



THE FAST TRACK INITIATIVE FOR NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS<sup>1</sup> IS ABOUT THE PROVISION OF SKILLS AND THE CREATION OF FAST TRACKS TO ENABLE NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS A MORE EFFICIENT TRANSITION INTO OCCUPATIONS CORRESPONDING TO THEIR EDUCATION, EXPERIENCES AND INTERESTS. THERE IS NO GENERAL FAST TRACK TRAJECTORY AND IT ONLY APPLIES TO PROFESSIONS WHERE THERE IS A BOTTLENECK SITUATION ON THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET<sup>2</sup>.

## Fast Track Initiative for Newly Arrived Migrants (Snabbspår - snabbare etablering av nyanlända)

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### SWEDEN

The Fast Track Initiative was proposed by the government in 2015. The aim was to coordinate existing PES measures into a streamlined trajectory for newly arrived migrants with skills that match occupations in which there are labour shortages<sup>3</sup>. Employers' organisations and trade unions are also able to apply for funding to develop initiatives like the translation of validation models into other languages<sup>4</sup>.

The initiative speeds up the entry of skilled migrants into occupations with labour shortages through activities which map, validate and bridge the skills of migrants or refugees who are identified as eligible for the initiative. Language courses run concurrently throughout the process; however it is not a pre-condition for the commencement of validation and bridging efforts.

The fast tracks are planned jointly between the employers' organisations, trade unions, the PES and other relevant government agencies. As of October 2018, there are 14 tripartite agreements between the PES and the social partners, which comprise about 40 professions.

Name of the PES

Swedish PES (Arbetsförmedlingen)

Scope of measure

National

When was the practice implemented?

Since 2015

What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?

Achieving the employment target of the EU 2020 Strategy demands higher labour market participation in the EU Member States. Newly arrived migrants tend to have lower employment rates, and therefore efforts to facilitate their integration into the labour market are key. At the same time many newly arrived migrants have education and training in occupations where shortages of skilled and experienced labour exists. These include engineers, teachers, technicians and doctors. There are gains to be made from a speedier utilisation of newly arrived migrants' knowledge and skills, both for the individuals concerned and for society as a whole. Within this context, one of the stated responsibilities and priorities of the Swedish PES is to promote the quick and efficient introduction of newly arrived migrants into the labour market<sup>5</sup>.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

- ▶ Swedish PES
- ▶ Employers' organisations and trade unions

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

Fast tracks are only targeted towards third country nationals who have been granted Swedish residency permits within the last two years and have work experience or an education connected to a sector that is currently facing a labour shortage<sup>6</sup>.

- 1 Within the group called "newly arrived migrants" are all "third country national" migrants who have received their first residency permit within 36 months. The refugee group are within the migration office's remit of responsibility and are only subject to PES measures, such as the Fast Tracks, once they've received a residency permit.
- 2 Eurofound (2016), *Approaches to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- 3 OECD (2016), *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrant's and their Children in Sweden*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257382-en>
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Internet: <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Globalmeny/Other-languages/About-us.html>
- 6 Source: From the EurWORK European Observatory of Working Life <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/labour-market-social-policies/sweden-fast-track-initiative-to-help-asylum-seekers-enter-labour-market>

### What were the practice's main objectives?

The objective of the Fast Track Initiative is twofold:

- ▶ To facilitate newly arrived migrants' entry into the Swedish labour market in a sector/profession that is relevant to the migrant's education, experience and interest.
- ▶ To coordinate existing PES measures into a streamlined package for migrants arriving with skills that are in line with occupations experiencing labour shortages<sup>7</sup>.

### What activities were carried out?

Each fast track has a different trajectory, but all follow three basic steps, including; skills mapping, assessment and bridging courses. It includes the following<sup>8</sup>:

- ▶ Skill assessment on the basis of self-assessment: The purpose of this step is to identify the educational and vocational background acquired in another country by the newly arrived person. It includes a skills assessment which is available in several languages<sup>9</sup>. People holding professional qualifications in a relevant fast track profession will be referred on to the next step in the process. On the basis of the Swedish Occupational Classification Standard (SSYK), professional codes are assigned at this stage.
- ▶ Evaluation by the Swedish Council for Higher Education or other authority: For the fast tracks concerning people with a post-secondary education, documentations of qualifications are recognised by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR, also the ENIC-NARIC office in Sweden), the National Board of Health and Welfare or the Swedish National Agency for Education.
- ▶ Validation according to industry model: The purpose of validation is to test skills which have been acquired in Sweden but where there is a lack of formal documentation, or to test skills acquired in in another country. Validation of competencies consists of both practical and theoretical tests based on an assessment in relation to industry standards. Since validation models differ between industries, skills may be validated against educational curricula in some cases, but skills are more likely to be tested against actual professional skills set by the industry and the ability to practice the profession. Regardless, validation models should result in formal documentation based on industry standards, where an assessment of competencies is made on the basis of employability. If the assessment concludes that the participant needs to complement their existing skills further, this is documented in a recommendation for supplementary education. In cases where validation leads to a change in the person's professional code (SSYK), a new individual plan will be drawn up.
- ▶ A professional assessment: The professional competence assessment involves assessing a person's vocational qualification in order to establish if the person has the ability to practice a profession. Recommendations are drawn for a completion of skills, if necessary. This assessment takes place during a work placement, and can last for up to three weeks, where the employer receives a grant of EUR 82 (SEK 800) per day.
- ▶ Work experience: This means that a person works in an actual workplace to get occupational orientation, professional practice and gain working experience. It may also have the purpose of strengthening the person's skills or developing their Swedish language skills. It may result in the employer giving the person a letter of recommendation, which will expand the individual's network. Work placement should be within fast track sectors.
- ▶ Bridging courses: If any of the measures above result in a need for bridging courses, the newly arrived migrant will be referred to a training provider, where an individual plan for training will be established. In parallel to these steps, each participant studies the Swedish language. Employers' organisations have committed to promoting places for internships, workplace-based learning or vocational skills assessments.

