Rätt Steg. *The right step.*
Stockholm, Sweden

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# Table of contents

1. The initiative and its organizers ................................................................................................................. 4  
2. Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems ......................................................... 4  
   2.1 Newcomers, employment and education in Sweden ................................................................................... 5  
   2.2 The provision of services for newcomers in Sweden ............................................................................... 8  
3. Genesis of the initiative ................................................................................................................................. 10  
4. The organisation and its activities .............................................................................................................. 11  
5. The innovative dimension of the initiative ................................................................................................. 13  
   5.1 Content dimension ...................................................................................................................................... 13  
   5.2 Process dimension ....................................................................................................................................... 14  
   5.3 Empowerment dimension .......................................................................................................................... 14  
6. Institutional mapping and governance relations .......................................................................................... 15  
7. Governance challenges ................................................................................................................................. 17  
   7.1 Mainstreaming social innovation ............................................................................................................... 17  
   7.2 Governing welfare mix: avoiding fragmentation ....................................................................................... 17  
   7.3 Governing welfare mix: developing a participatory governance style ..................................................... 17  
   7.4 Equality and diversity ................................................................................................................................. 17  
   7.5 Uneven access ............................................................................................................................................ 18  
   7.6 Avoiding responsibility ............................................................................................................................... 18  
   7.7 Managing intra-organisational tensions .................................................................................................... 18  
   7.8 Enabling legal framework ........................................................................................................................... 19  

References .......................................................................................................................................................... 20  
Appendix ........................................................................................................................................................... 21
1 The initiative and its organizers

Rätt Steg stands for Right Step and was a project run by the Municipality of Stockholm. It was carried out from August 2009 to August 2012 and it was aimed at fostering access to the labour market (and Swedish society in general) of low-educated and illiterate newcomers, i.e. asylum seekers and refugees living in Sweden since no more than three years. Its main activity was the testing of innovative methods of teaching the Swedish language as a tool to improve the recipient’s position in society and in the labour market. Only non-Europeans newcomers were eligible for participating in Rätt Steg, although in the end all the participants were Somali.

The project was led by Swedish for Immigrants (SFI henceforth), a national service of adult education for immigrants, which is managed and financed at the municipal level. Each municipality is responsible for the provision of SFI courses, which are organised within dedicated schools or inside schools also providing other language courses. 21 schools offer SFI courses in Stockholm. Rätt Steg was tested in the SFI Västerort school, located in the immigrant-dense district of Tensta, in northern Stockholm. When Rätt Steg finished as a pilot project in 2012, it became a permanent unit within the SFI Stockholm organisation, but still operating in the same Västerort school.

Two further organisations contributed to Rätt Steg: the Swedish Employment Service and Jobbtorg Stockholm. The former is the national authority providing benefits and services to unemployed people. Jobbtorg is an agency of the City of Stockholm and provides services for unemployed people. The District Administrations of the Municipality of Stockholm were also involved in the inclusion of the newcomers within the project.

Rätt Steg was a sub-project of a macro programme called Etablering Stockholm run by the same Municipality of Stockholm from 2009 to 2012. The programme had a total budget of 92 million SEK (9,932,902.84 €)\(^1\) and was co-funded by the European Social Fund. Rätt Steg was addressed to newcomers and aimed to support and speed up their integration into the Swedish labour market. It was composed of three sub-projects: Rätt Steg, MD1 (Matching from Day One) and Yrkeskompis (Professional Mate). MD1 revolved around the development of methods for the efficient and fast matching of employers and job seekers and between needs and skills. Yrkeskompis had the aim to enlarge the social and professional network of the newcomers. The same three organisations led Etablering Stockholm, although Jobbtorg Stockholm was the leader of the programme as a whole.

2 Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems

Newcomers are immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers who recently settled in Sweden. Statistics Sweden, the national institute of statistics, defines newcomers as people who have been in the country for no more than four years, while Rätt Steg targets people who arrived less than three years prior to the start of the project.

