**Requirements for Family Reunification**

**SWEDEN**

# 1. Background

## Immigration to Sweden

In 2015 almost 163,000 people sought asylum in Sweden which is twice as many as in 2014 when a total of 81 000 people sought asylum. Around 35,000 of those who sought asylum 2015 were unaccompanied minors. The three most common countries of origin were Syria (51,338 people), Afghanistan (41,564 people) and Iraq (20,857 people). Among unaccompanied minors the three most common countries of origin were Afghanistan (23,480 people), Syria (3,777 people) and Somalia (2,058 people).[[1]](#footnote-1) In 2016 (from January to the end of July) almost 17,687 people have applied for asylum in Sweden and the three most common countries of origin are the same as in 2015, both in general and for unaccompanied minors.[[2]](#footnote-2)

According to the Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*) one of the greatest challenges has been providing accommodation for asylum seekers.[[3]](#footnote-3) In January 2016 the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB*) issued a warning about the strain that the refugee situation might put on important societal functions.[[4]](#footnote-4) Because there was a large number of people who entered the country during a relatively short period of time in 2015 (70 percent of all asylum seekers that year applied for asylum between September and December) the government made the assessment that the situation could represent a serious threat to public order and internal security and therefore decided to set up temporary internal border controls in southern Sweden. The internal border controls have been in effect since 12 November 2015. In June 2016 the government decided to prolong the internal border controls to 11 November 2016. Before then they will look into the need to further prolong the internal border controls.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to the Police the internal border controls have helped lower the number of asylum seekers from 2000 a day to 500 a week.[[6]](#footnote-6) To cope with the migration situation there have also been several changes in legislation.

## 1.2 Changes in legislation (especially after 2010)

Family reunification is the most common reason why people move to Sweden. Not only do refugees reunite with their families in Sweden but also those who temporarily work or study in Sweden. Since 2010 family reunification has been conditioned with a subsistence requirement: to reunite with your family in Sweden you have to be able to support yourself and have housing of sufficient size and standard for yourself and your family. The subsistence requirement had some exemptions (e.g. unaccompanied minors seeking to reunite with their families) and did not affect family reunification as much as expected at first.

In July 2016 the Swedish Parliament adopted a new temporary law which further limits family reunification directly through a stricter subsistence requirement but also through imposing more stringent requirements on permanent residence permits.[[7]](#footnote-7) The law *Lag (2016:752) om tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppehållstillstånd i Sverige* was implemented in 20.7.2016 and will be applied for three years. It will also be applied to those who have sought asylum after 24.11.2015. During this time asylum seekers who are entitled to protection will only be granted temporary residence permits in Sweden. A person who is given refugee status will be granted a residence permit for three years and a person who is given subsidiary protection status will be granted a residence permit for 13 months. Those who are given refugee status and a residence permit for three years will still have the possibility to reunite with their families in Sweden. Those who are given a subsidiary protection status and applied for asylum after 24.11.2015 will only have the right to be reunited with their families in some cases, this includes unaccompanied minors. When your residence permit expires your reasons for seeking asylum will be tried again which may result in your residence permit being prolonged. If you by that time can provide for yourself you may be granted a permanent residence permit.

Because of the temporary residence permits fewer will be eligible for family reunification during the three years to come. If you have been granted a permanent or a three-year residence permit as a refugee and therefore are entitled to family reunification you must also be able to support yourself *and* your family members that want to move to you in Sweden. What income you need depends on how big your family is and how large your living costs. The subsistence requirement from 2010 did not require you to be able to support your family as well. There is also still a demand that your home must be of a sufficient size and standard for you and your family. If your family members apply for a residence permit within three months from when you were granted a residence permit, the subsistence requirement is not applicable. Children under 18 years of age are also exempt from the subsistence requirement. If you are granted family reunification your family member’s residence permits will also be temporary if your residence permit is*.*[[8]](#footnote-8)

