from the private sector in the near future. The HR staff at the University felt that the Umeå region may be more challenging than many other university towns in Sweden because the job market here is smaller and more limited than in the larger cities. This has improved slightly with the expanded transportation network delivered by the high-speed rail link (Botniabanan) which has expanded the viable job market for the partners of academics.

Many employers recognised during interview that having the correct 'hardware' and organisational support in place for foreign employees is not enough. It is the softer side of the contextual characteristics that matters a lot for the longevity of the relationship. To facilitate this requires support to TCNs in meeting Swedish people, gaining Swedish friends and becoming more integrated into the subtleties of society.

#### *Perceived Future Diversity Trends and Business Implications*

All interviewed organisations envisage that the diversity of nationalities resident in Sweden will increase in the future, especially in relation to staff shortages in the medical, nursing and personal assistance sectors. Some organisations recognised a disconnection between the skills offered by the labour pool and the skills needed by the



labour market. Some viewed the offering of tailor-made training courses to help bridge the gap as a win-win strategy to fill a labour shortage and to boost the opportunity for integration (Inter-view discussions), as described below.

Private companies predict an increasing level of technical competence required from the staff of the future, particularly in regard to computer-added mechanisation. This implies a greater need for more highly qualified staff. Some HR managers suggested that such a trend is also likely to have negative implications for gender equality in the workplace since fewer women tend to study these more technical subjects (Polarbröd Interview). Such technical advancements also have concomitant requirements for skills and abilities suited to the Swedish legal and regulatory context for electrical and mechanical professions, which will have associated negative implications for those trained outside of the Swedish system.

Discussion with healthcare providers suggested that in the next 10 years they will need to employ an additional 250,000 qualified medical staff throughout Sweden in order to keep up with the demand for care. The country is simply not training sufficient numbers to cover this need. The shortfall will need to be filled by people trained outside of Sweden. This could be viewed as a net-gain to the country where they benefit from qualified personnel the country has not had to pay to educate. It also points to the growing need for the skills, knowledge, competence evaluation procedures to be efficient and effective, and for supplementary training schemes to be more readily available and accessible, and may suggest a need to review the level of medical Swedish language abilities required, as described in Part 1 of this country report.

Umeå City Council also predict a similar trend in the need for an increased workforce in care and home support in the future, especially within the elderly care sector. They note that this sector will need to show a higher degree of relevant qualification in the future with specific training in elderly and handicapped care, legal and regulatory frameworks and basic nursing or first-aid skills. The Council has a perception that the system as it stands today is not providing for the future employment need. They consider this lack serious enough that they may establish their own training programme in the near future (Interview discussion)

### 3.6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PART 2

This section of the report concerned the diversity management (DM) practices implemented by both the for-profit, non-profit and public sectors within the region of Västerbotten in Sweden. The aim was to shine a spotlight on the regional context and experience in relation to diversity. Diversity was taken broadly to encompass not only nationality but also gender, age, religion, educational background or any other nomenclature. The initial intention of the research design was to explain and analyse the

diversity management procedures being implemented within a range of the region's employers, and to outline the human resources practices, tools and incentives being utilised to shepherd the diverse personnel, with a particular focus being given to those third country nation (TCN) employees. In reality, however, it was found that these aims did not match well to the regional context and experience, especially with the very low overall representation of TCNs, and to the Swedish organisational ethos and managerial style. What results is thus rather an overview of the regional organisations' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of diversity, of the perceived trends and needs, and of their sectorial skills balance and the contextual and organisational factors perceived to both support or hinder a greater diversity of nationalities within the workplace and an effective labour market integration of immigrants.

Findings highlighted serious future skills and employee shortages in the healthcare and personal home assistance sectors which present opportunities for jobs for TCN immigrants. Effectively matching this labour to need however has implications for skills evaluation, acceptance of foreign experience, subtle socio-cultural acceptance of something outside of the 'Swedish', and important implications for Swedish language teaching, learning and ability.

Local experience of diversity-related conflict was, overall from this small sample of organisations, extremely low and tended in the main to relate to a lack of familiarity to the Swedish organisational context and behaviour, and to the job's expectations of roles and responsibilities. As such these kind of conflicts can be relatively effectively managed through coherent introductory packages and good communication.

Also in keeping with findings from the other parts of this research, was the emphasis on the more subtle and personal attitudes, aptitudes, initiatives and motivations of the players involved in any employer-employee relation. These more social, cultural and personality-related characteristics are not always the kind of factors that can be learned, or managed, and may not always even be overcome by simple fluency in the host country language. They are also two-way and require positive engagement from both sides in order to facilitate a successful labour market, and socio-cultural, integration of those living in Sweden who have a third country background.

### 3.7 SUMMARY OF PART 2

Diversity management (DM), in the context of this study, refers to the management of a variety of skills, ages, religions, genders and nationalities of people within an organisation to the benefit of the organisation. The concept has been both purported to be a better way of managing people (Marvin and Girling, 2010), but also criticised as legitimising a more limited approach to equal opportunities where corporate benefit takes precedent. In Sweden the management of diversity has been promoted largely by

Swedish immigration policy and a growing recognition that the ninth of the population that are foreign-born experience higher unemployment and labour market discrimination (Omanovic, 2009). Sweden has invested in improving integration within the labour market. At the regional level however geographic and demographic contextual differences are apparent across the country.

The Västerbotten context has its own specificities that explain why Västerbotten organisations had, overall, little experience of, issues related to third country national (TCN) personnel the effective integration and management of such diversity. The County is home to just 6630 TCN residents (or 2.5% of the population [ASTRID, 2010]). TCNs resident in the whole of Sweden in 2010 was 3.1% (SCB, 2010) putting the region below the national average. The County, however, contains a further 5617 (2.2%) Swedish citizens who were born in third country nations but hold Swedish citizenship. Nevertheless the focus of this study is on the 6630 TCN citizens, even though those falling outside of the definition of TCNs can face similar labour market and societal integration challenges. A reason why it was important to highlight the difference in figures depending on which passport a person holds is because it was found during interviews that respondents described their employees as being TCNs because their parentage, or country of birth was TCN, even though a person may hold Swedish citizenship, and may even have been born and raised entirely in Sweden. A person's official citizenship status may not always even be known by an employer, or a skills evaluator. There was thus an important blurring of the data that occurred during interviews and any statistics regarding the number of TCN employees must therefore be viewed with healthy caution. Ethnic diversity within organisations in the region was found to be a topic that was not much considered.

One statistically significant yet officially invisible group of TCNs within Västerbotten are those that come for short-term summer work within the berry-picking and forestry industries. Eriksson and Tollefsen (2013) estimate that around 3750 TCN labour migrants worked in Västerbotten during 2009, with a majority coming from Thailand. Since they only stay a few months and are not present at the end of the year when the statistical databases are updated in Sweden they are not registered in the general Swedish data. Although this project was not able to interview anyone involved in this sector, these seasonal workers represent the largest number of labour migrants from third countries into the County. This research could not capture this regional expression of employers resorting to TCN labour, nor any associated benefits or tensions but it is important to acknowledge the sector's existence and possible significance within the region.

The focus of this part of the report was upon those TCNs in the workforce, and their employers. In total, the project interviewed ten employers: six public, two non-profit,

and two private companies. The sectors covered ranged from a bakery to an industrial engineering company, a church, the state-run unemployment service, the local university, to a number of public and private actors in the personal home or disability assistance and/or healthcare and medical services sector. The smallest organisation had 245 employees and the largest had 11000 regional employees.

It is not easy to generalise a clear picture of TCN personnel since the overall numbers were quite low and there was not a strong sectorial relationship. The regional pattern of origin did mimic national in-migration waves, in accordance with Swedish policies of asylum and refuge. As such the region saw trends of Bosnians and Serbs during the conflict in former Yugoslavia, Iranians and Iraqis, Somalians and Ethiopians, and, more recently, Syrians.

Umeå Council and the Norrlands University Hospital seemed to employ an over-representation of TCNs in comparison to the surrounding demographic context with the percentage of staff of TCN origin (note: many likely hold Swedish citizenship) being 7% and 15% respectively (interview data). Interviews with those involved in healthcare recruitment also described a skills shortage within Sweden that encourages external recruitment. The other main employer in the region, which also had an over-representation of those of foreign heritage, was Umeå University. Of these the university estimated that approximately 200 were Third Country Nationals. The remaining interviewed organisations ranged from having 0% TCN staff to approximately 4% (interview data). The majority of the organisations met with during this research also noted that their highest levels of leadership were Swedish people of Swedish background. Many recognised this as an area requiring attention.

Swedish society has a positive and open rhetoric towards diversity and everyone's equal worth. It is a pervasive view and those interviewed that had experience of TCN staff described them as valued and competent personnel contributing greatly to the improved operation of the organisation. However it would be surprising to find a person with HR responsibility within Swedish organisations who would express antipathy to a diversity of nationalities, or gender, or of other such 'labels'. Most organisations have an equality and equal opportunity policy led by EU regulations and strive, with varying degrees of implementation effort, towards ideals of a diverse and fair workplace. Lines of questioning that attempted to probe for differences in work output, attitude, ability or level of payment or motivation amongst different people, especially amongst different nationalities, did not meet with response and were felt to be antagonistic to Swedish sensitivities and cultural attitudes to everyone being on an equal footing. However, particularly in the medical sector, but also within the local council operations, the view was expressed that TCN personnel, and those from Euro-

pean countries, bring new ways of looking at things, and experience of different ways of operating. Such perspectives can benefit organisational operations.

Informal discussion with TCN people themselves, nevertheless, highlighted the pivotal role of personal contacts and personal references in gaining access to the Swedish labour market. The local contact did not necessarily have to be Swedish, simply someone known to the employer. The importance of social capital, rather than skills evaluations and validations or top-down attempts to manufacture diversity, as an effective strategy towards employment and labour market integration thus should not be underestimated.

Methods for staff induction and insertion within an organisation were generally led by the needs of the individual and/or the specific job. Different rules or approaches explicit for TCNs were not found, although the medical sector had recognised a need for a clearer introduction to the roles and ways of operating in the Swedish context for those trained outside of Sweden as a good way to smooth the landing phase. Some employers have experienced conflict, or at least difficulty, surrounding the role of the Swedish manager. Those with a different country experience often come with knowledge of systems that are more hierarchical, perhaps even deferential, than the Swedish managerial system. The Swedish system is much flatter, and management is generally very approachable and interactive and generally prefer a non-authoritarian style. Swedish managers should not assume that those without a Swedish background intrinsically understand such details. It may be necessary for managers to take time to explain the Swedish cultural approach to working.

A coherent package of policies and processes of DM being implemented in a clear, necessary and deliberate manner simply was not found in the interviewed organisations. Additionally, none of the organisations reported having particular performance assessment practices. Such a top-down and hierarchical, authoritative concept runs counter to the core ethos in Swedish organisations and Swedish socio-politics. The idea of singling out a group of staff, such as TCNs, for specific and individualised performance assessment practices is anathema.

Salary differentials could not be discussed within the interview context however statistics available within the department's ASTRID population database suggest that TCNs earned on average SEK 122,000 (Euros 13,000) per annum less than Swedish citizens in the Västerbotten region in 2010. The difference was higher for the more highly educated TCNs.

Generally organisations in the region receive very few job applications from non-Swedish applicants to advertised jobs. Whether this is a result of the inability of non-EU immigrants to find job adverts, an expression of a skills mismatch between those

offered by immigrants and those the labour market requires, or a factor of geographic isolation and general demographic homogeneity in the region, or a combination of all these, is open to debate. The proficiency of employees in the Swedish language was emphasised by respondents, with the possible exception of the university.

The initial intention of the research design for this part of the report was to explain and analyse the diversity management procedures being implemented within a range of the region's employers, and to outline the human resources practices, tools and incentives being utilised to shepherd the diverse personnel, with a particular focus being given to those third country nation (TCN) employees. In reality, however, it was found that these aims did not match well to the regional context and experience, especially with the very low overall representation of TCNs, and to the Swedish organisational ethos and managerial style. Also in keeping with findings from the other parts of this research, was the emphasis on the more subtle and personal attitudes, aptitudes, initiatives and motivations of the players involved in any employer-employee relation. These more social, cultural and personality-related characteristics are not always the kind of factors that can be learned, or managed, and may not always even be overcome by simple fluency in the host country language.



## 4 TCNs' PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

### 4.1 METHODS AND SOURCES FOR DATA COLLECTION

*Selection of TCN associations' leaders, experts and local actors in region*

The research team aimed to achieve a balance of organisations across sectors by contact-ing religious, ethnic, humanitarian and environmental and sports organisations of Swe-dish and non-Swedish origin. The eventual cross-section obtained unfortunately did not include any sporting-relating organisations. These proved difficult to engage in the time available. This may also reflect something of the findings of an earlier re-search project in the region that also found sporting associations difficult to engage in discussions regard-ing immigrant involvement in sport (Sjöberg, Sydh and Bjuhr, 2012). This will be returned to in section 4.2.

