



SIRIUS - Policy Network on Migrant Education

**MULTI-COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP TO ENHANCE
THE EDUCATION OF REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING YOUTH
IN EUROPE – PERAE**

Refugee Education in Sweden

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1 Introduction

This research report is part of the 'Multi-country Partnership to Enhance the Education of Refugee and Asylum-seeking Youth in Europe' (PERAE) established within the SIRIUS Network, a European policy network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background. The aim of PERAE is to propose a partnership between eight European countries to address inadequate access to quality education for asylum-seeking and refugee youth throughout the European Union.

This specific report aims at mapping integration for newly arrived minor migrants in education with a particular focus on secondary education in Sweden. The Swedish government is responsible for designing guidelines for Swedish integration policy and in addition to adults; it also includes newly arrived minor migrants. In Sweden, the group is not homogenous, but rather heterogeneous that is defined in different ways depending on context.

This report specifically focuses on Swedish school education, in which, the migration status is less important in the light of the education assignment, which is to offer all newly arrived students an equivalent education. But in other contexts newly arrived a student migration status is important to clarify, that is, where in the asylum process the current children and young people (Bunar, 2010).

On January 11, 2016 a law change, regulated through the Swedish Education Act (2010:800), defining newly arrived students within the education system. A newly arrived student is a person who has been resident abroad and who is current resident in Sweden or not is considered a resident in Sweden but who has started his education in Sweden after the autumn term starts the calendar year when he or she is seven years old. A student shall no longer be considered newly arrived migrant after four years of schooling in this country.

In recent years Sweden has seen a drastic rise of newly arrived minor migrants applying for asylum. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) in 2015, 71 000 newly arrived minor migrants came to Sweden, of which 40 000 between 16-18 years old, children aged 1-12 years are fewer, almost 31,000.

The number of newly arrived children between the ages of 1-12 years corresponds to about 2% of the pupils in pre-school, pre-school and in grades 1-6 in compulsory school. At the age of 13-15 years, the number of new arrivals corresponds to more than 5% of all pupils in grades 7-9. At the age of 16-18 years, newly arrived young people correspond to almost 8% of the population of the same age group. Among newly born children born 2002-2014, there are 2000-3000 children in every cohort. The older cohorts are significantly larger. Largest, the year litter was born in 1999 with almost 13,000 students. A large majority of new arrivals in older elderly people are boys (Swedish Migration Agency, SMA 2015).

The drastic rise in asylum applicants means that major efforts had to be made to accommodate the new arrivals in the Swedish schooling system. The reception structure for newly arrived minor migrants covers various fields of activity such as school and education, social services, asylum testing, health care and civil society. These different parts of society are subject to different strengthening mechanisms, which impose high demands on coordination and interaction between the various parts.

The Swedish government has taken a variety of measures in the field of education to deal with the increasing number of students in coming years with a focus on receiving and education for new arrivals, as well as measures in the field of anti-discrimination and equal rights including gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation and age.

Regardless the measures taken, the integration of newly arrived migrant students in the Swedish school system still face specific challenges but also opportunities for improvement. In examinations of the school's work with new arrivals migrant minors, the Swedish School Inspectorate has identified factors

that can influence the work of school and governing body in a positive direction. They are linked to organizational and teaching factors of the Swedish Education system for example assessment of the student's knowledge, structures for cooperation and communication between the municipalities in which the newly arrived students come into contact and dissemination of the student's knowledge and experience. But also with regards to counter school segregation, the municipality applies a model for resource allocation between schools combined with active development work to increase the goal achievement for all students.

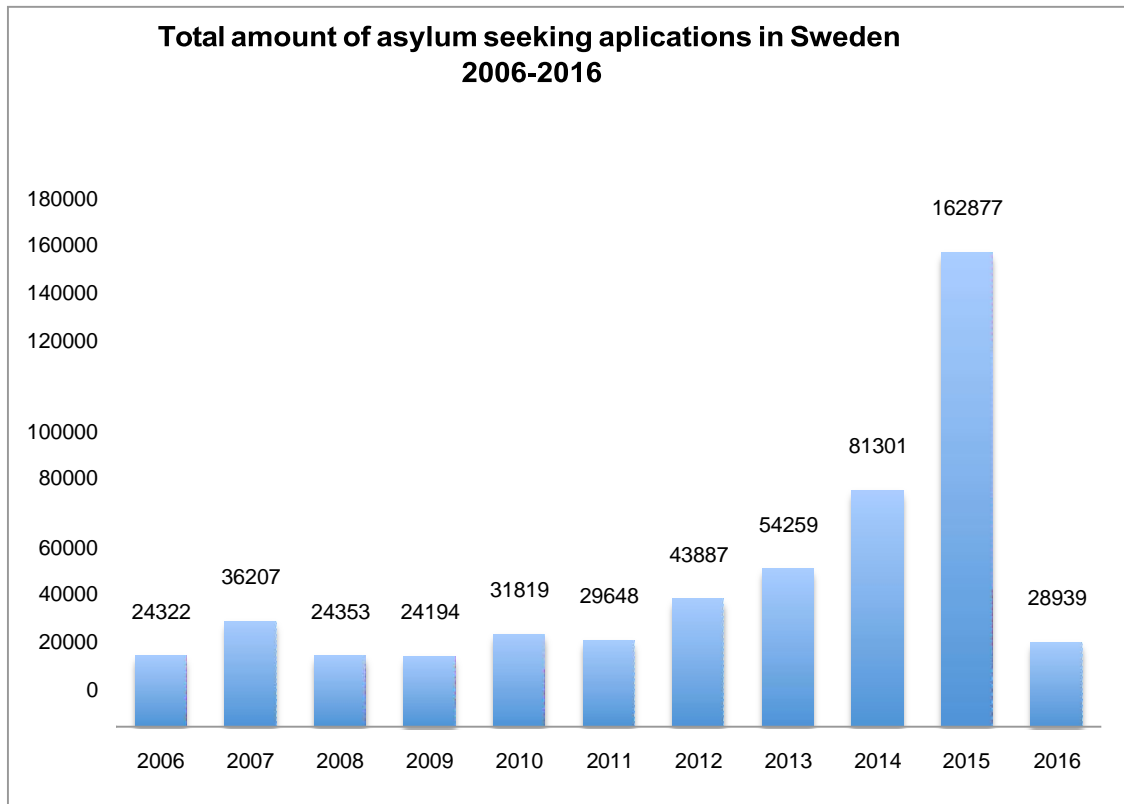
After this introduction, newly arrived migrant minors will be referred to as newcomer students in the report. In the second chapter we will continue to describe the overall situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden. The chapter will focus on the legal and institutional setting of educational integration of newly arrived minors during three different phases of their stay: first arrival (0-2 months in Sweden), reception education (2-12 months in Sweden) and transition to mainstream education (more than 12 months in Sweden). The literature study in the third section summarizes the state-of-the-art on refugee education in Sweden.