By reducing the number of asylum seekers this new law seeks to strengthen the capacity to receive them and to establish the newly arrived. It has been established that having a job and somewhere for you and your family to live when they arrive is positive for integration. Another reason behind this law is the will to harmonize asylum- and migration policy with that in the EU and therefore make migration policies more sustainable. [[9]](#footnote-9) This has been a much discussed change in legislation since according to the government a majority of the referral organisations have pointed out the negative consequences this law might have for individuals (more about this in chapter 1.4). For example the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden (*Barnombudsmannen*), the Red Cross (*Röda korset*), the Swedish Bar Association (*Sveriges advokatsamfund*), Save the Children (*Rädda barnen*), the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (*Sveriges Akademikers centralorganisation, SACO*), the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (*Tjänstemännens centralorganisation, TCO*) and UNHCR rejected the proposal as a whole in their refferals.

As response to the current migration situation there has also been several other recent changes in the Swedish legislation concerning immigrants though not directly family reunification. Asylum seekers’ right to assistance is protected by the law *Lag (1994:137) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl.*[[10]](#footnote-10) The right to assistance includes a daily allowance and the right to asylum accommodation. As of 1.6.2016 adults who do not live with children no longer have the right to assistance when their deportation or removal order takes legal effect or shortly thereafter. Before 1.6.2016 the right to assistance ended when a person left the country, even if his/her deportation or removal order already had taken legal effect. This change in legislation seeks to make space for more asylum seekers in asylum accommodations.[[11]](#footnote-11) Sweden has a significant housing shortage that not only affects the capacity to accommodate asylum seekers but also those who have already been granted residence permits.

In order to deal with the lack of accommodation and to create better opportunities for the newly arrived to establish themselves, all municipalities became obliged to accommodate newly arrived immigrants.[[12]](#footnote-12) Before March 2016 some municipalities made great efforts to accommodate the newly arrived while some took none at all.[[13]](#footnote-13) The number of newly arrived immigrants a municipality is obliged to accommodate is decided beforehand by the government and grounded in a municipality’s population size, labour market conditions and the number of newly arrived immigrants and unaccompanied minors already received in the municipality. The number of asylum seekers that reside in a municipality is also taken into consideration and a suggestion is put forward by the County Administrative Boards. The counties are also obliged to receive and accommodate a number of newly arrived immigrants. This number is suggested by the PES and decided by the government. In 2017 the government will decide the county number while the counties will decide the municipality numbers.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Integration has been on the political agenda together with the capacity to receive, accommodate and care for asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants and the strain on vital societal functions. Labour market integration in particular has been brought forward as the best solution for the newly arrived and for the society as a whole. Since 2010 there is a law in Sweden concerning the establishment of the newly arrived.[[15]](#footnote-15) The law *Lag (2010:197) om etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare* concerns responsibilities and activities that seek to ease and accelerate the establishment of the newly arrived. The reasoning behind this law was the need to create opportunities for the newly arrived in order to be self-sufficient and to strengthen their participation on the labour market and in society.[[16]](#footnote-16) To further facilitate integration, the government has initiated a so called ‘[establishment package’ that includes several different measures that aim to shorten the time span between arrival and finding a job](http://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/regeringens-etableringspaket/).[[17]](#footnote-17)

## Draft laws / bills (those being prepared)

There are no draft laws/bills concerning family reunification in particular since we recently have seen a big change in legislation. The Impact of these changes is not yet known.

## Discussion (possible future developments on legislation)

The changes we have seen in Swedish legislation so far (and especially during the last year) have strived towards adjusting Swedish migration policy to the minimum level in EU law and international conventions (even if just temporarily) with the aim to reduce the number of asylum seekers. The reasons put forward have often concerned capacity, e.g. capacity to accommodate and capacity to integrate. The desired impact is that fewer will seek asylum in Sweden and that all vital societal functions therefore will continue to function correctly and asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants will have better opportunities to be cared for and integrated. In parallel with a discussion on how to diminish the number of asylum seekers there has been a discussion concerning integration opportunities and initiatives that focus on giving the tools and help needed for the newly arrived in particular to be able to establish themselves on the Swedish labour market and in the Swedish society. Future developments in legislation will likely have to do with either of these two political tracks – diminishing the number of asylum seekers or their establishment.

