



# VICTORUPESI

## Unity in diversity

Vocational Innovation using Creative new Technologies resulting

in Upskilling Pathways for Social Integration

## National Report

Persons involved:

Iulia Halangescu  
Tatjana Ristovski



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

# 1. Desk Research

IKF Malmö conducted a desk research focusing on foreign-born women's accession to the labor market in Sweden. Therefore, we investigated different aspects of the issue to address better the gaps in terms of vocational training and spot the available funding as well as the local initiatives to support the inclusion of foreign-born women. We also evaluated the Swedish legal framework including the policies which is applicable to the needs of our target group. The existing strategies in Sweden to deal with the concerns of foreign-born women's inclusion in the labor market is also examined. In addition, in our desk research, we tried to identify and list the public and private organizations in Sweden to contact in later stages for conducting a focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

## **National legislation / policies / funding / initiatives supporting migrant women's inclusion in the labour market**

### **Legislation and Policies**

Desk research of the Victorupesi project is conducted to identify the national legislation and policies. Also, the funding opportunities and initiatives supporting migrant women's inclusion in the labour market. The Swedish legislation is designed in a way which gives responsibility to the State to take measures aimed at eliminating unemployment while adhering the standards of right to work.<sup>1</sup>

The State has specific policies which promotes easier access to labor market. For example, in Prop 2017/18:1 Utgiftsområde 24, chapter 3.7; the Government recognised that more efforts are needed to strengthen foreign-born women to enter the labour market. The measures that contribute to create easier paths to jobs and more jobs with lower qualification requirement is required to be taken into account.<sup>2</sup> Also, the Swedish Public Employment Service is developed an action plan at the beginning 2017 on behalf of the government and it aimed to increase the proportion of foreign-born women in the working force.<sup>3</sup>

The Government also targeted thematic areas such as utilizing job potential for the green industries in 2018-2019. Therefore, newly arrived people and people far away from the labour market without higher education, not women specifically but with equality in mind, could access to the job market.<sup>4</sup>

The Swedish Public Employment Service stated in their yearly report that their activities must be design in a way that promote gender equality and increase foreign-born women's activity in the labour market: 1. Foreign-born women must receive the support they need to get closer to the labour market, 2. to actively work for a more even distribution of program decisions between women and men, 3. ensure that independent actors provide support to foreign-born people, and to a greater extent foreign-born women far from the labour market, 4. that the national supplier follow - up conducts

---

1

<https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/demokrati-och-manskliga-rattigheter/fakta-om-manskliga-rattigheter/ekonomiska-sociala-och-kulturella-rattigheter/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.regeringen.se/4a65cf/contentassets/79f6d27416794f0bb146c792e02b65fc/utgiftsomrade-24-naringsliv.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.47a458fb16df81b913353bd/1574677167971/rapport-en-arbetsmarknad-for-alla.pdf>

4

<https://www.regeringen.se/4af042/contentassets/e6b42c9045bb4d78a3adc66d765500aa/07501-uppdrag-att-tillvarata-jobbpotential-i-nom-de-grona-naringarna.pdf>

<https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/globalassets/om-oss/publikationer/2019/rapport-2019-05-tillvarata-jobbpotentialen-i-de-grona-naringarna---naturnara-jobb.pdf>

special audits of independent actors and current services from a gender equality perspective with the aim of follow outcomes and capture the actors' experiences.<sup>5</sup>

The women with entrepreneurial interest are also considered since the Government and the Ministry of Trade and Industry gave Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth a mission to enable efforts so that foreign-born women will be able to start their own businesses. For example, mentorship and networking support which may enable women to get in contact with the labour market. The project timeline is defined between 2018-2022.<sup>6</sup>

## **Funding**

There are various funding agencies which provided support for the foreign-born women's employment with their projects in Sweden.