2 Situating education for asylum-seeking and refugee youth in Sweden

2.1 Asylum seekers in Sweden in numbers

Before focusing on refugee students we will first provide an overview of the amount of asylum seekers in Sweden for years 2006-2016 and a brief explanation of the underlying factors affecting the asylum in Sweden.

Graph 1: Total amount of persons applying for asylum in Sweden 2006---2016.



Source: Asylum Statistics 2002-2016, Statistics Sweden, modified by Fryshuset

In 2015, the total amount of people seeking asylum to Sweden increased to the record number of 162,877 people. That's approximately double the amount as compared to the year before.

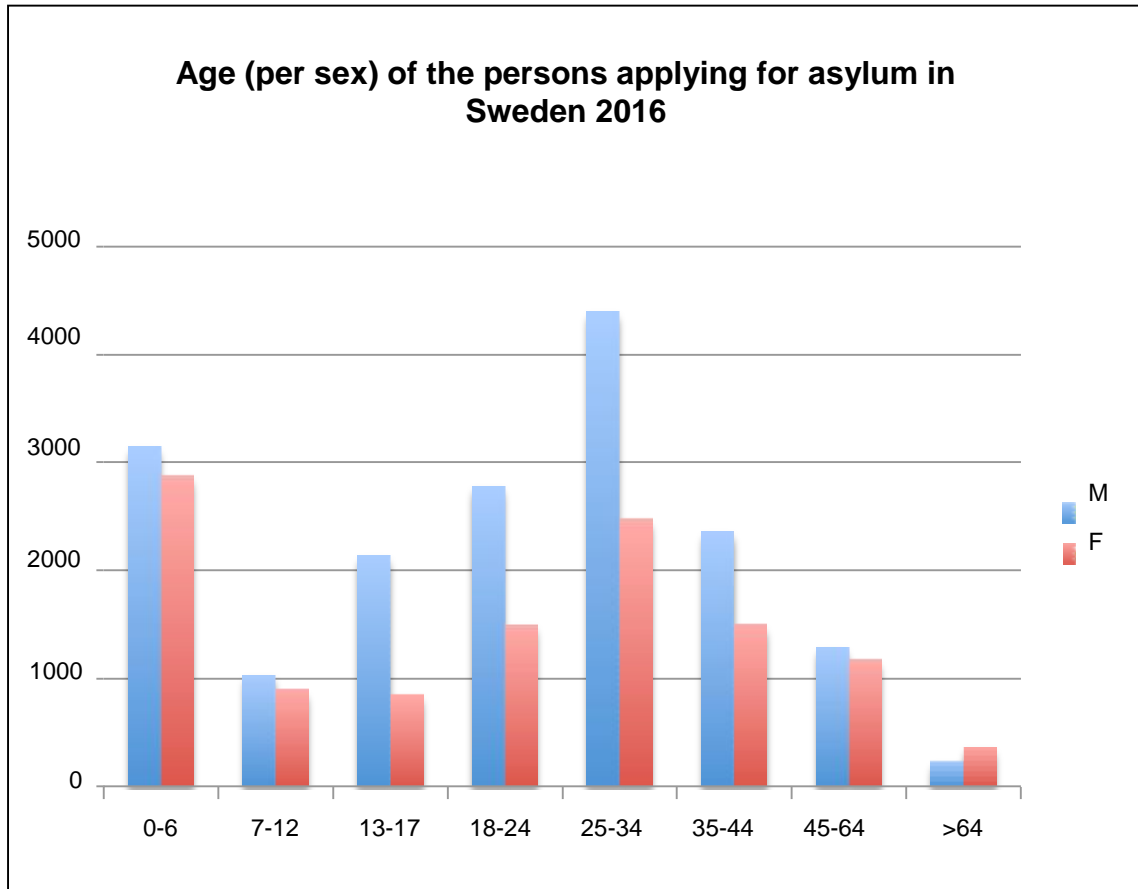
At the beginning of 2015, around 4,000-5,000 asylum seekers came to Sweden, each month. During the late summer, a dramatic increase began - from 6,619 in June to six times as many in October 39,196. October 2016 Sweden received the most asylum seekers ever.

As shown in graph 1, in 2016, the number of asylum applications dropped significantly to 28 939.

This places Sweden below EU average and in ninth place over most applications per inhabitant. The number is the lowest in Sweden in nine years (Eurostat, 2017).

The reduced refugee flows to Sweden are due to reduced travel conditions mainly from Western Balkan route, and the EU's agreement with Turkey. In addition it has become impossible for refugees to travel from Germany to Sweden without having their ID documents in order (SMA, 2016).