Beyond this formal definition, newcomers are de facto newly arrived refugees or asylum seekers from Africa and Asia. Asylum seekers submit their application to the Swedish Migration Board. Depending on inflows of applications the Swedish Migration Board reaches a decision in three to six months. During this period asylum seekers receive an accommodation for free (if they prove not having any income) but they cannot choose where to live. They can also apply for financial support from the Swedish Migration Board. The support is provided in the form of a daily allowance and it ranges from between 19 and 71 SEK (two to eight euros) per day, depending on whether or not the accommodation

\(^1\) All the amounts are converted at the exchange rate of 4\(^{th}\) March 2015.
includes food. Special grants for particular needs can be distributed. Asylum seekers have the right to emergency health, dental care, and maternity care and to a free health examination. If they are able to prove their identity and their application meets all requirements, they receive an Asylum Seeker Card (LMA Card), which allows them to work. They are usually referred to the local branch of the Swedish Public Employment Service to search for a job. If the application is accepted, asylum seekers receive a permanent residence permit and their status becomes the same as a refugee, who is allowed to live and work under the same conditions as every other Swedish resident. As established by the Introduction Reform of 2010 (see chapter 2.2), refugees who are not working or are not studying at high school are administered by the Swedish Public Employment Service, which produces an Introduction Plan for them. The plan sets as its main goal securing a job for the refugees. At the same time, they also receive an accommodation if needed. In principle, refugees applying for an accommodation from the Employment Service cannot decide where to settle, but should be settled where they are supposed to have better chances to find a job. In practice this measure is reported not to be implemented, since the Employment Service does not want to deny the right of everyone to live where they want.

Despite this framework, newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees experience many difficulties in the introduction to Swedish society, in particular in accessing the Swedish labour market. This picture probably also has to do with the increasingly troubling situations for migrants in the European context, due to growing racism, the rise of extreme-right wing parties and an inadequate migration policy. Sweden is not exempt from these processes. Extreme-right wing parties are increasing their consensus and public policies and investments prescribed to immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are becoming unpopular.

2.1 Newcomers, employment and education in Sweden

The employment situation and educational performance of foreign-born persons, and newcomers in particular, is rather problematic in Sweden, and the extent of the issue is growing, since the number of newcomers arriving in the country has been constantly increasing in recent years, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Total number of newcomers in Sweden per year, 2006 – 2014.

Source: Our elaboration from Statistics Sweden².

² http://goo.gl/TCKQWS
In 2008, when the feasibility study for the programme Etablering Stockholm was prepared (see chapter 3), the newcomers totalled 48,114, while they number 74,082 in 2014. According to the feasibility study, around 10,000 newcomers lived in Stockholm in 2008. Table 1 shows the most represented countries of origin of the newcomers.

Table 1. Newcomers by country of birth and year, 2006 – 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>15642</td>
<td>13083</td>
<td>9543</td>
<td>38268</td>
<td>5321</td>
<td>5292</td>
<td>4247</td>
<td>3205</td>
<td>3391</td>
<td>59724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>3941</td>
<td>4218</td>
<td>7021</td>
<td>15180</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>3002</td>
<td>4596</td>
<td>10869</td>
<td>4372</td>
<td>44812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2695</td>
<td>3235</td>
<td>3165</td>
<td>9095</td>
<td>2958</td>
<td>2692</td>
<td>2478</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1757</td>
<td>20917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2485</td>
<td>2925</td>
<td>3462</td>
<td>8872</td>
<td>3484</td>
<td>2836</td>
<td>2675</td>
<td>2230</td>
<td>2572</td>
<td>24702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>2169</td>
<td>2976</td>
<td>6940</td>
<td>3249</td>
<td>2751</td>
<td>2971</td>
<td>2692</td>
<td>2489</td>
<td>21092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1681</td>
<td>1697</td>
<td>2213</td>
<td>5591</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>2133</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1531</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>15138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1204</td>
<td>1629</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>4687</td>
<td>2206</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>2142</td>
<td>2511</td>
<td>3069</td>
<td>16392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>1384</td>
<td>3171</td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>3209</td>
<td>4167</td>
<td>3801</td>
<td>3436</td>
<td>19608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>1197</td>
<td>2936</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>1744</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td>2914</td>
<td>5322</td>
<td>16121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>2299</td>
<td>1261</td>
<td>1769</td>
<td>5349</td>
<td>14397</td>
<td>26113</td>
<td>51188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Sweden.

Considering the whole period, the majority of newcomers come from Iraq, followed by Syria and Somalia. However Rätt Steg began in 2010 and its target group was people, who arrived in Sweden no more than three years earlier. We should therefore consider the period 2007 – 2009, when the majority of newcomers came from Iraq, Somalia and Thailand. In particular, 15,180 people arrived from Somalia, the nationality held by all of the beneficiaries of Rätt Steg. Somali newcomers are reported to be concentrated in Stockholm County, and a large community is located in the suburb of Tensta, in the North of Stockholm, where the SFI School that tested and implemented Rätt Steg is also located.

