

## Chapter 3

### The supply of migrant skills in Sweden

*Successful integration is heavily dependent on the skills of immigrants, and on the extent to which they can build the skills necessary to operate in Swedish society and on the Swedish labour force. This chapter examines the effectiveness of the routes migrants can take to acquire these skills. It begins by examining the success of the education system to integrate young migrants, to help them to navigate the system and to leave school with the qualifications required by the labour market. Next section then goes on to examine the extent to which adults arriving with very limited levels of education are able to build the functional and vocational skills that will enable them to find sustainable employment in Sweden. Finally the chapter turns to the development of language skills.*

For many migrants in Sweden, their ability to find their way, both into the Swedish labour market and into Swedish society, remains heavily dependent on their skills. As a result, the integration of immigrants in Sweden must begin with taking stock of immigrants' skills and building the functional skills and language skills that underpin all aspects of integration.

The task of building basic skills in Sweden has, for a long time, been a fundamental component of integration policy. In the current context of unprecedented arrivals of unaccompanied minors and large inflows of immigrants with only basic levels of education, efficiently and effectively building skills and addressing obstacles before they develop has become an urgent imperative. Strengthening the supply of skills provided by Sweden's migrant population will involve both building basic skills among Sweden's immigrant youth many of whom are struggling to integrate into the school system (first section) and among the large number of newly-arrived adults who bring with them very low levels of education (second section). In addition, strengthening the supply of skills provided by Sweden's migrant population will also require efficient language training (third section).

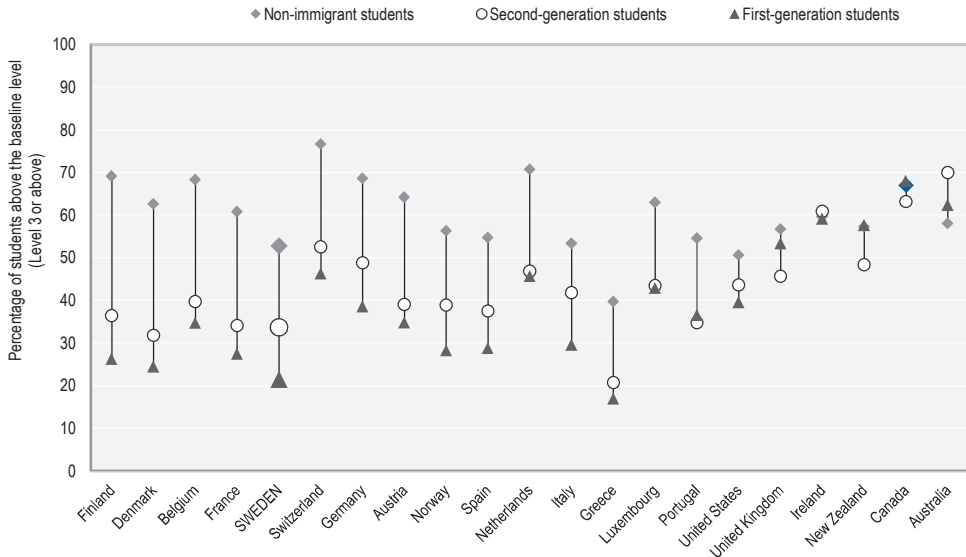
## **Integrating young immigrants into the school system**

### ***Sweden's young migrants lag behind their native peers***

Educational outcomes among students with an immigrant background – both those who are immigrants themselves, and those born in Sweden but with foreign-born parents – lag behind those of their peers with Swedish-born parents. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that, with a difference of 40 points on PISA tests, the disparity is equivalent to approximately one school year. In mathematics tests, where native language is less of an impediment to achievement, fewer than 22% of foreign-born students achieved an adequate performance on PISA tests, compared to 53% of native-born students. However, it is encouraging to note that while the performance of those students with foreign-born parents continues to fall behind the performance of those with native-born parents, the progress of these “second-generation” students in closing the gap is, alongside Italy, the most impressive in the OECD (see Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1. Students with an adequate performance in mathematics, by immigrant background, 2012**

Differences in literacy proficiency between migrants and natives, by age at arrival, in percentage



*Note:* Countries ordered according to disparity between native-born and first-generation students. Adequate performance is defined as scoring at least level 3 on PISA mathematics test. Students at this level can i) execute clearly described procedures, including those that require sequential decisions; ii) select and apply simple problem-solving strategies; iii) interpret and use representations based on different information sources and reason directly from them; and iv) develop short communications reporting their interpretations, results and reasoning. These data present performance results only and do not control for characteristics such as socio-economic background, age at immigration, language spoken at home which are likely to impact upon results.

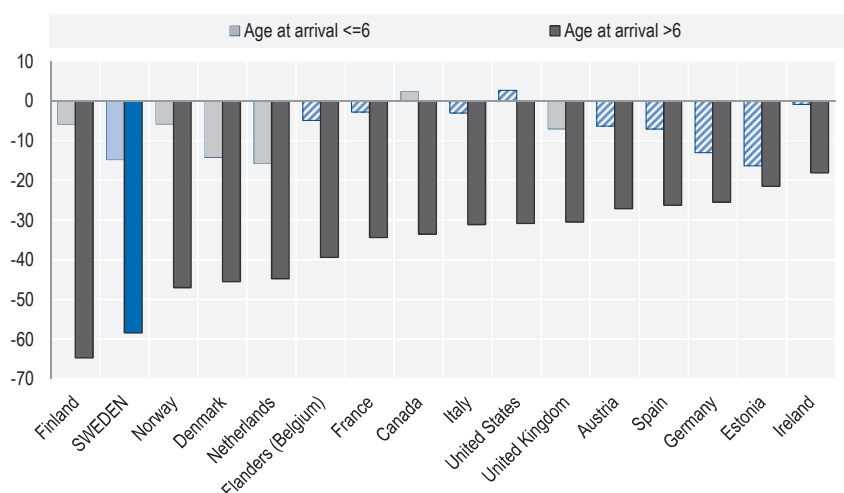
*Source:* OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: Excellence through Equity (Vol. II): Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201132-en>.

Across countries, studies have shown that when immigrants arrive at a sufficiently young age, integration is relatively effective (see for example Åslund et al., 2009). While children arriving below the age of 7-9 have been found to integrate with relative ease, after this critical age band, immigrant children are often at a disadvantage. Not only must they expend more effort in learning Swedish, but their acquisition of subject skills is less efficient while they learn to master the new language.<sup>1</sup> As a result, school performance observed in adolescence has been found to deteriorate progressively with age at arrival (Böhlmark, 2008). Figure 3.2 illustrates that, by the time they reach adulthood, those immigrants who arrived in

Sweden after the age of six, fall significantly behind the native-born in terms of literacy performance. Indeed the score point difference as measured in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) between immigrants and natives is, aside from Finland, the largest of the sampled countries.<sup>2</sup> With close to 52 000 asylum applications in 2015 from young migrants between the ages of 7 and 17 (accounting for 32% of all asylum applications the same year) improving the skill acquisition among young migrants arriving beyond the age of 7 is an important challenge.

**Figure 3.2. Differences in literacy proficiency between immigrants and natives, by age at arrival, 2012**

PIAAC Score point difference in literacy proficiency between migrants and natives, by age at arrival



*Note:* The sample includes persons aged 16 to 65. The coefficients presented in the figure are from separate regressions which include controls for age, gender, education and parental education. The striped bars indicate coefficients which are not statistically significant (at 10% level).

*Source:* Bonfanti, S. and T. Xenogiani (2014), “Migrants’ Skills: Use, Mismatch and Labour Market Outcomes – A First Exploration of the International Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)”, *Matching Economic Migration with Labour Market Needs*, OECD and EU, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264216501-11-en>.

The challenge of integration in school is faced across OECD countries. It is, however, particularly acute in Sweden where the rarity of speaking the language prior to arrival, the residential concentration of immigrants, and the large number of minors arriving at the compulsory school leaving age contribute to the difficulties facing adolescents entering the school system. Box 3.1 outlines the core features of Swedish policy in this area.

### Box 3.1. Swedish policy at a glance: Integration into the schooling system

There is a large degree of local autonomy governing the integration new arrivals into school in Sweden and much is left to the discretion of the local municipality and the school head. Increasingly, however, central government guidelines are setting minimum standards on a number of fronts.

**Rapid integration:** All children arriving in Sweden, accompanied or otherwise, should be offered access to education in no less than 30 days after their arrival.

**Skill mapping:** Changes planned for 2016 will ensure a skill mapping assessment forms the basis of decisions regarding which grade the newly-arrived student should be placed, and how timing and instruction should be planned. Compulsory mapping must be completed within two months of arrival.

**Preparatory classes:** In their first year of compulsory school, newly-arrived migrants *may* be offered preparatory classes to provide them with support prior to entering mainstream education – though the decision regarding whether or not to provide such preparatory classes is down to the individual head teacher. Changes planned for 2016 will ensure a phased transition such that students are placed in regular classes alongside preparatory education where possible, and that preparatory classes do not last for longer than two years. In effect this will mean that when a child is able to attend, for example, a physical education class alongside their native-born peers they will be moved to this class even while they may stay in preparatory classes for mathematics tuition.

**Introductory programmes:** Upon reaching the end of compulsory schooling, those students who fail to qualify for upper-secondary can undertake introductory programmes. These programmes, open to both the native- and foreign-born students, include:

- Preparatory education enables students to undertake minor completions necessary for eligibility to higher education preparatory courses.
- Programme-oriented individual options is open to students who aim to achieve eligibility to upper-secondary courses but require more than minor completions
- Vocational introduction is designed to equip students to enter the labour market or eventually to lead on to studies in a vocational programme.
- Individual alternative targets youth who have large skill gaps or weak motivation.
- Language introduction targets the foreign-born whose language skills are impeding their educational progress.