Members of the research team also had knowledge of some organisations that were known to work either with or for immigrants locally, for example PREI and Save the Children, and the Deeper Life Bible Church and the Catholic Church. Further identifi-cation of suitable interviewees snowballed from these early discussions, and via in-ternet re-search.

Associations established by, or run more exclusively for, third country nationals were harder to find and engage. However arguably the largest such body in the Västerbot-ten region, the Project for Integration (PREI), was interviewed at length about their estab-lishment, their role and their experiences in the region. Regional project-based initiatives such as the 'In Umeå' project run by the recreation and leisure department of Umeå City Council were also interviewed and their findings, and a project evalua-tion report, were reviewed. Table 4.1 describes the eight organisations interviewed and their core opera-tions and characteristics:

**Table 4.1: Characteristics of the Interviewed Organisations**

Organisation	Sector of Activity	Public	Non-profit	Ethnic	Non-ethnic	Religious	Non-religious
1) Swedish Church	Worship		X		X	X	
2) Catholic Church	Worship		X		X	X	
3) Project for Integration (PREI)	Integration, Arts, Culture		X	X			X
4) Deeper Life Bible Church	Worship		X	X	X	X	
5) Swedish Association for Nature Conservation	Nature conservation		X		X		X
6) Umeå Leisure Services (Umeå Fritid)	Leisure and recreation, council contact for non-profits	X			X		X
7) Friend in Umeå (Vän i Umeå)	Integration		X		X		X
8) Save the Children	Humanitarian; Children		X		X		X

### *The process of data collection*

Data and information for this part of the research was gathered via a combination of desk research, literature review and in-depth interviews with organisational representatives. A total of eight interviews were conducted. Each interview took between 45 minutes to one hour. Most were conducted in person, though by necessity a few were conducted over the telephone. An initial internet-based research exercise helped to identify some of the organisations that were active in the region. Others were accessed through word-of-mouth or personal contacts.

A difficulty found during the discussions was that the organisations in the Västerbotten region have very few third country national (TCN) members or TCN volunteers. Many thus had little experience of issues relating to TCN involvement. In these instances it was necessary to adapt the interviews to discuss more generally the issues they face in garnering volunteers or members, and to a more general discussion of what reasons they saw for so little TCN engagement and how such barriers might be

overcome. In some instances the organisations interviewed had raised this lack of engagement as being of concern but had considered it not a high priority area of focus at this time. It seems that the arena of the civil engagement of those with a foreign background is a topic which is beginning to pique greater attention at this regional level. Some associations within the Umeå region have been early leaders in this arena recognising already in 2009 that involvement of immigrants in recreational, humanitarian or sporting associations could help with the integration process (described further in section 4.2).

#### 4.2 OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

This section provides a brief introduction to the Swedish volunteer and non-profit sector and places its context within an international perspective. It is interesting to start with the commonly-held misperceptions: The first is that involvement in volunteer or charitable organisations is a predominantly American thing, even that Americans are exceptional for their level of engagement (Curtis, Baer and Grabb; 2001). The second views the Swedish non-profit sector as being virtually non-existent (Wijkström, 2004). This is in part due to its lack of a clear role in welfare service provision (ibid), in part to a different relation with the state (Anheier and Salamon, 1999), and in part due to the much lower levels of employed staff within the sector (Chartrand, 2004) as this section will further explain. Recent research, however, questions the wisdom of these commonly held views. Curtis et al (2001) found that when membership and involvement in religious organisations and church groups are excluded, Americans are not exceptional in their volunteerism, and Swedish and other Northern European nations score highly in their level of involvement with voluntary associations. They conclude that there is evidence of American 'exceptionalism' with regard to church membership only (ibid). In their work analysing the volunteerism of 33 countries with democratic political regimes they suggest that a high degree of volunteering occurs in nations that have; i) multi-denominational Christian, and particularly Protestant, religious compositions, ii) long experience of democracy, iii) social democratic or liberal democratic political systems, and iv) high economic development. Sweden, assessed through these criteria, scores highly.

Another cross-nation analysis of volunteer effort also highlights the pivotal role of the socio-political system of governance (Anheier and Salamon, 1999). Countries that have a liberal governance system, such as Britain and America, tend to have lower government spend on social welfare, allowing for a larger non-profit sector to fill the gaps (ibid). Such a voluntary sector tends to have two-to-three times the number of paid employees than the more Scandinavian social democratic regimes, according to figures presented by Anheier and Salamon (1999). In social democracies the system is designed with high state involvement in welfare provision (supported by high taxes)

thus limiting the need for non-profits to offer services. This helps explain why Sweden has only 2.5% of paid employment in the non-profit sector (compared to 6.2% in the UK and 7.8% in the USA [ibid]).

Authors such as Curtis et al. (2001), Chartrand (2004), and Anheier and Salamon (1999) emphasise that a low degree of 'professionalisation' of the non-profit sector, and a low representation within welfare provision does not mean that a volunteer sector does not exist in Sweden. Indeed Sweden ranks amongst the top in terms of the number of citizens involved in volunteering: amongst the highest membership levels in non-profits in Curtis et al's 2001 study of 33 countries. Anheier and Salamon's 1999 survey of 23 countries (p58) estimate that 51% of the Swedish population volunteer. It is rather that the Swedish voluntary sector is more focussed around craft, sport and recreational activities than social welfare provision, these researchers suggest. The Swedish non-profit model speaks more to a lifestyle choice and a strategy for building a sense of community.

Chartrand's 2004 thesis provides a useful historical evolutionary background to social movements and civil society engagement within the socialist welfare state of Sweden. He described the concept of the non-profit as having its roots in the early 19th century charitable efforts of the elite, and then being modified by the massive labour and temperance movements that occurred within the later 19th Century. The initial charities functioned more as a kind of support group for members (Wijkström, 2000). They were selective in who they included, and whom they targeted (ibid).

The popular movements (known in Swedish as *folkrörelser*) were popularist mass initiatives challenging poverty, and the privileges of the wealthy, and promoting Protestant free churches (Wijkström, 2000). They were a bottom-up swell of opinion pushing power to the people, and they resulted in the mass formation of Swedish labour unions (ibid). According to Chartrand (2004) the term of *folkrörelser* is intrinsically associated in the Swedish psyche with positive societal engagement. This was the essential precursor to the Swedish social democratic system and these organisations' ways of operating and being involved in Swedish civil society (Wijkström, 2000). This formed the essential model of civic engagement for most of the 20th Century (ibid). These organisations—the Swedish Church, the temperance (abstinence from alcohol [strongly related to the American movement and to the church]) movement, and the labour unions—retain power and influence to this day in Sweden though their heyday was in the 1950s and 60s, and some today are experiencing difficulties retaining membership and value (Wijkström, 2000).

Following World War II the creation of the Swedish welfare state gained impetus (Chartrand, 2004). The government took the reins of many aspects of welfare provi-

sion and established comprehensive safety nets for society. By the 1970s 90% of the Swedish population belonged to a Swedish voluntary organisation, though this was often the national church and/or a labour union (ibid). This large-scale and pervasive role of the State, and a low-level of distrust of Government (Lundström and Svedberg, 2003) forced any remaining 'ideal' organisations and non-profits to focus on niche areas and recreational interests (ibid).

Indeed the role of the voluntary sector within sport and leisure is tremendous within Sweden. According to Wijkström (2000) sports organisations account for 3.5 million members in a country of just 9.5 million. Based on his 1997 work with Tommy Lundström describing the non-profit sector in Sweden Filip Wijkström provides a nuanced and illuminative statistical description of the Swedish voluntary sector. This is outlined in section 4.2.

#### *Policy frameworks and support measures for volunteering*

An understanding of the policy context for the non-profit sector also requires some historical knowledge. Lundström and Svedberg's 2003 paper describing the evolution of the volunteer sector in the social democratic welfare state of Sweden offers such insight into the historical-political evolution. They emphasise the long "pro-State tradition" found in Sweden dating to the 16th Century church reforms and a high general level of trust in Government. This fundamental attitude helps explain, in their opinion, the close collaboration between the State and the non-profit sector, and indeed the many takeovers of volunteer welfare operations by the State during the early 20th Century.

The long tradition of popular peoples' movements (the folkrörelser) also helps explain the high proportion of membership organisations in the Swedish non-profit sector and the very engaged population. Lundström and Svedberg (2003) note that Swedish government policy has consistently facilitated these kind of membership organisations through a system of subsidies and state support. Wide and broad participation and democratic decision-making runs deep in the Swedish psych with its roots in these popular movements. Lundström and Svedberg note that these attitudes and policies have thus meant organisations operating outside of these norms tend to be viewed with suspicion and have traditionally garnered less support in Sweden, citing the example of Greenpeace (ibid).

The policy framework guiding the construction of the welfare state from the 1930s was also instrumental in absorbing any non-State welfare operations whilst facilitating State takeovers of welfare. This channelled the non-profit sector to focus on culture and recreation. Strategic legislative and financial support to sports-related non-profits, for example, after the Second World War were seen as complementary to the

efforts of the welfare state to improve the health of the population, and were also viewed as offering an important training ground in the exercise of democratic principles (Lundström and Svedberg, 2003). The long history of trust in government, widespread belief in participation, openness, equality and democracy has been harnessed and guided by the State via legislation and subsidies that have meant that these kind of organisations have come to dominate the Swedish non-profit and volunteer sector.

Researchers such as Filip Wijkström (2000; 2004) and Tommy Lundström and Lars Svedberg (2003) however, suggest that new trends are emerging within the Swedish non-profit sector since the 1990s with global economic challenges and Swedish political changes. New ideologies of smaller government, and financial pressures to cut back on spending, as well as a shift towards a more Anglophone model of non-profit service provision and professionalisation, and a national trend towards falling memberships, have allowed a more utilitarian perspective, and policy framework, to permeate the voluntary sector (Lundström and Svedberg, 2003; Chartrand, 2004). Changing financial relations within the sector away from membership dues towards more project-based, international origin fundings, may also have implications for the nature of the Swedish voluntary sector in the future (Chartrand, 2004). It is early yet to make predictions on how the sector will evolve. The following section, however, provides a detailed description of the sector in Sweden as it looked in the 1990s and early part of the 21st Century.

#### *Statistics and studies about the Swedish volunteer sector*

Sweden has a highly engaged and active membership (86%) of their non-profits (table 4.2). This is considerably higher than other European countries according to a number of studies cited in Wijkström (2000). A large proportion of these volunteers contribute their time differently, however, to the British, American or other European non-profit sectors i.e. their focus is not upon healthcare, education or social services (only 26% volunteer time to these sectors in Sweden) (Wijkström, 2000, p177). This is in contrast to Britain where 62% of volunteers work within welfare service provision, 58% in Germany and 42% in the Netherlands (ibid). Swedish volunteerism overwhelmingly focuses within the fields of sport and recreation: 44.5% of all volunteering according to Chartrand (2004, p44). This emphasises one of the main differences between the Swedish non-profit sector and other countries, especially the Anglophone model: The Swedish model is predominantly geared towards pleasure and/or personal interest, rather than welfare need. This is also revealed in an international comparison of the proportional allocation of operating expenses to what Wijkström (2000, p174) terms as the “Welfare State core domains” where the Swedish non-profit sector apportions only 27% of its expenses whilst the UK allocates 57%, Italy 62%, Germany 70% and the United States a massive 85%.



**Table 4.2: Percentage of Active Members**

Country	Share of Active Members (%) [ie. those members who volunteer their time]
Sweden	86
Germany	68
Republic of Ireland	60
Belgium (French-speaking)	58
Slovakia	58
Netherlands	57
Great Britain	47
Bulgaria	40
<b>Average (unweighted)</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: Gaskin and Smith (1995) presented in Wijkström, 2000, p169

In terms of the total percentage of the population involved in volunteering Sweden remains high on the list. Gaskin and Smith (1997) (cited in Anheier and Salamon, 1999, p53) claim that 36% of the adult population in Sweden volunteers, second only to the Netherlands (38%) in a study of nine European countries. Britain had 34% and Germany 18%. According to Wijkström (2000) almost 75% of all the work effort of non-profits in Sweden is provided by volunteers. Less than 3% of the workforce are employed by a non-profit. These statistics support the assertion that Sweden has a very low degree of paid employment in the non-profit sector (2.5%, more in line with eastern European and Latin American countries according to this data), yet the highest level of volunteer effort (51%) across the 23 countries. The Anglophone countries in particular have a greater proportion of paid employees, a more 'professionalised' NGO sector if you like, but slightly lower levels of volunteering.