Graph 2: Age (per sex) of the persons applying for asylum in Sweden 2016



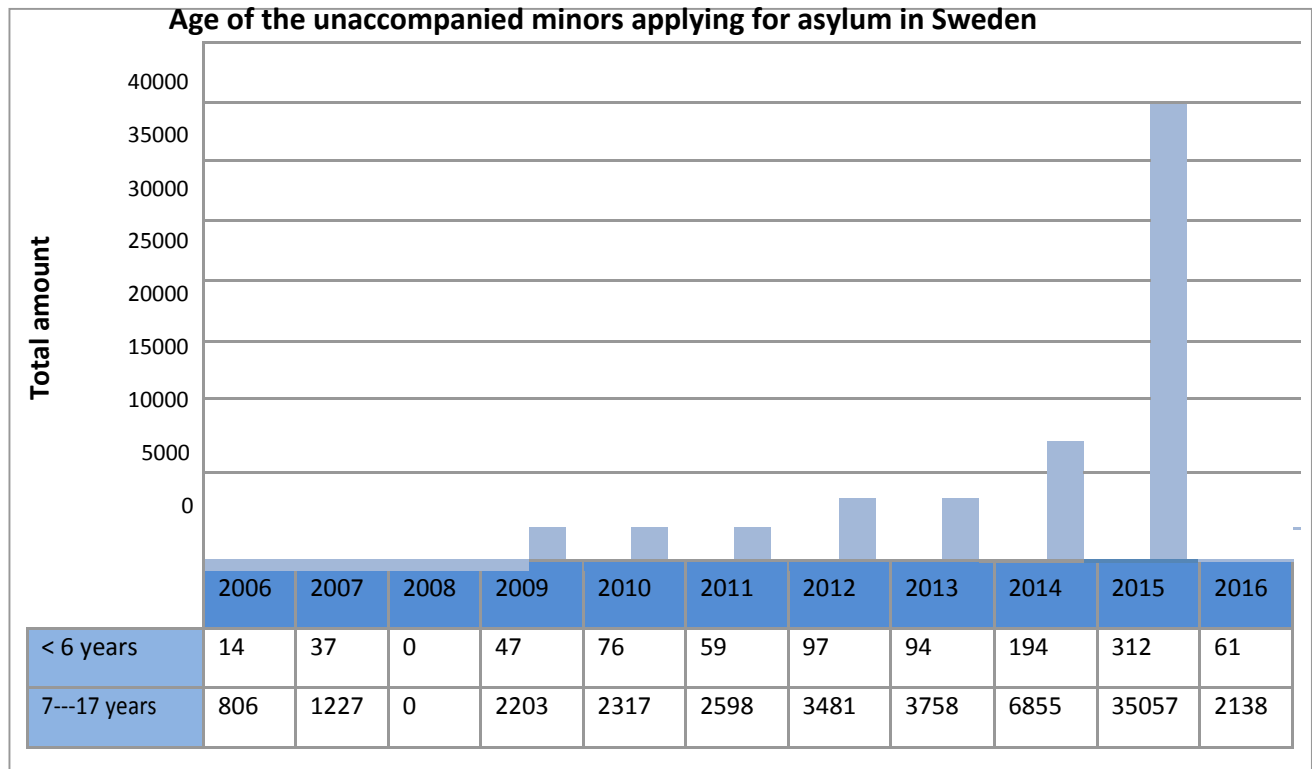
Source: SMA statistics on total amount of asylum applications received 2016, modified by Fryshuset

As demonstrated in graph 2, most of the persons applying for asylum in Sweden were boys in the age group 0-6 and between 18 to 34 years old.

2.2 Unaccompanied minors

The number of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Sweden has increased significantly in 2015 as visualized in the graph below. In 2016, this number decreased significantly in Sweden, with over 33 000 fewer unaccompanied minors in 2016 than in 2015, or -94% (Eurostat, 2017).

Graph 3: Amount of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Sweden per year



Source: Swedish Migration Agency 2017, modified by Fryshuset

Graph 3 shows that in total 35,369 unaccompanied asylum seekers applied for asylum in 2015 of which 99,1% are children and youth between 7-17 years. The majority of them are boys, 1,607 between 13-17 years. The number of girls for the corresponding age range was 341 (SMA, 2016).

In January 2016 a total of 3,078 unaccompanied asylum seekers were granted residence in Sweden, which means that they were subject to compulsory education. At the beginning of 2017 this number doubled to 6,853 unaccompanied asylum seekers who were granted residence. In Sweden, asylum seekers have the right to education but are not subject to compulsory education (SMA, 2016).

For 2008 there is no record as to gender or age statistics for unaccompanied minors, therefore there is only one total figure as shown in graph 2.

As shown in graph 3, the number of applications for unaccompanied asylum seekers was 35,369 in 2015 and 2,199 in 2016 respectively. In 2015, 4,660 asylum cases for unaccompanied minors were settled and in 2016 9,999 asylum cases were settled. In 2015, approximately 3,000 unaccompanied children were granted asylum in Sweden and 6,853 in 2016. This means that the vast majority of children who came to Sweden as asylum seekers in 2015 are still awaiting a decision (SMA, 2015/2016).

2.3 Legal and institutional setting

2.3.1. General legal and institutional setting

Sweden is a democracy with a parliamentary regime and at the same time a constitutional monarchy. Sweden applies a people's sovereignty principle which means that all public power is based on the people (*Government Form, 1:1*) and where the people's representatives in the parliament have the ultimate power in all questions, this when the legislative and judicial power in practice is based on the Swedish parliament.

Sweden's migration policy is a wide concept including refugee and immigration policy, return, support for immigration and the link between migration and development. It also includes cooperation at international level on these issues. The area also covers questions about Swedish citizenship (*Government Offices, 2017*).

Sweden applies a regulated immigration, with a framework established by the Swedish Parliament and in international agreements. Basic constitutions include the Foreigner Act and the Foreigner Regulation, as well as the EU's common rules for, for example, free movement, asylum and labor immigration. Questions are handled within the parliament by the Labor Market Committee and within government by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Integration and the Ministry of Gender Equality. Responsible authority for examining the right to immigration is the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA). Legal review of the work's decision is made by the Migration Courts. Integration policy is a nearby policy area, which is also handled in Sweden by other authorities such as the Labor Market Agency and the Youth Board.