## Impacts of changes in recent legislation (or expected impacts in the future)

The most debated change in Swedish legislation recently has been the temporary law that affects both the possibility to get a permanent residence permit and the possibility for newly arrived immigrants to reunite with their families. This law has been criticised by many authorities and organisations for potentially having a damaging impact. It has been criticised for potentially hindering the establishment and integration of the newly arrived by shifting the focus to short-term labour market solutions. The self-sufficiency demands could affect the incentives to study and make it more profitable to find *a* job rather than the *right* job, if one wants to get a permanent residence permit and if one wants to reunite with his/her family. This law might also lead to more people traveling to Sweden to seek asylum and to more families taking dangerous journeys to Sweden as their best option for family reunification. The Swedish Ombudsman for children has also criticised the law for being particularly harmful to children.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The current housing shortage in Sweden and the high costs of living that follow can perhaps make the subsistence requirement an even higher demand for someone who has recently received a residence permit.

# 2. Requirements allowed in Council Directive 2003/86/EC and how they are applied in Sweden for beneficiaries of international protection

In the new temporary law from 20 July 2016 fewer are now eligible for family reunification due to residence permits being temporary rather than permanent. If you hold a type of residence permit that entitles you to family reunification (see chapter 1.2) you must be able to support yourself and your family. Before this law there was no requirement of you to be able to support your family as well as yourself. The Swedish Migration Agency now have stricter requirements to take into consideration when granting residence permits on the basis of family connection. An age requirement is also applied in Sweden in accordance with the Council Directive 2003/86/EC.

## 2.1 Stable and regular resources

Since 2010 stable and regular resources is a condition for family reunification and part of the subsistence requirement together with the requirement of having accommodation of sufficient size and standard (see chapter 2.4). To reunite with your family you must show that you have a regular work-related income and that you can support yourself and those family members of yours who apply for residence permits. Work-related income includes for example salary from work, unemployment benefit, sickness benefit and earnings-related old age pension.[[19]](#footnote-19) What income you need to have in order to fulfill the subsistence requirement depends on how big you family is and what your living costs are.[[20]](#footnote-20)

You are exempt from the subsistence requirement if:

* You have a refugee or subsidiary protection status and your family applied/applies for residence permits within the first three months of you being given that status.
* You are a under 18 years of age
* If your family has applied for residence permits before the temporary law entered into force

Swedish citizens, citizens of other EES-states or Switzerland and those who have lived in Sweden for more than four years were exempt from the subsistence requirement from 2010 but are not in the subsistence requirement from 2016.[[21]](#footnote-21)

According to the government we will in time see a decline in the number of asylum applications due to the recent changes in legislation. Fewer asylum applications will lower the work load of the Swedish Migration Agency and therefore lead to lowering the costs of asylum investigations and the reception of asylum seekers. [[22]](#footnote-22) Concerning applications for family reunification we have not yet seen a noticeable decline, according to an article from *Svenska Dagbladet* (14.7.2016). This may according to the Åsa Carlander Hemingway, head of unit at the Swedish Migration Agency, have to do with a general lack of knowledge about the changes in legislation.[[23]](#footnote-23)

A subsistence requirement as a condition for family reunification has been applied since 2010 but due to it becoming stricter fewer people are now eligible for family reunification. The government acknowledges that the workload will increase in some cases, for example due to residence permits becoming temporary and therefore in need of reassessing. The government also acknowledges the complexity it will add to asylum investigations and that the subsistence requirement will have to be assessed in more cases than before. [[24]](#footnote-24) At the same time as fewer are able to apply for family reunification, this new law is temporary and parallel to the Aliens Act, it doesn’t concern all whose asylum applications are now being investigated by the Migration Agency. For example, asylum applications from before 24.11.2015 are investigated according to the Aliens Act. In their referral response concerning the new law the Migration Agency concluded that more resources will be needed because of the complexity the law adds to asylum investigations. Depending on factors such as when you applied for asylum your case will be investigated either under the Aliens Act or the temporary law. Rather than lowering administration costs the Migration Agency expect this new law to increase the administrational demands in the form of sorting and labeling different cases. This can affect productivity negatively.[[25]](#footnote-25)