**Table 4.3: Comparison of Employment and Volunteer Effort in Non-profit Sector**

Region	Country	Total Paid Nonprofit Employment	Population Volun-teering	FTE Volunteers In 1,000	Total Paid And Unpaid Employment
European Union	Austria	4,5%	n/a	41	5,7%
	Belgium	10,5%	30%	99	13,0%
	Finland	3,0%	33%	75	6,3%
	France	4,9%	23%	1,022	9,5%
	Germany	4,9%	26%	979	8,0%
	Ireland	11,5%	20%	32	14,2%
	Netherlands	12,5%	46%	678	18,7%
	Sweden	2,5%	51%	229	8,3%
	Spain	4,5%	12%	254	6,8%
	UK	6,2%	48%	1,120	10,5%
	<b>EU Average</b>	<b>6,9%</b>	<b>32,1%</b>	<b>452,9</b>	<b>10,3%</b>
Other dev countries	Australia	7,2%	19%	177	10,1%
	Israel	9,2%	12%	32	11,0%
	Japan	3,5%	Very low	695	4,6%
	US	7,8%	49%	4,995	11,9%
	<b>Other Average</b>	<b>6,9%</b>	<b>26,7%</b>	<b>1474,8</b>	<b>9,4%</b>
Eastern Europe	Czech Rep.	1,7%	a/a	94	2,7%
	Hungary	1,3%	7%	10	1,6%
	Romania	0,6%	34%	91	1,3%
	Slovakia	0,9%	n/a	7	1,2%
	<b>Eastern Eu Average</b>	<b>1,1%</b>	<b>20,5%</b>	<b>50,5</b>	<b>1,7%</b>
Latin America	Argentina	3,7%	20%	64	6,0%
	Brazil	2,3%	12%	139	2,5%
	Colombia	2,4%	48%	111	3,1%
	Mexico	0,4%	n/a	47	0,7%
	Peru	2,4%	31%	26	2,9%
	<b>Latin Am. Average</b>	<b>2,2%</b>	<b>27,8%</b>	<b>77,4</b>	<b>3,0%</b>
<b>Grand average</b>		<b>4,8%</b>	<b>26,8%</b>	<b>193,6</b>	<b>6,9%</b>

Source: Anheier and Salamon, 1999

However if the economics of the sector are considered, contrary to the common international perception, the Swedish volunteer sector does not measure as smaller and weaker in terms of their total operating expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) (Wijkström, 2000). According to the data shown in Table 3.4 from the 1990s Sweden's non-profit sector contributes just below the British 4.8% of GDP and above the Norwegian, German, French and Japanese levels.

**Table 4.4: Economic Importance of Non-profits as a Percentage of GDP**

Country	Percentage of GDP (%) <i>(Year of Data is 1990 unless stated otherwise)</i>
Netherlands	15.5 (1997)
USA	6.3
UK	4.8
Sweden	4.1 (1992)
Norway	3.7 (1997)
Germany	3.6
France	3.3
Japan	3.2

Source: Compiled from data in Wijkström, 2000, p171 and Chartrand, 2004, p40

Wijkström (2000, p 173) goes on to look at the distribution of non-profit operating expenses across internationally recognised categories of operation within the sector known as ICNPO fields (International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations) in Sweden, which further emphasise the focus on cultural and recreational activities (22.8% of operating ex-penses), with social service provision or international aid amounting to less than 7% of the total sector's expenditure (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Share of Operating Expenditure by Non-profit ICNPO Sector in Sweden**

Field	Share (%)
Culture & Recreation	22.8
Labour & Business	21.0
Education & Research	13.3
Development & Housing	8.8
Law, Advocacy & Politics	7.7
Social Services	7.4
International Activities	5.8
Religion	4.2
Health Care	2.7
Philanthropy	2.5
N.E.C.	2.1
Environment	1.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60 billion SEK</b>

Source: Lundström and Wijkström, 1997 cited in Wijkström, 2000, p173

It is important to also discuss how the non-profit sector in Sweden is funded. A common international perception tends to be that the Swedish non-profit and volunteer sector is very dependent upon government funding, and this thus also compromises to some de-gree its independent status. However, according to Wijkström's research (2000, p175) 62% of the Swedish non-profit sector's revenue is generated by its own activities (Table 4.6). More than half of this amount comes from membership fees. This data is from 1997 but provides an international benchmark from that time (Table 4.5). Government funding at this time amounted to only 29%, in line with the US and significantly lower than the British, French or German models, making it amongst the least dependent on the State (ibid).

It is hoped that this section describing the Swedish volunteer sector has served to penetrate some of the myths purporting its lack of existence, or lack of independence from government, or its failure to provide for people. The studies and statistics described here have rather emphasised that a significant sector does exist, the level of volunteerism in society is high, and the independence from the State, at least in funding terms, is quite large. What is perhaps unique to Sweden is the low engagement of the non-profit sector in traditional welfare-service provision or poverty reducing efforts, and its centralisation along sporting and recreational lines. What is also exceptional is the broad societal engagement in volunteer effort, and the low level of 'professionalisation' or paid employment within the sector. Understanding of this national context should help frame the following consideration of immigrant involvement in civic society through volunteering.

**Table 4.6: International Comparison of Revenue Sources for Non-profit sector**

Country	Government Sources (%)	Earned income (%)	Donative Sources (%)
Germany	68	28	4
France	59	33	7
Italy	43	53	4
United Kingdom	40	48	12
Japan	38	60	1
United States	30	52	19
Sweden	29	62	9
Hungary	23	57	20
<b>Average</b>	41	49	10

Source: Lundström and Wijkström, 1997 cited in Wijkström, 2000, p175

### 4.3 TCNs' CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEERING IN NON-ETHNIC ORGANISATIONS

#### *Legislative framework at national, regional and local level*

A fundamental concept, enshrined in law, is that anyone and everyone can access, and get involved with, these volunteer organisations as long as the members act in accordance to the statutes of the group. No one, at least by law and in theory, can be excluded as a result of their ethnicity, political views, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. Most of these organisations are financially supported by the government and they therefore need to prove their democratic foundations, and they must have open and approved financial transactions and accounting systems.

Incorporated associations that have an economic or business aspect are regulated by a specific law called the 1987 Associations Act (Föreningslagen) which details how an organisation should be organised (Notisum, 2013). Such associations, for example, must have a board of directors, clear and professional economic accounting, they must hand in an economic declaration every year, and they must be registered as such in the national database (ibid). The board in such an organisation carries the full organisational and economic responsibility. The board is always elected by the members of the organisations.

In 1999, in accordance to the new ideas of governance, the laws governing environmental impact were consolidated into an Environmental Code (Ministry of the Environment, 2001). This has been somewhat controversial because voluntary environmental organisations have been given some rights to appeal decisions in the environmental court. This is problematic because the voluntary organisations do not represent the general public. They only represent themselves. This means that their special, or vested interest (in Swedish *särintresse*) has essentially been legitimised.

Sweden has a highly regulated labour market and heavy cost implications for employing someone (one of the highest in Europe) with the high minimum wage levels plus all the social security and pension and tax benefits that must be covered (Finfacts, 2005). Non-profit organisations and volunteer associations must operate within these same legal requirements if they wish to employ staff. This may be another factor discouraging a 'professionalised' non-profit sector.

There is no specific legislation regarding the specificities of TCNs. They are subject to the same rules and regulations as Swedish people are. There are no regional or local differences in laws or legal frameworks. In Sweden, although the regional authorities have a large degree of autonomy in how they operate, they are still bound by the same national laws and codes of conduct.



### *Main features of TCNs civic participation*

The main feature found regarding the volunteering activity and behaviour of third country nationals, from the limited survey conducted during this project, is their conspicuous absence from most traditional Swedish organisations and volunteer activities in the Västernorrland region. This cannot be entirely due to the relatively small TCN demographic however since there was evidence of TCNs, or Swedes with a TCN background, establishing their own parallel organisations. This section further describes the findings from the interviews.

### *Forms and specificities of TCNs and second generations' civic participation*

As noted above, it is difficult to describe the particularities of TCNs' participation in non-ethnic voluntary organisations in the region because they were found to be almost totally absent from those traditional or deeply-rooted Swedish associations. The Swedish Church (Svenska kyrkan, SK), the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Naturskyddsförening, NK), and the Swedish activities of the Save the Children non-profit association (which has an almost 100-year history of activity in Sweden [Save the Children's Swedish website]) all noted an absence of Swedes with a non-Swedish background or TCN citizens within their membership. Regionally each estimated having one or two such members at most (interview findings). This applies also to second generations, as far as could be interpreted from knowledge of their members. Whilst, as previously stated, the demographic context of the region and the relatively low numbers of TCNs or nationalised non-EU origin people can partly explain this low representation in civic engagement this clearly is not the whole story.

Save the Children does have a greater wealth of interaction and experience with TCNs, and Swedes of TCN background or heritage, as beneficiaries of their services, rather than as contributing members. Their focus in the region, as their name suggests, is upon the well-being of children, that is, those under 18-years old. They have run programmes for over 15-years helping such children with their schooling (homework support, usually from trained but retired teachers). They also have intimate experience of the challenges facing children (often 16-18 years old, usually boys) who have come to Sweden on their own as refugees (often from war-torn and conflict-ridden countries [ensamkommande barn in Swedish, or unaccompanied children]). In the past decade such children arriving in the Västernorrland region have largely been from Somalia, Eritrea, Iran, Afghanistan and Syria. They are predominantly male, and once in the Swedish system they reside in specific care homes for the ward of such children (hem för vård eller boende [HVB]). Save the Children has considerable experience of supporting these young people, helping them to navigate the Swedish bureaucracy, supporting in their efforts to enter the school system and catch up with their qualifications. The or-

ganisation notes that these young people usually learn the Swedish language very quickly and to a competent level. Thus language is not their most fundamental challenge (interview finding). Another role of Save the Children in this system is to monitor the activities and behaviour of the authorities and care homes and maintain the fundamental rights of the child in accordance with the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

From this long experience Save the Children emphasises the crucial influence of the subtle, unspoken rules and codes of conduct, the cultural attitudes and expectations—both of the Swedish society, and of the societal background of immigrants—when it comes to barriers to civic engagement, volunteering, gaining work, and overall integration (interview discussion). Yet if this were more openly and explicitly recognised and understood improvements could be made: A number of the respondents during this research mentioned the need for better introduction and explanation of these more subtle, rules, or attributes, that Swedish people tend to assume are known by those from other countries. From the child perspective of Save the Children it has been recognised that it is not always sufficient to work only with children. Simple examples such as supporting non-Swedish parents to understand the centrality of sports and extra-curricular activities for children within Swedish culture for example, or the need to be able to swim in order to get a pass grade in school sports, or the reality that hitting a child is forbidden by law in Sweden (interview discussion). Such conversations may help the integration process, and encourage the voluntary engagement of immigrants.

The point about swimming is important in a number of ways. It emphasises the need for Swedish understanding of certain non-Swedish perceptions of who should be allowed to swim, which otherwise act as barriers to engagement. It also illuminates a specificity of second generations who may find themselves caught between the cultural norms and expectations of the parents, and of the surrounding Swedish society. Girls, in particular, face many such challenges. The open and liberal Swedish attitude to the female role, ability and expectation can create difficulties for second generation girls which requires sensitive negotiation. Recent Umeå high profile campaigns pushing for, in their view, female equality in the swimming pools whereby women should be allowed to bathe topless (Frygell, 2014; Redin, 2014) represents a poignant example of Swedish perspectives being possibly quite far from some other perspectives, and perhaps not helping the case for immigrant integration and engagement. True understanding of the swimming barrier, particularly for immigrant girls' involvement, also opens up the way to overcoming such barriers. Save the Children and other respondents during this research cited this example of a successful local initiative in the Ersboda neighbourhood of Umeå where a larger number of immigrants live,

which was extremely appreciated by immigrant families. The organisation bought fully-covering swimming costumes which they rent out to girls at a very low cost. Then they rent privately the local swimming pool, ensure curtains for privacy during showering and changing (also not a guarantee in the usual Swedish public swimming pool), and ensure female-only participants, trainers and staff are in place (interview finding). This is not simply about gender roles, it also concerns other culture's attitudes to revealing the body and their ideas of modesty and decorum. A discussion of how much immigrants should adapt to the host country's way, and how much the host country should adapt is not a focus of this study but is a topic of great interest, requiring sensitive handling.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (NK) and the Swedish Church both had recognised that they have lower representation of those with a TCN background than the surrounding society in which they operate. Both have had some discussion on the topic within their leadership structures but it has not been a high priority for now. Both organisations, in fact, have difficulties even in attracting and retaining Swedish members. This was especially highlighted by NK. Both organisations are also very 'Swedish' in that they have the word explicit in their English title and an indigenous origin with a focus on the protection of the Swedish countryside and wildlife (in the case of NK), or the Swedish history and traditions of worship in the Lutheran branch of Protestantism (SK). These core missions may not resonate strongly with people of a non-Swedish background and thus may present an immediate hindrance to their engagement (interview findings). Both organisations are likely also being affected by the broader changes in the patterns of interest and volunteer engagement in Swedish society that Lundström and Svedberg (2003) and Wijkström (2000) consider.