Newcomers are one of the weakest groups in the Swedish labour market. At the time of the feasibility study (2008), the employment rate of foreign-born persons was 64.4% compared to a rate of 75.1% among the native-born people. The employment rate of newcomers was 50.3%. The rate was dramatically lower for women at 36.6%, almost half the men’s rate.

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3 Statistics Sweden considers as newcomers people arrived in Sweden since no more than four years, while the target group of Rätt Steg is people arrived since no more than three years.

4 [http://goo.gl/TCKQWS](http://goo.gl/TCKQWS)
Table 2. Employment rate in Sweden 2008 and 2013 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate native-born persons</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate foreign-born persons</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate of newcomers (0-4 years)</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As shown in Table 2, the employment rate of newcomers decreased by 2.1% from 2008 to 2013, due to a sharp fall of the men’s rate of employment (-7.3%). The employment rate of women increased (+2.4%), although it is not possible to assess the role of programmes like Etablering Stockholm in assessing these figures. In the same period the employment rate of foreign-born persons slightly decreased (-1.0%) while it increased among the native-born group (+3.3%).

The employment rate of newcomers strongly varies on the basis of other variables, such as the place of birth and the level of education of the persons involved. The difficulty to access the labour market especially concerns newcomers coming from Africa, Asia and, increasingly, South America, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Employment rate among newcomers (0-9 y) by place of birth in Sweden, 2008 and 2013, %.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born persons</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries except Sweden</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU except Nordic countries</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe except EU members and Nordic countries</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another important factor affecting the labour market situation of newcomers is the level of education. Table 4 displays the employment rate of people with at most a lower secondary education level, in 2008 and 2013 (the two surveys consider different lengths of stay in Sweden).
Table 4. Employment rate of people with at most a lower secondary education level in Sweden, 2008 and 2013, %.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment rate</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>native-born persons</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foreign-born persons</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newcomers (0-4 years)</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newcomers (0-9 years)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The situation is getting worse for the group of foreign-born persons and in particular for newcomers. The employment rate of low-educated newcomers decreased by 3.9%, and probably more considering the 0-4 year range (the data of 2013 refers to the range 0-9 years). The share of the low-educated population on the whole reference group differs on the basis of birth origin. 32% of people coming from Africa have at most a lower secondary education level, compared to 8% of people coming from North America (Statistics Sweden, 2014).

Another important issue related to the condition of foreign-born persons is the risk of long-term unemployment. 48% of foreign-born unemployed people are considered as long-term unemployed, contrasting with a figure of 31% across the native-born group. This is the biggest difference amongst European countries (Statistics Sweden, 2013). Newcomers are thus a group particularly at risk of long-term unemployment, considering that usually people who experience difficulties in accessing the labour market tend to remain excluded.

The same difficult newcomer position (particularly low-educated people coming from Africa and Asia) in the Swedish labour market emerges also if we consider other data, like unemployment rates and participation in the labour market. According to all the cited surveys, the short period of living in Sweden and the low level of education are the two variables that most negatively impact on the employment rate, and this is the condition of social exclusion which led to the conception of Rätt Steg.

2.2 The provision of services for newcomers in Sweden

The regulation, organisation and financing of services provided to newcomers has traditionally been a widely discussed issue in Sweden. The so-called “introduction” of newcomers into the Swedish society has always been managed at both the national and local level, with a history of conflict more than cooperation among different levels and entities. The quality of the services provided has been affected by this conflictual and fragmented situation, producing overlapping measures and contradictory messages towards the users. Although the law has always identified a coordinating agency (the municipalities until 2010 and the Swedish Employment Service since 2010), the concrete provision of services has been fragmented among different actors, and the situation is even more complicated in Stockholm where the structure of the municipality is more complex than in other Swedish cities.

The first regulation of the introduction measures for newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees was established in 1985. The law assigned the responsibility for the reception of refugees to the municipalities, under the central supervision of the Swedish Migration Board. The question was treated as a social policy issue administrated through the provision of social services, without including a labour market perspective (Myrberg, 2014).

The Swedish Employment Service started to become involved in 1991, with the role to identify possible measures to help the newcomers earn their own living as soon as possible. The “individual introduction
Plan” was established as mandatory in 1993; the plan was managed by the municipalities and had to include participation in educational and vocational training. The issue of newcomers became particularly troublesome in the 1990s, due to two reasons: the economic crisis that was occurring in Sweden and the growing number of new refugees arriving in the country from the Balkans. This attention led to the establishment of a parliamentary Committee on Immigration Policy, which evaluated the introduction system for newcomers. In 1996, the Committee observed that only a small share of them were employed, even among the group that had completed the introduction period. The main weakness was identified in the inadequate cooperation between the municipalities and the Employment Service and in the weak labour market perspective within the introduction plan. It was therefore made clear that the aim of the introduction programmes should have been to provide newcomers with the conditions to become economically self-sufficient and socially active. Despite this evaluation, the following reforms of the 2000s did not introduce the relevant changes to the structure of the provision of services, partly because the two emergencies of the early 1990s were over (Myrberg, 2014).