## 2.2 Compliance with integration measures

Family reunification is not conditioned with any integration criteria other than the requirement to sustain the family members and oneself (see 2.1). Courses in Swedish for immigrants are voluntary but knowing Swedish opens up opportunities on the labour market. Newly arrived immigrants who receive different labour market measures (e.g. internships) by the PES (as part of the so called *establishment package)* need to partake in such courses in order to get the establishment subsidy (*etableringsersättning)*.[[26]](#footnote-26) Compliance with integration measures thus improves your likelihood of finding a job, fulfilling the subsistence requirement and therefore your possibilities of reuniting with your family.

## 2.3 Staying period

There is no staying period required before reunification. Reunification is dependent on a person’s status and when that person applied for asylum.

## 2.4 Accommodation

Accommodation of sufficient size and standard is part of the subsistence requirement and has been a condition for family reunification since 2010 (see chapter 2.1 for more detailed information about the subsistence requirement as a whole). The new temporary law from 20 July 2016 states that a home for two adults without children is considered sufficiently large if it has at least one bedroom, a living room and a kitchen or kitchenette. Adults with children must have more bedrooms. At most you can have two children per bedroom in order for your accommodation to be considered sufficiently large.[[27]](#footnote-27)

It is acceptable if your accommodation is subleased if you have been approved as a tenant by the relevant instances, e.g. your landlord. Your accommodation must be available from the day your family members arrive to Sweden.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The reasoning behind the accommodation requirement is that you and your family’s integration will be made easier by you having somewhere to live that is of sufficient standard and size.

## 2.5 Sickness insurance

Sickness insurance is not required for family reunification. If you have a residence permit you have the same access to healthcare as Swedish citizens.

## 2.6 Minimum age

If you have been granted a time-limited residence permit and you and your partner must be at least 21 years old in order to reunite in Sweden. There is also a demand that you have to have lived together before you moved to Sweden. If you and your partner have children together you are exempt from the age requirement.[[29]](#footnote-29) The age requirements seeks to ensure a better integration and to prevent forced marriages as according to article 4.5 from Council Directive 2003/86/EC.[[30]](#footnote-30)

# 3. Family reunification of Swedish citizen’s family members with foreign citizenship

## 3.1 Requirements on stable and regular resources (income)

Swedish citizens, citizens of other EES-states or Switzerland and those who have lived in Sweden for more than four years were exempt from the subsistence requirement from 2010 but are not exempt from the recent the subsistence requirement.[[31]](#footnote-31) If you are a Swedish citizen and your family members with other citizenships applied for residence permits after 20.7.2016 the subsistence requirement applies.

Since the subsistence requirement is new for Swedish citizens wanting to reunite with their families, we do not yet know the change’s impact. The government expects that the stricter requirements for family reunification will improve integration and lower immigration due to family connection.

If you are a Swedish citizen or have a permanent residence permit the person you *plan* to marry or cohabit with can be granted a residence permit and move to you in Sweden.[[32]](#footnote-32)

## 3.2 Other possible requirements related to family reunification of Swedish citizens´ family members

Spouses, registered partners or cohabiting partners and children under 18 years of age count as family.[[33]](#footnote-33) There are no requirements concerning e.g. income, language skills or level of integration of family members with foreign citizenships.

## 3.3 Impacts of the requirements

Family reunification due to *newly* established relations (a couple that have not lived together before or only for a short period of time) has diminished over time. In 2015 newly established relations made up 38 percent of all family reunifications. This compared to 50 percent in 2013. Iraq, Thailand, and Syria were the most common countries of citizenships of those being granted residence permits due to newly established relationships in 2015. In 2013 Thailand was a more common country of origin than Iraq.[[34]](#footnote-34) In the same time period family reunification due to *established* relations has become more common.

There is no source discussing the possibility of a “brain drain” as a consequence of the stricter requirements.