In some relation to this point it is also important to note that the average profile of a member of organisations such as NK, the Red Cross, Save the Children and many other volunteer actors in Sweden is the retired person, especially females. NK describes their members additionally as generally having a higher than average educational background. This retirement-aged generation of Swedes has grown up with a strong volunteer ethic and many have decades-long history of voluntary engagement in their preferred organisation (interview findings). This age demographic may, of itself, present a further double-barrier to immigrant engagement since there are very few (only 110 [ASTRID, 2010]) over 65 years-old people of immigrant background living in the entire Västerbotten region. Some questions arise: if this demographic is to increase in the future would their engagement with volunteering increase? Secondly, does having a large proportion of older volunteers engaged within an organisation put off younger TCN adults and Swedes of TCN background from getting involved? Perhaps

they are more interested to meet Swedes of their own age? Such questions require further investigation.

The Catholic Church, the In Umeå project and the Friend in Umeå network all had slightly more experience with TCNs. This interaction, however, was generally as a largely passive worshipper in the Church's services, or as the main beneficiary target group of the volunteering and befriending services offered by the other two organisations. The Friend in Umeå network probably had the most proactive and engaged TCNs of these three initiatives. The section below discusses further the subject of motivations.

Regarding the role and specificities of second generations, Friend in Umeå had experienced that such children find things easier than their parents in many ways as they are often more immersed in Swedish society through the school system and they usually learn the Swedish language more quickly. As a result, however, these children sometimes have to take on more responsibility to support their parents. They may end up translating for their parents at doctor's visits or meetings with authorities etc. Such a role can bring pressure and stress, and in some instances may force a child to a more mature perspective than they would otherwise have held. As described earlier in this section, this friendship network had also noted that there are sometimes cultural challenges for second generation teenage girls when it comes to expectations, or to participation in certain kinds of events or activities.

#### *Specific motivations underpinning TCNs involvement*

For the non-ethnic organisations and initiatives interviewed as part of this research it is difficult to generalise much about TCNs' motivations since there was little experience. This was particularly the case for the Swedish Church and the Swedish conservation group. The Catholic Church, however, and the In Umeå project and the matching network, Friend in Umeå did have more experience. The Catholic Church noted the motivation of TCNs as being more than simply a place to worship, though clearly that would be a strong attraction factor for many. Yet it was also recognised that there was a strong social draw, an appreciation of, even a need for, the familiarity and comfort of the institution and for the opportunity to meet with (in many cases) fellow countrymen and speak their mother tongue together (interview finding). The Catholic Church in Umeå has people attending its services from a diverse range of countries in Asia (Korea, Philippines, Malaysia and India), Australia, New Zealand, Canada and North America, a number of Latin American countries and a number of Africans (largely Eritrean and Burundian). Many are students at the university but certainly not all (interview finding).

The interview with the 'In Umeå' project which aimed to increase immigrant participation in volunteer and non-profit associations, revealed TCN motivations such as searching for a sense of belonging, and wishing to contribute something positive. Immigrants, in their experience, were interested to get involved in volunteers activities as a way of meeting Swedes, and/or as a method of overcoming isolation (particularly for those who did not have family members nearby).

The friend-matching network, Friend in Umeå, clearly attracted those TCNs who really wanted to meet and interact with Swedish people, those who are interested and committed to learning the language, and those who also wish to share a little more of their story and their background with Swedish people. This organisation really emphasises the two-way aspect of cultural exchange and this is likely contributing to its popularity. They emphasise how the relations should not simply be about "showing the Swedish way" (interview). This group reports a strong demand from TCNs for its services. They cite their biggest challenge as being attracting and engaging Swedish people (interview finding).

Social aspects were central to all. Few interviewees actually described having had experiences of a strong hobby or skill-driven motivation from TCNs such as a crafting interest, or an ethical commitment to a particular non-profit group's mission.

*Specific contributions offered by TCNs (positive and negative aspects)*

The most successful pairings for Friend in Umeå tended to be those where the immigrants themselves were very interested. They also noted that it had often been easier when families with children were paired since they immediately had something in common and it is much easier to organise things that are child-appropriate activities (interview finding).

Obviously the specific kind of contribution will vary tremendously according to the kind of organisation. Those sporting organisations, or yoga groups or dance classes perhaps simply require a TCN to turn up and join in. The level of contribution an individual makes may relate to the level of entry barriers to the activity.

Save the Children had noted that TCN youth often engage very well and with great enthusiasm in an activity they are taken to through their operations, whether it be climbing or bowling or hiking. Yet when it comes to them continuing to engage in such activities at their own motivation and expense, even if the cost is low, participation immediately ceased. They had found the explanation for this often to be not that they do not have the financial resources, but rather that TCNs choose to, feel obligated to, or simply must, send as much money as they can overseas to those family members they have remaining in the home country (interview finding). A failure to recognise



such commitments, responsibilities and obligations as a hindrance to TCN engagement is disingenuous.

TCNs likely feel much less able to contribute to an indigenous organisation that has a host country focus such as the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation or the Swedish Church. It is likely that TCNs have a lot of experience and willingness that could be contributed, but it seems that many organisations have not yet recognised or prioritised how such contributions could be harnessed.

Negative contributions, or rather difficulties, or at least potential for difficulty was alluded to by a couple of non-profits surrounding gender roles. This can be a complex and delicate issue with some cultures and attitudes or behaviours from the Swedish side creating tension or offence within an immigrant family (interview finding). This would particularly be the case when the role of women is challenged, or when immigrant women begin to adapt to the general role of Swedish women. Men from some cultures can find this very difficult, even threatening (interview finding). Issues such as these are sensitive and subtle and can create negative consequences on occasion.

#### *Presentation of relevant and successful regional experiences*

There are two local initiatives that deserve description here as relevant and successful experiences with third country nationals and Swedes with a TCN background. One was the In Umeå project which was financed with EU funds and which has unfortunately not been able to continue beyond the 2010-2012 funding period. The other is the very bottom-up, volunteer-led initiative to pair Swedes and immigrants in a befriending scenario (either individually, or as families). Both offer replicable models and good experience:

#### *In Umeå – The Funded Project*

The 'In Umeå' project was actually initiated by a group of concerned associations who recognised, and were concerned about, the trend for immigrants and those with a non-Swedish background to not get involved with the very Swedish "föreningsliv" (associations' life). The impetus came from the associations themselves and they requested Umeå Fritid to support them and to project manage the initial grant application process and the resulting project. Umeå Fritid—literally Umeå Freetime—is Umeå city council's department for handling everything to do with leisure and recreation within the city. They also manage the Bureau of Associations (Föreningsbyrån) which acts as the first point of contact for all NGOs, and sports, hobby and recreational associations and groups, of which there are around 750 registered within in the city. Unfortunately since the end of the project funding very little has been able to happen due to the lack of dedicated resources and lack of prioritisation. This underlines a weakness in project-



based funding of such initiatives. For continued progress a project's funding would ideally be placed within a wider organisational and financial strategy (interview finding).

The group of associations were brought together to discuss and work with each other to find ways of being more inclusive and encouraging engagement of those with a non-Swedish background. This awareness-raising and the educational aspect of the project's activities was very much appreciated by the associations. Another important aspect of the project was their activities surrounding the outreach to and information sharing with those newly arrived Swedes coming through the asylum system (nyanländ) about the volunteer sector, how it works, what they might be interested in becoming involved with etc. These 'new Swedes' were the TCN focus group for this project.

A key factor in the success of the project, at least in terms of raising awareness, was the collaboration the project established with the schools that provide 'Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)' classes. This channel was a very important channel for meeting a lot of immigrants and informing them about the volunteer side of Swedish society. This was an important way to meet older adults, and parents, that activities with children or high schools would not reach. The project has created a very good model for outreach, for activity days, and for education of associations. Umeå Fritid is hopeful that this model and the lessons learnt can be built upon in the future but as it currently stands there is little plan for that.

The project found that sports and music activities are usually attractive to youth. Adults tended to be more interested in cultural events, though sports also engaged them. The project found that many immigrant adults were particularly interested in learning to swim. This raises other issues for cultures that require segregated public swimming.

Some less common sports groups did get involved, for example arm wrestling and yoga and these proved to be very popular among the immigrants attending the activity days. However the larger and more common types of sports associations were very difficult to engage in the project. They already have so much going on, but also a focus on integration of immigrants is not a high priority for them. After the 'In Umeå' project, however, some youth sports associations in the Ersboda area of the city (an area with a higher concentration of immigrants) did begin to show interest in engaging with immigrants groups. They even began to get funding for integration activities through sports though this was initiated by a resident man of Kurdish origin who had noticed the need. This same individual is now employed at Västerbottens Sports Federation (Västerbottens idrottsförbund) to work for integration and diversity. This raises

an important point about the crucial role one individual can hold if they have the interest and the passion to 'champion' integration efforts and push for improvement.

Another example of how the participation of TCNs in sport was increased was given by Umeå Fritid: Through the 'In Umeå' project that they coordinated, a local badminton club in the Umedalen (western) part of the city became aware of the fact that there were a group of very interested and very good badminton players who were based in Ersboda. These men, however, did not have a car and they found it too difficult and time consuming to take two different buses and journey all the way across town (a journey of approximately 45 minutes) to participate in badminton at Umedalen. So, to overcome this distance, time and cost barrier the Umedalen club decided to run some badminton nights in the Ersboda area. This was a very tangible change and a flexibility that was much appreciated, and was a result of a strong direct match between an immigrant group and a sports club.

#### *Friend in Umeå (Vän i Umeå) – the Volunteer Effort*

This organisation has only been in existence for three years (since 2011) though it has much experience to share from this time. It was established in 2011 by a loose group of people affiliated with the Swedish Church, Swedish for Immigrants (Svenska för invandrare, SFI), Save the Children, KFUM and the Red Cross (interview finding). They had noticed that when they asked immigrants who were learning Swedish in SFI school who their friends were the only Swedish 'friends' they could name were officials they had met through their immigration process, or teachers at SFI. Friend in Umeå was, from the beginning, a wholly voluntary effort. It is not an organisation in itself, it is more of a network and it works in collaboration with other organisations. Recently they have received small amounts of funding from the Red Cross, and from the Västerbotten County Administration. This money has enabled them to organise communal activities which have been much appreciated. They aim to expose immigrants to the wealth of natural and cultural facilities that can be experienced at little to no cost such as forest walks, mushroom picking trips, visiting museums etc. Experience garnered from these trips show that there is Swedish cultural knowledge or familiarity that those from other countries often do not have and Swedes should remember not to assume that others have this knowledge, even things such as wearing wellies in the forest, not high heels. Simple interventions such as having appropriate clothing and footwear available for loan could be helpful in the future but this is not something Friend in Umeå have the ability to provide at this time.

Their main service however is the provision of individual matching of immigrants according to their interests and expressed wishes, with Swedish individuals through an initial interview. How the pairings meet, and how often is then left up to those invol-

ved but they recommend around twice a month for one year. Their emphasis is on matching being a two-way process for people to learn about each other and their cultural backgrounds. It is not designed to show the 'Swedish way'. Swedes gain as much from the friendships and interactions as the immigrants. The network has not worked specifically with asylum channels, or the Public Employment Service. It has been mostly immigrants involved with the SFI schools. In reality most of these people have tended to have origins from Africa and the Middle East. They have people who come from Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq and a few people from Afghanistan or China. Some are students at the university. They have a 'board' of 5 or 6 Swedish people. They have tried to engage immigrants to become more involved in the running of the network but this has not yet happened.

In the beginning they had about 30 'pairings', now they have approximately 120 pairings (some are families with children), which means a total of between 300-500 participants. Some meet together every week, others perhaps every month. Some pairings don't always work, or don't have longevity. Personal characteristics are integral to the success of the pairing, and to the integration process. They have found a large demand from the immigrant side to meet Swedish people. They usually start with those immigrants who are studying Swedish at SFI. Attracting Swedish involvement is one of the biggest challenges they face. There is interest from Swedish people but it is very difficult to really get them to commit their time. People are so busy. Many people have come through church connections but they are trying to broaden away from being perceived as a religious-related group.

Another big challenge they have is trying to engage young Swedish men. There are many young immigrant men who would like to make Swedish friends but it is very difficult to find someone for them. A sporting interest or connection could be very helpful here but they have not really managed to get this going very well yet.

Some of the people Friend in Umeå support have stated that they would like to feel that they can contribute and give back something themselves. They don't always want to be on the receiving end. They feel that they themselves could have something to offer. This is a good strategy for building confidence and pride. Certainly the immigrants that have been involved in the befriending scheme say that it has helped them to improve their Swedish language ability, and given them greater insight into the Swedish way of life.