The Swedish Public Employment Service in Malmö created the project named "Kick off" in collaboration with FC Rosengård. Target group foreign born women far from labour market. It focused on health, information about the society, integration, and family.<sup>7</sup>

European Social Fund (ESF) is another funding agency which have several projects with the cooperation of number of municipalities and Swedish Public Employment Service and civil society. "Värmland tillsammans" is one of those projects by several municipalities in Värmland, the country council in Värmland, the Swedish Public Employment Service and the civil society. It is funded by ESF. The project aims to support foreign-born women and men to come closer to the labour market or further studies.<sup>8</sup> In Stockholm, ESF finances "Hållbar etablering" project which focuses on facilitation for the entry into the labour market for newly arrived persons with a short educational background. The project has a specific focus on foreign-born women.<sup>9</sup> For the newcomers regardless of their gender, ESF funded another project called "Etableringeslyftet 2.0" with the vision is to utilize the new skills of the new arrivals in an efficient and coordinated manner and to actively contribute to them getting closer to self-sufficiency. This will be done partly through individualized efforts for mapping, simplified validation, matching, professional introduction, and language development.<sup>10</sup> Finally, ESF has funded "Amazon Projects" which are based on government-wide platforms that will deepen collaboration for women on long-term sick leave and / or the long-term unemployed with a great need for support to establish themselves in the labour market. The target group is Swedish- and foreign-born women of working who are far from the labour market.<sup>11</sup>

Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) has also funded several projects which supports foreign-born women's inclusion into the labour market. "Womenisa" was a project

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.47a458fb16df81b9133effd/utrikesfodda-kvinnor.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://tillvaxtverket.se/download/18.2e832f28168bb82933b29493/1549550917214/Regeringsuppdrag%20att%20fr%C3%A4mja%20utrikes%20fr%C3%B6dda%20kvinnors%20fr%C3%B6retagande%202018-01-11.pdf>

<https://www.regeringen.se/4948a5/contentassets/5902ae60335a4aa99db41ce2c0f7b266/n18-01430.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/press/pressmeddelanden?id=8CBF51F92175E33B>

<sup>8</sup> <https://varmlandsprojektparaply.se/projekt/varmland-tillsammans/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.esf.se/Resultat/Projektbanken-2014-2020/Alla-Projekt/Hallbar-etablering/>

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www.sll.se/verksamhet/Regional-utveckling/Nyheter/2020/06/78-miljoner-till-projekt-inom-kompetensforsorjning-och-konkurrenskraft/>

<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.sll.se/verksamhet/Regional-utveckling/Nyheter/2020/06/78-miljoner-till-projekt-inom-kompetensforsorjning-och-konkurrenskraft/>

which primarily targets women with a foreign background, from a socio-economic vulnerable area around Stockholm. Womenisa aims to recruit unemployed and foreign-born women to the network.<sup>12</sup> “Trappa upp nationellt” is a project inspired by Yalla Trappan<sup>13</sup>, (also funded by Tillväxtverket). The project aims to increase employment and entrepreneurship among foreign-born women through cooperative entrepreneurship, employment, internships, or work preparation initiatives such as education and study circles.<sup>14</sup> Yalla Trappan project inspired Yalla Rinkeby 2.0 which builds on what has already been established in Rinkeby and on the concept that Yallatrappan in Malmö has built up. It involves engaging women with a foreign background who are outside the labour market in development processes with work-integrating social enterprises and self-developed methods within Yalla as a basis.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, Kompetensslussen which was funded by Tillväxtverket focus on the textile business. Based on the validation methods that exist today, the project aims to develop a coordinated validation model to take advantage of and further develop the skills of newly arrived women. The purpose is to create new, individualized and in-demand training initiatives in professional adult education, which in the long run leads to satisfying the industry with the right skills.

### **Local Initiatives**

The Swedish Public Employment Service and Samordningsförbunden has an initiative called “SamSpråk” is an initiative by in Södertälje, Stockholm. The target group for SamSpråk is foreign-born women searching for a job who need language development. The project combines language training and effort to improve the health condition among the women.<sup>16</sup>

There is also an initiative to match employers with employees which funded by the government. Jobbsprånget matches employers with new arrivals, who have higher education in areas that are relevant for the industry.<sup>17</sup>

“Jämställd Etablering” purpose is to increase newly arrived migrants' opportunities to get a job by matching and to provide individual support from the Swedish Public Employment Service. The project is an activity in the Swedish Public Employment Service's action plan to get more foreign-born women into work or study.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.womenisa.se/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.yallatrappan.com/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://coompanion.se/coompanion/trappa-upp-nationellt/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://yallarinkeby.se/projektet-yalla-rinkeby-2>