Something started to change in the late 2000s, when a centre-right party won the national elections and when the flows of newcomers started to rise again. As a result the so-called “Introduction Reform” was issued in December 2010. The reform transferred the responsibility for all introduction measures during the first two years of stay in Sweden from the local government to the central government, namely, to the Swedish Employment Service in collaboration with other central agencies, such as the Swedish Migration Board and the County Administrative Boards. The only two tasks which remained under the auspices of municipalities were the provision of housing and of language education. The underpinning logic of the reform was to solve the problems of fragmentation and differentiation of a system managed by each municipality and to formally adopt a work-first perspective. The new introduction benefit was therefore the same for everyone, regardless of the municipality where the newcomer settled down and its supply was for the first time bound to his/her active participation in the introduction programmes. The Swedish Employment Service also became responsible for the distribution of newcomers among the different counties (the regional level), in consultation with the County Administrative Boards and the Swedish Migration Board, but not with the municipalities. In this way the distribution of newcomers would have been decided starting from the local conditions of the labour market. This measure was never effectively implemented and the quota are set by the Employment Service to the County Administrative Boards are non-binding. The reason for this failure to execute is that no actor wants to take the responsibility to deny the right of someone to live where they want. The responsibility for the management of an individual introduction plan was also transferred from the municipalities to the Employment Service. It was decided that the individual plan should last no more than 24 months and should include at least Swedish language training provided by Swedish for Immigrants and some employment preparation activities. The reform also introduced a new actor, called the “introduction guide”. It is an independent actor working on commission for the Employment Service that is supposed to support newcomers in their search for work. The guides are remunerated by the Employment Service, partly on a fixed basis and partly on a result-basis, i.e. only when the newcomer finds work or begins a post-secondary level education.

Not all measures of the Introduction Reform have been implemented. In particular the mechanism for the territorial distribution of newcomers and the role of the introduction guide still have to be clarified and, maybe, re-discussed. The reform has been criticised for having strongly limited the scope for action of the municipalities, which after 25 years of experience had developed efficient procedures and internal skills to work with this target group. The Employment Service seems to lack this experience and competence (Myrberg, 2014).

The reform was introduced after the beginning of Rätt Steg. However, it gives an idea of the environment within which the project was conceived: a work-first approach with a strong focus on
education and an attempt to overcome fragmentation, testing new forms of collaboration among different central and local public actors.

3 Genesis of the initiative

In 2008 The City of Stockholm established the goal that 50% of all newcomers should become self-sufficient within 18 months after their arrival. Jobbtorg Stockholm, an agency of the Municipality of Stockholm providing services for the unemployed, started the discussion on how to achieve this goal, searching for collaborations with other actors, mainly the Employment Service, the District Administrations of the city and Swedish for Immigrants, which is the agency devoted to adult education for immigrants.

In Spring 2008, Jobbtorg applied to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions with the intention of accessing funds for the realisation of a feasibility study connected to the development of a project to be submitted for European Union funding. At the end of August 2008, 35 managers, team leaders and employees of the involved organisations participated in a workshop to discuss the obstacles they were experiencing in supporting newcomers and possible solutions to overcome them.

The study and the workshop revealed the presence of structural and cultural obstacles to the introduction of newcomers in the Swedish society and the absence of focused solutions for this target group. In particular four main problems were identified:

1. Lack of coordination: newcomers were assisted by many different organisations (District Administrations, Employment Service, Jobbtorg, SFI, NGOs etc.) without a sufficient degree of coordination. For the individuals this meant the multiplication of individual plans: each organisation proposed its own plan based on its mission, resources, contacts, often giving contradictory messages to the individuals. From a systemic point of view this situation led to a duplication of services, waste of time and resources e.g. to prepare overlapping surveys, needs assessments, etc.
2. Inefficient matching: both the Employment Service and Jobbtorg were experiencing difficulties in matching employers’ needs and newcomers’ skills, because of the lack of appropriate methods.
3. Inefficient support to low-educated and illiterate people: this target group was not adequately supported in learning Swedish and in getting access to the labour market, with a high risk of developing a long-term dependence on welfare assistance.
4. Isolation from social networks: newcomers have difficulties in establishing social networks and resources, which are often very important also to access the labour market.