#### *Relation between national/local integration models and TCN civic participation*

The local level in Sweden works using the national level policies and frameworks for the handling of skills, knowledge, competence evaluation, or the receiving of asylum seekers, or the processing of job seekers. National policies for equal opportunities and

gender equality, diversity and integration guide activities at the regional and local levels. How these guidelines are actually implemented, and specific project activities, however, are handled locally with a good degree of autonomy. This means that those regions that have higher levels of immigrant populations within the country may have greater experience of working with issues of integration than other parts of the kingdom.

With regards to the civic participation of TCNs, the local examples described in the pre-ceding section suggest that there is quite a lot of work ahead to really increase levels of immigrant participation and engagement with the Swedish way of interacting with sports and recreational and volunteer associations. Despite a lot of effort and commitment the In Umeå project's efforts unfortunately did not result in a great many new TCN members of the volunteer organisations, sports groups and non-profits involved. The project's contribution was greatest on the institutional, organisational and awareness-raising front. An external evaluation of the project considered the reasons for this low conversion of initial interest and enthusiasm to a longer-term volunteer involvement. It found that, when 77 'new-Swedes' were asked how often they would like to participate in a sport or volunteer activity 27% responded 'when it suits them', and 25% said once a week (Sjöberg et al, 2012). This highlights the wish, or inability, to commit to pre-determined days and times, and a desire for flexibility, an aversion to the regularity of many Swedish associations. A quotation from a respondent in the evaluation report suggests that many with a third country background do not have such a cultural familiarity with planning for the long-term. They tend to think in the shorter term and don't wish to tie up time in advance. This points to a dichotomy between new-Swedes' interests and the traditional way that Swedish associations organise their activities. It also highlights a clear difficulty for the associations that need to have an idea how many will be involved in their activities, or that need to build sports teams with a place for all and a shared development over time (ibid). There needs to be a compromise from both sides for a successful relationship between TCNs and associations in such instances.

Other points raised in this evaluation report as hindrances to active membership in a volunteer organisation was a certain nervousness of experiencing a negative reaction, a lack of confidence in their ability to understand (both linguistically, but also the social rules and norms), and the more systemic structural discrimination that was described in part 1 of this report.

It is also likely that the focus on newly arrived immigrants in the In Umeå project (meaning those who have been in Sweden less than five years) may have been rather narrow and thus contributed to the low 'conversion' rate. These people tend to have a large 'to-do' list in this early stage as they focus on finding a job and mastering the

Swedish language. It is possible that they have little energy left over after this to devote to hobbies or volunteering, and activities geared to aiding a deeper level of integration. It takes time for an immigrant to feel comfortable enough in the society and in their lifestyle to be able to commit their time and resources to volunteering (Sjöberg et al, 2012).

In Friend in Umeå's experience language is the key to integration. Sufficient competence in the Swedish language is crucial to being able to navigate a path towards integration. Sport can also be a good channel, especially for children. If a child is good at a sport it can give them a higher status and acceptance.

#### *Factors and conditions promoting or hindering TCN civic engagement*

The following sections outline some of the factors found to be either promoting or hindering the involving of TCN immigrants in the volunteer and non-profit sector.

#### Promoting Factors

- Specific projects and initiatives geared towards encouraging immigrant engagement such as the 'In Umeå' project, or the Ersboda football club's initiative towards immigrant children and youth.
- Dedicated staff with a specific TCN integration mission (such as during the In Umeå project)
- Information and outreach conducted in immigrant languages eg. In Umeå's leaflet that was published with 26 languages in a single booklet.
- Information and explanation to non-Swedes about how associations, clubs and volunteering works in Swedish society, and on the kind of organisations in existence they might like to be involved in.
- Individual interest matching – Friend in Umeå does this to a certain degree. The In Umeå project described the potential value of individual matching but such a programme could not be implemented because it is human resource heavy and thus cost-prohibitive.
- Activity days held in other languages – Naturskyddsförening occasionally holds some events in English but this will only attract those immigrants who have some higher comprehension of English.
- Religious commonalities and familiarities can be a bridge.

## Hindering Factors

- Lack of knowledge or awareness of the existence, role and value of the non-profit and volunteer sector in Swedish society
- Language barriers – insufficient ability, or confidence, in the Swedish language
- Lack of knowledge or understanding of the more subtle, sometimes unspoken, social rules and codes of conduct
- Lack of sensitivity, from the Swedish side, to cultural and linguistic differences and a lack of patience with, and/or interest in, those with different cultural backgrounds
- Financial limitations and barriers – particularly for some activities or sports requiring a lot of gear, specific clothing or equipment
- Cultural clashes where, especially immigrant parents, may have little understanding of the role, importance and expectations of their children's involvement in sports or recreational clubs
- Cultural clashes where particular activities are not seen as appropriate for particular groups e.g. girls playing football perhaps, or male and female communal swimming classes
- Lack of familiarity and understanding of a societal and cultural structure where every-one can have a voice and an opinion and get involved such as exists in Sweden—those from very different societal backgrounds may have little experience and conception of a volunteer sector
- TCNs and those with sport or volunteer experience from other countries may be intimidated or put off by the formal, regimented and committed nature that seems to be expected by Swedish associations and volunteer groups. Other countries often have looser and less formal, less binding arrangement (Sjöberg et al, 2012).
- Religious beliefs can occasionally be a barrier.
- Lack of confidence, especially to engage and communicate with Swedes
- Perhaps a lack of desire to 'be Swedish' or conduct oneself in a 'Swedish way'
- TCNs may need to send as much money as they can overseas to those family members they have remaining in the home country—this limits the financial capital they have available to them to engage in volunteer or sporting activities



#### 4.4 TCNs' ETHNIC ASSOCIATIONS AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

##### *Legislative framework concerning TCNs' associations*

Any TCN group or association must abide by the same legislation as all Swedish organisations. There are no differences in the legislative framework or the Act of Associations (föreningslagen). An association must follow the principles in Swedish, act in accordance to democratic principles, and not incite hatred, racism or homophobic attitudes (Hate Speech Proposition 2001/02:59 (Riksdagen, 2001)). There is a legislative framework and laws surrounding the protection of religious freedom in Sweden (US State Department, 2012). It is not necessary to register religious activity unless groups wish to become officially-recognised religious denominations in the country. This would require a detailed analysis of the organisation and its membership. Such recognition allows a religious group to receive government support, and to be taxed as a non-profit (ibid). Denominational status confers the right to legally marry couples, for example (interview finding).

##### *Main features of TCNs' ethnic associations*

There were only two organisations interviewed as part of this project that could be described as 'ethnic' organisations meaning established by, and run with a strong focus upon, those with an immigrant background. These were a non-profit group PREI (Project for Integration) and a religious organisation, namely the Nigerian-headquartered Deeper Life Bible Church. It is open for interpretation whether the Catholic Church should be considered within this category of 'ethnic' or not but their Bishop described in an interview how the Church has often been referred to in Swedish society as the "invandrares' kyrka" which means the immigrants' church. It automatically became an assembly place for catholic immigrants. Their experience, however, has largely been referred to in the preceding section on non-ethnic associations but they may on occasion be referred to here.

Umeå's City Council maintains a database of all sports, non-profit and volunteer associations registered in the municipality. This is not compulsory to their existence however registration allows an association to take advantage of the Council's Bureau of Associations' help services. It allows them to make use of council facilities, book venues, and apply for financial support in the form of small grants (Umeå Kommun, 2014). According to their website there are 750 volunteer and sporting associations registered in total. Under the category of "ethnic" organisations, i.e. those organisations who have classed themselves as ethnic, there are 28 registered groups (around 3% of the total) [ibid]. These range from groups such as the African Welfare Association, or the Iranian Association to the Somali Minority International Welfare Organisation (ibid). Most of these are fairly small and informal. Many are geared towards being a

support network for their fellow countrymen and women in the region. Others work more specifically with integration aims, or for cultural understanding such as the Womens' Association for Health and Integration or the Ethiopian Support and Integration Group. Others have a more general aim to support the health and wellbeing of immigrant communities such as the Interest Group for Wellness. A couple of the organisations in this database have an explicit focus on youth or issues of identity related to second generations such as the Somali Youth Association in Umeå or the Integrated Eritrean Association in Umeå.

This database provides only basic information on the name of the organisation, a contact person's details and an email address or website where available (very few had a web-site). Some briefly describe their activities, others do not. Many are rather informal and not highly active. The register is updated annually. The largest and most active of these associations in the region is PREI. This organisation was interviewed as part of this re-search and forms a key reference for the findings detailed throughout this section, as well as providing the regional example under section 3.4.6. A broader analysis would have been facilitated if time and resources had allowed. This section and the information contained within must, therefore, be viewed as a brief snapshot of two organisations' experiences, rather than a comprehensive synthesis.

#### *Specific motivations underpinning TCNs' associations*

As mentioned earlier in this part of the study, PREI was established with a strong motivation to help improve integration between immigrants and Swedes, and to help break the social isolation of many immigrants, especially vulnerable women. This remains the core of their ethos but time and growing membership has broadened their remit to include many sporting, dance, cooking and handicraft opportunities in line with the interests and experiences of its members (interview).

The group was born from intimate personal experience, and that has likely been a crucial factor in their success. The founders could be related to by the target groups. The organisation was likely not seen as being led (or even imposed?) by the Swedish society. The subtle structural and cultural barriers that section 3.3.3 described were likely not perceived by immigrants.

The Deeper Life Bible Church, however, was established as a result of a very small, localised, bottom-up interest from students of African origin to worship in a familiar way (interview finding). The motivation of its participants was described during interview as similar to that of its initiation, that is, to be involved in something familiar, to have a connection to their homeland and their previous experience of worship, and to gain a sense of community. Since this organisation was established by students for students it has a high turnover of participants. In addition it meant that the organisa-

tion was not established with any particular integration purpose in mind and its members are not particularly trying to integrate themselves into Swedish society or Swedish forms of worship. A likely attraction factor of the Deeper Life Bible Church for these international students is that the services are held in the English language. For all these reasons this Church has very few Swedish participants.

#### *Factors and conditions facilitating or hindering TCNs' associations*

Some factors that may be helping, or hindering, the establishment and development of TCNs' own associations are described below:

#### Facilitating Factors

- The ease of establishing a group or association in Sweden
- The openness of Swedish society, at least bureaucratically, to establishing such a group
- The strongly-held democratic ideals of Swedish society which dictates that everyone should have a voice
- Support services available such as that offered by the Bureau of Associations
- A common framework already shared and well known by immigrants such as the Catholic Church's, and the African origin Deeper Life Bible Church, familiar (and probably comforting) views, approach and manner of worship.
- Organisations established by immigrants themselves are probably less intimidating as many of the people involved have had similar experiences. This is a strong connecting factor and an effective way to begin to combat societal isolation.
- There are lower language barriers for TCN-run groups since many more immigrants know English than know Swedish, and also because TCNs' associations are more likely than Swedish associations to have members who speak an immigrant's mother tongue.
- A possible fear of, or intimidation by, or perhaps a lack of interest in, the Swedish society and the Swedish culture of associations and non-profits may be a factor encouraging the establishment of TCNs' own organisations
- A preference for an organisation where TCNs can establish their own rules and/or continue home traditions or ways of organising. This can be empowering and comforting and can smooth the longer term integration process and

help build confidence. Conversely, it can also become another barrier to interaction with the Swedish society.

### Hindrances

- If the organisation is country-specific it can mean very low potential and actual members if there are very few immigrants from that country
- The focus of the group can be very specific and this may hinder the advancement of the association in the long-term
- The make-up and aims of the TCN group can alienate Swedes
- The effectiveness and value of the TCN association can be limited by the perpetuation of home-country inherited attitudes or conflicts, and may prevent groups working together towards shared goals
- A possible lower competence in the Swedish language or ability to navigate Swedish bureaucracy or cultural norms could limit the effectiveness and development of TCN associations

### *Role of Sending Countries in TCNs' associations*

The Nigerian-headquartered Deeper Life Bible Church has a network of groups across the world and their leadership gain support and share materials with each other in response to requests (interview finding). The church may release some small amount of funding to help establish new groups (ibid). This is no different from how the Catholic Church, or any other group with international representation (such as the Red Cross or Save the Children) operates. Embassies and Ministries are not involved as far as this research could investigate (interview finding).

Where embassy or consulate staff have become involved in Sweden has been, for example, in the case of the berry picker workers from Thailand and the alleged salary and worker rights abuses that have been occurring in that industry. After high profile urban protests by the immigrant workers the Thai embassy in Stockholm, and various representatives of the Thai authorities became involved as interpreters and investigators in attempts to resolve the labour conflict (Eriksson and Tollefsen, 2014).

This research has not been able to conduct detailed investigation of relational ties between immigrants and their home countries, or of those immigrants who reside in Sweden as political refugees. It is therefore not possible to draw conclusions about the role of the sending countries, or the Ministries or Embassies in such instances. There is always some degree of media and popular speculation of organised remittances colla-

tion, or organised information gathering exercises but this research is not able present any evidence on such topics.