<sup>16</sup> <https://tillvaxtverket.se/download/18.4c1250a116d1bb3a3f01bb69/1568294949888/Fem%20v%C3%A4gar%20till%20arbete%20och%20f%C3%B6retagande%20f%C3%B6r%20utrikes%20f%C3%B6dda%20kvinnor%2020287.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://jobbspranget.se/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/internationellt/eu-fonder/jamstalld-etablering>

## 2. Focus Groups



- Two focus group discussions were held through a video call on the 26th of February. One focus group is established with four individuals from the target group and one with the three individuals from the company and vocational training center representatives on the 26th of February. With respect to research questions used within the interviews, the focus group had a discussion, reflecting the below mentioned objectives:
  - Training needs of the target group (TG1) in digital skills such as social media skills
  - Current gaps in the provision of training on social inclusion and capital building
  - Finding the VET (Vocational Education Training) requirements that companies need in terms of their need for workers

## 3. In-depth Interviews

Interviews took place in different days from the 20th of January to the 12th of February 2021, through one-to-one video calls and face-to-face meetings between a member staff of IKF Malmö and the practitioners, vocational center, and company representatives. The purpose of the in-depth interview was to identify the training needs and problems for socially excluded people to build social capital by developing professional skills. Interviews involved a total of 10 experts. 5 of the interviews are conducted with the practitioners who are in the field of working for the social and economic rights of foreign-born women. 2 interviews are conducted with the persons who work as circle leaders in a vocational training center in Malmö. In addition to these, 3 company owners/entrepreneurs are interviewed from the sectors of HR Consultancy, Accounting, and IT.

# FINDINGS

The main findings from this research are as follows:

- **The training should take into consideration the digitalization:** The global pandemic has created enormous impact on the target group as well as native Swedes. Since the vocational training centers had to stop their activities and adjust digitalization, vocational training of foreign-born women became more difficult. Also, the economies are highly impacted in every country including Sweden which led people to lose their jobs. Therefore, due to the shrink of new vacancies, access to labor market by the foreign-born women decreased with the addition of their certain disadvantages and barriers.

Digitalization gained more importance and the women who are not skilled in digital devices are negatively impacted. Not having access to such devices caused their isolation. Women who have trauma background suffered due to isolation even more.

NGOs and vocational training centers who conduct study circles could not engage properly with the target group. Foreign-born women who are learning the Swedish language had harder time to practice their language skills and it caused backlash in their skillset. Eventually, these decreased the opportunity to get a job as well as their social integration process since these activities are usually a way to get out of their own social circles and penetrate the multicultural zone and restore their self-confidence while networking.

Some participants emphasized the importance of networking to get into the labor market. They addressed the difficulties of networking and exchanging experiences through online channels.

- **Language education continues to be the ever-lasting pressing need** for the women who has foreign background. As pointed out above, the quality of the State services on language education must be developed to increase the employment rate of the target group.
- **Leadership Training:** Foreign-born women in Sweden do not necessarily realize their potential on leadership. Even if they realize, the harmful habits of job market do not allow them to hold higher positions. Therefore, there should be more committed efforts to support entrepreneurial women who wants to be leaders in business and other sectors.
- **Transferable Skills:** There should be a training effort for women who has transferable skills and would like to adapt the current employment sphere.
- **Networking Needs:** must be collective effort to create or restore the missing link between the potential employers and the foreign-born women. To make them engage and being a bridge between them has crucial importance since their networking is going to increase target group's involvement in the vocational training and labor market.

- Partners should provide participants with **clear instructions** on:
  - the aim of the project,
  - how will the VICTORUPESI training will impact their career path and social integration,
  - how long the training will be, and what exactly they will study,
  - where the training will take place,
  - in which way their contribution to the training will affect the life of others that are facing the same challenges,
  - how the training was built on their need's assessment.

- **Flexible training is essential** since our target group -foreign-born women- are quite diverse with diverse needs and responsibilities. The level of education, possible trauma background, the speed of learning is very different depending on such differences. Apart from the vocational training which they attend, there can be other factors including the labor division at their home which may require more flexible approach for the target group.
- **From the focus groups and interviews, it can be noted that the participants are keen to be** supported to establish their businesses, vocational trainings on entrepreneurship, social media education for women or focusing on women's mental health or language skills. These projects did not lose their relevancy since there is still demand on them by the potential participants. However, the labor market demands new skills from foreign-born women.