### ***Local autonomy enables schools to adapt to local conditions but funding is not systematically reactive***

Unpacking what lies behind the poor outcomes of students with a migrant background is complicated by the large degree of autonomy at the local level when it comes to integration support provided in schools. The head teacher of each school has the autonomy to decide whether preparatory classes will be offered to newly-arrived students to help them ease the transition to mainstream classes as well as to decide how students are allocated to classes thereafter.

The number of foreign-born students in school in Sweden varies substantially across municipalities such that while, in 2014, 21% of children aged 5-14 in Södertälje were born abroad, in Lekeberg this figure stood at just 2%. In many cases, these young migrants are concentrated in the less affluent municipalities and while immigrant students and the native-born with foreign-born parents account for 15% of students nationally, they account for 23% of students in schools classed as socio-economically disadvantaged (OECD 2013).<sup>3</sup>

The support required to integrate a newly-arrived student in a class of native-born students will be quite different from that required to integrate new arrivals in a class in which the existing students are largely migrants themselves and, as a result, in this context, local autonomy has been important in allowing local schools to adapt to these differences. Nevertheless, it is important that such local autonomy is supported by careful monitoring of outcomes and the provision of national guidelines on minimum requirements. Recent changes, announced in 2015, will go some way towards this by requiring the assignment to pupils be based upon a skills mapping exercise (see Box 3.1) where previously they have, in many municipalities, often simply been placed in classes with peers of a younger age. However further efforts should be made in harmonising the availability of additional support, monitoring the integration support tools employed and the outcomes these achieve and scaling up those interventions found to be effective. For example those identified during the recent pilot that provided native language study guidance, support for contact with guardians; increased teaching time, and help with homework (Assadi et al., 2015).

Furthermore provision of support to new arrivals in those schools with a heavy concentration of students with an immigrant background is likely to require more resources than in schools with few students with an immigrant background. Given that schools are run at the municipal level in Sweden, the ability to channel resources to where they are needed remains heterogeneous across the country. While municipalities are required by the Education Act to allocate funding according to school need, the degree to which they do

this is left to the discretion of the municipality. In addition, while larger, and more heterogeneous, municipalities have the capacity to equalise funding to some degree by allocating their funds according to school needs, some local actors have highlighted that smaller municipalities are often more limited in their ability to do this.

At the end of 2015 the government announced that it would provide an additional one off grant of SEK 200 million (EUR 21.6 million) to those municipalities who received asylum seekers amounting to more than 10% of the population below 19 years of age. It is important, however, that targeting disadvantage in education is built into the system such that resources are automatically redistributed towards schools that are facing challenges. Targeting resources at pre-defined “failing” or “disadvantaged” schools may not be sufficiently reactive to changes in the composition of a school population. This is particularly relevant in the current context of large numbers of newly-arrived students. In addition, targeting pre-defined schools can have unintended consequences if it implies a negative image for the school. Labelling a school as “failing”, “disadvantaged”, or even “priority” can create a stigma that may discourage the attendance of native-born pupils. In France, for example, the targeting of particular geographic areas through the *Zones d'éducation prioritaires* (ZEPs) was found to prompt a decline in school enrolments due to both depopulation of ZEP areas and to middle class parents avoiding ZEP schools (Bénabou et al., 2003).

Enabling school funding to depend upon the socio-economic characteristics of its student population may help ensure that funding is targeted where it is most needed in a responsive manner. In addition, it avoids non-linear definitions of disadvantage and the dichotomous labelling of schools into those that are disadvantaged and those that are not. Box 3.2 discusses the approach to targeting school funds on disadvantage adopted in some other OECD countries.

### **Box 3.2. Targeted school funding in OECD countries**

In Sweden the extent to which school funding is targeted towards disadvantaged schools is down to the discretion of the municipality. Elsewhere in the OECD countries have experimented with targeting funding more explicitly at disadvantage and in a more linear fashion.

In **Switzerland**, rather than targeting schools in a proportional manner, the Putting Quality into Multi-Ethnic Schools (QUIMS) programme provides additional financial resources and support to schools in which greater than 40% of students are either migrants themselves, or whose parents are foreign-born. This approach, however, creates an arbitrary discontinuity.

### Box 3.2. Targeted school funding in OECD countries (*cont.*)

In 2013, the **Australian** Education Act introduced a new funding model. Recurrent funding is now determined, with reference to a Schooling Resource Standard, on the same basis for government and non-government schools. For non-government schools, their base funding is discounted based on the capacity of the school community to contribute towards the cost of operating their school. In addition, all schools are entitled to additional funds to address identified student and school needs. These funds are targeted at students from low socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with limited English skills and students with a disability, as well as at small schools and schools in regional and remote areas (OECD, 2015a).

**England** also underwent a school funding reform in 2013/14 with the aim of simplifying the funding system and improving transparency and the quality of education choices. The reform aimed to increase consistency in allocations to schools, and to make the funding system more student-driven. In addition to the general fund, a Pupil Premium programme (2011) aimed to reduce inequities between students through additional school funding to support disadvantaged students and close attainment gaps. The premium of GBP 900 per disadvantaged student targets students who have benefited from free school meals at any point in the last six years. Schools decide how to use this funding. The overall programme funding reached GBP 1.875 billion in 2013/14 (OECD, 2015a). In addition, with the aim of incentivising schools to focus on the performance of their disadvantaged students, “Pupil Premium Awards” – ranging from GBP 1 000 to GBP 250 000 – are awarded to schools which have overseen the largest improvement in the performance of their disadvantaged students. Alongside the Pupil Premium, funding from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) is allocated based on the numbers of pupils from nationally underachieving minority ethnic groups and English language learners. The grant is intended to promote “whole-school change” to narrow achievement gaps and to address the costs of additional support to meet the specific needs of bilingual learners (Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Chowdry and Sibieta, 2011)

In **Flanders, Belgium** the funding formula allocates a portion of total funding on the basis of four socio-economic indicators: mother’s level of education, the household income, the language spoken at home and the living environment of the student.

The segregation that results from the concentration of new arrivals in disadvantaged schools limits the interaction between foreign-born and native-born Swedes. This tends to be associated with slower language acquisition and limited network formation in a manner that may negatively impact on long-run integration (see above for a more complete discussion on the role played by networks in influencing integration outcomes).

The concentration of children from low socioeconomic and foreign backgrounds, while largely a result of residential segregation, can be exacerbated by policies enabling school choice (see Box 3.3). Until recently in Sweden long waiting lists for sought after private schools have de facto meant that new arrivals were denied access to these schools, and while



recent policy discussions have suggested endowing these schools with the possibility to enable new arrivals to bypass waiting lists, the use of this right is down to the discretion of the school.

### **Box 3.3. The impact of school choice on integration**

Alongside the residential concentration of immigrants that results from housing shortages (see Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion on housing of immigrants), school choice reforms, introduced in Sweden in the early 1990s, seem to have enhanced the school concentration of students with an immigrant background. These reforms provided for a voucher system enabling students to choose among public and private schools within the compulsory education system without having to pay additional tuition fees. Research conducted by Böhlmärk and Lindahl (2007) suggests that a higher share of private school students within a municipality in Sweden is related to higher segregation in terms of parental education and immigrant status between public and private schools.

Debate on the impact of school choice on student outcomes remains ongoing. Recent research (Edmark et al., 2014) suggests that the impact of school choice on 9th grade marks indicate larger effects for children of Swedish parents than among children whose parents were born outside Sweden. Nevertheless, the authors also find a modest positive impact on the outcomes of children whose parents were born outside Sweden. That is, having one more school within two kilometres of the students' home appears to increase the likelihood that they will go on to obtain a university degree by 1.15 percentage points. However, while school choice may be beneficial for those who make an active choice, recent research suggests immigrants and their children are less likely to do so. Using travel distance to school as an approximation of school choice, Edmark et al. (2014) find that students whose parents were both Swedish born were more likely to send their children to a more distant school. Indeed, long waiting lists for highly sought-after schools have often meant that newly-arrived migrants are often *de facto* excluded from attending.

Where school choice has budgetary implications – as is the case in Sweden where the child brings a state funded voucher to the school of their choice – competitive pressure may lead school leaders and teachers to raise the quality of their schools in order to attract more students. Good schools may then expand while poorly performing schools must improve or close down. However, if poorly performing schools do not close but continue to cater for those who have not left, the concomitantly reduced funding may, alongside peer effects, have a detrimental impact on those that remain. This is likely to be a particular problem for those schools operating in catchment areas that are home to large numbers of newly-arriving migrants. However, the degree to which this is a problem in Sweden is not yet known.

Beyond financial resources, however, a shortage of teachers has arisen in Sweden in recent years. The large number of retirements and increasing number of pupils has combined with the implementation of the requirement that uncertified teachers be replaced with certified teachers to create an estimated need for 81 000 full-time teachers between 2015 and 2019. Given that, in the past five years only 47 000 teachers and preschool teachers graduating in Sweden (not all of whom work full-time or even enter the

teaching profession upon graduation) the shortfall that is expected to reach close to 50 000 teachers over the coming five years. In order to address this deficit several initiatives have been developed to address this shortage including reform to increase teacher salaries and efforts to increase the number of newly-arrived immigrants with a teaching background whose skills are utilised within the education system (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of the “Fast Track for Teachers”).