Consistent with the findings of the study and of the workshop the parties agreed to start a joint venture to develop a coherent strategy to support newcomers in their access to labour market. In Autumn 2008 a steering committee including representatives from the Employment Service, Jobbtorg and SFI started to meet every three weeks and elaborated the core logic of the programme Etablering Stockholm. The latter is thus the result of a process of co-design focused on finding solutions to tackle the four problems that emerged during the feasibility study. Beyond a widespread action to promote the collaboration among the different actors, three sub-projects were designed to improve the matching activities (sub-project MD1), to provide the low-educated and illiterate newcomers with adequate language support (Rätt Steg) and to facilitate the construction of social networks that could foster their access to labour market (Yreskompis). Etablering Stockholm received co-funding from the European Social Fund and started its activities in August 2009.
4 The organisation and its activities

The aim of the sub-project Rätt Steg was to provide newcomers with adequate language support to foster their access to Swedish society and labour market. Its main activity was therefore the testing of innovative methods of teaching the Swedish language. Swedish for Immigrants was the lead partner for Rätt Steg, in strict coordination with the Employment Service and Jobbtorg Stockholm.

The target group of Rätt Steg was low-educated and illiterate newcomers, that are non-European asylum seekers and refugees who arrived in Sweden no more than 36 months prior to the project. In total 81 people were involved in the project, compared to 1,204 people involved in the entire programme Etablering Stockholm. The specific target group of Rätt Steg is small, hence reducing the possibility to include great numbers of people and it needs to be supported intensively in the mid-long term. All the participants were between 20 and 40 years old and the average age was 28. 79% of the participants were women, 21% were men. 80% were illiterate. Rätt Steg involved only Somali participants (see chapter 7, challenge #4).

Candidates to participate in Rätt Steg were identified among the participants of ordinary SFI courses who were also enrolled to Jobbtorg. The Swedish Public Employment Service and the District Administrations of Stockholm could also recommend some of their clients to the staff of Rätt Steg. Beyond a low level of education the participants often shared other conditions of disadvantage, like poor health, traumatic experiences, worries about family and friends living in their country of origin. These factors make it even more difficult to facilitate their access to a knowledge-based society and labour market.

The staff employed in Rätt Steg was comprised a project manager, two teachers, two mentors and two native language teaching assistants in Arabic and Somali. The task of the mentors was to mediate the relationship with other institutions (SFI teachers and administrators, Employment Service, Jobbtorg, District Administrations, employers), acting as a link between the participants and Swedish society. The support of the native speakers is considered as a cornerstone of the model. Their task was to mediate between languages and cultures, supporting the participants when dealing with new demanding challenges and encouraging them to express themselves in Swedish.

Rätt Steg was conceived as a complementary activity within the traditional SFI service offer. The participants attended the ordinary courses in the morning and the specific Rätt Steg activities in the afternoon. The latter were divided into three courses: Rätt Steg 1, Rätt Steg 2 and the internship. Rätt Steg 1 was a course lasting about six months, mixing traditional teaching, practical workshops, conversations, field visits and extra courses. Rätt Steg 2 was an advanced course, consisting of an upgrade of the activities of Rätt Steg 1, with a specific focus on job search and matching activities. The internship phase included some preparatory activities and a three month internship, with continuous monitoring from the project staff. The aim was to make it possible for everybody to finish the whole course, but those who stopped at Rätt Steg 1 were prevented from accessing the internship, since they did not possess the required knowledge of the Swedish language. The total duration of the whole course was 10 to 15 months, depending on the individual’s needs and skills. Needs were assessed jointly by professionals and participants. The latter, guided by the teachers and the language assistants, could establish the specific language skills needed to manage their daily life and to improve the possibility to access the labour market and communicate at the workplace. The contents of the lessons were flexible and oriented to meet the participants’ answers to the question “what do you need to get by in your daily life? Which specific social situations do you want to be able to deal with?” Assessment of the improvements of the participants was made on the basis of these desired results.

Each of the two courses was organised into different modules, dedicated to specific topics: health (duration of three months), work (three months), social life (three months), and parenthood (one month), basic computer knowledge (one intensive week per month). The topics were chosen to meet newcomers’ needs in the new society, covering useful issues in their everyday lives. Moreover at the
In order to comply with one of the major concerns of the whole programme Etablering Stockholm, Rätt Steg promoted a close collaboration between the different organisations involved in the provision of services towards newcomers: SFI, the Employment Service of Stockholm, Jobbtorg, the District Administrations. Various working groups were organised within the framework of Etablering Stockholm and the staff of Rätt Steg was actively involved.