There has been a recent local Umeå example of international networking of local TCN groups. This is exemplified in an initiative during 2010-2014 to construct a mosque building for Umeå's Muslims to be able to worship in a dedicated building of their own, which they currently lack. This initiative, spearheaded by the local Swedish Muslim Association, was actively networking and liaising with organisations and individuals in the Middle East in an attempt to raise the required funds (Degerström, 2012; VK Dec, 2013; Redaktionen, 2013). So far they have not been successful in raising sufficient funds. It should be noted that it has been funding and internal organisational difficulties that have presented obstacles to the realisation of the association's ambition to build a mosque. There were no legislative or planning hindrances from the Swedish side. Indeed the initiative received planning permission and began construction on the foundations in an urban site but lack of financing prevented completion (Brodin, 2014). The large hole dug for the foundation was abandoned and became full of water, presenting a safety risk. Eventually the city council filled in the hole again in spring 2014.

### *Successful Regional Experiences*

PREI-the Project for Integration-is an Umeå-based immigrant-established and led non-profit group that has been particularly successful at (and started out with this focus) accessing and drawing out those 'hidden' women and girls with immigrant backgrounds who are expected to stay at home, and who tend to also have a greater experience of domestic violence. The group's remit and range of activities has broadened considerably since its establishment 25 years ago but they retain a strong commitment to these often isolated and vulnerable women, children and elderly within the immigrant community. They were established by six such women who felt themselves to be outside of the Swedish society and isolated and they offer a powerful tribute to what can be achieved by women, for women, when working together. They are not a feminist organisation and today they have many men involved and people from all backgrounds, but they retain a strong female empathy and they provide an arena where women and girls can gain skills and confidence together within a framework of a supportive organisation that intimately understands their needs. This organisation's subtle undertow has been about emancipation and empowerment. Their mission is to solve difficulties faced by immigrants, together with an aim towards improving integration (PREI, 2014). The 'PRE' in 'PREI' stands for prepared and the 'I' stands for integration (ibid)

When observing the organisation and their activities, however, one gains a sense that the Swedish side has become somewhat lost. This may be partly because the organisation has been so broad in its activities and operations, and is so democratic in its nature. It is also likely partly due to the previously mentioned difficulty in getting Swedish people to engage and commit to such initiatives. The impression one gets today is the organisation is very much about cultural exchange within its predominantly non-Swedish members, and it serves as an important empowerment and support network operating in parallel to Swedish institutions and opportunities. It carries both advantages and disadvantages by being viewed as a principally 'ethnic' organisation. Whilst this lowers initial engagement barriers for members and participants by having a lower expectation, or even need for, good Swedish language competence, and through not having the same subtle 'Swedish' unspoken codes of conduct and manner of interacting, it could be argued that the opposite has taken place. That is, that Swedish people possibly find the organisation to be somewhat exotic or 'foreign' and may not feel so comfortable there. In some ways it may be appropriate to say that PREI has become a 'victim' of its own success in attracting and engaging immigrants. It operates as a parallel structure which gives comfort to its members, but at the same time reduces the need for members to engage with Swedish organisations and Swedish volunteer opportunities or Swedish people.

#### *Integration models and TCNs' participation in ethnic associations*

As described already in section 3.3.7 the local level 'integration model', if one is to use such a term, is led by the Swedish national level policies and guidelines. This is as true for so-called ethnic associations as for non-ethnic associations. Little can be added to this fact. What might be suggested, however, with regard to the level of TCN civic participation is that there is a difference in participation levels and engagement of TCNs in what might be described as their own, or 'ethnic' organisations rather than more Swedish organisations. The reasons for this have been mentioned throughout the preceding sections but likely related to reduced entry barriers, greater comfort, lower Swedish language skills, greater flexibility in engagement, lower need to commit oneself to a regular and strict meeting time or training regime, familiarity, fewer unspoken social rules or codes of conduct. To be able, however, to determine whether these are common denominators across a number of different kinds of ethnic associations would require further investigation.

#### *Transnational Activities and Sending Country Links*

The Catholic Church and the Deeper Life Church have, like any religious group, an inherent evangelical mission to promote themselves and spread their mode of worship. This requires transnational communication and support networks. They have both



been very successful at this, though their success in Sweden has largely been a result of bottom-up demand. Other TCN associations may well have links with 'sending countries' or have the origin country as a focus for their mission but such organisations were not found during this research at the Västerbotten regional level. Most of the twenty-six ethnic associations in the Umeå City Council database simply had sporting or art, dance or cultural activities, or integration support, as a focus for their members. The Bangladeshi Society in Umeå state as part of their mission that they occasionally gather money for humanitarian or disaster relief activities in Bangladesh. The local Libyan Association describe that they work to promote democratic development in Libya and organise cultural activities linked to Libya. This research, at the local level of Västerbotten at least, does not suggest that TCN-established or run volunteer and ideal organisations tend to focus on the origin countries. Their activities rather suggest a social and community impetus for friendship, support and health of specific sporting interests. The fact that so many of these ethnic organisations have such a focus is perhaps another indication of the findings presented throughout section 3.3 that traditional Swedish associations and voluntary groups are not reaching, or successfully engaging with, those of an immigrant background, so much so that immigrants feel more comfortable establishing parallel organisations.

#### 4.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Swedish organisations are open and accessible to all by legislation. Yet despite this openness, and a high level of Swedish involvement, those from third country nations are conspicuous by their absence from the sector, especially at the Västerbotten regional level. Reasons for this absence were highlighted during interviews with key informants. An analysis of the TCN-established and run organisations also suggests some of the reasons for a hesitance among TCNs to engage with the Swedish way of interacting with the voluntary sector.

Even though there were not many ethnic organisations at the regional level and those in existence were generally quite small and informal, interviews with them provided insights into TCN motivations and concerns. TCNs were significantly more represented in TCN-established organisations than Swedish-led or Swedish-focused volunteer groups. Research findings suggest that TCNs can identify more easily with TCN founders. TCN organisations were not seen as being led (or even imposed) by the Swedish society. The subtle structural and cultural barriers that section 4.3. described are not as prevalent in immigrants' own organisations, thus the entry barriers are lower. TCNs are often seeking something familiar with which to engage, they may wish to maintain a cultural connection to their homeland, or seek community and support from people who have lived through similar experiences. High competence in Swedish language may be less necessary in TCN organisations and there may even be utilita-

rian use of the mother tongue. TCN organisations also tend to tolerate a greater flexibility in engagement, and have less of a need for a volunteer or member to commit themselves to a regular and strict meeting time or training regime.

It could be argued, however, that TCN organisations whilst offering an important support role and a chance for a TCN to become engaged in something, may unintentionally contribute to polarisation and a lack of interaction and integration. TCN organisations can be in danger of becoming a parallel structure to Swedish service providers and volunteer groups. Although they can give comfort to their members they, at the same time, reduce the need for members to engage with Swedish organisations and Swedish people. Swedes, in addition, may find TCN organisations not relevant to their interests, or too ex-otic or 'foreign' for them to be able to engage.

The level of contribution expected of a volunteer or participant can be an entry barrier to the activity for TCNs possibly not used to such organised and repetitive ways of being involved. The impression of formality, commitment and seriousness given by Swedish sports associations, volunteer groups and ethical non-profits can be intimidating, and serves as a barrier for TCNs and other non-Swedes. Another explanation for lower TCN participation in groups where a cost is incurred (however small) that arose during interview discussion was that some TCNs choose to, or feel obligated to, send as much money as they can overseas to family members remaining in the home country. A failure to recognise such commitments, responsibilities and obligations as a hindrance to TCN engagement is disingenuous. Culturally different interpretations of gender roles can also be a complicating factor in a TCNs decision to engage or not with Swedish civil society.

Although this research was unable to engage with sports or music groups to discuss im-migrant participation and the experiences within these sectors it is important that their key role is not ignored. Sports associations, especially football clubs but also others, and music groups with a focus on immigrant children and children from deprived areas exist throughout Sweden and in the Västerbotten Region. These groups can offer a lifeline route into wider societal integration for such children and national and regional examples of such success models exist. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such initiatives for an individual child probably depend largely on the interest, skill and confidence level of the child, but additionally upon the attitude, interest and commitment from that child's par-ents. Communication and interaction at the parental level thus remains necessary.

The low conversion of initial interest and enthusiasm to a longer-term volunteer involvement found during the In Umeå project in the region was felt to be influenced by the TCNs' desire or need for flexibility, and an aversion to the regularity of many Swe-

dish associations. This points to a dichotomy between TCNs' interests and the traditional way that Swedish associations organise their activities. The implication is that a more successful immigrant engagement would be achieved where there could be a compromise on such strictures from both sides.

Unsurprisingly however, throughout the research, language was held to be a crucial tool to integration. Sufficient competence in the Swedish language is essential to being able to navigate a path towards integration. Findings from this research, nevertheless, suggest that language fluency alone is not enough.

Other barriers to TCN engagement were found to be much more subtle or personal socio-cultural phenomenon. For example, a nervousness of experiencing a negative reaction, a lack of confidence in their ability to understand (both linguistically, but also culturally), and a lack of willingness to expose oneself to the more systemic structural discrimination that was described in part 1 of this report, or even to possible overt discrimination. It also takes considerable time for an immigrant to feel comfortable enough in the society and in their lifestyle to be able to consider committing their time and resources to volunteering.

Experience gathered from Swedish-led organisations indicated that there is Swedish cultural knowledge or familiarity that those from other countries often do not have. Too often Swedes are not aware of this, or just assume that everyone has the knowledge and understanding of their society that they have. This can discourage TCNs and other immigrants. This is where organisations that recognise this and that encourage a two-way process of respect and understanding, not just showing the 'Swedish way', seemed to be more successful in engaging TCNs in the region.

#### 4.6 SUMMARY OF PART 3

For this third part of the DIVERSE research project eight Swedish and third country national (TCN)-established religious, humanitarian and environmental non-profit organisations were interviewed about their experience and perception of TCN immigrant participation in volunteering and civil society. A limitation of this Västerbotten regional perspective was that the interviewed organisations generally had very few TCN volunteers. Many thus had little experience of issues relating to TCN involvement. In such cases the interviews focused more generally on the issues they faced in attracting volunteers and committed members, the reasons they saw for so little TCN engagement and how barriers might be overcome. In some instances the organisations interviewed had recognised their lack of TCN representativeness as being of concern but they had considered it not to be a high priority area at this time.

The report provides an opening analysis of the Swedish volunteer and non-profit context, grappling with the international perceptions and myths surrounding the sector. Sweden ranks amongst the top in terms of numbers of citizens involved in volunteering—an estimated 51% of the Swedish population volunteer (Anheier and Salamon, 1999). Yet clear differences from the dominant perception of non-profit and volunteering based on the Anglo-Saxon model are apparent. Sports organisations were estimated to account for 3.5 million members in a country of just 9.5 million (Wijkström, 2000) accounting for 44.5% of all Swedish volunteer effort. Strategic legislative and financial support was given to sports-related and recreation non-profits after the Second World War as part of efforts to improve the health and well-being of the population. This helps explain why these kind of organisations have come to dominate. 75% of all the work effort of non-profits in Sweden is provided by volunteers. Only 2.5% of the workforce are employed by a non-profit. The Swedish volunteer sector is actually sizeable in terms of their total operating expenditures: 4.1% of gross domestic product (GDP). Contrary to international perception, 62% of the Swedish non-profit sector's revenue is generated by its own activities, largely from membership fees making it actually amongst the least dependent upon State funding.

The studies and statistics described in this section emphasised that a significant Swedish volunteer sector does exist, with high levels of volunteering, and a good degree of financial independence from the State. What is unique to Sweden is the low engagement of the sector in traditional welfare-service provision or poverty reducing efforts, and its centralisation along sporting and recreational lines. What is also exceptional is the broad societal engagement in volunteer effort, and the low level of 'professionalisation' or paid employment within the sector. Understanding of this national context should help frame the following consideration of immigrant involvement in civic society through volunteering. New trends are emerging within the Swedish non-profit sector, however due to global economic challenges and Swedish political changes and new ideologies of smaller government. It is too early to predict how the sector will adapt to these trends.

A fundamental concept, enshrined in law, is that anyone and everyone can access, and become involved with, volunteer organisations as long as the members act in accordance to the statutes of the group. No one, at least by law and in theory, can be excluded as a result of their ethnicity, political views, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. There is no specific legislation regarding the specificities of TCNs. They are subject to the same rules and regulations as Swedish people are. There are no regional or local differences in laws or legal frameworks. In Sweden, although the regional authorities have a large degree of autonomy in how they operate, they are still bound by the same national laws and codes of conduct.