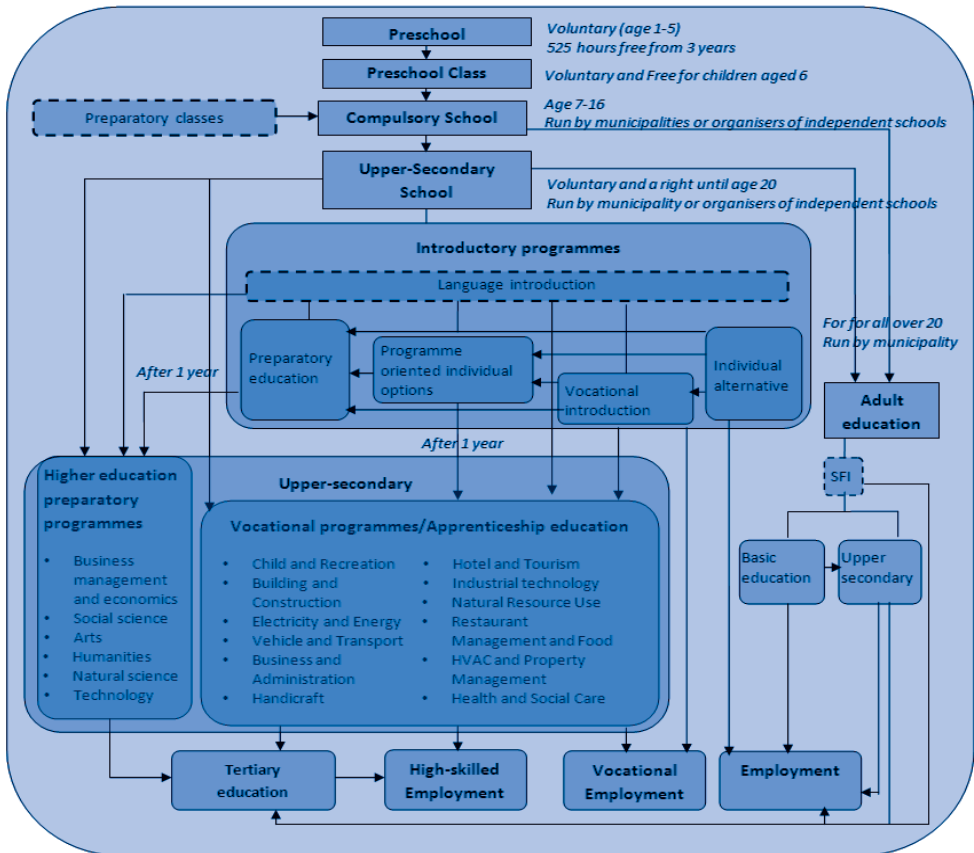
***Young immigrants often struggle to qualify for upper-secondary education and remain trapped in courses with weakly-motivated native-born students***

Most schooling systems incorporate age-related performance assessments which, depending on their timing, can create challenges for new arrivals when language problems, alongside other difficulties, temporarily hamper their ability. If these assessments are critical in determining the future educational options available to students, they may have long term repercussions that are difficult to repair. The Swedish education system (as illustrated in Figure 3.3) is designed to incorporate no such dead-ends. It should be feasible for students to flow through the system through different routes, overcoming initial set-backs to gain access to higher education.

Post-compulsory upper-secondary education in Sweden consists of higher education preparatory programmes and vocational programmes. While upper-secondary schools are not compulsory, it is expected that they are attended by almost all pupils. For those pupils who are not immediately eligible to apply for upper-secondary school, five introductory programmes provide individually adapted education intended to help pupils bridge the gap to upper-secondary school (and potentially on to higher education) or to establish themselves on the labour market (see Figure 3.3). Each of these components can provide a route into higher education such that pupils on any of these programmes can achieve eligibility for higher education.

A particular hurdle facing many students with a foreign background is the transition between compulsory schooling and upper-secondary school. The minimum requirement for entry into upper-secondary education in Sweden is to qualify for vocational programmes.<sup>4</sup> Figure 3.4 highlights that while over 91% of students with native-born parents achieve this minimum, the numbers are somewhat lower for those native-born students whose parents were born outside Sweden (85.8%) or those who arrived before the start of compulsory school (86.6%). However, as few as one in every two of those young migrants who arrive after the start of compulsory school manage to qualify for upper-secondary school and among new arrivals (those who arrived less than four years prior to the end of compulsory school) the figure falls below one in three.<sup>5,6</sup>

Figure 3.3. Pathways through the education system



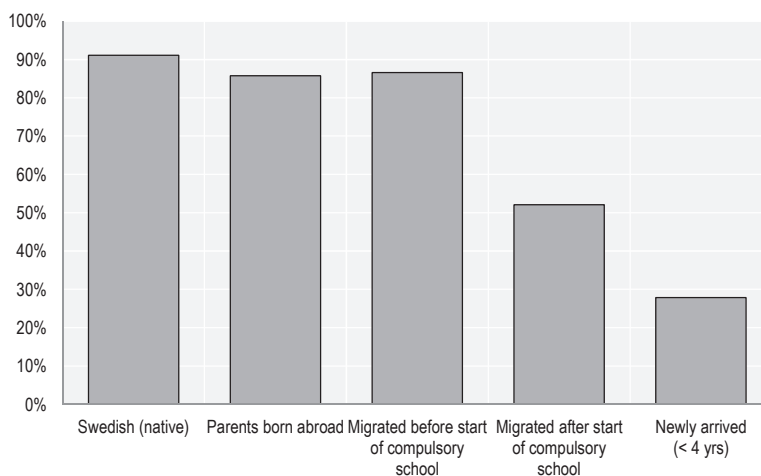
HVAC: Heating, ventilation and air-conditioning; SFI: Swedish for Immigrants.

Source: OECD Secretariat analysis based on national legislation and regulations.

As a result, “Introductory Programmes” – and in particular the “Individual Alternative” programme – is often called upon to accommodate migrants who failed to qualify for upper-secondary courses. Though this programme is aimed at students who are struggling with their education, over 12% of all foreign-born students in introduction programmes in 2014 were placed on the “Individual Alternative” programme (see Figure 3.5 below).<sup>7</sup> The result is that, in 2014, over half of “Individual Alternative” students were migrants.

**Figure 3.4. Percentage of students qualified for upper secondary at the end of compulsory schooling, 2013**

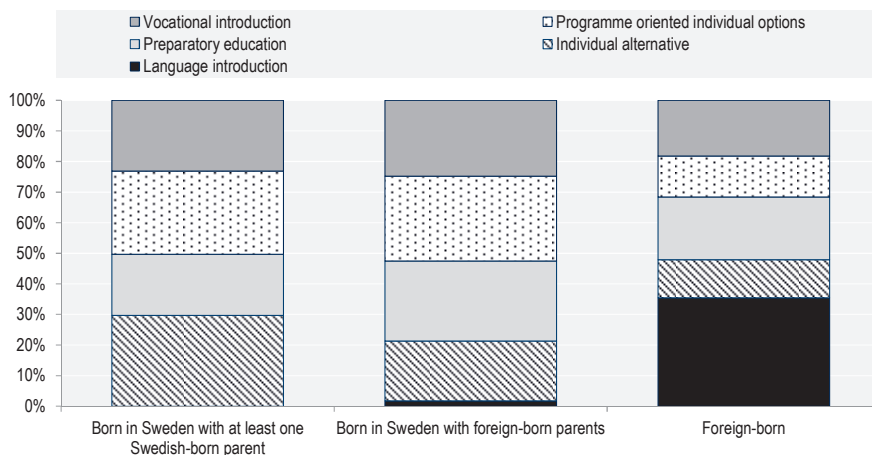
Percent qualified for vocational programmes, lowest upper secondary requirement



Source: Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education).

**Figure 3.5. Distribution of Students across Introductory Programmes, 2014**

Percent



Source: Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education).

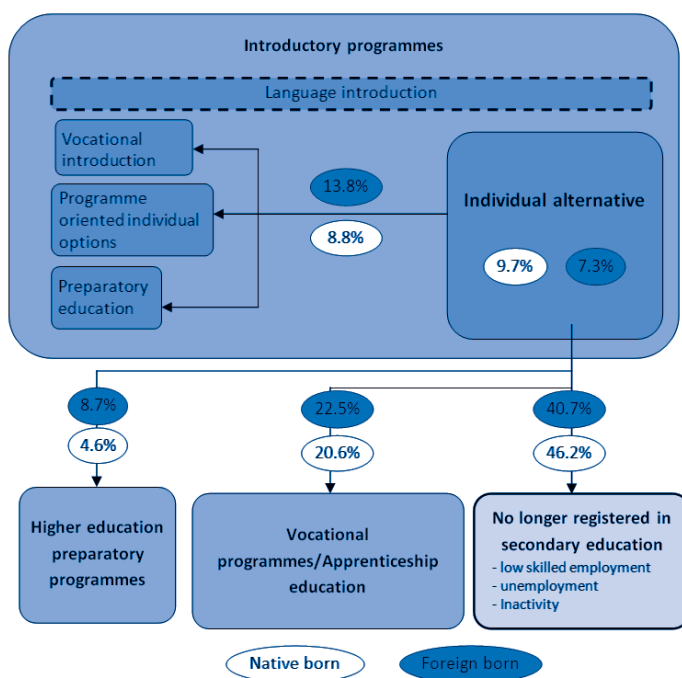
The programme was initially designed in order to provide additional tailored support for a small number of struggling students on a temporary basis, and in some municipalities has been successful in helping these students. However, in practice, the “Individual Alternative” programme is primarily targeted at pupils that have large skill gaps and weak motivation and, in some municipalities, the programme has acted as a holding bay in which struggling students are parked until they leave the education system.

