



Fast Tracks

Enabling a Quicker Entry into the Labour Market Through Chain Measures in Sweden



iQ GOOD PRACTICE to the point

Target Group:

Local, national and international policy makers, ministries

Summary:

Sweden's Fast Track offers a structured chain of integration activities, legitimized by the relevant labour market parties. The chains' three main areas are: Identify vocation, competency evaluation and bridge training, all of which are guided by, and depending on, Sweden's labour market demands.

Organiser:

The Swedish Public Employment Services (PES), "Arbetsförmedlingen", in cooperation with trade unions, employer organisations, education providers and other relevant government agencies.



Sweden

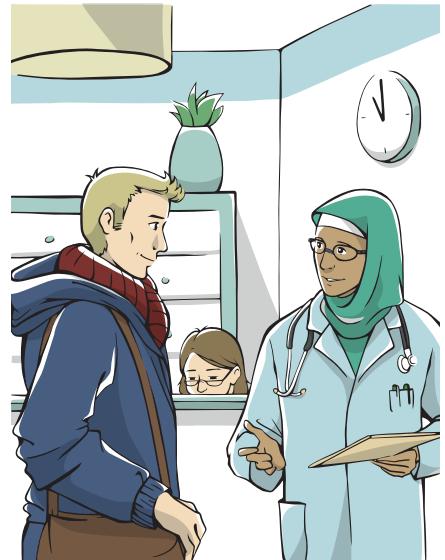
Sweden's population in 2016:
9,903 million

Immigrant population
(first and second-generation immigrants):
23.2% of the overall population

Employment rate of immigrants (2016):
65.5% immigrants; 80% non-immigrants

Starting position/challenge

In 2015, with the increased immigration of "newly arrived" in Sweden, designating those who have obtained a residency permit in the last 36 months, the Swedish government faced multiple challenges, but also identified multiple possibilities. The challenge: newly arrived immigrants tend to have lower employment rates. The chance: many newly arrived have education and training in occupations where shortages of skilled and experienced labour exists. Within this context, one of the stated responsibilities and priorities of the Swedish PES is to promote the quicker and more efficient introduction of newly arrived immigrants into the labour market.



Implementation of the Model

Starting from 2015 onward, a triparty conversation was organised between the Swedish Labour Ministry, the Swedish PES and the labour market representatives (trade unions and employer organisation in specific), especially within sectors with a shortage of skilled workers. This was done in order to find ways to identify and facilitate skills needed in the Swedish labour market within the newly arrived group. In addition, to find ways to tackle existing obstacles for those within the group not gaining employment due to them not having no or little experience in/from Sweden. Since 2016, 14 agreements on structured cooperation's between Arbetsförmedlingen and labour market representatives have been drawn up. Participants in the respective fast track will gain the necessary skills after taking part in a pre-defined chain of activities to meet the Swedish markets demands for employability. All chains have built in their DNA a close cooperation with each sectors' representatives. Each Fast Track has a different design but follows 3 steps including competence mapping, assessment and completion, all of which are measures that pre-dated the fast track programme but which are now being linked to each other. These steps include concretely a competency mapping based on self-assessment, for instance. Moreover, a validation is done according to the "industry

model", through which skills are tested which are either acquired in Sweden, but for which there is no supporting document, or to test skills acquired in another country. A professional assessment is also executed, entailing the assessment of a person's vocational qualification in order to establish if the person has the ability to practice a profession. Based on the recommendations drawn from the assessment, an individual plan is designed and executed. If any of the measures mentioned above result in a need for bridge courses, the newly arrived will be referred to a training provider where an individual plan is designed and executed.

Summary

The central paradigm of Sweden's fast track is to build on a newcomer's existing education and skills with the goal to adjust and update these skills in a methodical and structural fashion as quickly as possible according to the requirements of the Swedish labour market. By cooperating with the relevant labour market players and by building on existing, but previously scattered, measures, a broad acceptance is guaranteed. The fast track allows for a quick continuation in a qualified profession through a tightly-woven, and tightly connected chain of activities.

Essential Work for the Welfare State

Ursula Berge, Political Director, Trade Union for Academics within Social Sciences

How do trade unions, to name but one stakeholder, evaluate the fast-tracks programme? And why do they cooperate in the first place? Ursula Berge of the Swedish Trade Union for Academics within Social Sciences describes the path toward engagement of her trade union as "a wake up call". As soon as it became clear that "around 25 percent of all the asylum seekers that had come to Sweden have some kind of academic education, most importantly from within the Social Sciences" the Union started considering what it could do. This sense of urgency was strengthened when reports were published which highlighted that academically schooled people with a refugee background, struggle to find jobs adequate to their credentials. With this in mind, the union decided to engage with

Fast Tracks in order "to find smoother ways into the labour market for our future members." Engaging with the Fast Track programme has been a learning process, according to Berg. "We have learned a lot about the reality of academics with foreign credentials who try to enter the Swedish labour market, including bottlenecks and a lack of coordina-



tion amongst different stakeholders." While strengthening newcomers' abilities to enter the labour market more swiftly, the Union is also confident that Fast Tracks make a substantial difference in terms of "positively changing the attitudes of natives towards foreign educated professionals." This is a socially important development, according to Berg. "We are convinced that newcomers in the Swedish labour market are essential for the wellbeing of society in general, not to mention the welfare state in particular." And the future? What hopes and expectations do the Union have? "We are working towards the goal that it will not take more than a maximum of three years for a foreign educated person within social sciences to work in his or her profession here in Sweden."

Three questions for Alexandra Sjöberg, Development Manager of the Arbetsförmedlingen

Enabling Newcomers to Work on the Adequate Job Level



What is the innovative part of your format?

The structural cooperation with the labour market stakeholder is quite unique and ensures that the PES' activities are tied to the real needs of employers where there are skill shortages. It builds confidence in the fast track, in that it ensures that a person who has, successfully, finished the pre-defined chain of activities is indeed employable – according to "Swedish standard" of the occupation in question. The 3-step method,

that the fast tracks is built upon (identify – test – bridge), is a solid way of making sure that skill shortages are tackled by strengthening those newcomers with the relevant competences.

Is it possible to introduce the format in other countries?

Other countries can be inspired by parts of the fast tracks or of the tracks as a whole in order to integrate skilled workers where there are shortages. Identifying necessary interventions provided by the fast tracks or implementing actions to create a chain of activities provided by the PES can be also quite useful to many countries. Finally, the idea of establishing close cooperation with the relevant labour market players, to ensure that these chains of measures are legitimised and accepted quite quickly, could also be helpful to many countries.

What can the format achieve in the long term?

In the long run, it enables labour markets to develop a positive dynamic by enabling upward mobility in terms of integrating qualified workers to perform in an area of choice. It has a positive effect on the labour market if people are given a chance to work at the correct level of their competency. It is very important that we, as a receiving country for refugees, try to avoid "under-assessing" the skills obtained in foreign countries.

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Network IQ

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