2.3.1.1 Freedom of education

In Sweden, the Freedom of education is included in the Constitution of Sweden.

The responsibility for school is divided between the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdag*), government, school authorities, municipalities and independent schools.

The Swedish school system is regulated through the Education Act (*Skollagen, SFS 2010:800*). The school authorities are governmental and work for the Ministry of Education (government). There are four authorities in the school area in Sweden; the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*), the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (*Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten*) and The Board of Appeal for Education (*Skolväsendets överklagandenämnd*).

The municipalities have primary responsibility for the school system. For independent schools, a single headmaster is responsible or a board of directors. Independent school (*friskola*), is run by owners other than the municipality and exist as both primary and secondary schools.

2.3.1.2 Levels and type of education

The formal education in Sweden takes place at three levels primary education, secondary education and tertiary education.

Primary education comprises of pre school (accessible for children from 1 to 5 years old), a pre-school class (6 years old) and mainstream elementary education (targeted at children from 7 to 9 years old). The municipalities are responsible to provide this education for all children ages 1 -5. The amount of municipal contributions for pre-school depends on the child's age and whether the parents work, study, are unemployed or on parental leave for other children. The classes are voluntary. After the age of 5, all children are also guaranteed a place in a one-year pre-school year (*förskoleklass*) starting in the fall term of the year they turn 6 until they start compulsory schooling. After the pre school class year children will start comprehensive school, which is for nine years, divided in three stages and the attendance is compulsory. Stage 1, *lågstadiet*, (grade 1-3, accessible for children from 7-9 years) is part of the primary education.

Secondary education comprises both lower secondary education (accessible for children from 10-12 years) and upper secondary education or high school (accessible for children from 13 to 15 years).

The lower secondary education is an extension on stage 1 for primary education. Education for the two stages is for 6 years (age 10-15 years) and the attendance is as well as stage 1 compulsory. The education is organized in a unified structure consisting of different stages, types of education and

courses. There are two stages: stage 2, *mellanstadiet* (grade 4-6) and stage 3, *högstadiet* (grade 7-9). Students are entitled to complete primary and lower secondary education even if the compulsory school attendance has ended earlier. From 12 years on up or grade 6, pupils in compulsory school grades. Students will receive grades in all subjects, in addition to language choices. Each primary school has the opportunity to profile, or have different specializations, such as Montessori, English classes or cultural and sports classes.

The upper secondary education or high school is for 3 years and optional. All young people who have completed primary and lower secondary schooling are entitled to attend upper secondary education. There are different types of programs:

- **National programmes** that prepare for higher education or are vocational programmes. It contains 18 national programs, which last for three years (grade 10-12) and is voluntary to attend. They are divided into upper secondary subjects, program-based subjects, specializations, program depths and degree projects. Entrance requirements vary between the different programmes, but all of them demand students to have passed grades in Swedish, English and mathematics from their final year of compulsory schooling.
- **Introductory programmes** for those who do not have qualifications for a national programme; Preparation Course, Program-based Individual Choice, Profession Introduction, Individual Option, Language Introduction.
- **Education deviating from the national program structure;** Special variants, national recruitment programs and nationally approved sports education.

Aside, Sweden offers primary and secondary education for students with special needs, which is an alternative to upper secondary school for students who are not expected to be able to reach primary school knowledge requirements because they have a developmental disabilities.

Tertiary education post-secondary education or higher education is academic education at university or university level. In Sweden there are also qualified vocational education, vocational college and folk high school.

2.3.1.3 Compulsory education

Children with foreign nationality residing in Sweden are entitled to education in the same way as other children in Sweden. School attendance is compulsory in the primary and lower-secondary school (years 1-9) and attendance at school is both right and an obligation. This means that all children have the right to education in the primary and lower-secondary school but they are also required to participate in the activities that the school organises.

Unaccompanied minors, have the right to education regardless of whether they should stay or return to their home country. Asylum seekers have the right to education in the same way as other children in Sweden. However, the compulsory attendance at school does not apply to them. Compulsory school does also not apply to children who are permanently resident abroad or who's conditions are such that it is obviously not possible for the child to attend school (Education Act 2010:800).

Swedish compulsory schooling consists of three stages: *lågstadiet* (grade 1–3), followed by *mellanstadiet* (grade 4–6) and then *högstadiet* (grade 7–9). Children between ages 6 and 13 are also offered out-of-school care before and after school hours. Compulsory education also includes *sameskolor* (Sami schools) for children of the indigenous Sami people.

In Sweden compulsory school commences the autumn term when the child is turning seven years old. The compulsory school (primary and secondary education) term expires for the majority after the ninth school year. The upper secondary school is three years (years 10-12) and non-compulsory. Caretaker's or custodians are responsible to ensure that the child fulfils his / her compulsory schooling. The

municipality will ensure that the pupils in their primary and lower secondary school complete their schooling. In addition the pupil's has the right to special support and adaptation.

2.3.1.4 Equal opportunities in education

The skills and right to education is regulated through the Education Act (2010:800). It stipulates every child's right to equal access to education regardless of gender, geographic residence and social and economic conditions, also that the school should take into account pupils in need of special support.

From of January 1, 2016 the Ministry of Education introduced a new legislation for a more equal reception of newcomer students in compulsory, high school, special needs and Sami education. It stipulates a number of measures in the field of education to deal with the increasing number of newcomer students in coming years with a focus on receiving and education. Also, in Sweden, gender-aware education is increasingly common, striving to provide children with the same opportunities in life regardless of gender (Education Act, 2010:800).