Among those students that do progress out of the “Individual Alternative” programme, the foreign-born are over-represented. And, of the 2011 cohort, a larger proportion of the foreign-born “Individual Alternative” students progressed into mainstream upper-secondary or other introductory courses after three years than did native-born students (see Figure 3.6). However, given the large body of research identifying the important role of peer effects in educational outcomes (see Sacerdote, 2011 for a summary of the empirical literature) the concentration of immigrants in classes with the least motivated of their native-born peers is unlikely to aid the educational success of Sweden’s young immigrants. And three years following enrolment in the language introduction – the point of entry for new arrivals arriving beyond the age of 16 – close to 90% of students remained introductory programmes (largely Individual Alternative) having failed to move into vocational programmes or higher education preparatory programmes.

Concerns to avoid segregation in classes have meant that new arrivals are moved rapidly into mainstream courses. Ensuring that they continue to receive intensive targeted support, including mother tongue support with course material, will be important to ensure that immigrant students are not automatically placed in classes with weakly motivated native-born students where they are unlikely to reach their full potential.

**Figure 3.6. Paths out of the “Individual Alternative” programme, 2011 cohort**

Progression of students three years after joining the “Individual Alternative” programme



Source: OECD Secretariat on the basis of data from Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education).

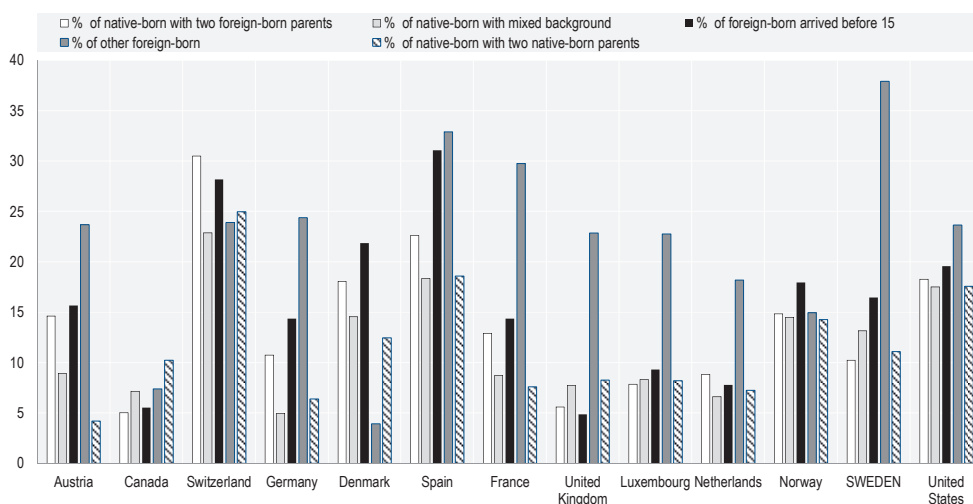
### *Many young migrants choose to leave school early*

Integrating young migrants in school is a challenge, integrating them when they have left school can be more challenging still. And while Sweden appears to do a relatively good job in keeping those who arrived at a younger age in the education system, young immigrants arriving towards the end of compulsory schooling, many of whom find themselves stuck in “Introductory Programmes”, may choose to abandon education entirely.

Across the OECD young immigrants – particularly those who arrive in their host country beyond the age of 15 – are particularly likely to drop out of education, and no more is this true than in Sweden. In 2013 close to 38% of all those immigrants aged 15 to 24 who had arrived beyond the age of 15 were no longer in education. This represents the highest figure among the OECD countries for which information is available (see Figure 3.7 below).

**Figure 3.7. Early school leavers, 2013**

Percentage of 15-24, not in education with at most ISCED 0-2

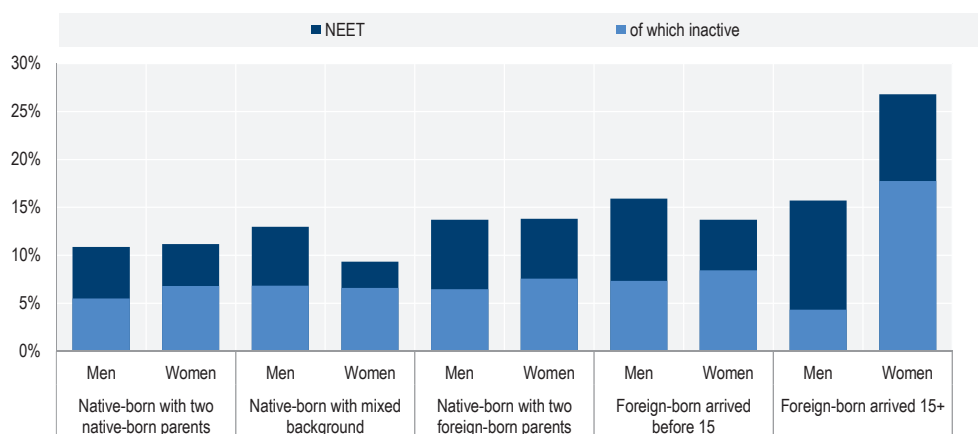


Source: OECD and European Commission (2015).

Many of those arriving beyond the age of compulsory education who leave school early, do so not because they are not motivated, but because they are; many are keen to find work and begin remitting wages. And, while as in most OECD countries, immigrants and those with immigrant parents are more likely to be neither in education nor in training (NEET) than the children of the native-born, in Sweden the proportion of young people who are inactive and NEET is relatively similar among the native- and the foreign-born. Indeed, as Figure 3.8 highlights, the inactivity rates among those who are neither in employment education or training are the *lowest* among the male immigrants who arrived after the age of 15.

Those immigrants between the ages of 16 and 24 who remain active are eligible for support from the PES through the Job and Development Guarantee for Youth after a period of 12 weeks in unemployment. This programme involves an initial three months of job-search training followed by a work placement or short training for up to 15 months or until the young person reaches 25. This programme is not directly targeted at migrants and indeed Swedish language courses are not provided under the Job and Development Guarantee for youth. This means that those young people whose language difficulties impede their job search are unable to address this barrier within the programme.

**Figure 3.8. NEET rates and inactivity by parental origin and age at arrival, aged 15-34, 2013**



Source: OECD and European Commission (2015), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264234024-en>.

To address the labour market incentives behind the large number of migrants choosing to leave school early, since August 2015, an education contract has been introduced to encourage unemployed youth between the ages of 20 and 24 to return to adult education to gain an upper-secondary qualification. The contract will increase the financial aid available while offering increased flexibility to combine studies with work and labour market initiatives. While this initiative is not directly targeted at immigrants, given their disproportionate representation among those who do not qualify for upper-secondary education, they are likely to be substantially represented among the beneficiaries. The education contract, however, is not available for immigrants in the introduction programme since they are already eligible for the introduction benefit and therefore cannot receive additional financial aid for studies. In a similar vein, trainee jobs allow youth with an incomplete education to combine work and studies by studying for a vocational certificate while working part-time. The young job seeker is able to earn a wage for the work that they do while the employer is eligible for a wage subsidy.<sup>8</sup> However, eligibility is contingent upon having obtained an upper-secondary education which rules out many of those who are struggling the most.



### ***With growing numbers of unaccompanied minors, effective integration in school is an urgent issue***

Unaccompanied minors – young migrants, under the age of 18, who have been separated from both parents – represent a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to their integration into the school system. The vast majority of unaccompanied minors arrive beyond the critical age at which integration into the school system becomes more difficult; over 93% of young girls who arrive unaccompanied are beyond the age of 7, and among boys the figure exceeds 98%.

Furthermore, alongside the hurdles faced by all migrants – language hurdles, unrecognised credentials, discrimination etc. – unaccompanied minors face additional hurdles resulting from the lack of financial and psychological support provided by a family. And, perhaps more importantly still, these children often feel substantial pressure to find work (or begin the introduction programme in order to gain the introduction benefit) in order that they can begin to send remittances to family remaining in their origin country.

Unlike young migrants arriving with a guardian, from the age of 18 unaccompanied minors are eligible to take part in the activities offered under the introduction programme. This has meant that, on top of the lack of parental supervision of schooling outcomes, these minors face an additional incentive to leave school early as, if they do so, they may begin to claim the introduction benefit.

### **Ensuring all adults have the skills to integrate into society and the labour market**

For those who arrive late into the Swedish education system, catching up with their native-born peers is already a challenge. But for those who arrive after schooling age but who nevertheless lack even basic numeracy and literacy, integrating into the labour market poses further challenges still.

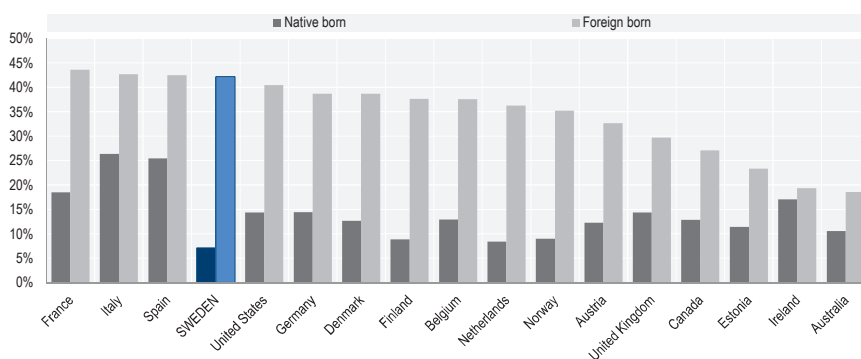
Those immigrants who lack basic literacy skills are liable, not only to struggle to find work, but they are also likely to struggle when learning Swedish and when navigating their way in Swedish society. A sound mastery of the basic skills, literacy, numeracy and problem solving, is a necessary foundation upon which to build the other more advanced skills – such as language skills, and job search skills – necessary for effective integration.