Yet despite this openness, and a high level of Swedish volunteering, those from third country nations are conspicuous by their absence from the sector. Reasons for this absence include the level of contribution and formality expected of a volunteer can be off-putting to TCNs who are possibly not used to such organised and structured ways of being involved. Other entry barriers include for example, a nervousness of experiencing a negative reaction, a lack of confidence in their ability to understand (both linguistically, but also culturally), and a lack of willingness to expose oneself to systemic, or even overt discrimination. It also takes considerable time for an immigrant to feel comfortable enough in the society and in their lifestyle to be able to consider committing their time and resources to volunteering. Unsurprisingly however, throughout the research, language was held to be a crucial tool to integration. Sufficient competence in the Swedish language is essential, yet are insufficient on their own. Recognising these myriad and subtle other barriers to TCN engagement are essential.

Another explanation for lower TCN participation in groups where a cost is incurred (however small) that arose during interview discussion was that some TCNs choose to, or feel obligated to, send as much money as they can overseas to family members remaining in the home country. A failure to recognise such commitments, responsibilities and obligations as a hindrance to TCN engagement is disingenuous. Culturally different interpretations of gender roles can also be a complicating factor in a TCNs decision to engage or not with Swedish civil society.

This research did not find that TCN-established or run volunteer organisations focused on their origin countries. Their activities rather suggested a social and community impetus for friendship, support and health or with a specific sporting interest that did not require an investment of commitment or of equipment. The fact that so many of these ethnic organisations have such a focus may suggest why traditional Swedish associations and voluntary groups are not successfully engaging with those of an immigrant background.

The little experience of second generations that was found within the region suggested that the children of immigrants integrate more easily than their parents. They are often more immersed in Swedish society through the school system and they usually learn the Swedish language to a high degree of fluency. Consequently, however, these children may end up taking on more responsibility to support their parents. They may end up translating for their parents at doctor's visits or meetings with authorities etc. Such a role can bring pressure and stress to children, and may even force a child to a more mature perspective than they would otherwise have held.





## 5 SUMMARY

### *Introduction: A General Landscape of Third Country Nationals' Migration*

The Swedish historical experience of immigration was described in the introduction to this research report, providing context for the project. So-termed first wave immigrants were largely labour market migrants from Finland and Norway (with a good number also from Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Turkey, Spain and Greece) dominating between the 1940s and 1960s. Second wave migrants began in the 1970s and began to consist more of those seeking refuge. It is open to debate whether the migratory trends in Sweden since the turn of the millennia could be described as a “third wave” where clearly dominant are asylum seekers and refugees from the world’s conflicts. The Swedish migration board estimates that 80,000 new cases of asylum will be granted during 2014 (Migrationsverket, 2014). Labour migration has been seen as preferable since migrants start working immediately, meaning they are both contributing to Swedish society and integrating more quickly than asylum seekers and tied migrants generally are able to. New legislation liberalised the Swedish labour market in 2008. For those seeking refuge from difficulties in their home country the potential for labour migration also opens up another, legal, route into Sweden, at least in theory. As the findings from this study of the evaluation of foreign-acquired competence (Part 1), diversity within the workplace (Part 2), and more subtle and social aspects of a broader integration of immigrants (Part 3), suggest, putting an effective labour migration into practice is more difficult than theory and policy assume.

As a rule, Sweden tends to have been poorer than many EU countries at labour market integration of immigrants, but one of the best at ensuring basic human rights and providing social support from the State (Nordlund & Pelling, 2013). The country is also near the forefront in its efforts towards validating the skills and qualifications of migrants (described in part one), and is certainly a pioneer in its efforts to support immigrants to learn the Swedish language through their Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language training. The three parts of this report further examined multiple aspects of these immigrant-host country dynamics and integration opportunities and barriers.

### 5.1 PART 1: THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS' SKC RECOGNITION

This first part of the DIVERSE research project focussed on the systems, tools and procedures in place within Sweden to access and recognise the formal and informal skills, knowledge and competence (SKC) of immigrants with third country national status (TCNs). The research also shone light on initiatives occurring at the regional level of Västernorrland County in the northern part of Sweden. Data for this part of the study was gathered through a combination of literature review, statistical analysis and seven interviews conducted with individuals working at evaluating organisations within

the region. The report describes the legislative and administrative framework surrounding SKC assessment and investigates the assessment tools and procedures in place. The benefits and outcomes of an SKC evaluation process, both for the migrant and for the society as a whole, were considered and difficulties and bottlenecks within the system were highlighted.

Sweden defined the SKC validation process in its 2003 Bill on Validation where 'validation' was considered to incorporate a detailed assessment, documentation and evaluation of the formal and informal knowledge, skills, experiences and qualifications that a person possesses. SKC recognition is the responsibility of the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, AF). They, in turn, sub-contract validation services from the private or semi-private sector. The system is centralised so that agreements with sub-contractors are made at the national level, within sectors such as medical, teaching, engineering. The actual supply of validation services at the regional level however can differ, with a number of players being involved. At the Västerbotten County level validation is performed, for example, by at least eight different organisations, for a variety of labour market sectors.

There are a number of different validation models in operation in Sweden however all models follow a similar 4-stage procedure. Stage one consists of a general mapping of a person's knowledge and abilities in the sector. Stage two provides more in-depth competence mapping, while stage three entails a first level of independent assessment of competence. Stage four includes a formal assessment of level of attainment and may include practical tests, examinations, authorisation and/or certification. The cost of validation and the time input required vary widely between the stages and the sector concerned.

Sweden has been held as an example of good SKC practice by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with regards to its extensive and cost-free infrastructure supporting migrants to learn Swedish; its efforts towards a practical recognition of immigrants' knowledge and experiences, especially beyond formal education; and its legislation to protect wage dumping effects and to limit possible threats to the employment security of the local workforce.

Stakeholders within the SKC system that were interviewed saw value in the process. It can not only, in their view, help immigrants into employment more quickly but it can also serve as a confidence-boosting and self-awareness raising tool for the individual being assessed. An SKC process, even if it directs a person into the Swedish education system to update their knowledge or learn about the Swedish context, it was still felt to offer a win-win to both the Swedish State and the immigrant as it can shorten the amount of time, and thus cost, a person needs to spend in education and speed their

pathway to employment. There are of course significant sectorial differences however, where doctors or lawyers or electricians for example require a longer period of “Swedish-sizing” their competence, than perhaps an nursing assistant, care worker or computer engineer.

Statistics and studies on the effectiveness and success, or otherwise, of the SKC recognition system in getting immigrants into permanent employment faster are few at this stage and initial suggestions are lukewarm. Researchers such as Dingu-Kyrklund (2013) and Rooth and Edberg (2006) have described an inherent structural discrimination where employers find it difficult to assess the competence of someone from outside the Swedish ‘norm’. Overcoming such attitudes and misconceptions may be one of the biggest challenges. This highlights the potential value of SKC systems but also acknowledges that tools, procedures, legislation are not sufficient on their own. Attitudes, familiarities, socio-cultural norms and subtle assumptions all play a significant role.

A major blockage in the Swedish validation system is the long time it can take to get a foreign education validated, and the bias in the system which tends to encourage foreign qualifications to be complemented by Swedish qualifications. Other observed shortcomings include a lack of sustainable financing, the absence of an overall framework for quality assurance, and a lack of relevant training for validation professionals. Other criticisms include the time and resource input required from a trained evaluator; the suggestion of inherent bias towards the needs of the Swedish labour market rather than an immigrant’s previous professional competence and employment preference; a lack of recognition of discrimination faced; or the oversights that occur when translating informal and on-the-job skills to equivalent Swedish qualifications (Anderson and Osman, 2008). These are crucial areas where policy and methodologies require further creative input in order to improve the effectiveness of any validation system.

At the Västerbotten region level there had been few specific TCN-related SKC recognition initiatives and validation was still in the early stage. All the regional practitioners interviewed emphasised the importance of the migrant’s competence in the Swedish language for the success of a recognition evaluation. The system requires a lot of commitment and drive from the immigrant. Interviewees also agreed that one of the weakest parts of the current SKC system is its inability to deal with informal/non-formal competence and experience. Respondents also emphasised that whilst SKC recognition can bring opportunities and benefits, it can take more than specific subject knowledge to work in the Swedish, or any country’s, context. This applies especially to sectors that work with the public, or that must deal with Swedish legal and/or health and safety standards. The informal knowledge of cultural codes and social relationships (eg. teacher-student; patient-doctor) is important. Such knowledge requires time,

familiarity and understanding. It can be taught to some degree, but experiential learning is also required.

The outstanding conclusion remains, nevertheless, that sufficiency with the host country's language is of significant importance to SKC success in the way the system is currently structured. However, as is re-emphasised in Parts 2 and 3 of this report, language alone is not the whole story. This can be seen in the persistence of lack of labour market and societal integration across migrant generations where Swedish born and bred (fluent in Swedish) people of immigrant background remain below national averages.

A final conclusion regarding the SKC process within Sweden relates to the great many players and layers within the system that create confusion, a lack of transparency and a lack of coordination. Practitioners within the system themselves acknowledge this confusion. A person seeking out SKC recognition as a strategy to employment cannot fail to be somewhat puzzled.

## 5.2 PART 2: DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF ORGANISATIONS

Diversity management (DM), in the context of this study, refers to the management of a variety of skills, ages, religions, genders and nationalities of people within an organisation to the benefit of the organisation. The concept has been both purported to be a better way of managing people (Marvin and Girling, 2010), but also criticised as legitimising a more limited approach to equal opportunities where corporate benefit takes precedent. In Sweden the management of diversity has been promoted largely by Swedish immigration policy and a growing recognition that the ninth of the population that are foreign-born experience higher unemployment and labour market discrimination (Omanovic, 2009). Sweden has invested in improving integration within the labour market. At the regional level however geographic and demographic contextual differences are apparent across the country.

The Västerbotten context has its own specificities that explain why Västerbotten organisations had, overall, little experience of, issues related to third country national (TCN) personnel the effective integration and management of such diversity. The County is home to just 6630 TCN residents (or 2.5% of the population [ASTRID, 2010]). TCNs resident in the whole of Sweden in 2010 was 3.1% (SCB, 2010) putting the region below the national average. It is important to note that it was found that respondents described their employees as being TCNs during interview because their parentage, or country of birth was TCN, even though that person may have held Swedish citizenship, and may even have been born and raised entirely in Sweden. A person's official citizenship status may not always even be known by an employer, or a skills evaluator.

There was thus an important blurring of the data. Ethnic diversity within organisations in the region was found to be a topic that was not much considered.

One statistically significant yet officially invisible group of TCNs within Västerbotten are those that come for short-term summer work within the berry-picking and forestry industries, estimated to be around 3750 TCN migrants in summer 2009, a majority from Thailand. They are not registered in the general Swedish data. Although not interviewed as part of this research these seasonal workers represent the largest number of labour migrants from third countries into the region.

The project interviewed ten employers about their diversity management: six public, two non-profit, and two private companies. The sectors covered ranged from a bakery to an industrial engineering company, a church, the state-run unemployment service, the local university, to a number of public and private actors in the personal home or disability assistance and/or healthcare and medical services sector. The smallest organisation had 245 employees and the largest had 11000 regional employees. It is not easy to generalise a clear picture of TCN personnel since the overall numbers were quite low and there was not a strong sectorial relationship. The regional pattern of origin did mimic national in-migration waves, in accordance with Swedish policies of asylum and refuge. As such the region saw trends of Bosnians and Serbs during the conflict in former Yugoslavia, Iranians and Iraqis, Somalis and Ethiopians, and, more recently, Syrians. Interviews with those involved in healthcare recruitment also described a skills shortage within Sweden that encouraged foreign recruitment.

Swedish society has a positive and open rhetoric towards diversity and everyone's equal worth. Lines of questioning that attempted to probe for differences in work output, attitude, ability or level of payment or motivation amongst different people, especially amongst different nationalities, did not meet with response and were felt to be antagonistic to Swedish sensitivities and cultural attitudes to everyone being on an equal footing. However, the view was expressed that TCN personnel, and those from European countries, bring new ways of looking at things, and experience of different ways of operating, that can benefit the organisation.

Informal discussion with TCN people themselves, highlighted the pivotal role of personal contacts and personal references in gaining access to the Swedish labour market. The local contact did not necessarily have to be Swedish, simply someone known to the employer. The importance of social capital, rather than skills evaluations and validations or top-down attempts to manufacture diversity, as an effective strategy towards employment and labour market integration thus should not be underestimated.

A coherent package of policies and processes of DM being implemented in a clear, necessary and deliberate manner simply was not found in the interviewed organisations.



tions. Salary differentials could not be discussed within the interview context however statistics available within the department's ASTRID population database suggest that TCNs earned on average SEK 122,000 (Euros 13,000) per annum less than Swedish citizens in the Västernorrland region in 2010. The difference was higher for the more highly educated TCNs.

Generally organisations in the region receive very few applications from non-Swedish applicants to advertised jobs. Whether this is a result of the inability of non-Swedes to find job adverts, an expression of a skills mismatch between those offered by immigrants and those the labour market requires, or a factor of geographic isolation and general demographic homogeneity in the region, or a combination of all these, is open to debate. The proficiency of employees in the Swedish language was emphasised by respondents, with a possible exception being at the university.