# 4. Economic impacts of family reunifications

The economic impact of immigration is a common point of discussion and while some claim to know the answers, others criticize them for not being able to provide well-founded proof. When it comes to the economic impact of family reunification in particular there seems to be no research done other than analysis of what limiting family reunification *might* lead to. The government has temporarily limited the possibility to reunite with family partly to put pressure on those entitled to family reunification to integrate and establish themselves on the labour market and in the society. In the referral responses[[35]](#footnote-35) many of the parties concerned criticised the limitations for possibly having the opposite effect. Because of the stricter subsistence requirement people could end up with jobs they are overqualified for. *A* job rather than the *right* job could mean an expensive loss of competence for Sweden. Depending on the effect the limitations will have on family reunification and those seeking it, the economic impact can either be negative due to many working in jobs they are overqualified for or it be positive in terms of greater establishment and integration for individuals and therefore for their families.[[36]](#footnote-36)

## 4.1 Short term costs and benefits of family reunifications

The short term costs and benefits of family reunification have not been estimated. Costs and benefits are rarely discussed in economic terms. Family reunification is primarily discussed in terms of negative/positive effects on the wellbeing of the individual rather than the economic costs and benefits for society.

According to the critics of the stricter rules for family reunification a person needs to be able to reunite with family in order to integrate more quickly and establish him-/herself both on the labour market and in the society. The benefits of family reunification would therefore be equal to long term benefits for the labour market and for society as well as well as for the individual.

The short term costs of family reunification has to do with getting family members to Sweden once they have been granted residence permits. The Migration Agency is responsible for travel grants. As more asylum seekers have been given a refugee status (due to an increase in asylum seekers) more have applied for grants to pay for their family-members journeys to Sweden. In 2014 11,341 applied for this grant in comparison to the 4,617 people who applied for it in 2012. Due to the changes in the exchange rate between the SEK and the USD, journeys to Sweden have become more expensive. You are not entitled to a travel grant if you are a Swedish citizen or if you or your family can pay for the journey to Sweden.[[37]](#footnote-37)

It can be argued that it is less costly to investigate applications for residence permits due to family reunification that it is to investigate other residence permit applications. Since the family is not situated in Sweden during the investigation there are no living costs to cover during the investigation period. At the same time some have argued that stricter rules for family reunification risks leading to more people actually coming to Sweden to seek asylum as their best option for reuniting with their families. Another possible consequence is that more families will risk their lives to find safety due to a lack of safe ways of getting to their family-members. Since many of the asylum seekers are men it is possible that a longer waiting period and smaller possibility for family reunification (due to residence permits being temporary) will be especially hard on women and children (since they are still in the origin countries). Stricter requirements make investigations concerning family reunification more complex and therefore administration more demanding and costs higher. Costs will decrease if the number of applications is reduced which is an expected consequence of the stricter requirements.

Short term costs concerning immigration in general include increased expenditures of the Swedish Migration Agency. The Migration Agency have hired new employees to lead the growing number of asylum investigations. This includes investigations concerning family reunification. The obligation to accommodate asylum seekers has also increased the Migration Agency’s expenditures. The municipalities’ spending has also increased due to them being responsible for instance for the schooling of asylum seekers’ children and for unaccompanied minors.[[38]](#footnote-38) Municipalities are to a large extent paid back by the state for their increased spending due to immigration.

## 4.2 Employment and wellbeing of family members

In Sweden there is an employment rate gap between foreign and native-born. In 2014 the difference in employment rate between the two groups was 15 percentage points. The gaps in employment rate are even larger among women but must be seen in the context of the high female employment rates of the native-born. In their report about labour market integration the OECD points out that employment rates of immigrant women in Sweden are higher than in the OECD on average. Among the native-born employment rates reach 78 % which is one of the highest employment rates in the OECD.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Foreign born are not a homogenous group and employment rate partly has to do with time spent in Sweden. The longer you live in Sweden the better you learn the language and the more integrated you get. According to Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska centralbyrån)* the employment rate of those who immigrated in the 90s has been growing steadily over time. Women with refugee status and women who immigrated through family connection had the lowest employment rate at the start of their time in Sweden and a relatively lower increase over time in comparison to other immigrants (see graph below). [[40]](#footnote-40)