### *Many adult migrants arrive with very low levels of education*

Sweden's foreign-born population tend to lag behind their native-born counterparts in their stock of these basic skills. Data from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills suggests that the disparity between Sweden's foreign- and native-born adults with very basic literacy is the largest among surveyed countries (Figure 3.9). Part of this may be due to language – as the test is performed in the host-country language – but in any case, it points to a large challenge.

**Figure 3.9. Proportion with very basic literacy, by place of birth, aged 16-65, 2012**

Proportion with very basic literacy, by place of birth



*Note:* The sample includes persons aged 16 to 65.

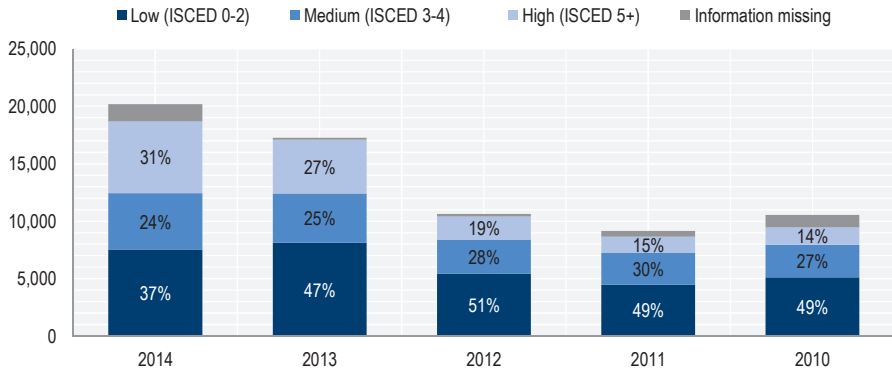
*Source:* OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012.

The challenge stems partially from the large number of migrants arriving in Sweden on humanitarian grounds, as a significant number of these migrants bring with them only very basic skills. Many have been obliged to leave school early in their origin country, or have been educated in systems that are much less advanced than that in Sweden. Indeed, in the last two years alone close to 16 000 refugees and their family arrived in Sweden with just a primary or lower-secondary education (Figure 3.10).

As a result, the educational disparity in Sweden between foreign- and native-born individuals is among the largest in the OECD. Figure 3.11 illustrates this disparity. In Sweden, the share of the foreign-born population holding only a very low level of education (ISCED level 0 or 1) is 10%, while among the native-born population the figure is negligible – indeed it is not, in general, possible for individuals to leave the education system in Sweden with such low levels of education.

**Figure 3.10. The education levels of recently arrived refugees and their families, by year of arrival**

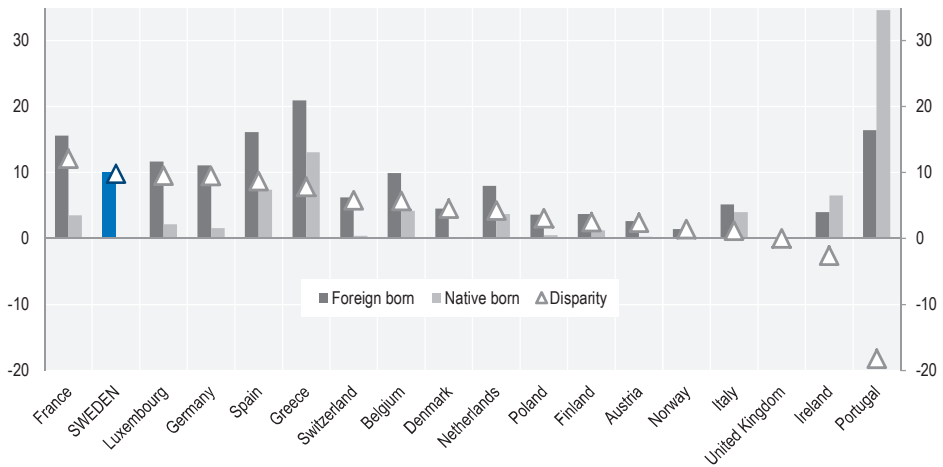
Total number of arrivals, aged 20-64 (percent of total shown in data label)



Source: Data provided by Statistics Sweden.

**Figure 3.11. Share of foreign- and native-born with very low education, aged 25-64 and not in education, 2013**

Percent of the proportion holding only ISCED level 0/1 (left axis), percentage point difference (right axis)



Source: Data provided by Statistics Sweden.

The extent of these educational disparities means that it is of paramount importance that they are addressed early and effectively in the integration process to equip all migrants with the basic skills needed to be functional in the labour market and society, and in order to avoid compromising the efficiency of further integration measures.

***These low-skilled immigrants require intensive education to provide basic functional skills***

Intensive second-chance and remedial education programmes can address the basic skills deficits that prevent immigrants from entering the labour force and integrating with Swedish society.

However, achieving the minimum skill level to be considered as employable on the Swedish labour market is likely to require long-standing support. It is an investment, however, that pays dividends across generations as the integration difficulties experienced by the children of immigrants tend to be more manifest among those whose parents were low-skilled.

Despite the need for intensive remedial education, early skills training for newly-arrived immigrants has focused heavily on Swedish language training (see Box 3.4 for an outline of the available support for those lacking functional skills). Many newly-arrived migrants on the introduction plan are directed initially to Swedish for Immigrants courses which, while largely designed to equip adult immigrants with a basic knowledge of the Swedish language, have often been tasked *de facto* with teaching basic literacy skills to those immigrants who lack them. While the tailoring of language classes to the educational background of the participant is important, it is equally important that individuals are directed to the appropriate institution to ensure that support is provided by those most qualified to do so. Immigrants lacking very basic skills are in many cases unable to obtain them within the two-year period of SFI study that is provided for under the introduction programme. As a result, many immigrants lacking basic literacy and numeracy have been parked on SFI courses for a period of time that extends beyond the introduction period.

Additional support is provided through a range of courses run by the PES. However, PES funding for adult education is largely confined to short-term employment oriented training with the result that unemployed migrants lacking basic skills are often channelled into courses which, given their short duration, are rarely appropriate to their profound needs.

### Box 3.4. Swedish policy at a glance: Routes to literacy in Sweden

Some of Sweden's newly-arrived refugees bring only very limited levels of education with them. For these migrants integration will be a long path and must begin with basic literacy. There are currently a number of actors working with individuals who lack basic education in Sweden.

**Swedish for Immigrants:** Largely designed to equip adult immigrants with a basic knowledge of the Swedish Language, SFI is also used as a tool to teach basic literacy skills to those immigrants who lack them.

**Municipal Adult Education:** Alongside Swedish for Immigrants, municipal adult education is available at the basic level and at the upper-secondary level. Municipal adult education at upper-secondary level corresponds to the levels set for pupils at upper-secondary school, and can therefore be used by adults to top-up courses they failed to complete in their youth. A recent initiative has brought Swedish for Immigrants under the aegis of the municipal adult education system.

**PES run courses:** Labour market training co-ordinated by the PES is carried out by private and public educational providers. Ad hoc projects to raise basic skills are targeted at those whose lack of functional literacy impedes their use of courses targeted at the labour market.

**Knowledge Boost:** This recent funding initiative will provide grants to local authorities for municipal-run general and vocational adult education courses. Local authorities must apply for the grant and part of the funding has been reserved for courses that combine SFI with vocational training.

As a result, alongside SFI and PES activities, there are a range of *ad hoc* programmes and projects run by some municipalities to offer additional support for literacy and very basic skills acquisition to those on social assistance who have been through the introduction years without successfully acquiring these skills. The intensity and duration of these programmes, however, varies with the availability of funding – both over time, and from one municipality to the next. The reliance on these project-based programmes to build the basic skills upon which all future integration efforts depend is likely to be inefficient; it limits the stability, the long-term budgeting, and pedagogical development.

Since 2000, the notion of flexibility to learning requirements has been central to adult education in Sweden. It is important, however, that this flexibility does not translate into duplication of services if multiple institutions attempt to adapt to the needs of the individual rather than ensuring that each individual is directed to the institution appropriate to their needs. For newly-arrived adults, the adult education system is likely to be the most appropriate place to build basic skills that require intensive

education and support. Adult education is, in general, free of charge, and there are a variety of funding mechanisms including: study allowances, study grants (for those with the greatest needs and with disabilities) and loans. In 2014, however, only 5% of introduction programme participants had adult education included in their introduction plan as an alternative to labour market activities. The primary reason for this remarkably low number is that completed SFI studies are currently a prerequisite for participation in adult education.

In response to this, the government has recently announced its intention to move SFI even closer to the municipal adult education system, in order to ensure that SFI can be combined with other relevant education as early as possible in the integration process. This may help to ensure a better co-operation between education targeted at building basic skills and language education; however it is important that this step does not undermine the labour market focus of language training among those that do not require remedial education. Furthermore, in order to ensure that the financial incentives created by the introduction benefit do not distort the educational decisions of newly-arrived migrants, it is important that adult education play a more important role in the introduction plan.

Sweden has made much progress in emphasizing early labour market access among newly-arrived humanitarian migrants. While many countries have much to learn from Sweden in this respect, it is important that the pendulum not swing too far, and that those who lack basic skills are given the opportunity to build these in a coherent manner alongside early labour market contact.

### ***... and flexible vocational pathways closely linked to the world of work***

Those migrants that have acquired the necessary foundation skills will still require significant support in gaining the vocational skills necessary for employment. And high quality vocational education and apprenticeships have been found to be effective in building skills demanded by the labour market (see Liebig and Huddleston, 2014). However, while immigrants and the children of immigrants are often among those who benefit most from these vocational streams, in many countries, they are also among the least likely to complete the training.