Also as of January 1, 2017, a new regulation is introduced for active anti-discrimination measures. The new rules apply to pre-school, school and other activities that are regulated in the school act and are contained in the Discrimination Act (*Diskrimineringslagen*, SFS 2008:567). The rules on active anti-discrimination measures applies for primary and secondary education as well as other activities regulated by the Education Act. The schools' obligation to work with active measures has been extended to all grounds for discrimination. The work of active anti-discrimination and otherwise promoting equal rights and opportunities should include gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation and age. New is also an obligation to carry out work on active actions under an overall framework.

2.3.1.5 Reception of education for foreign-speaking newcomers

Education for newcomer students is organized in most municipalities through separate introductory education for a long time, or through direct integration into regular classes (Bunar, 2010; 2015a). The most common form is preparatory classes, with regards to older children and adolescents in later school years, while direct integration is more common in younger ages (Nilsson & Bunar, 2015).

As of the autumn term in 2013 a new legislation took effect regarding experimental operations with increased teaching time in Swedish or Swedish as a second language for newcomer students in primary and secondary education (Education Act, 2010:800). The experimental operations, which are supposed to end autumn 2017, offers government grants for increased teaching time for newcomer students. The grant is for governing bodies who have newcomer students in grades 1-9 (compulsory education) and in preparatory classes and who participate in the research activities. The aim is that newcomer students will have more time for teaching in Swedish or Swedish as a second language.

Due to the new legislation for a more equal reception of newcomer students, mentioned in 2.2.1.4 the Swedish National Agency for Education has developed new general councils with a purpose to serve as a good help in the school's assignment to support newcomer students to develop as far as possible towards the national educational goals (*Skolverkets allmänna råd om utbildning för nyanlända elever*, SKOLFS 2016:2). The general councils describe how the municipality can work with the organization of the reception as to the following;

1. Prerequisites for the work
2. Initial assessment of newcomer students' knowledge of placement in course, teaching group and school form
3. Teaching for newcomer students
4. Teaching time for newcomer students

5. Upper level secondary education for newly arrived students

For lower secondary education, sections 1-4 apply. For the special needs education, and Sami education, sections 1-3 apply. For upper secondary education, sections 1 and 5 apply.

After this general national and institutional setting, we will now further elaborate on the integration of newcomer students by discussing the legal and institutional setting within three different stages of the integration process of newly arrived minors in Sweden (secondary) education: 1) first arrival (0-2 months in Sweden), 2) reception education (2-12 months in Sweden) and 3) transition to mainstream secondary education (more than 12 months in Sweden). Each phase represents different durations of stay and thus different levels of second language acquisition and experience in the respective educational systems.

2.3.2 Phase 1: First arrival (0-2 months in Sweden)

Children with a foreign nationality residing in Sweden are subject to compulsory education from the autumn term starts the year when he or she is 7 years old. Special rules for newcomer students have been introduced as of January 1, 2016.

A newcomer student means a person who has been resident abroad, who is now resident in Sweden and who has started his education here in the autumn term of the year he or she turns 7 years old. A newcomer student shall be placed in an education group appropriate to age, prerequisites and personal circumstances within two months of receiving his or her education. A newcomer student who lacks sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language should be taught in part in preparation classes for a maximum of two years.

After asylum seekers have submitted their application they are directed to a receiving municipality, this designated municipality is from that point on forward responsible to investigate the child's needs and for giving the children a schooling and that they are offered a place at a municipal school unit. Also, The Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) can inform the municipality in question on the parents' mission. The municipality also needs to ensure that they go to school on the same terms as other children and adolescents in the municipality. This applies to pre-school, primary school and secondary school.

Responsibility for the reception of asylum seekers children who come to Sweden with a guardian is divided between SMA, municipalities, county councils, County Administrative Board and police. The responsibility varies depending on where the new arrivals are in the reception process. When it comes to unaccompanied minors responsibility for the reception of single children and adolescents is divided between municipalities, county councils, County Administrative Boards and The National Board of Health and Welfare.

The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for ensuring that the person applying for asylum in Sweden has somewhere to live during the waiting period if the person does not choose to arrange accommodation on his own. However, for unaccompanied minors, the SMA assigns the child to a receiving municipality which for the municipality in question implies long-term responsibility for the children's accommodation, care and school. The municipality is entitled to state compensation for asylum-seeking children in school or preschool.

Once a newcomer student has been appointed a school by the municipality, the school needs to make an initial assessment and find out what skills the student brings with it. An initial assessment of newcomer students' knowledge for placement in the right year and teaching group as well school form should be completed within two months of the student's entry into school. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that students complete their schooling and to adapt teaching so that all students can participate. The initial assessment of a newcomer student's knowledge is regulated in the

school day and mandatory to implement. Since April 15, 2016, the National Agency for Education is mapping material for assessing newly arrived pupils' knowledge, steps 1 and 2 is mandatory to use in this work for primary school, secondary school, joint school and special school. The initial assessment is to be conducted so that the rector can decide on the placement of a newcomer student in the course and the teaching group within two months of being enrolled in the Swedish school. It is the student's knowledge (which he or she has shown at the survey), the student's age and personal circumstances in general that will be the basis for this decision. The result of the survey will also be used as the basis for the planning of the student's further education and how the teaching time will be distributed between the subjects.

This first chapter described the legal and institutional setting for the education of foreign-speaking newcomer students during the first phase of their arrival in Sweden. The next chapter will cover the setting of the overlapping second phase in which foreign-speaking newcomer students enrol in reception education and thus have arrived more than approximately two months but less than one year.

2.3.3 Phase 2: Reception education (2-12 months in Sweden)

After the school decides on placement in grade an individual priority timetable should be established. A priority timetable should specify that the total teaching time for a newcomer student correspond to at least the time that is left for the other students in the same grade during the remaining school period. The principal may decide on additional teaching hours in general for students, in addition to the guaranteed teaching time it is compulsory (School regulation, 2013: 69).

For newcomer students, in the primary and lower secondary school, it is common to begin in a preparatory class, which is separate from the regular class. At the same time, one belongs to a regular class. Preparatory class for newcomer students will be taught for up to two years. A student who is unable to attend the teaching in Swedish is entitled to receive support in the form of study supervision in his or her mother tongue if the student is at risk of not meeting the minimum knowledge requirements that must be attained in one or more subjects.