From SE05\_SCB\_2014\_Integration på arbetsmarknaden

Men who were granted residence permits due to a family connection had an initially higher employment rate then men with refugee statuses. The employment rate of all male immigrants increases over time (see graph below). [[41]](#footnote-41)



From SE05\_SCB\_2014\_Integration på arbetsmarknaden

It is important to note that the numbers above concerning employment rate over time are based on the employment rate of those who immigrated to Sweden 1997-1999 and stayed in Sweden for thirteen consecutive years. We do not know if those who immigrated in 2015 will show the same change in employment rate over time. The employment rate of refugees and their family members is dependent on their level of education but also on the labour market in Sweden and the possibilities they receive through different labour market measures.

Foreign born have lower incomes than the native born. This is particularly the case the first years after arriving in Sweden. Incomes are also dependent on the country of origin. In the age-group 30-55 years, the foreign born have a median income equal to 63 percent of the native-born. The foreign born who have lived in Sweden less than five years have a median income equal to 14 percent of the native born while the foreign born who have lived in Sweden for 10 years and more have a median income equal to 80 percent of the native born. Studying accounts for part of the difference between those who have lived in Sweden for less than five years and the native-born. The lowest median income can be found among people born in Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia. Differences in educational level can to some extent explain the difference in median income between foreign and native-born. Foreign born men enter the labour market quicker than foreign born women.[[42]](#footnote-42)

## 4.3 Impact on population structure

Foreign born account for 17 percent of the Swedish population. Immigration is an important contributing factor to the Swedish population growth. According to Statistics Sweden the population would be diminishing if not for immigration. Like many other countries Sweden has an aging population. Immigration has a positive impact on the age structure, contributing to the population being younger. Immigration increases the proportion of the population that are of working age and therefore the proportion of the population that can contribute to the economy and the welfare of the state by working.[[43]](#footnote-43)

More men than women seek asylum and therefore more men than women are granted residence permits as beneficiaries of international protection. In 2015 70 percent of all asylum applicants were men. 58 percent of those granted residence permits through family connection were women.[[44]](#footnote-44) It is unclear what impact this disparity will have on the population structure but family reunification could even out the gap between the number of newly arrived men and women.

There is a lack of information about the educational levels of those who immigrate to Sweden. In general those who emigrate from Somalia, Eritrea and Afghanistan have lower educational levels due to lack of well-functioning school systems in their countries of origin. This is compared to those who have emigrated from Syria who in general have a higher educational level.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Almost one third of immigrants hold at most a lower secondary education, which is twice the share among the native-born.[[46]](#footnote-46) Since Sweden has one of the lowest shares of low-skilled employment in the OECD some immigrants face bigger hurdles when entering the labour market. Foreign born with high-school diplomas have a higher employment rate than foreign born without diplomas. Foreign born women without high-school diplomas have the employment rate closest to the native born women with the same educational background. Among men it is the foreign born with higher education that have the closest employment rate to that of the native born.[[47]](#footnote-47) The barriers between immigrants and the labour market not only has to do with what jobs are available and the measures that can be taken to match with these, but it also has to do with language barriers, lack of networks and structural discrimination on the labour market. In Sweden there has been a big debate concerning labour market integration. Several employers’ associations have proposed lowering entry-level wages as a solution to create more jobs. In Sweden the social partners[[48]](#footnote-48) negotiate the minimum wages through collective agreements, but [new forms of employment](http://www.lag-avtal.se/tidningen/article3968854.ece) have been proposed by several political parties which in effect would mean a kind of statutory minimum wage (for some occupations). While some argue that such changes would make employers more willing to hire refugees it has been criticised for not being grounded in research as a solution for quicker labour market establishment.[[49]](#footnote-49)

There is a lack of information about what occupations the newly arrived have had before immigrating to Sweden.