In particular workplace learning including: job shadowing, service learning voluntary work, internships, and apprenticeships have been shown to be important mechanisms to help those with a foreign background to access the labour markets in the country in which they study and live.<sup>9</sup> However, these positive outcomes require well developed VET programmes, closely

linked to the world of work. Workplaces offer real on-the-job experience that make it easier to acquire both hard and soft skills, as well as offering migrants the chance to develop networks that are critical in the Swedish labour market.<sup>10</sup>

However, while the organisation of Sweden's adult education system along parallel lines to the schooling system enables adults are able to top-up courses for which they failed to qualify in school, it remains largely independent from the labour market. Adult learning is predominantly confined to either long-term formal education or short PES-administered courses. Creating stronger links between the two, and allowing labour market training to count towards conventional qualifications, could facilitate flexible training pathways between education and employment. The PES offers a range of internships and temporary employment schemes that could usefully be combined with adult education (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of some of these schemes). However, the limited co-operation between the PES and municipalities again undermines the efficient use of these measures in combination.

The recently initiated education contract – targeted and youth between 20 and 24 as discussed above – offers increased flexibility to combine studies with work experience and labour market initiatives and may be a good template for the creation of similar opportunities among the adult migrant population. This will require co-ordinated co-operation between municipalities, the PES and social partners. Along similar lines, a model currently piloted across the United States is the career pathways model. Career pathways, while not directly targeted at the foreign-born, can be particularly suited to their needs as they enable modular educational courses to be undertaken alongside labour market experience to enable meaningful career progression (see Box 3.5). These models can also be combined with recognition of prior learning and bridging for those with existing skills and experience (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of recognition and bridging).

### **Box 3.5. Combining work and study through career pathways**

The career pathway approach developed in the United States provides an example of linking education and work that is of particular relevance for migrants who may not have access to traditional education-labour market routes. A career pathway is a series of connected education and training programmes and support services that enable individuals to combine employment within a specific industry or occupation with vocationally relevant education, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector (US Department of Education, 2012). By making explicit the routes and potential rewards associated with moves up the career ladder, the articulation of career pathways can engender enhanced aspirations, ensuring, not only that individuals are motivated to make the most of their training, but that they are able to choose the most appropriate path to achieve their aspirations. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare participants for the next level of employment. This requires educational courses, available in modular formats, that lead to industry recognised qualifications.

Employer engagement is critical to the success of these pathway programmes and can vary from merely recognising qualifications to programme management and oversight, programme design, and even programme delivery.

*Source:* Barnow, B.S. and S. Spaulding (2015), “Employer Involvement in Workforce Programs: What Do 231 We Know?”, in C. Van Horn, T. Edwards and T. Greene (eds.), *Transforming U.S. Workforce Development Policies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

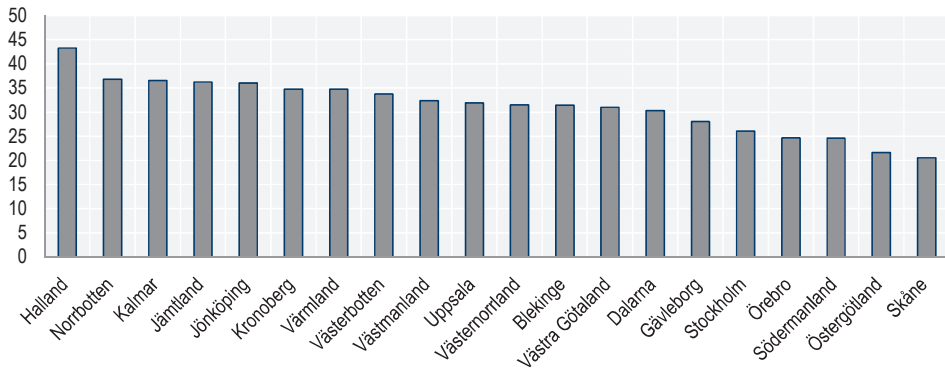
### ***Labour market outcomes vary across the country***

The degree of local autonomy in the provision of adult education and supplementary educational initiatives targeted at the low-skilled exists alongside quite different success rates when it comes to moving low-skilled refugees and their families into employment. While local labour market conditions mean that the employment population ratio among low-skilled adults in their first two years of residence differs from region to region, on the whole the employment population ratio among newly-arrived refugees and their families hovers at around 8%. The extent to which these migrants move into employment in their first 7-10 years in Sweden, however, differs quite substantially across the country (see Figure 3.12) and while the local autonomy that characterises the Swedish education system is behind a lot of the success, it is important that this local autonomy is complemented by careful monitoring and the publication of statistics and information on outcomes, in order to ensure that activities are of equal quality across the country.



**Figure 3.12. Change in employment of low-skilled immigrant adults during first ten years of residence, by region, 2014**

Percentage point difference in employment population ratio of those resident 0-2 years and those resident 7-10 years



*Note:* This figure is based upon cross-sectional data and does not, therefore, account for the different compositional make-up of refugee cohorts.

*Source:* Based upon data provided by Statistics Sweden.

Sweden has a strong tradition of building public policy on the basis of the results of rigorous impact evaluations of policy pilots. Indeed, the Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU), a research institute operating under the Swedish Ministry of Employment, is tasked explicitly with carrying out high-quality scientific evaluations to support the formulation of policy in the field of education, labour markets and integration. However, while many OECD countries have much to learn from Sweden on this tangent, it is important that the high degree of local autonomy in policy design and implementation is complemented with a culture of monitoring policy and publishing outcomes at the local level.

## Learning the Swedish language

Knowledge of the host-country language is a key factor in determining the speed and success of integration – both economic and social. Language skills are an essential prerequisite in the ability of the foreign-born to form networks with the native-born population and search for a job. And, since both networks and employment are important routes through which to build further language skills, poor knowledge of the host country language can prompt a vicious cycle. Language proficiency is not only a key component

of the acquisition of locally relevant skills but also has a substantial impact on the transferability of existing skills.

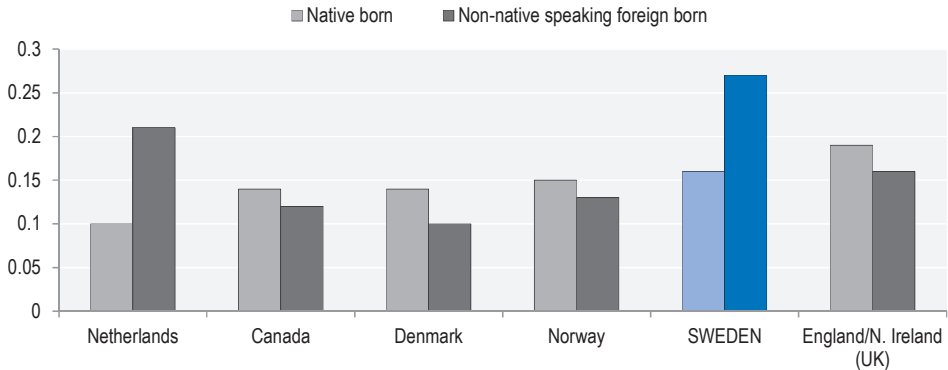
***Few migrants speak Swedish when they arrive in Sweden and the level required on the labour market is high***

In contrast to other OECD countries receiving a large number of migrants, very few of Sweden's migrants speak the language upon arrival. Where close to half of the migrants arriving in Canada, France and the United Kingdom arrive from a country sharing one of the main official languages; in Sweden this is true only for the few migrants arriving from other Scandinavian countries. Indeed, with a full 58% of immigrants not speaking Swedish at home, Sweden stands – alongside Norway and the United States – among those countries with the fewest immigrants using the national language at home.

At the same time the level of proficiency in Swedish demanded by the labour market – even for low-skilled employment – is high, and language difficulties are frequently cited by employers as one of their primary concerns in hiring immigrant workers (see, for example, Skedinger, 2011). Data gathered under the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) suggests that, in Sweden, the association between literacy skills and employment probability is large in comparison with other surveyed countries (see Figure 3.13). What is more, literacy skills tend to have a larger impact on the employment probability of non-native foreign-born speakers than they do upon the employment probabilities of native-born individuals of a comparable age and education level. After controlling for age and education, an increase of 100 points on the PIAAC 500-point literacy scale is associated with an increase of 27 percentage points in the probability of being employed among foreign-born non-native speakers; among the native-born, the same difference in literacy performance is associated with just a 16 percentage point difference in the probability of employment.

**Figure 3.13. Return on literacy for employment rates of native-born and non-native speaker foreign-born, 2012**

Percentage point increase in employment probability resulting from one additional literacy score point as measured by the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)



*Note:* The sample of foreign-born has been restricted to individuals aged 25-54 whose native language differs from the country's language who did not learn the language as a child or speak it at home. The numbers represent the estimated gain in chances of being employed of one additional score point in literacy as measured in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), controlling for ten-year age groups and education levels (grouped in low, medium and high) fixed effects resulting from an ordinary least squares regression. Note that a score of 274 points or below is equivalent to PIAAC level 2 or below, which the OECD defines as lacking the basic skills needed for functional literacy. Levels 3, 4 and 5 range from 276 to 326 points, 326 to 376 points and equal or higher than 376 points, respectively.