The programme Etablering Stockholm has been followed up with an evaluation made by an external evaluator. The evaluation compared the results of the group involved in the programme with the ones
of a control group who used the traditional services of the Employment Service, Jobbtorg and SFI. The probability of the beneficiaries of Etablering Stockholm to come out with employment or training was 48% greater than the probability of the members of the control group.

As far as Rätt Steg is concerned, the average time spent by the beneficiaries of the traditional SFI courses to overcome the A level and enrol to the B level (corresponding to the passage from Rätt Steg 1 to Rätt Steg 2) is 400 days. The same level was reached by the Rätt Steg’s beneficiaries in 260 days. 12 participants out of 81 found a job after having completed the Rätt Steg courses; 4 enrolled to a vocational course; 11 moved to a C level course (higher level of language training); 23 completed both A and B level courses (low and mid-level of language training). All the participants left Rätt Steg with a self-written résumé, a cover letter and improved knowledge of their skills and professional profile. These outcomes have been considered as successful by the external evaluator, taking account of the features of the target group.

The evaluation has identified some success factors of the experience: the intensive full day education; the mix of traditional language training, practical workshops and field visits; the focus on issues that are relevant to the participants; the offer of extra courses to gain new perspectives on leisure and work; the internships and their follow-up activities; the individual mentorship; the computer literacy; the support of native language speakers, that allows the participants to deeply understand the language and provide a safe learning environment; and the collaboration with the other organisations involved in the programme Etablering Stockholm, that allowed to overcome fragmentation and create a direct link among language training and labour market.

5 The innovative dimension of the initiative

Drawing on social innovation literature the innovative dimension of Rätt Steg is analysed using three basic dimensions (Gerometta, Häußermann and Longo 2005; Moulaert et al. 2005a,b; Oosterlynck et al., 2013): a) the satisfaction of basic social needs (content dimension); b) the transformation of social relations (process dimension); c) the empowerment and socio-political mobilisation (linking the process and content dimension).

5.1 Content dimension

Neither the traditional welfare services nor the market provide low-educated and illiterate newcomers with specific services to facilitate their access to labour market. The key to improve the possibilities of finding a job for this target group has been identified in a specific educational programme. The traditional way used to teach Swedish to this target group was ineffective, since they have no educational basis in their mother tongue either. This prevented them also from finding but also searching for a job, with the high risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

One of the basic questions of the project was how to make it possible for people coming from contexts based on informal practices to learn how to come up against a complex and highly formalised society, like the Swedish one. This was considered as fundamental to put them in the conditions to understand and access the new labour market and avoid a sense of insecurity, suspicion and helplessness. The specific language and social needs of the beneficiaries were assessed jointly by professionals and participants, starting form competences, skills and, eventually, previous work experience of each participant. In this way classes and internships could be adapted to their daily life experience and their professional profile.
According to the interviewees and the external evaluation of the project, the new methods of teaching tested within Rätt Steg have proven to be successful in providing the target group with useful instruments to understand and integrate in the Swedish society.

5.2 Process dimension

The programme Etablering Stockholm represented, since its genesis, a huge effort of coordination among different public entities: the Swedish Employment Service, Jobbtorg Stockholm, Swedish for Immigrants and the Administrations of the 14 districts of Stockholm. The lack of coordination among these entities was identified as an obstacle to the quality of the services provided to immigrants, and to newcomers in particular (see chapter 2). Therefore Rätt Steg (and the whole Etablering Stockholm programme) represented a milestone in the improvement of the collaboration among these different entities. The extent to which this coordination is the result of a common outlook or of power struggles did not emerge from the analysis. In any case, this governance style characterised by units composed by professionals coming from different offices is challenging the traditional structure, where an office is in charge of a project and the others are no more than partners.

Many private actors took part in Rätt Steg: employers hosting internships, various organisations hosting field visits and participating as guest speakers. Nevertheless these actors have not formally been involved in the design and governance of the project.

Finally the participation of the beneficiaries was partially promoted only within a framework established through a top-down approach. They were not involved in the design of the project, although they could influence the specific content of the courses, presenting real life situations and making specific requests. In this way knowledge was generated also by the beneficiaries, thus avoiding the passive reception of information.

The target group of the project (low-educated and illiterate newcomers) do not usually have any opportunity to take part in processes of knowledge production. In this sense, efforts to improve their chances of actively participating in society can enable new processes of participation and integration.