## 4.4 Positive impacts on the economy (taxes, work force etc.)

Immigration does not only affect the population structure but also the public sector consumption. Statistics Sweden has estimated that asylum seekers have affected the GDP by 0.5 percentage points and contributed to an increased GDP-growth. The positive impact on the GDP has to do with an increase in public consumption.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The positive impact of immigration on the economy has been and is partly dependent on the impact on the age structure of the population but also on the labour market integration of immigrants. Some studies have been made concerning the economic impact of immigration and they conclude that the impact has varied over time depending on the type of immigration (work or refugee) and on the financial situation in Sweden. The positive/negative net contribution to the public sector has been estimated to be less than 1 percent of the GDP per year. Labour market integration and a higher employment rate among the foreign born would mean a positive net fiscal effect in the future.[[51]](#footnote-51)

According to calculations made by the think-tank *Arena idé* the immigrant population has accounted for 85 percent of Sweden’s employment growth since 1950 and therefore for the economic growth. The positive impact of immigration on society is connected to both supply and demand factors: what education etc. immigrants have but also what the labour market demands are.[[52]](#footnote-52)

According to calculations made by economist Joakim Ruist redistribution of economic resources through the public sector from the rest of the population to the refugees is likely to be substantial. This is because refugees have lower income levels and receive more social assistance compared with the total population. In 2015 Ruist estimated that 3.4 percent of total fiscal revenues are from refugees which is an underrepresentation since refugees make out 5.2 percent of the total population.[[53]](#footnote-53)

In Sweden there are staffing shortages in several professions e.g. engineering, medical, hospitality and education. Many of the professions that are in high demand take a long time to become qualified for. One of the positive impacts that immigration has on the economy is that many immigrants have an educational background and labour market experience that Sweden is in great need of. Therefore the government initiated fast-track programs to shorten the time period before arriving in Sweden and working in Sweden. There are several fast-track programs and they are tied to different professions. Examples of such fast-track programs include a validation of experience, language training, and relevant internships.[[54]](#footnote-54)

# 5. Administrational impacts of family reunifications

There is a lack of cost estimation concerning immigration in general and family reunification in particular. This year (2016) municipalities have become obliged to accommodate newly arrived immigrants. Residence permits are now granted on a temporary basis and family reunifications have become harder to achieve. The government strives to lighten the administrative burden but big changes demand administrative adjustments. There is much uncertainty concerning the effects of temporary residential permits and stricter requirements for family reunification. These changes are recent and therefore there are several different scenarios for the future depending on their effect on immigration, integration and whether or not the situation abroad will improve.

## 5.1 Administrational work and costs of public administration

The situation at the end of 2015 when many applied for asylum during a relatively short period of time was challenging for several welfare institutions. There was a rapid increase in the demand for schooling and other welfare institutions. Many such institutions were already at high capacity before the increase of asylum seekers. Sweden has also experienced staffing shortages in several professions. The situation has had an impact on administrational work and costs but focus has been on finding ways of removing organizational restrictions that complicate the reception of asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Recent immigration has strained health and social care and the educational system. For a while now, Sweden has had a lack of teachers, social workers and dentists which contributes to the strain felt by public service institutions.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Municipalities are financially compensated by the state for receiving asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants Municipality applications for government compensations can be costly due to the administrational work they entail. According to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions this system for compensation must be simplified.[[57]](#footnote-57) Municipalities´ obligation to find accommodation for newly arrived also entails administrational work and costs because of the housing shortage in the country.

## 5.2 Accommodation costs for the public sector

The housing shortage is wide spread problem in Sweden. In 2015 most of the newly arrived (86 percent) found accommodation on their own.[[58]](#footnote-58) Because of the housing shortages, some people with residence permits live in their asylum accommodation while waiting to be assigned to a municipality. Because of the rapid increase in the number of asylum seekers at the end of 2015, the Migration Agency had to quickly find new solutions for the lack of accommodation. At times the Migration Agency had to rely on expensive quick fixes. There was a period of time when more asylum seekers moved in to the Migrations Agency’s asylum accommodations than moved out. Since the number of asylum seekers has decreased, so has the strain on asylum accommodations. In the budget for 2016 the Migration Agency has been granted a total of 12 625 000 SEK compensation for accommodation costs. Benefit- and accommodation costs (*ersättningar och bostadskostnader)* have increased over time and constituted 58 percent of migration expenditures in 2014 compared to 49 percent in 2010. Accommodation costs are estimated to decrease in the years to come. The accommodation of unaccompanied minors has been the single largest expenditure of the expenditures in the state budget that concern benefits and accommodation.[[59]](#footnote-59) Because stricter rules for family reunification also affect unaccompanied minors we might not only see a negative effect on their wellbeing but also on their living expenses.