In keeping with findings from the other parts of this research, was the emphasis on the more subtle and personal attitudes, aptitudes, initiatives and motivations of the players involved in any employer-employee relation. These more social, cultural and personality-related characteristics are not always the kind of factors that can be learned, or managed, and may not always even be overcome by simple fluency in the host country language.

### 5.3 PART 3: TCNs' PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

For this third part of the DIVERSE project eight Swedish and third country national (TCN)-established non-profit organisations were interviewed about their experience of TCN participation in volunteering and civil society. A limitation of this Västernorrland regional perspective was that the interviewed organisations generally had very few TCN volunteers. Many thus had little experience of issues relating to TCN involvement.

The studies and statistics described in this section emphasised that a significant Swedish volunteer sector does exist, with high levels of volunteering (>51% of the population), and a good degree of financial independence from the State (>62% of revenue came from own activities). What is unique to Sweden is the low engagement of the sector in traditional welfare-service provision or poverty reducing efforts, and its centralisation along sporting and recreational lines (44.5% of all Swedish volunteer effort). What is also exceptional is the broad societal engagement in volunteer effort, and the low level of 'professionalisation' or paid employment within the sector (just 2.5% of the workforce). There is no specific legislation regarding the specificities of TCNs. There are no regional or local differences in laws or legal frameworks. In Sweden, although the regional authorities have a large degree of autonomy in how they operate, they are still bound by the same national laws and codes of conduct.



Yet despite this openness, and the prevalence of Swedish volunteering, those from third country nations are conspicuous by their absence from the sector. Reasons for this absence include the level of contribution and formality expected of a volunteer putting off TCNs who are possibly not used to such structured ways of engagement. Other entry barriers include for example, a nervousness of experiencing a negative reaction, a lack of confidence in their ability to understand (both linguistically, but also culturally), and a lack of willingness to expose oneself to systemic, or even overt discrimination. It also takes considerable time for an immigrant to feel comfortable enough in the society and in their lifestyle to be able to consider committing their time and resources to volunteering. Another explanation for lower TCN participation was that some TCNs choose to, or feel obligated to, send as much money as they can overseas to family members remaining in the home country. A failure to recognise such commitments and responsibilities as a hindrance to TCN engagement is disingenuous. Culturally different interpretations of gender roles can also be a complicating factor in a TCNs decision to engage or not with Swedish civil society. Unsurprisingly however, throughout the research, language was held to be a crucial tool to integration. Sufficient competence in the Swedish language is essential, yet is insufficient on its own. Recognising these myriad and subtle other barriers to TCN engagement are essential.

This research did not find that TCN-established or run volunteer organisations focused on their origin countries. Their activities rather suggested a social and community impetus for friendship, support and health or with a specific sporting interest that did not require an investment of commitment or of equipment. The fact that so many of these ethnic organisations have such a focus may suggest reasons why traditional Swedish associations and voluntary groups are not successfully catering for immigrant needs/desires.

Findings from this report offer insights into the significant resource migrants represent in Sweden, but also provide sobering thoughts about the difficulty in translating admirable political intentions into practice in a real and effective manner. The very recent (September 2014) national election results lifting, for the first time in Sweden, a far-right party that campaigns on an anti-immigrant mandate (the Sweden Democrats), to the level of the third largest political party in the country emphasises the need for careful reflection on current issues surrounding immigrant and native employment patterns and labour market behaviours.

Migrant origin and degree of initial labour market interaction translate into differing levels of socio-cultural, linguistic and skills barriers the migrant must overcome on a journey to integration. Despite the best ethical intentions of policymakers and decision-makers and the best efforts of skills validators, employment agencies, human resource managers or other involved stakeholders the facts remain: immigrants, and

those Swedish citizens with immigrant heritage, tend to have lower employment rates and a lower average income than Swedish counterparts of Swedish heritage, and those with TCN backgrounds lag furthest behind. The statistics revealing that higher educated immigrants are even more affected by such trends than lower educated migrants also point to uncomfortable truths that those in positions of power too often fail to acknowledge: That any relationship, any interaction, any integration, has two sides, two players, and not everything can be legislated against, or processed away or systematised out of relevance. This report, while reminding of the time required and socio-cultural and personality-related aspects that can greatly influence the degree and speed of immigrant integration, also offers valuable insights, models and ideas from the Swedish experience. As such it serves to signpost areas within SKC recognition, organisational human resource management, and procedural and socio-cultural practices within the volunteer sector where further effort could yield tangible positive results for a faster, deeper interaction between migrant and native.

## 6 POLICY BRIEF

### 6.1 PART 1: SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, COMPETENCE RECOGNITION

It is of relevance to note that the topic of skills, knowledge competence (SKC) assessment and recognition (validering in Swedish) has been raised at the highest and most visible levels of Swedish political discourse recently in the run-up to the September 2014 national elections. The leader of the main opposition party, when questioned about immigrant in-tegration to the labour market on a national television discussion, stated that validering was a very important process to improve employment engagement of immigrants and that Sweden must improve its procedures related to this. While this is of course true, there is a danger that a sole focus on tools and methods, will lead to disappointment if the linguistic and the more subtle socio-cultural barriers to integration are not recognised and also given prominence.

Discussion in the popular press within recent months has also been indignant about the extreme length of time (5-10 years) it takes for highly educated immigrants to establish themselves within the Swedish labour market (Almerud and Krantz, 2014). Increasing at-tention is being given to the need to better speed-up and effectivise the system, particular for sectors where Sweden has a shortage of labour such as nursing, midwifery, and medi-cal doctors. The host country language attainment is an important ingredient influencing this time duration but it is not the whole story. A suspicion of foreign education, and a bi-as within the SKC system to push immigrants into Swedish education rather than into Swedish jobs also play their part. Policy could target these blockages.

- The competence in the Swedish language of the person that is having their skills as-sessed is key to the value and effectiveness of the SKC assessment process. Sweden already puts resources and effort into supporting immigrants to learn Swedish through its Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) programme (as described in Part 1 of this report). Discussion of the successes and difficulties with this programme is not part of this research. What is important to highlight here is that it would be wise for authori-ties not to push immigrants to conduct an SKC evaluation before they have gained sufficient competence in Swedish (this has been occurring more recently as part of the new establishment plans for immigrants). Going through the evaluation and assess-ment process too early is simply a waste of time and resources and will not allow best benefit from the service. Alternatively, if speed is important then the SKC system should be overhauled to allow evaluation in the English language as well (with asso-ciated resource and training implications). However this strategy would probably not be in the

long-term best interests of the immigrant either since mastery of Swedish is important in accessing and maintaining employment.

- For employment sectors (such as medical, legal or electrical) with a clear requirement of competence in Swedish legal and/or technical standards, SKC evaluation cannot help much. A person must go through the Swedish training (or at least part of it) to gain such knowledge and legal standards. If such a sector is a known goal of a person at the outset of SKC evaluation it is perhaps better to not undergo a full assessment.

However, it is recognised that the assessment process may help a person with relevant foreign competence in the sector figure out where their experience and qualifications translate to in the Swedish system and thus where they need to pick up training. Thus it may, overall, save those people with relevant experience time, and thus also save the authorities money in supporting educational costs, to conduct the SKC.

- Policymakers could consider whether some sectors could be modified to allow immigrants with a competence in the English language to work already prior to gaining fluency in the Swedish language since English is fairly widely used and known among much of the Swedish population. The population could then be given an open choice when they call for a medical appointment for example, whether they would like a Swedish-speaking person or would they consider seeing an English-speaking professional. Trialling such initiatives may prove fruitful but monitoring and evaluation is required.
- Evaluating informal and non-formal skills: this is difficult but not impossible. Its value is very sector-specific. This area requires more research and testing.
- The lack of cohesion, and the number of different stakeholders involved, and models used, causes some confusion and creates a lack of clear oversight—this could be better streamlined with political intervention.
- The lack of statistics and reports evaluating the value and success of the SKC process is undermining claims of its impact on labour market access and societal integration. For example: does SKC validation get immigrants into permanent jobs, and faster? The answer to this is not yet clear. Comprehensive and strategic research must be supported to provide answers to this question and guide future SKC effectivity.
- Systemic problems within the wider Swedish context, such as hidden discrimination, and a suspicion of competence and qualifications gained outside Sweden, is a broader issue that requires action and is not something that a SKC pro-

cess alone can tackle. Awareness-raising that such barriers to integration exist, and to encourage combative strategies are essential.

- A final important aspect of recent labour market dynamics and co-dependencies within Sweden has been the growing but largely unknown importance of temporary seasonal labour (berry pickers and forest workers, but even construction site workers) that falls outside of official statistics and monitoring. The liberalisation of the Swedish labour regulations in 2008 which opened up the possibility to import foreign labour to these sectors has fuelled this new type of utilisation of seasonal foreign labour. A key implication for policy is to improve the assessment and evaluation of patterns and behaviours within this sector, which has as yet unknown implications for wider labour market and societal integration of TNC immigrants.

## 6.2 PART 2: DIVERSITY WITHIN SWEDISH ORGANISATIONS

- The definition of a Third Country National (TCN), and this focus on the citizenship held, creates difficulties in the Swedish context when it is relatively quick and pain-less to gain Swedish citizenship (4-5 years). If this remains the focus, research and action will omit a whole group of people who are officially Swedish citizens yet who still face many of the same problems as TCNs. Missing this wider group also risks missing some of the more subtle and persistent structural factors that contribute to people of immigrant background or heritage generally having greater difficulty with labour market and/or societal integration, and/or having lower average salaries. A shift in, or at least a more nuanced and open, definition of who is affected by difficulties gaining Swedish jobs and difficulties integrating into society, is recommended.
- Information and materials should be overhauled to move away from the general subtle assumption that TCNs work in low-skilled jobs. While this view has some relevance, the research conducted here in Northern Sweden suggests that many TCNs working in the region are very highly educated doctors, academics and specialists. They offer a net gain to Sweden, which has not funded their upbringing and education, yet benefits from their input to Swedish healthcare provision, Swedish education and international research, and Swedish technological advancements.
- The research undertaken as part of this project in Västerbotten region suggests that TCNs often find employment (both highly skilled, and less skilled) in sectors that struggle to attract sufficient numbers of Swedes due to both a lack of willingness to move to the region, and (in some sectors) a dearth of trainees compared to jobs required. A policy recommendation related to this point

could be to better inform the wider public about this situation which would raise awareness of labour market dynamics in the region, and would also help to combat claims or fears from those concerned about Swedish jobs.

- Organisations could be encouraged to reflect more strategically upon other countries' methods of working within specific sectors by engaging with their staff that have been trained outside of Sweden—this diversity of views could be beneficial for all.
- Likewise, organisations would benefit from recognising that those not brought up in Sweden (even other Europeans) do not necessarily have an instinctive grasp of the subtle Swedish codes of behaviour, flat hierarchy etc. Helping a non-Swede to understand these norms and expectations with a 'cultural induction phase' or a 'be-friender'-type system, may serve to alleviate possible misunderstandings and teeth-ing problems that diversity may occasionally bring.
- Personal contacts, networks and references are crucial, even for Swedes in many cases, when searching for employment, particularly with that first job. Efforts supporting contact of immigrants with Swedes could be a productive way of supporting labour market integration efforts, and may even be more beneficial than learning Swedish.
- There appears to be evidence of a hidden discrimination in Sweden which was highlighted in section 1.3.4 of Part 1 but also throughout Part 2 of this report. Improved awareness raising of the more subtle and structural barriers that can further complicate an immigrant's efforts to find employment could be instrumental in limiting such impediments.

### 6.3 PART 3: PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

- More active engagement and outreach to third country nationals (TCNs) and those of immigrant background, at the local council level, to explain what volunteer and charitable organisations exist, how they operate, and how a person could get involved would be beneficial.
- Ethnic associations have a very important role to play but they can, at times, hinder integration by setting up parallel support structures. Local policies and strategies could encourage greater collaboration and engagement between ethnic and the indigenous Swedish non-profit groups.
- Policies/financial incentives that encourage associations themselves (especially traditional Swedish religious, social and environmental groups) to i) recognise the untapped potential of TCNs, ii) value TCNs and diversity, and iii) proactively



vely reach out to TCNs via information or introduction days, other language events or literature, or specific activities.

- Council-led initiatives, such as the In I Umeå project described in part three of this report, can play a key role—policy could encourage and fund such programmes for the long-term rather than in short-lived successful interventions with no follow-up.
- Finally, although not directly interviewed for this research, the interviews conducted in the region, and other research findings, have acknowledged the importance of the volunteer sporting sector in engaging in young immigrants (refer to section 3.2 to section 3.5). Sports associations within Sweden have, in recent years, worked rather actively to recruit new members within immigration dense and/or deprived neighbourhoods. Such efforts should continue to receive local and national political and financial, and models of successful should be scaled up.

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