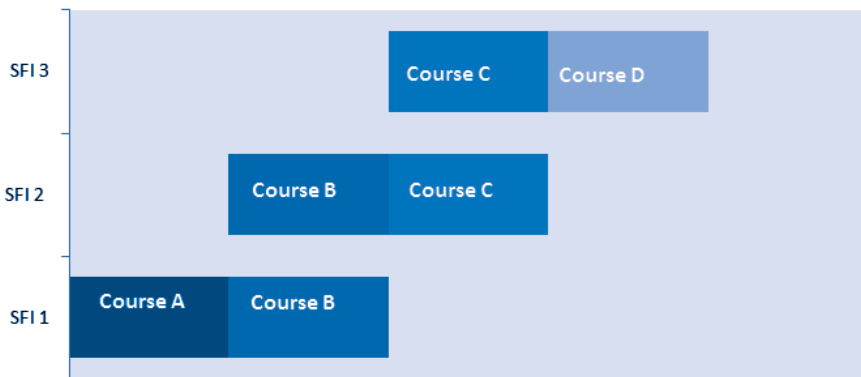
*Source:* OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012.

### ***In Sweden, language tuition is tailored to the needs of the student***

Given the centrality of language skills in determining employment prospects, the development of an effective language syllabus is critical. The education level, age and existing language skills of students have a significant impact on the speed with which they are able to pick up new languages (Isphording, 2013; Chiswick and Miller, 2014). Older learners and the low-educated will require more course hours than younger and more educated workers. Similarly, monolingual speakers, those whose native language is linguistically very different from Swedish, and those with little daily exposure to Swedish will also, most likely, be less efficient at learning Swedish (see Lazear, 1999). As a result, it is very important that language courses are tailored – in terms of speed and teaching methods – to the characteristics of their students.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, language tuition in Sweden is administered under the aegis of municipalities and is a mandatory component of the introduction plan for refugees and their accompanying family.<sup>11</sup> Under the Education Act, municipalities should offer at least 15 hours of Swedish for Immigrants per week and courses are expected to last, but are not limited to, 525 hours in total. The tuition provided through SFI is undertaken via four courses (A through D) which are divided into three study paths. Depending on their educational background and prior knowledge, students are placed within one of these three programme streams. Each study path then contains two courses; one less and one more advanced course (see Figure 3.14). The pedagogical design of each course differs in the sense that it is tailored to fit the educational background of the students and their previous knowledge of Swedish. Courses are taught through classes covering at least 15 hours a week and all students have the right to progress up to the most advanced course – course D on study path 3. Standardised tests throughout the year are used to grade courses B, C and D and the target length of SFI training is 525 hours, though this is not a limit and the length of SFI training is likely to vary with the background of the student. In particular, illiterate learners and those with very limited education will first need to focus on oral basic language skills before learning how to study, read, and write and are likely to require the long-term investment of adult education in combination with language learning.

**Figure 3.14. Design of SFI study paths**



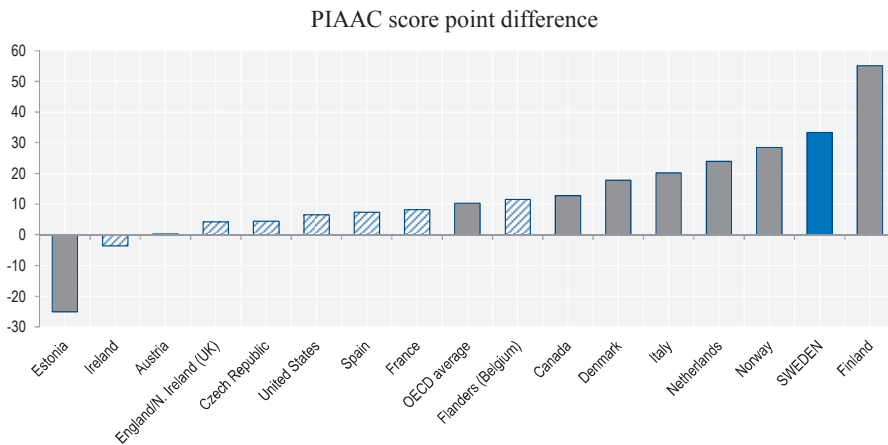
*Source:* Åslund, O. and M. Engdahl (2013), “The Value of Earning for Learning: Performance Bonuses in Immigrant Language Training”, *CREAM Discussion Paper Series No. 1303*, Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration (CREAM), Department of Economics, University College London.

In 2014, there were 124 750 individuals enrolled in SFI courses with an average of just over 26 students per teacher (though this ranges from 44 students per teacher in Stockholm to just over 12 on the island of Gotland).

***Sweden makes relatively good progress in the early years following arrival but outcomes (and costs) vary substantially across the country***

Some indication of the progress made by migrants in their first years in their host country can be ascertained from literacy tests; from the difference between the literacy scores of those who have recently arrived, and those who have been resident for a number of years. In Sweden, after controlling for age, education, sex and region of birth, established migrants (those who have been resident for greater than five years) tend to score, on average, 33 points more on PIAAC literacy tests than do recently arrived migrants. This improvement is among the largest among surveyed countries – with only Finland seeing a larger improvement – and suggests that language training in Sweden is relatively effective.

**Figure 3.15. Difference in literacy proficiency of immigrants resident for greater than five years, 2012**



*Note:* Striped bars represent results in which the difference is not statistically significant.

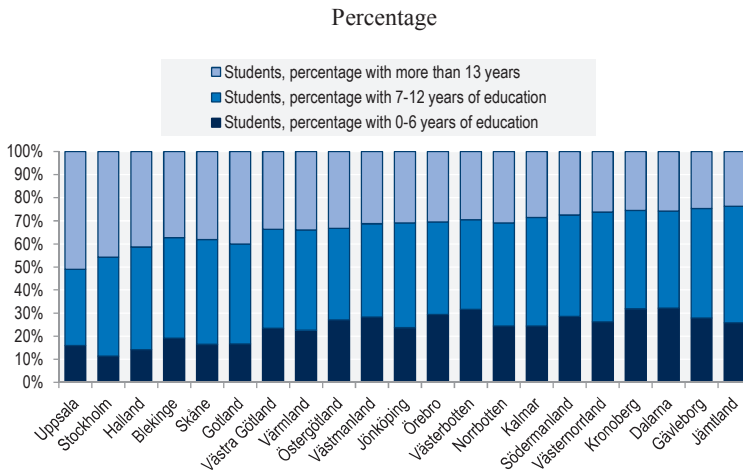
The numbers represent the estimated disparity in literacy performance, as measured by the score point difference, between migrants who have been resident in the host country for five years or fewer compared to those who have been resident for longer than five years. Estimates control for age groups (grouped into 16-24, 25-55 and 56+), for sex, for education (grouped as upper-secondary maximum or above upper-secondary) and region of birth. Note that a score of 274 points or below is equivalent to PIAAC level 2 or below, which the OECD defines as lacking the basic skills needed for functional literacy. Levels 3, 4 and 5 range from 276 to 326 points, 326 to 376 points and equal or higher than 376 points, respectively.

*Source:* OECD Secretariat calculations on the basis of the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012.

However, given that the responsibility for language tuition lies with the municipality, the quality of language training tends to vary from one municipality to the next. And while in some municipalities the offer is highly developed – including language training tailored to particular professions – elsewhere small and diverse populations of SFI students mean that the degree to which language training can be tailored to the labour market aspirations of the migrant is more limited. Indeed, regions with fewer participants in their basic SFI courses (level 1A) tend to have a higher proportion of course interruptions and courses that run for a longer duration.

In addition to the numbers of course participants, the characteristics of these participants are likely to have a substantial impact on the cost and efficiency of language courses. The average duration for SFI 1 courses A and B are 263 and 305 hours respectively, at the same time, on the most advanced track, the average duration of a course is just 208 hours (for SFI 3C) and 172 hours (for SFI 3D). As a result the average cost of SFI tuition in regions such as Uppsala and Stockholm where close to half of all students come to SFI with more than 13 years of education (see Figure 3.16) is likely to be substantially lower than in regions such as Gävleborg, Jämtland, Dalarna and Kronoberg where less than one in four participants have such a high level of education, or in Västerbotten, Västmanland, Kronoberg or Södermanland where 40% of students have fewer than six years of education when they join SFI courses.

**Figure 3.16. Educational attainment of SFI students, by region, 2014**



Source: OECD Secretariat on the basis of data provided by Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education).

Given the importance of language skills for integration in Sweden, the government has made substantial efforts to improve the efficiency of language tuition. Between 2009 and 2010, a limited number of municipalities were given the right to grant substantial cash bonuses to recently arrived migrants in order to incentivise better performance on language courses. In theory, language classes are offered in the interest of the learners and as such there was some push back against the idea of paying students to increase their efforts. However, the rationale behind the introduction of the performance-based bonus was that the effort of language students may be below what is optimum if i) immigrants are not fully aware of the importance of language skills for their future integration and ii) there are externalities that are not internalised by decisions of language students. The policy pilot was run by the central government which in co-operation with the Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU) which designed the experiment in a manner to enable an evaluation of the programmes impact. Analysis of the effects of the pilot found that, while the introduction of the performance bonuses had a substantial positive effect on student achievement in Stockholm and other major agglomerations, other participating municipalities were not affected (Åslund and Engdahl, 2013).<sup>12</sup> On the basis of these results, the policy experiment was discontinued in August 2014.

Effective language training, however, does not simply depend on immigrants' motivation to learn, but also on the quality of available language learning options. A potential explanation for the limited impact of performance incentives outside the major cities is that attainment is constrained by the quality of course provision. This may in turn impact on the motivation of the migrants to participate. Municipalities clearly face quite different challenges in the provision of SFI. At the same time, however, there is much that they could likely learn from one another. A first step towards rendering the quality of language tuition more consistent throughout the country would be the dissemination of harmonised information on the outcomes of language tuition. Such information should form the basis of efforts to share best practice and, potentially determine remuneration levels.