Main highlight of many participants is that the technological requirements are higher and higher of the current era, especially after Covid-19. The industries are getting more and more digitalized and the gender roles in the society, including in the mindset of the target group, do not allow women to enter male-dominated sectors such as information technologies. Inclusion of women in micro-engineering or car industry is a necessity to reach gender equality. It is also stressed that this is a problem needs to be addressed from both sides, because less women are interested in such opportunities or simply, they do not know if they can work in such sectors. There is a perception in women that car industry requires knowing mechanics and physical power or getting hands dirty. However, it is quite the contrary, it requires to be able to control the job digitally. In conclusion, there are many male-dominated sectors that changed the employment profile, but foreign- born women are not necessarily aware of their transferrable skills to work in such sectors.

Vocational training is needed for foreign-born women to identify their transferrable skills. For example, a chemist can work in agricultural sector in Sweden which is a growing sector.

In addition to above-mentioned finding, it is mentioned that the management positions or higher positions are not also quite open to foreign-born women. Training initiatives for women leaders must be carried out, although the deeper problem is that foreign-born women usually do not enter the job market due to their skills in a new country including Sweden. The issue of starting at a suitable level must be tackled and addressed.

There is a big labor gap in the medical sector and especially in elderly care. Most of the participants of the interviews addressed the need of skilled labor in healthcare sector. Due to demographic information of Sweden, it is expected that the labor needs in elderly care sector is going to be in a raising trend. The issue, on the other hand, must be addressed multidimensionally. Hence, vocational training in elderly care would not be enough to be employed, potential workers also must master the Swedish language.

In general, the participants draw attention to the notion of inclusion towards women who have foreign background, who have neurodiversity or who have disabilities. However, inclusion relates to the compatibility to the new work environment. Therefore, training on the Swedish work culture might be also a necessity.

- **Other relevant findings:**

- 1- **Regarding the Swedish Laws and Policies:** General opinion of the participants on the Swedish legal framework and policies regarding the employment is that the Swedish law is well



structured. Right to work and means to work have a good structure and institutions. However, the law does not actively engage the employment needs of foreign-born women, according to the interviewees there is a missing link between the legislation and the actual needs of those women. Therefore, this affects foreign-born women's inclusion into the labor market and social integration.

It is recognized by the participants that there is a certain level of effort from the State Agencies to meet the employment needs in general. However, missing link still exists between the legislation and the professional inclusion. Since the State has limited resources and the capacity, most of the foreign-born women find their path to job market through NGOs and civil society.

It is also emphasized that there is a gap in the policies and practice for foreign-born women's language acquisition and adaptation to the work culture and culture in general. It is agreed by the participants that Sweden is putting an effort to invest in migrants' education in general such as Swedish Language for Immigrants (SFI). For example, SFI is for beginners and they are not efficient for everyone since the courses are quite slow. For the foreign-born women who already gained certain language skills or who are fast learners, there is not any other remedy to learn the language free of charge. They cannot leap to the secondary school since their SFI grade is needed. This decreases the Swedish speaking and their participation in labor market.

Although there is an intention in the law, the implementation of the law does not reflect the need of networking and engaging with the society. Also, it is commented that the laws and the policies such as the ones with Swedish National Employment Agency are not easily understood by the foreign-born women due to bureaucracy and complicated laws and regulations in Sweden. Although it does not reflect reality, it is assumed that everybody has access to a computer and knows how to use it to get into the labor market. All in all, the efficiency of the laws and policies are questioned by the participants.

- 2- **Regarding the Funding:** It is observed that most of the participants are only aware of the funding which they have already accessed before. There is a general understanding that Erasmus+ projects and other European Union funds exist as well as Swedish National Agencies' funding opportunities.

Some participants did not see a benefit of covid-related funding, some others indicated that there was no funding opportunity related to that. However, the main highlight of the interviews is the need of having funding for the digitalization. Since the target group lacks the necessary digital tools and the information on how to handle technology, the necessity is sought by the practitioners in the field of vocational training.

