

An education system's experience of a refugee crisis:

**Challenges faced, Responses adopted and
Lessons learnt for Education policy**

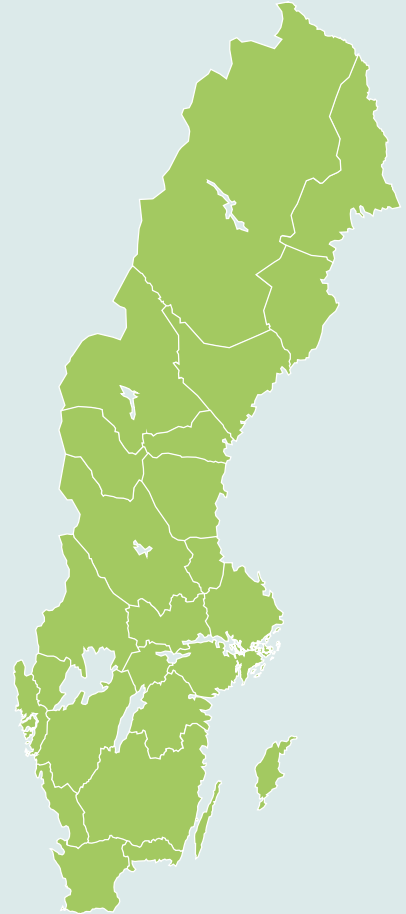
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An example from Sweden

- Population: 10,523,709
- Since 2000 the population has increased with 1.6 million people
- 290 municipalities
- The northern part of Sweden is sparsely populated

(Statistics Sweden January 2023)





The refugee crisis 2015

- Background and context
- The Swedish education system
- Challenges
- Responses
- Lessons learnt for education policy

Background and context

- Sweden has historically welcomed large numbers of migrants, in particular migrants seeking humanitarian protection.
- An immigration spike in 2014 and 2015 – a shift in the number of new arrivals and a geographic shift. The majority of the individuals coming from outside Europe.
- 75% increase of the number of foreign-born individuals since 2000.





Background and context

Legislation: According to the Education Act (2010:80) all children who live in Sweden have the right to education. The municipality is obliged to offer the child a school placement within one month after arriving to Sweden.

- In 2015 almost one in three students in Sweden had an immigrant background (the average in the OECD area was one in four students) (OECD Spotlight Report on Sweden, 2019).

The Swedish education system

- Decentralised, steered by goals and learning outcomes defined at the national level. The government has the overall responsibility and sets the framework for education at all levels.
- School providers: Municipalities and school providers of independent schools.
- Big differences between the school providers and schools (size, capacity etc.).



Challenges faced

- Accomodation of a large number of newcomer students
- Responding to individual learning needs of students
- Teacher shortage
- Managing diversity in the classroom, need of capacity building and support
- Resource allocation





Responses adopted

Strategies for the enrolment and absorption of a large number of students:

- **Collaboration** between government agencies and municipalities
- **Support:** The National Agency for Education offered support material concerning the mapping of the new arrivals knowledge and skills, etc.

Responses adopted

Quantitative (teacher shortage) and qualitative capacity building:

- **Bridging programmes for teachers** with a foreign teacher's degree.
- The **Teacher Salary Boost**.
- **In-service training** offered by the National Agency for Education and the universities:
 - Language and knowledge enhancing teaching
 - Managing diversity in the classroom.





Responses adopted

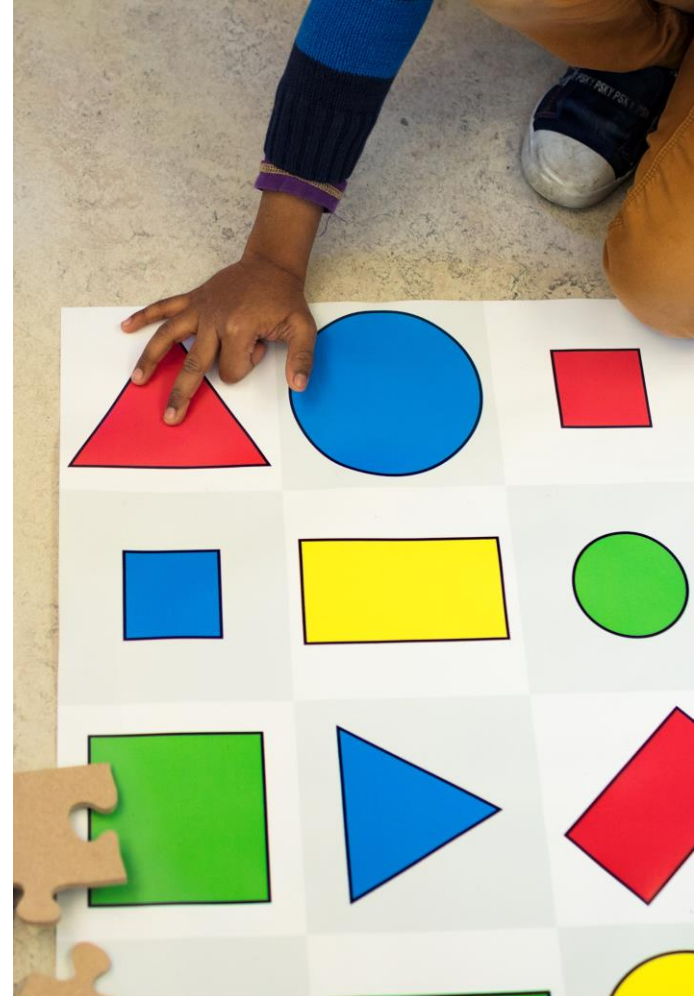
Government arrangements and resource allocation

- **State grants** to municipalities receiving new arrivals, for example the Equity state grant.
- **Financial support** within the targeted actions to school providers with low knowledge outcomes and/or socio-economic challenges.
- Two major **government commissions** were given to the National Agency for Education: *The Learning of Newcomer and Multilingual Students* and *Collaboration for Better Schools (CBS)*

Support from the OECD

Strength through Diversity: *Spotlight Report on Sweden* (OECD, 2019)

- Collaboration between OECD and the Ministry of Education and Research
- Policy area: The integration of immigrant and refugee students in education
- Policy advice for development and/or redesign of current policies





Lessons learnt for education policy

Complex challenges require:

- Co-operation and collaboration
- Systemic approach – work with the whole system
- Stake-holder dialogue
- Support to strengthen agency and ownership
- Holistic approach, learning and well-being
- Capacity building at all levels

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