One tool which has proven effective in enhancing the efficiency of language acquisition is the combination of language instruction with vocational training (as opposed to separate, parallel or sequential trainings). Vocation-specific language training can be an effective way to allow migrants to build work-related language skills, and – when provided on the job – allows participants to apply their new skills to real-life situations (Chenven, 2004; Delander et al., 2005; Friedenberg, 2014; see also Liebig and Huddleston, 2014) whilst gathering work experience in the host country.

Similarly, learners who are far away from the labour market, such as inactive mothers and the elderly, may gain a greater motivation to study when the course is focused on their specific real-world language needs and, in the case of mothers, accounts for their childcare obligations.

Work-related language training is increasingly an area of focus across the OECD (see Box 3.6) and, in many ways, the more populous municipalities in Sweden that provide SFI courses tailored to the needs of academics, educators, engineers, economists, lawyers, social/human resources, systems specialists, healthcare workers, entrepreneurs, craftsmen, and bus and truck drivers are leading this movement.

### **Box 3.6. Examples of OECD countries combining language training with other integration activities**

#### **Combining language with civic orientation**

Language training in **Canada** is offered from literacy to advanced levels and couples language acquisition with knowledge of Canadian civics and culture and covers aspects of living in Canada, job search skills, civics, and cross-cultural communication.

#### **Combining language with work experience**

Language courses for integration in **Finland**, arranged as part of the employment training for immigrants, are closely targeted on improving the employability of immigrants and helping them to find work. To this end, language courses include a placement in a Finnish work place. This work experience element of the course provides an opportunity to learn the Finnish language on the job while gaining practical experience of working in various occupations. **Germany** has recently put in place a wide-reaching new system of free vocation-specific language courses, entitled “German for professional purposes”. The courses target foreign-born job seekers and their children who have completed mandatory schooling and intermediate German language training. Courses combine technical instruction, work placements and site visits. **Australia** is among the OECD countries that pioneered on-the-job language training. Since 1991, Australian authorities provide co-funding to employers for training their workers in “Workplace English Language and Literacy” (WELL). Australia’s “Adult Migrant English Programme” (AMEP) also includes a “Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training” (SLPET), entitling participants to up to 200 hours of vocation-specific language tuition and up to 80 hours of work placements. In **Belgium**, the third step of the integration programme in the region of Flanders is the orientation of participants to the Flemish employment service (VDAB), whose programme then offers job-oriented language courses, including “Dutch in the Workplace” (NodW). **Luxembourg’s** “Linguistic leave” programme allows employees up to 200 hours of leave, instruction, and compensatory allowance in order to improve their Luxembourgish skills.



However, the practicalities of arranging such courses for a small numbers of participants have meant that these vocational language trainings are often limited to larger agglomerations. While some municipalities have attempted to address this difficulty by pooling their SFI students (in 2012, SFI was contracted to other municipalities in 8% of the municipalities) long distances mean that this can be a challenge in more rural municipalities. Furthermore, though on-the-job language training may give employers the opportunity to verify that learners have in fact acquired the language skills required for the job, the number of employers willing to accommodate language learning in the workplace is often limited so that, in many cases, language and vocational training is often offered in parallel by separate providers.

In the context of these long distances and difficulties finding employers willing to accommodate on-the-job learning the provision of online language courses may represent a useful supplement to face-to-face language classes. Web-based courses are an important and low-cost option for immigrants with information and communication technology (ICT) literacy. ICT-based language programmes are also a good solution for advanced and highly-specialised courses, where the number of interested learners is often insufficient for classroom-based learning. This approach may be particularly valuable to support immigrants settling in remote areas of Sweden. In addition, online language tuition such as those in use in Australia, Canada and New Zealand can help immigrants to reconcile language training with employment and childcare constraints. Such courses offer a broad variety of learning options, ranging from self-study materials, through part-time, evening, and weekend courses, to full-time teacher-led courses (see Box 3.7).

While distance learning in other fields has been found to be effective in Sweden it has not been heavily employed in the field of Swedish for Immigrants.<sup>13</sup> Building on this experience, Sweden could further develop opportunities for self-driven or guided language learning online. This may provide a cost effective method of beginning introduction activities early, particularly for those who are still in the asylum process and have access to relatively little else.

### Box 3.7. Online Language Learning in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark and Norway

Across the OECD countries are expending efforts to enhance the online supports for language tuition, and blending face-to-face instruction with distance learning.

In **Canada** online curricula (in both English and in French) have been developed to aid language acquisition among those who cannot attend regular classes:

- Online English tuition is available through Language Education at a Distance (LEAD)
- French tuition is available online through via CLIC en ligne, an online version of Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC).

The courses are a particularly good option for shift workers, those looking after family members, and learners in remote areas and require a time commitment of approximately 5 hours a week of personal study combined with 30 minute to 1 hour of remote interaction with a coach/teacher. The curricula are organised in a way to allow students to learn both about Canada and the way of life, while learning the language (either French or English). Students are offered the option to study online or through one-on-one correspondence with a certified teacher. In addition, online assessments to enable the placement of individuals into appropriate language training have already been developed and piloted and are expected to be used particularly for language students in remote areas.

**Australia** and **New Zealand** offer a similar set of flexible language training options usually including, as well as distance and learning, one-on-one tutoring, free child-care, transportation subsidies, and continuous intake to avoid long waiting lists.

**Denmark's** free online course, "Online Danish", includes a self-assessment tool and modules at different proficiency levels in speaking, writing, reading, and comprehension. In the Netherlands, a competitive online language learning market has produced a wide range of ICT products and language courses with ICT components (Codagnone and Kluzer, 2011; and Kluzer et al., 2011).

In **Norway**, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (VOX), operating under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research offers free on-line resources that can be used as part of, or in addition to, Norwegian language courses.

Source: [www.clicenligne.ca](http://www.clicenligne.ca), <http://www.linchomestudy.ca/Online/> and [www.vox.no/Norsk-og-samfunnskunnskap/Nettbasert-opplaring/gratis-norskopplaring-pa-nett/](http://www.vox.no/Norsk-og-samfunnskunnskap/Nettbasert-opplaring/gratis-norskopplaring-pa-nett/).

The government has announced its intention to combine SFI with other relevant education, such as upper-secondary vocational education. As part of these efforts, the provision of Swedish for Immigrants will, in the future, be undertaken within the municipal adult education system. To this end, the National Agency for Education has been tasked with drawing up a new modular syllabus for Swedish as a second language at the basic level. These efforts may be usefully complemented with a focus on the outcomes of language tuition – through the use of nationally standardised tests – and efforts to develop more flexible methods to language tuition.

## Notes

1. Indeed, these new arrivals must, in many cases, learn two new languages concurrently as English is also required to enter into upper-secondary education.
2. The OECD Survey of Adult Skills scores literacy skills on a six-level scale according to respondents' ability to find information in written material of varying complexity. Those who score less than Level 1 (176 points) are able to read only short passages on familiar topics. The skills required to reach Level 1 (from 176 to 226 points) are knowledge of basic vocabulary to process meaning at sentence level and the ability to read written text. Level 2 requires higher cognitive skills, particularly the ability to connect information at different points in a written text. For information on higher literacy skills see OECD (2013).
3. A socio-economically disadvantaged school is one whose students' mean socio-economic status is statistically significantly below the mean socio-economic status of the country/economy.
4. To gain admission to an upper-secondary national programme, in addition to passing grades in Swedish (or Swedish as a second language), English and mathematics, students aiming for admission to vocational programmes must have passing grades in a further five subjects, and students aiming for the higher education preparatory programme must have passed a further nine.
5. According to the *2015 Yearbook of Education Statistics* (Statistics Sweden, 2015), of the 40% of foreign-born students who fail to achieve the target grade for the compulsory school leaving certificate – 9.9% fail just one subject, 27.6% fail at least two subjects, and 2.2% fail all subjects.
6. Of those young migrants who successfully enter upper-secondary programmes, many still continue to face difficulties. The proportion of foreign-born students who drop-out of upper-secondary education – at 10.5% – is almost double the proportion of native-born students (5.4%).
7. This figure rises to 30% when those on language programmes are excluded.
8. To be eligible for trainee jobs young people, aged 20-25, must have been unemployed for the past six months (or three months for those choosing to work towards vocational studies in shortage occupations). Trainee jobs must

be compliant with collective agreements but are not subject to the Employment Protection Act, they can be undertaken as part of the introduction plan for newly-arrived migrants.

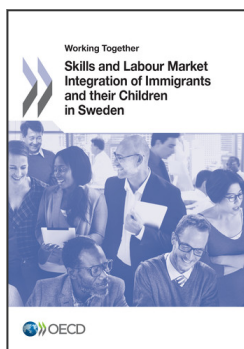
9. Crul (2007) compares the children of Turkish immigrants in the apprenticeship countries Germany and Austria with the Netherlands and France and highlights the importance of apprenticeship systems in enabling a smooth transition to the labour market for those children of Turkish immigrants who have gained access to an apprenticeship training place.
10. Indeed, evidence from Sweden suggests that 20% of students with a swift transition between school and work start their careers at a site where they worked already while in school (Åslund et al., 2006).
11. In addition, SFI is a right for all immigrants over the age of 16 who are resident in Sweden, and who lack a basic knowledge in Swedish.
12. The effects were similar for men and women but the relative effect was greater among the young and among those with no more than secondary schooling.
13. While completion is lower than that on campus based courses (55% as opposed to 81% completion of campus courses) satisfaction rates have been found to be higher (Statistics Sweden, <http://www.scb.se>).

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