In secondary education it is common for a newcomer student, after the student's knowledge has been validated, to enroll a introductory language program before applying for a national program. The introductory programmes are intended to provide pupils who don't have the approved grades required for the qualification of a vocational program and who need an education with a focus in Swedish in order to continue to secondary school or to other education. The education is individually adapted to the needs of each student. The student must start the education by the year when he / she is 20. For asylum seekers and for those staying in Sweden with a time-limited residence permit, the education must begin before the age of 18.

The Swedish Migration Agency has developed information material for asylum seeking children as well as for parents or caretaker's in several languages, including information on the asylum process and asylum seeking children's rights. Also information and recommendations directed to adults in order to support the child, but also to inform and discuss with other children from other countries. For teachers who want to address migration issues in general there is a teacher's guide. The material is primarily intended for secondary school students.

2.3.3.1 Conditions for reception education

You are counted as a newcomer student if you have been living abroad and start your education in Sweden in the autumn of the year you turn 7 years old. Newcomer students are new arrivals for four years after the pupil has begun schooling in Swedish school. After the first four years, students still need support based on their needs and conditions. The child should start primary or lower secondary

at least one month after arriving in Sweden or as soon as appropriate with regard to the child's personal circumstances. They are covered by the general obligation have a right to free basic education in a public school (Education Act, 2010:800). Upper secondary education should begin before the end of the first half of the calendar year you turn 20, which also applies to those who have received a permanent residence permit (*permanent uppehållstillstånd för asylsökande, PUT*).

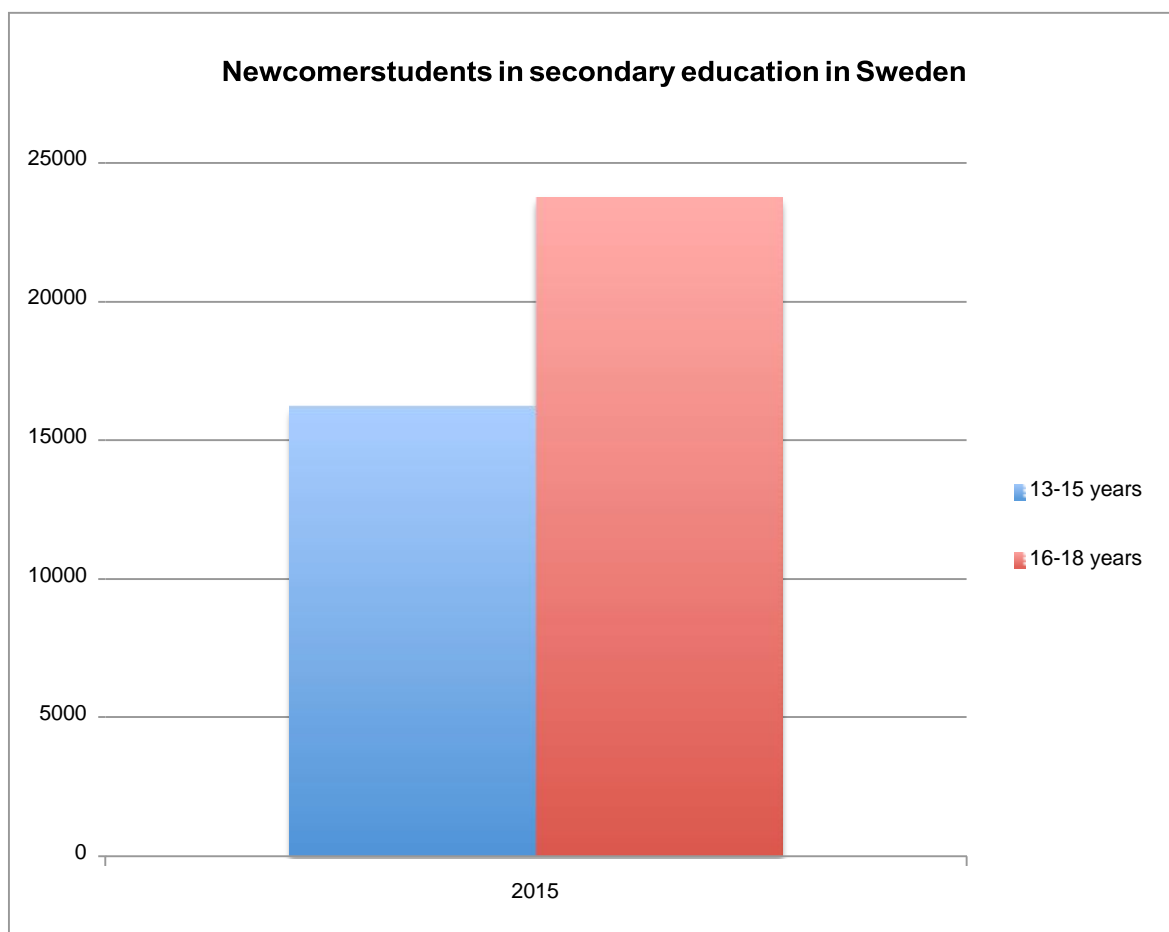
In order to apply to the various national programmes in upper secondary school the newcomer student needs to meet the following requirements;

1. Newcomer students must have a pass grade in Swedish or Swedish as a second language, and in English and maths.
2. Newcomer students need to have pass grades in five other subjects in order to apply to a vocational programme
3. Newcomer students need to have pass grades in nine other subjects in order to apply to a programme that prepares you for higher education. These programmes specify what some of the nine subjects have to be. For example, you have to have pass grades in biology, chemistry and physics in order to apply to the natural sciences programme.