Two participants stressed the inadequacy of the current funding system and addressed the need for a change in the current economic system of project-based funding. To put it simply, the projects are usually bound with 1-3 years of time limit and their sustainability is at stake if there is no extension of funding. Therefore, there is a possibility that there could be no additional funding even if the project is extremely successful and reached the target. One participant brought up the project of IKF Malmö called Carpe Sofia and BNS. These projects supported the business ideas of the foreign-born women and a large number of the participants established their own businesses and women with entrepreneurial ideas got great benefit out of the project. However, the project had to finish due to fund-cuts. The solution that was introduced by those practitioners to have a 'stable income scheme'. This is a sponsorship-like income generation activity for NGOs. According to the participant, non-profit does not mean that it should all depend totally on project funding, you can still have stable economy through companies, your members and target group. All in all, this would create sustainable growth for the foreign-born women.



**3- Regarding the National and Local Initiatives:** The question is formulated in a way which aims to identify the perception of the practitioners, vocational training center representatives and potential employers on the local and national initiatives to support foreign-born women. The goal was to understand the manifestation of the local and national initiatives in the sense of their cooperation.

The participants have different opinions on how concerted the initiatives are. However, the common finding is that although there are certain agencies which are trying to cooperate. However, the effort usually remains ineffective. For example, there are partnerships among NGOs in certain projects. But also, NGOs rapidly introduce new projects and there is not necessarily good coordination among them. The National Agencies fund the local initiatives which the target and the subject of the projects duplicate.

One interviewee pointed out the mutual network and certain collaboration of the NGOs and Agencies who work in the vocational training of the migrants since there are many different activities in different institutions. Human resources of these projects are not isolated, even if foreign-born women are isolated. For example, IKF cooperates with municipalities of Malmö and Stockholm.

Vocational Centre's representatives, however, have a more optimistic view about the level of sufficiency and the concerted effort. They have emphasized that the vocational training centers have connections and cooperation with the governmental authorities such as social services of State-run kindergarten. Although the workers of vocational centers were quite sceptical of the fact that the cooperation might be dependent on the occupant of the 'seat'.

All in all, the common opinion of the participants is that there is not properly concerted effort to ensure the foreign-born women's access to the labor market.

#### **4- Challenges for the Target Group**

The common issue raised by all the participants is 'discrimination'. According to the participants, not having a Swedish name on the ID or CV is a challenge to be invited to job interviews. There are also issues with accents, a different appearance, skin color and attitude. Because it is extremely difficult to integrate into Swedish job market without a network, it is nearly impossible for a foreign-born woman to get a job without the network and recommendation of someone.

Language barrier is also one of the biggest challenges in accessing jobs even if the foreign-born woman applies for an English-speaking position. The Swedish work culture requires being able to mingle in Swedish during the coffee breaks as part of the social integration. The professionals who work with foreigners are also facing problems with language. It is harder to communicate with vocational training providers for the foreign-born women.

Other differences of the Swedish work culture need to be learnt as well. For example, interviews are one of the first steps of accessing the jobs and the expected employee behavior during the interviews may vary from one country to another. Also, it may not be welcomed to have spontaneous meetings with the manager in Sweden whereas booking time is preferred.

Mental health of the foreign-born women is another factor according to the number of participants in our interviews. Failure to find a job in the long run affects women's self-confidence and mental health. These mental health issues may affect learning new skills and the language. Also, some foreign-born women who came to Sweden are traumatized due to war or other disasters which they left behind. For the practitioners in vocational training

centers, they need to be aware of the target group's daily struggles and be considerate about trauma background.

There is also a problem of informal segregation. Foreign-born women do not live in the same neighborhoods with the locals, their children do not go to the same schools, etc. Integration does not happen with only vocational training. Segregation does not help foreign-born women to have the network to access the job market.

Networking opportunities are hugely impacted by the global pandemic. There used to be job fairs in the past, online events are not serving the purpose of networking and this is an issue to access vocational training and jobs.

Another challenge which was brought up by the interviewees is the human resources capacity of the Swedish National Employment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen). Foreign-born women do not get tailored services for their own vocational training needs and coaching services from Arbetsförmedlingen. The automatized services of Arbetsförmedlingen does not seem to create the expected result on vocational training needs due to the participants.