### What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?

In the spring of 2015<sup>10</sup>, a number of dialogues were initiated in various sectors between the Ministry of Labour, employers' organisations, trade unions, the PES and other relevant government agencies. The objective was to find ways to facilitate for newly arrived migrants to enter the Swedish labour market in industries that were facing a skills shortage, and thereby to reduce the time migrants need to find employment. The aim was to create fast tracks which, based on industry needs, would complement the skills of newly arrived with education and/or experience from the industry, so that they speed up the process to employment.

After final rounds of negotiations, the Swedish PES assumed responsibility for convening the relevant trade unions, employers' organisations and government agencies to take the process forward and formalise the concept of fast tracks. The government offices did not take part in these meetings.

7 OECD (2016), *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrant's and their Children in Sweden*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257382-en>

8 The following information is taken from the most recent evaluation of the Fast Track Initiative for Newly Arrived immigrants: Arbetsförmedlingen (2017): *Arbetsförmedlingens nulägesbedömning av arbetet med snabbspår (Employment Agency's first assessment of the work on Fast Tracks)*, Stockholm, 2017-05-24

9 <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/For-arbetsokande/Valj-yrke/Tester-och-guider/Sjalvskatta-dina-kompetenser/Self-assessment.html>

10 Arbetsförmedlingen (2017): *Arbetsförmedlingens nulägesbedömning av arbetet med snabbspår (Employment Agency's situation report and assessment of Fast Tracks)*, Stockholm, 2017-05-24

	<p>In order to ensure that fast tracks would lead to employability several stakeholders were involved; such as the Swedish National Agency for Education, the National Board for Health and Welfare and the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR). These stakeholders have since been working on creating and adapting processes and different trajectories in the Fast Track Initiative based on industry needs. Based on industry standards, the PES also procures different validation and training programmes, as well as managing applications of grants, which are targeted towards the social partners.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>The Fast Track Initiative is funded by government funds.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>According to the PES' assessment of the fast tracks (carried out in June 2018<sup>11</sup>), the following results are noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Between 1 January 2016 and April 2018, a total of 6 721 persons had entered a fast track<sup>12</sup>.</li> <li>▶ Out of these, 2 020 were women and 4 701 men.</li> </ul>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>After 19-21 months of participation, 49 % of the participants in the non-regulated professions were in employment. The corresponding share for those in regulated professions were 35%.<sup>13</sup></p>
<p>What are the lessons learnt and success factors?</p>	<p>Lessons learnt include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is a need to continue working to increase the quality of the skills assessment of newly arrived migrant jobseekers.</li> <li>▶ Ongoing dialogue needs to be intensified with the involved stakeholders on follow-up on and evaluation of the development of fast tracks.</li> <li>▶ Geographic conditions for specific VET training opportunities in the Fast Track Initiative varies, and participants may have to travel to participate in the relevant training. In order to improve the PES' ability to match people nationally, it is important that the costs for travelling are covered, otherwise people may refrain from participating in relevant activities due to economic reasons.</li> <li>▶ Currently, there is no tracking whether the job obtained is in line with the person's skills, and whether participants are now in a profession that reflects the fast track that they participated in (this does not differ from how the Swedish PES register all other persons who leave for an employment). There is a need for more qualitative evaluations of participants in, or leaving a fast track.</li> <li>▶ Involvement of universities is a key factor for newly arrived migrants with academic degrees. The investments that have been made in bridging programmes provided by the universities are of key importance.</li> <li>▶ Involving the social partners in the process of developing the Fast Tracks has many advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Social partners have good knowledge of existing hurdles to specific professions in Sweden.</li> <li>▶ In some cases, they may have the ability to reduce the effect of those hurdles. For example, by providing tutoring guides for trainees who only have basic knowledge of Swedish.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

11 Swedish PES (2018), *Snabbspåren fortsätter framåt* Swedish weblink: <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Statistik-och-publikationer/Rapporter/Ovriga/2018-06-08-Snabbsparen-fortsatter-framat.html>

12 Eligible individuals include those who are newly arrived persons with training and / or experience in one of the Fast Tracks (Evaluation report)

13 Swedish PES (2018), *Snabbspåren fortsätter framåt* Swedish weblink: <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Statistik-och-publikationer/Rapporter/Ovriga/2018-06-08-Snabbsparen-fortsatter-framat.html>



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