5.3 Empowerment dimension

Rätt Steg did not start from a bottom-up perspective, but from an internal effort by the side of different public entities, which were looking for better solutions to shorten the time it takes for newcomers to enter the labour market, according to a work first perspective.

Nonetheless, the project promoted the individual empowerment of the beneficiaries by improving their employment opportunities, by making them aware of their previous and new skills, by allowing them to become independent in managing everyday situations. All the participants improved their skills in different fields: communicative Swedish, computer knowledge, job search, social skills. All this knowledge constitutes an important driver of empowerment in every aspect of the beneficiaries’ life: family life, social life, job search, work experience.

The teaching methods tested in Rätt Steg aimed at the development of the critical thinking of the beneficiaries, encouraging their capacity to use their mind and voice. The work of the teachers and the mentors was aimed at raising the awareness of the individuals on how society is organised and how the beneficiaries could participate in the wider social life.

The collective dimension was not considered as the project’s concern, in line with the focus on labour market promoted by the work first approach. The newcomers participating in the activities were not perceived as a collective actor with associated rights, but as a group of individuals, each one with
his/her own opportunities and limits. Nevertheless the project proposed many group activities (courses, workshops, field visits) that also allowed reinforcing the relationship among the participants.

6 Institutional mapping and governance relations

The implementation of the programme Etablering Stockholm is consistent with a trend started in the 1990s, when the municipalities started to become the primary actors in the provision of activation programmes for the unemployed. The role of the Swedish Employment Service started to become rather blurred; it became a national authority acting at local level, with a high risk of overlapping activities with other local offices. In the specific field of the provision of services for newcomers the Introduction Reform of 2010 (see chapter 2) tried to overcome this fragmentation, giving back a strong role of coordination to the Employment Service. However some competences remained in the hands of the municipalities that in the meantime had developed programmes and procedures to foster the access to labour market for immigrants, including newcomers. The result of these processes is the presence of a combination of services and projects provided by a mix of local actors and national actors acting at the local level. Therefore the coordination among different levels and services is a big issue in the field of active labour market policies. Recently some innovative programmes, tested as time-limited projects and often supported by the European Social Fund, are promoting the creation of a new governance system, based on units composed by officials coming from different offices. All these processes can be found both in the programme Etablering Stockholm and in the project Rӓtt Steg.

Etablering Stockholm was led by the Employment Service and Jobbtorg Stockholm. The sub-project Rӓtt Steg was implemented by Swedish for Immigrants, by means of a management unit composed by professionals coming from SFI, the Employment Service and Jobbtorg. Also the District Administrations of the City of Stockholm were involved. Before the launching of the organisation, each of them was providing services to the newcomers, producing overlapping activities and often giving contradictory messages.

The Swedish Employment Service is a national public agency directly accountable to the Swedish Parliament and the Swedish Government. Its goals are to facilitate matching between jobseekers and employers and to manage the unemployment national insurance scheme. Since 2010, as described in chapter two, it is the coordinating agency for labour market integration of newcomers. The activities of Rӓtt Steg are part of the Introduction Plan (see chapter 2) elaborated by the Employment Service for each newcomer searching for a job in Sweden. Each activity (courses and internships) is registered in the personal plan of each participant.

Jobbtorg is a municipal agency established by the City of Stockholm in 2008. It is conceived as the main entrance to labour market opportunities for people living in the city. People subscribing to Jobbtorg get an individual job plan and support in their search for a job, including training and internships. Jobbtorg has a wide network of employers offering internships in the city of Stockholm, which is also used by Rӓtt Steg to offer internships to its participants.

SFI is a national service of adult education for immigrants, which is managed and financed by the municipalities. Its general purpose is to foster the integration of the immigrants (with a specific focus on newcomers) into Swedish society and its labour market, providing them with at least a basic knowledge of the Swedish language. When Rӓtt Steg finished as a pilot project in 2012, it was implemented as a permanent project within the SFI Västerort school in the immigrant-dense district of Tensta, in the Northern part of Stockholm. The process of institutionalisation was limited by some tensions which emerged between the management unit of Rӓtt Steg and different organisational levels within SFI (see chapter 7.7).

The District Administrations of the City of Stockholm were also included in the involvement of the newcomers within the project. They are in charge of the provision of social services and they meet
many potential beneficiaries of Rätt Steg.