There are no direct costs to municipalities for accommodating newly arrived immigrants and their families other than the administrational costs of finding the housing. During 2016 municipalities are compensated with 125 000 SEK per newly arrived immigrant they receive. This compensation is supposed to cover costs of language education for immigrants but also the administrational costs of finding housing.[[60]](#footnote-60) Indirect public expenses concerning the accommodation of the newly arrived is tied to integration measures and subsidies aimed at making the newly arrived able to pay for expenses such as housing.

Municipalities are now obliged to offer accommodation but most of the newly arrived that settle in municipalities do so on their own.[[61]](#footnote-61) Newly arrived immigrants who choose to find accommodation on their own (rather than being placed in a municipality) settle in or nearby big cities to a larger extent. Newly arrived immigrants who are placed in municipalities do to a larger extent settle in areas where there is housing available but where they have smaller possibilities of finding jobs than in the big cities.[[62]](#footnote-62) In this sense the housing shortage can have an effect on their labour market integration.

## 5.3 Educational costs (language, culture, integration)

Immigration is estimated to have a big impact on educational costs. The demand for schooling and also for education for adults and Swedish language courses for immigrants is likely to increase in the near future as those who came at the end of 2015 get their residence permits. There seems to be no estimations concerning the direct educational costs of immigration, especially not related to family reunification. The educational costs of immigrants coming through family reunification are the same as for refugees and other immigrants in general since they are offered the same integration measures, in the form of e.g. language courses.

## 5.4 Costs for service production in public sector (day care, health, school)

The costs for service production in the public sector is unknown due to the recency of changes in legislation and due to the recent increase in the number of asylum seekers.

According to estimations done by the Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och landsting, SKL) refugee immigration will increase healthcare expenses. They estimate that the cost per person will increase from 20 938 SEK in 2015 to 21 140 SEK in 2020. This increase is dependent on whether or not labour market integration will improve.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Due to immigration there is a growing demand for social services and primary and secondary education which means a growing demand for both staff and facilities. In the short run, financing is not a problem for municipalities (which provide the services mentioned) because they are compensated by the government. The challenge is to expand the services as fast and much as is needed. [[64]](#footnote-64)

## 5.5 Benefits of family reunification for municipalities and other local/regional units

Assumed benefits of family reunification is quicker integration on the labour market and in the society for both the individual and his/her family. Family reunification is of special importance for unaccompanied minors since children’s wellbeing and ability to learn is dependent on their families’ support.

# 6. Other Effects

## 6.1 Signal effects of the new legislation

The new legislation is expected to have signal effects but we have yet to see any clear impact of the new legislation on the number of asylum seekers. The number of asylum seekers has decreased due to it becoming harder to get to Sweden.[[65]](#footnote-65)

## 6.2 Security issues

Sweden has had internal border controls in effect since 12 November 2015. In June 2016 the government decided to prolong the internal border controls to 11 November 2016, they will then look in to the need to further prolong border controls.[[66]](#footnote-66) Internal border controls were introduced to slow down the immigration to Sweden and to lighten the burden on vital societal functions. According to the Police the controls have helped lower the number of asylum seekers from 2000 a day to 500 a week.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Family reunification can be denied according to the Aliens Act if a family member is a threat to public order and security.

## 6.3 Other issues

The Swedish Migration Agency has a database that contains information about the situation in different countries but there is no national list of safe countries of origin.[[68]](#footnote-68) In Sweden there is no national legislation allowing the use of the “safe country of origin” concept. In practice however countries are categorised as safe or unsafe when granting/denying asylum applications.[[69]](#footnote-69)

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