Arbetsförmedlingen and other national agencies' language is also a problem for foreign-born women. Although the rules and the regulations are published on their websites, it is challenging for a person who has foreign background to understand them. That makes it harder to adapt and keep being engaged with the employment scheme.

The current system is criticized with its lack of cooperation and concerted efforts. The practitioners and the target group should have open dialogue channels, so that the training needs are discovered in a more democratic way since the status does not consult foreign-born women on what they wish for their career.



# How are we going to use these findings?

When developing the training materials, the partners will ensure that the content is **clear and easy to understand**, consisted of all the relevant information needed to use **different social media platforms**, and also included information on **safety and security** when using the platforms. With regards to language barriers, all partners **translated the materials into English, Swedish, Italian, Serbian, Slovenian, Romanian and Spanish** to aid the training in the different countries.

When training started, each partner organization ensured that **flexible training options were given** to suit those involved, and the **online learning platform** was also used to supplement the training, in case any information needed reiterating.

## Other ways of using the findings

The findings of this research, that collected valuable data on the current situation of the foreign-born women, will also be used as a reference document for the organization and other local actors involved in the process of the social integration of our target group. It will also be displayed on the organization website so it can serve not only locally but internationally as well.

## The importance of diversity management!

VICTORUPESI consortium consist out of very divers partners serving very divers beneficiaries. This represents a micro mirror of the societies each of our beneficiaries are living in and is important to build the ground for holistic approaches.

Reasons for having holistic approaches in Sweden:

- **Social awareness aspect:** The job market is highly dominated with the stigma against foreign-born individuals. There are deeply rooted habits and **discriminatory behaviors** among the employers to be hesitant to hire foreign-born women even if they are qualified. Also, vocational training centers' practices proved that the women with no digital skills in today's digital world are behind others and they are the most isolated. As per the level of intersectional discrimination is high, it is important to raise awareness within the potential employers and other society members as much as possible on gender equality and racial discrimination. It is crucial to understand that the good quality of the inclusion paths for the target group by everyone since their inclusion and education would only enhance the whole community's wellbeing.
- **Legal aspect:** Even if there are policies and laws in place, the status of foreign-born women's training needs, language education and access to labor market proved the existing framework is not sufficient for diversified target group. Flexible methods must be developed and introduced with the consideration of different groups of foreign-born people based on different education levels and abilities.

- **Administrative Aspect:** State agencies lack sufficient effort to enhance the standards of its services to effectively respond to the needs of both the labor market and foreign-born women.

In specific, Swedish National Employment Agency should be encouraged to develop more tailored services based on different individuals' needs and level of growth as the current standardized services are not inclusively engaging with everyone. In addition, Swedish language teaching scheme should be updated in a way in which every individual can find a suitable learning model since it does not consider the abilities or disabilities of different individuals. Therefore, all relevant national agencies are in need of updating their policies to more inclusive ones for foreign-born women.

### The importance of digital skills!

The world is changing significantly, hence the need to keep up to date with technology. With technology advancing at an incredible speed, it is important that we are not lagging behind these changes.

Reasons for having good digital skills in Sweden:

- Many employers now require you to have some basic computer skills, such as being able to use certain applications and software to get a job, write CVs and being able to attach CVs to emails.
- The emerging need of improving digital skills must be focused on adjusting to the new more digitalized world for the purpose of attending online classes or working from home, especially after the pandemic.
- New trends in the job market must be followed and women must be trained on such trends, for example creating a video presentation instead of a personal letter.
- Also, networking skills during the digitalization is another aspect that the target group would need to acquire.
- It is important to know the digital limits to have healthy digital habits.
- To help you showcase your **personal brand** online. This enables employers to explore your digital competences.
- Whether you are an employer or an employee, businesses use digital skills to **promote and market** their brand, service and/or ethos
- Being digitally active can also increase your **networks**. This could be for social purposes or employment seeking purposes.

## The overviews of the political context in each of the partners countries

Sweden, a democratic and hereditary monarchy State, is ranked first in terms of political freedom<sup>19</sup>, the citizens enjoy larger freedom and human rights. Also, Sweden has a feminist government with a specific ministry for gender equality. The party of Social Democrats is the oldest party and currently ruling party which has been in power for the last century with a few election cycle exceptions. Social Democrats share the coalition with the Green Party.