2.3.3.2 Students in secondary reception education

The number of newcomer students in compulsory school has increased by 27%, from 62 400 in 2015 to 79 400 in 2016 (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017). As shown in the graph below, in 2015 in total 39 954 newcomer students enrolled secondary education of which 16 197 in lower secondary education (age 13-15) and 23 757 upper level secondary education (age 16-18 years),

Graph 4: Newcomer students in secondary education in Sweden in 2015



Source: The National Agency of Education 2015, modified by Fryshuset

An analysis done by the Swedish National Agency for Education of the SMA's statistics on the new arrivals, who came to Sweden in 2015, shows that at the age of 13-15 years, the number of newcomer students corresponds to more than 5 % of all pupils in grades 7-9. Children in the ages 13-15 years in the Swedish school system correspond to pupils in secondary education year 7-9. At the age of 16-18 years, newcomer students correspond to almost 8 % of the population of the same age group. A large majority of new arrivals in older elderly people are boys.

2.3.4 Phase 3: Transition to mainstream secondary education (more than 12 months in Sweden)

A newcomer student can be taught in a preparatory class for up to two years. Because newcomer students in preparatory class in lower secondary education also belong to a regular class, and therefore do not get all their classes in preparatory class, newcomer students will gradually be transferred to the regular teaching group. How much of the teaching will take place in the preparation class and how much that will be done in the regular teaching group must be decided on a case-by-case basis. The teaching in the preparatory class in a subject shall cease as soon as the student is judged to be able to follow the teaching of the subject in the regular teaching group. The general advice on education for newcomer students (SKOLFS 2016:2) applies to elementary school, elementary school, special school and joint school as well as for upper secondary school and upper secondary school.

As to the language introduction programme in upper secondary education, the length of time a student is to be taught on language is determined on the basis of each student's individual prerequisites and goals. This may mean that the students go for a long time in the education. However, the Higher Education Ordinance emphasizes the importance of the students introducing language as soon as possible in their studies. It should therefore be seen as an introduction and something that happens under a limited amount time. There are also no established requirements for a student to have achieved the grade E in Swedish as a second language at elementary level to proceed with language introduction. Therefore, in a municipality or at a school, one can choose to make the language introduction training at a very basic beginner level. Students then graduate to another introductory program where they continue to study Swedish as a second language together with other subjects within the program. Degree goals are not available for language introduction. The education should instead follow a plan that the principal decides on.

3 State of literature

3.1 Challenges in the integration of newcomer students in Swedish education

3.1.1 Access to quality education in Sweden

Access to quality education seems to be difficult, at least according to the OECD, which means that growing ethnic inequalities are probably an Achilles Day of Swedish in education systems (OECD 2005: 47). In Sweden the concept of equivalence is what is stated in the governing documents for elementary school in Sweden. The equality concept can be divided into three basic aspects; Equal access to education, Equal quality of education and education to be compensatory (*Skolverket, Likvärdig utbildning i svensk grundskola?, 2012*).

Over the last decade, both quality and equivalence have been questioned in the Swedish school system. Quality drops and equivalence is curtailed (Böhlmark and Holmlund 2011, National Agency for Education (SNAE). SNAE statistics (2015a) indicate that the proportion of pupils eligible for upper secondary school's national programs continues to decline, but also that there are significant development trends between different student categories defined by migration background, socioeconomic status and gender.

3.1.1.1 Segregation

Research has shown that an important obstacle to be mentioned regarding equal access to quality education in Sweden is school segregation. The Institute for Labour and Education Policy Evaluation (IFAU) concludes that the increased school segregation is mainly due to increased housing migration, especially based on students with a foreign background. The increased proportion of newcomer students risks further emphasis on school segregation based on foreign backgrounds. IFAU's concludes that the increasing school segregation can also, to some extent, be explained by the free choice of school. Students with a stronger socioeconomic backgrounds choose more often another school than the closest by, are more likely to attend an independent school. PISA 2015 shows that Swedish students' socioeconomic background has gained importance in terms of the results in science between 2006-2016.

Studies on how students' migration background affects school performance (Bunar 2012a), have clarified that the category "foreign background" or ethnicity is extremely unclear as to a variable and analytical unit, when students defined in that way constitute a very heterogeneous category. The existing differences can mostly be attributed to the students' socio-economic background and to the fact that an increasing number of students with a migration background are considered new arrivals (Bunar 2015a, Skolverket 2015a). This means newcomer students who have been in Sweden for four years. The SNAE concludes that schools with a larger proportion of students with a favourable socioeconomic background, the results tend to be higher than for students with less favourable conditions (Skolverket 2012 chapter 6, Skolverket 2016). This differences between schools with many high-performing students and schools with many students who do not fully reach knowledge goals are therefore increasing. This leads to major differences in teaching and risks leading to quality differences between schools.

In addition, teachers get widely different opportunities to do their work. Also, teachers expectations of student performance can be influenced by the overall level in the classroom - this also implies a risk of increased division of students based on 17 various good study conditions (Hattie, 2009). Further, some teachers judge students after an imagined Swedishness (Kallstenius, 2010). A teacher's choice of substance is often governed by the teaching materials used and by a narrow interpretation of how the central content of the syllabi can be treated. This is the case of a, often unaware, tight Swedish cultural

perspective which requires a familiarity with what is specific Swedish, which the newcomer students usually lack.

The TIMSS and Pisa studies (2016) clearly showed that the equivalence of Swedish schools continues to decline. An unequal school contributes to exclusion, poorer growth, and the capacity of each person to not be taken. It creates major gaps that adversely affect the Swedish democracy and society.

During recent years, a debate about whether increased number of students with migrant background in Swedish school is the real reason why Swedish students' results in international knowledge surveys are declining.

