

Measures to tackle the refugee crisis

Sweden and Europe are in the midst of an enormous task in providing security to people fleeing war, persecution and oppression. The Swedish asylum system is facing major challenges, as the number of people who have sought asylum in Sweden has increased dramatically.

In this serious situation, the Government, the Moderate Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats have agreed on necessary measures to reinforce capacity in Sweden's reception of asylum seekers and strengthen the introduction of new arrivals.

The aim of these measures is to create decent and orderly reception and better introduction, and to mitigate the cost increases. More countries must do more to offer people protection. Sweden will stand up for the right of asylum. In times of crisis, this is more important than ever. People fleeing war and oppression must be able to obtain protection in Sweden.

The implementation of the agreed measures will be followed up jointly.

Measures to reinforce Sweden's asylum system

Shortening processing times for asylum applications

The Swedish Migration Agency will be tasked with producing an action plan for the asylum examination process, with the aim of reducing processing times. The plan should contain both short- and long-term measures and describe the expected effects of the measures, such as the effects of sorting cases early in the process so that categories of asylum seekers who are typically approved are handled separately. The results of the ongoing EU negotiations on more rapid rejections of unfounded applications and applications from safe countries will also be implemented in Sweden. The plan will be reported to the Government Offices in conjunction with the Swedish Migration Agency's February 2016 forecast.

Creating space for more asylum seekers in accommodation centres

At present, there are almost 6 000 people who are subject to non-appealable refusal-of-entry orders and expulsion orders enrolled in the

Swedish Migration Agency's reception programme and living in accommodation provided by the Migration Agency.

Adults with no children will no longer be entitled to a daily allowance once a refusal-of-entry or expulsion order becomes final and non-appealable. Adults with no children who are subject to a non-appealable refusal-of-entry or expulsion order will lose their entitlement to accommodation provided by the Migration Agency when the deadline for leaving the country passes. The basic premise is that orders are to be enforced on the deadline. There will be an alternative for those who cannot be expelled or refused entry for some reason.

Individuals who have been granted a residence permit must be systematically discharged from Migration Agency accommodation when new housing is arranged. This means that an individual with a residence permit will not be allowed to reject an offer of allocated housing and remain in the accommodation provided by the Migration Agency.

These proposals aim to free up more accommodation places.

Maintenance requirement for family member immigration

The exception to the maintenance requirement for family member immigration for Swedish citizens, citizens of other EEA states and Switzerland, and those who have lived in Sweden for more than four years will be abolished. This change will apply to newly established relationships.

Temporary residence permits to be introduced as a general rule for a limited period

A time-limited legislative amendment will be introduced. Quota refugees, unaccompanied minors and families with children will continue to receive permanent residence permits as a general rule, in accordance with applicable legislation. The general rule for other refugees, persons eligible for subsidiary protection and persons otherwise in need of protection will be temporary residence permits. Refugees, persons eligible for subsidiary protection and persons otherwise in need of protection who are granted temporary residence permits will have the same right to family reunification as applies under EU law.

When a person's temporary residence permit expires, they will be granted a permanent residence permit even if their grounds for protection no longer apply, if they can show that they have an assessed income that is sufficient to support themselves. The temporary residence permit should also become permanent after three years if the grounds for protection remain.

The time-limited legislation will be drafted to this effect, and will apply for three years. The new legislation will be applied as soon as it enters into force. Decisions made from that date onwards will thus be based on the new legislation. The new regulations will be applied even for applications for a residence permit submitted before that date.

Legal routes

The reception of quota refugees provides a legal and safe route to Sweden and would also be a way to show solidarity with over-burdened countries in the immediate neighbourhood of conflicts. Sweden will therefore successively increase the number of quota refugees, up to 5 000 people.

An inquiry will be appointed on legal routes for seeking asylum in the EU. Humanitarian visas are one example of a matter to be investigated by the inquiry.

Review on unaccompanied minors

The number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden has increased dramatically in recent times. There is a need to analyse and review the reasons for this. In addition to the measures already announced with regard to unaccompanied minors, the entire situation concerning the placement and treatment of this group will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. This ongoing review will include all involved, from social services and the Swedish Migration Agency to minors' legal representatives, interpreters, etc. The review should also look at the transition from homes for care or residence to supported and other forms of accommodation.

Sweden to request relocation of migrants under the JHA Council decision of 22 September

On 22 September, the EU decided to temporarily relocate 120 000 people in need of protection, primarily from Italy and Greece, for two years. The decision makes it possible for other Member States to also benefit from relocation (a total of 54 000 places) under certain conditions and if an urgent situation arises, i.e. there is disproportionately high pressure on the asylum system. Benefiting from the places available under the system requires a Council decision.

The aim of our request is to push the principle that all countries must take joint responsibility and help those fleeing. It is important for European solidarity that all countries participate, and through this system all countries will build up a reception system and improve their asylum processes. Improved reception and legally certain examination

processes are a prerequisite if reception in other countries is to increase in the longer term and allow us to help more people.

Measures to strengthen the introduction of new arrivals in Sweden

Early action in the asylum-seeking process

It is important that asylum seekers themselves contribute more to the reception and introduction processes. The time spent waiting for an asylum examination should be used to strengthen an individual's prospects of establishing themselves. Inactivity must be discouraged. Swedish language tuition will be given while an asylum decision is being taken, along with a compulsory civic orientation programme. Study associations are appropriate providers, including of the measures for which the Swedish Migration Agency is responsible.