It is important to note that, since our target group is foreign-born women, discrimination and stigma against the foreign-born persons have growing resonance in the society. Therefore, in the last election in 2018, Social Democrats lost 13 seats against Sweden Democrats who became the third largest party. Sweden Democrats campaigned that "cultural clashes with visibly observant Muslims, and reports of growing crime—creating a recruitment mechanism for disaffected Swedes".<sup>20</sup> Although Sweden welcomed

<sup>19</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-of-sweden-democrats-and-the-end-of-swedish-exceptionalism/>

asylum seekers in the last decades, the number of refugee records hit high after 2015 with 162,877 applications for asylum, generally from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This makes almost 1.6 percent of Sweden's population of 10 million. According to the poll concluded by Ipsos in 2018, the proportion of Swedes who think immigration was bad for the country grew from 13 to 31 percent since 2015.<sup>21</sup>

Foreign-born women have intersecting and overlapping social identities which has negative impact on their education, vocational training and finally their access to labor market. Apart from the male dominance in certain sectors such as IT or management positions, there is also a big skepticism among the employers to include foreigners into their establishments. As a result, women who has foreign-born background suffers from this discrimination the most. Furthermore, foreign-born women become even less included, if they have other features for example disability, neurodiversity, or religious differences.<sup>22</sup>

According to different sources and statistics, unemployment rate in Sweden is higher in foreign-born individuals compared to the individuals born in Sweden. Unemployment is higher among foreign-born women in comparison to the foreign-born men. To illustrate better, 52 percent of foreign-born women in Sweden have a job (20-29 age group), whereas 67 percent of foreign-born men are employed. This employment rate goes up 79 percent for Swedish-born men.<sup>23</sup>

## The overviews of the funding of vocational education in each of the partners countries

Vocational education funding in Sweden is divided in sections such as adult education and training providers with the formal and non-formal education and training. Various State Agencies fund different activities along with the municipalities. In addition to the national funding agencies, European Union, and Erasmus+ has number of available funds to support access to job market. In Sweden, mainly municipalities provide adult education, and rarely regional councils. Municipalities may transfer some of the tasks to external education and training providers, such as private education companies and folk high schools.

Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) funds various private initiatives which have their own area of focus. For example, there are vocational training centers focusing on only certain areas such as Komptensslussen is a fast track to the Swedish textile industry. Their efforts increase and broaden the textile-related competence. Hermods is another company which gets funding by number of municipalities and offers industry-leading training that leads to jobs such as training in Construction and Civil Engineering, Metal Workers, Home Services, Janitors, Remediation, Service and Sales, Service Host in healthcare and Validation of construction and civil engineering.

## The overviews of the local companies and

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.thelocal.se/20180421/six-out-of-ten-voters-in-sweden-want-fewer-refugees-poll/>

<sup>22</sup> Carbado, D., Crenshaw, K., Mays, V., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). INTERSECTIONALITY: Mapping the Movements of a Theory. Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 10(2), 303-312. doi:10.1017/S1742058X13000349

<sup>23</sup>

<https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/labour-market/labour-force-surveys/labour-force-surveys-lfs/pong/statistical-news/labour-force-surveys-lfs-3rd-quarter-2020/>

# industries available to hire our beneficiaries in each of the partners countries

Sweden has several industries which may be of interest to our target group. Motor vehicles, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, industrial machines, precision equipment, chemical goods, home goods and appliances, forestry, iron, and steel are the main industries that exist in Sweden. Apart from the traditional agricultural sector, engineering, mine, steel, and pulp industries are growing to be competitive internationally.

Largest and famous Swedish companies are Ikea, Volvo, Ericsson, Vattenfall, Skanska, Hennes & Mauritz, Electrolux, Volvo Personvagnar, Preem, TeliaSonera, Sandvik, ICA, Atlas Copco, Nordea, Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget, Scania, Securitas, Nordstjernan, SKF, ABB Norden Holding, and Sony Mobile Communications AB.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from the private companies, the public sector in Sweden needs more employees. Especially, the need for medical staff, including nursing assistants and care workers, is brought up by many of the participants of our focus group discussions.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Sweden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Sweden)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.thelocal.se/20200513/sweden-pledges-to-give-up-to-10000-care-workers-permanent-jobs/>