3.1.1.2 Uneven distribution between municipalities

Another contributing factor to unequal access to education in Sweden is the uneven distribution of refugees and asylum seekers between municipalities. In school year 2016/2017, 10 % of municipalities have received 41 % of all newly arrived students. In the previous school year, 10 % of municipalities had received 46 % of all newly arrived students, which is somewhat equal. Counting the distribution by schools, 10% of all schools in Sweden took in 43 % of newcomer students this year compared to 46 % last year (SNAE, 2017). Nearly 700 schools in Sweden do not receive any newcomer students at all. Looking at the size and population of municipalities, it is mainly smaller municipalities that have received most newcomer students in their schools. In terms of the number of pupils, metropolitan municipalities have received most newly arrived students, but taking into account the size of municipalities, smaller municipalities have received proportionally most newcomer students in their schools.

The situation puts a huge strain on reception, organization and working methods of municipalities and schools, which is of great importance to newcomer students' development and learning.

3.1.1.3 Differences between municipal schools and independent schools

In addition Nearly 8 percent of the students in elementary school are newly arrived compared to 6,5 percent last year. However, there is a lot different between municipal and independent schools. The municipal schools have almost 9 percent new arrivals, while the independent schools (*friskolor*) have almost 3 percent newcomer students. New rules on special quota for selection to independent schools (Education Act, 2010: 800) Memorandum: Prop. 2015/16: 184) for more students in schools took effect on November 1, 2016. This means that schools can offer a limited number of newly arrived students who do not have enough queue time (often used for submission to independent schools in Sweden) a school place. The special quota should refer to students who resided in the country less than two years before the start of the school the current academic year.

3.1.1.4 Organizational challenges

In addition, a contributing factor to in equivalence in education for newly received students' reception, learning and inclusion is the school models (Bunar, 2015a).

It's been pointed out by among others, Axelsson (2015) and Nilsson Folke (2015), that neither preparatory classes nor ordinary classes in them guarantee equal education for newly arrived students. The organizational models used in the Swedish school system put students in their own arenas where the only interactions are with other newly arrived students and their teachers. Therefore the models become what Zembylas (2011) calls for spaces of exclusion.

The main criticism of organizational models of reception and the principles they are based on is that they are not rooted in the pupils' individual needs and prerequisites, nor by scientific knowledge, but in what local school administrations find is the easiest and most often cheapest way (Skolinspektionen 2009, 2014b, Fridlund 2011, Skowronski 2013, Nilsson Folke and Bunar 2015).

3.2 Reception education for foreign speaking

3.2.1 Challenges in preparatory education

Newcomer students become a homogenous group based on deficiencies and difficulties in school and those who are well behaved as individual exemptions (Stretmo, 2014). Previous experience and knowledge are not valued, but students are considered as beginners in Sweden no matter what topic (Bouakaz & Bunar, 2015). Furthermore, parents have no information and ability to influence their children's schooling and placement in preparation class (Bunar, 2015b). Many parents want to engage more but do not feel invited to do so.

3.2.2 Defection from reception education

The defection from language introduction programme and thus from upper secondary school are significant (Bunar, 2015). The Swedish National Agency for Education shows that, the 2014/15 academic year 8.4 % of the students were enrolled in a language introduction programme in upper secondary school's grade 1. The increase in the number of new arrivals has resulted in an increase of 11 per cent in the number of pupils in upper secondary school Grade 1 between the academic year 2013/14 and the academic year 2014/15. Since language introduction was introduced in 2011, the number of students in the program has increased by 34 % in grade 1.

The number of students on language introduction has not only increased, but "it is the program where beginners 2011 after a year remained largely on the same program. It was about half of these students. After two years, however, only fifth students remained. Then 40 % of the students had passed on to either national program or other introductory program.

An equal proportion (41 %) was no longer in secondary school after two years. Language introduction is thus the introductory program with the highest proportion of students leaving the upper secondary school (Skolverket 2014a, p.27).

3.2.3 Increasing diversity in reception class

Sweden encounters a serious lack of qualified teachers in, foremost but not exclusively, Swedish as a second language and mother tongue (SNAE), due to the increased number of newcomer students the recent years.

Axelsson & Nilsson highlight the fact that subject teachers do not have preparedness or understanding of which supportive efforts second language learners actually need. Teachers lack insight on the topic of multilingualism as a resource. There is a widespread unawareness and ignorance that the first language actually supports the learning of a second language (Axelsson & Nilsson, 2014).

The requirement for credentials for teachers and preschool teachers was introduced in the school day 2011. The goal of identification is to increase the quality of Swedish school, raise the status of the profession and clarify what a teacher and preschool teacher is qualified to teach. Through the Teachers' Rise (*Lärarlyftet, 2011*) Swedish teachers can complete their credentials with more permissions.

In order to be able to apply to a national secondary education program, language is crucial. The municipalities find it hard to develop the upper secondary school language introduction.

Also, according to The Swedish National Agency for Education there is a need to further develop and improve the organization and implementation of reception of newcomer students, develop the systematic quality work carried out by the governing body and the school as well as to implement competence-enhancing efforts on language and knowledge-developing education for school staff.

3.2.4 Transition from reception education to mainstream education

According to Nilsson Folke (2015), the transition from reception class to ordinary system is the weak link in newcomer students' education, which shows that, the reception classes temporarily create a sense of educational and social inclusion, while the opposite applies to ordinary classes. In regular classes, the students are physically integrated in arenas with the majority, but due to lack of network and friends they end up in what could be termed social exclusion situation (Permisán and Fernández 2007).

The reception class also tends to be an environment with strong support but with long-term weaknesses. The ordinary class is opposite to that, an environment characterized by too much challenge with lack of support.

The paradox is based on the fact that the reception class itself is considered segregated and the students as quickly as possible want to be transferred to ordinary classes, but in the first mentioned they feel included and non-stigmatized (see also Skowronski 2013).

Also, according to Nilsson Folke (2015), a challenge worth mentioning are the eligibility rules for the national upper secondary education programs, which were sharpened in the upper secondary school curricula 2011. It is harder to get into national programs, but also students who have been in regular class at elementary school still need to attend a language introduction in order to be able to start regular education at upper level secondary level.

In addition, the language introduction is formed differently between different governing bodies.

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