Municipalities to share responsibility for the reception of newly arrived immigrants

Society has a shared responsibility for the reception of refugees. When all municipalities do their bit and take in newly arrived immigrants, the distribution of reception will be more proportionate in terms of municipalities' labour market conditions, population size, overall reception and volume of asylum applications.

The parties are in agreement that the Riksdag should support a bill based on the proposals contained in Ministry Publications Series 2015:33 *Ett gemensamt ansvar för mottagande av nyanlända* ('Shared responsibility for reception of newly arrived immigrants'). The new legislation will enter into force on 1 March.

Better and more rapid introduction

The regulations should be simplified in both legislation and ordinances pertaining to the introduction system, with the aim of increasing flexibility and facilitating establishment in the labour market. More jobs beyond the introduction plans should be possible. There is a very real need to find better ways for those with low levels of education to obtain vocational training that will enable them to enter the labour market. Models involving vocational training schools will be trialled. The possibility of introducing an obligation to undertake education for those arriving in Sweden later in life who have not completed the equivalent of compulsory schooling will be reviewed.

Expansion of opportunities for vocational introduction jobs

For newly arrived immigrants to more quickly find work, it is very important to provide opportunities to combine work experience and education and training. The current model of vocational introduction jobs should therefore be expanded to also make it possible to include newly arrived immigrants under the same conditions that now apply according to the model. This could be done, subject to new examination and approval by the European Commission and would depend on new negotiations between the parties concerning the changed conditions for vocational introduction employment.

Vocational introduction jobs should also be expanded to apply to employers not covered by a collective agreement. A prerequisite for this is that the conditions for the employee correspond to the collective agreement level and that the training and supervision which the employee has a right to are ensured. It should be investigated how this will be ensured and by whom.

More opportunities for work experience

For newly arrived immigrants to more quickly learn the Swedish language and about Swedish workplaces, the Government will undertake special measures to provide more work experience placements both in the private and public sectors.

Expansion of tax deductions for household work

A quicker introduction to the labour market will be made easier through lower thresholds into the labour market. To enable this, tax deductions on household work will be expanded to also include a wider range of gardening services, moving services and ICT services at home.

Clearer requirements for obtaining income support

Proposals submitted by the Inquiry on support and requirements concerning unemployed people who receive financial assistance (SOU 2015:44) will be presented to the Riksdag as a government bill. The report contains proposals for a new provision in the Social Services Act that clarifies what can be required of a person applying for income support due to unemployment. The report also contains proposals for additions to certain ordinances to give municipalities the opportunity to obtain information from the Swedish Public Employment Service.

Restriction of parental benefits

Today, those arriving in Sweden with children under the age of 12 years

are entitled to a maximum of 450 days with parental benefits in Sweden. At most 96 days can be claimed after the child's fourth birthday, and no days after the child's twelfth birthday. This will be restricted so that only a small number of the 450 days can be claimed after the child turns two years old.

A condition for being entitled to parental benefits is that the individual concerned has not claimed any similar benefit in their home country – a rule that also exists today.

A more detailed design of the proposal will be investigated.

Further opportunities to cope with the housing situation

More housing needs to be found urgently. Temporary relaxations of planning and building regulations will be introduced. A review will be carried out to simplify requirements for buildings constructed or requisitioned with time-limited building permits and review opportunities to return apartments to housing status that are currently being used for another purpose without the need to apply the new construction requirements.

Conditions will be developed for more municipalities to allow construction of housing for rent to the Swedish Migration Agency on long-term agreements, similar to the 'Västervik model'. For instance, this could involve making it possible for the Swedish Migration Agency to enter into agreements that last longer than six years.

More school places

Independent schools must be able to receive asylum seekers and newly arrived pupils in the same way as municipal schools. Municipalities must have greater freedom to place asylum seekers in schools other than those in close proximity. Distance support for pupils in their own mother tongue will be developed.

More teachers and more adults in schools

The teaching skills available among those arriving in Sweden must be utilised. Newly arrived immigrants with a professional background as teachers should be able to teach pupils who speak the same language in the subjects in which they are trained. Supplementary education and validation will be provided alongside this teaching. In this acute situation, more teachers and other staff are needed in schools. Retired

teachers and student teachers could be used as a resource in the teaching of newly arrived pupils.

Strengthened resources to handle the refugee crisis

Application for available EU funds

Sweden will apply for available EU funds to alleviate the refugee situation. A review is being conducted to quickly identify possible funds where Sweden can apply for money.

One-off funding to municipalities and civil society

To handle the current refugee situation and ease pressure on the municipal economy, the parties agree to provide one-off funds to the municipalities during 2015. In the distribution of funds among the municipalities, it is possible to take into account the scale of the numbers of asylum seekers staying in the municipality and the municipality's reception of new arrivals, as well as the distribution between adults and children. At the same time, one-off funds will be provided to civil society organisations to alleviate their work with the current refugee situation and the introduction of newly arrived immigrants. In total, the investment will amount to SEK 10 billion, approximately SEK 200 million of which will go to civil society organisations.

Formulation of municipal support for housing construction

In the Budget Bill for 2016, expenditure area 18 includes an appropriation for 'Support to municipalities for increased housing construction' (1:14). The appropriation concerned is proposed to amount to SEK 1.85 billion in 2016, an estimated SEK 1.8 billion for 2017 and subsequently SEK 1.3 billion per year.

This appropriation may be used for government grants to municipalities that contribute to increased housing construction. According to the Government's considerations in the Bill, in 2016 the funds are to be distributed based on actual building construction.

The Government is open to a broad agreement on how municipal support should be formulated. It could be possible to direct support to municipalities that build housing and receive newly arrived refugees.