The governance system of Rätt Steg did not include any third sector organisation. The NGO Red Cross was involved in Etablerring Stockholm with the role to develop and implement the sub-project Yrkeskompis. It also took part in some activities of the sub-project Rätt Steg (like workshops on first aid procedures), although not at the governance level. Other private actors involved in Rätt Steg were: employers (internships, field visits, and guest speakers), sport clubs (classes on health and well-being, yoga...), a school of arts and crafts (workshops), the museum of modern art (visit), a bakery (internship and workshops), the women centre of Tensta. However, none of these actors were active in the governance of the project.

Etablerring Stockholm was co-funded by the European Social Fund (60%, around 55 million SEK, that is around 6 million €) and the Municipality of Stockholm (40%, around 37 million SEK, around 4 million €). The specific budget of Rätt Steg was around 6.5 million SEK (ca. 700,000 €).

Figure 2. The governance system of Rätt Steg: actors and relationships.

Source: our elaboration from desk analysis, interviews and focus group.

Figure 2 sums up the governance relations of the project. Rätt Steg was managed by a unit composed by professionals from SFI, the Employment Service and Jobbtorg, in connection with the District Administrations of the City of Stockholm. The Red Cross was directly involved in the governance of the sub-project Yrkeskompis within the programme Etablerring Stockholm, but it had a weak relationship with the unit of Rätt Steg. The same occurred with the other organisations which were involved in the activities of the project but not at the governance level (the employers, the sport clubs, a school of arts and crafts, museums etc.).
7 Governance challenges

7.1 Mainstreaming social innovation

The innovative teaching methods tested in Rätt Steg have been implemented in the ordinary organisation of SFI. However the unit only operates in the school SFI Västerort, where the same Rätt Steg was promoted. Only in this school are the methods still applied with no more than 15 beneficiaries per year.

Rätt Steg is therefore still running but it has not been mainstreamed, although at the end of the project a year has been devoted by SFI to design its implementation and possible mainstreaming. The main reason is to be found in the internal tensions reported within SFI, as described in challenge 7.7. These tensions stopped not only the internal mainstreaming within SFI but also the external promotion of the activities and methods tested with Rätt Steg.

7.2 Governing welfare mix: avoiding fragmentation

Rätt Steg had also the purpose to overcome fragmentation among the measures addressed to newcomers and promoted by different entities, mainly the Employment Service, Jobbtorg Stockholm and Swedish for Immigrants. The lack of coordination was identified in the feasibility study as hindering the achievement of the goal to shorten the time required for accessing the labour market for newcomers. The establishment of a unit composed by professionals coming from the different authorities enabled the joint planning of activities and to avoid fragmentation and overlapping measures.

This framework, however, does not consider third sector organisations and private employers, which were not included in the network, except for some marginal activities.

7.3 Governing welfare mix: developing a participatory governance style

The beneficiaries of Rätt Steg have not been involved in the governance of the project. They had the opportunity to influence some activities within the project, proposing to the teachers and mentors their concrete needs to improve their capacity to express themselves in the society and labour market. Nonetheless they did not have the possibility to influence the design of the project and to take part in the governance system.

7.4 Equality and diversity

The issue of equality/diversity has been relevant during the whole duration of Rätt Steg, as regards to both gender and ethnicity. 100% of the participants were immigrants, 80% of them were women. Gender has been a recurring topic during the courses, in particular the role of women as regards family and labour in the different cultural backgrounds was discussed. As reported by the interviewees many of the participants came from a cultural tradition where men are supposed to work for wages and women to take care of the house. This was a relevant issue in a project that had the goal to include the beneficiaries in the labour market. Some of the women had to ask for the authorisation of their husband in order to participate in field visits or join an internship. The staff always respected this procedure and, thanks to the mediation of the native language assistants no problems have been reported.
Ethnicity has been a critical issue within Rätt Steg. All the participants were Somali, although information about the project was diffused in several languages. According to the interviewees, this occurred because of three reasons. Firstly, there is a strong concentration of illiterate Somali newcomers in the Northern part of Stockholm, where the project was implemented. Secondly, the majority of the members of this group are young (78% are under 40) and half of them are women, two particularly relevant features for the goals of the project. Thirdly, both Jobbtorgh and the Employment Service were reporting difficulties in working with Somali-speaking people. This homogeneity had a negative impact on the possibility to learn Swedish and was unanimously considered as a weakness of the project by the interviewees.

The issue of diversity was also present on the side of the employers who hosted the beneficiaries’ internships. Rätt Steg has been an important vehicle of promotion of diversity in the workplaces, and according to the interviewees it had a positive impact on the perception of diversity by the side of the employers, although this was not an explicit goal of the project.

Newcomers have been isolated as a target group but the participants have been treated as far as possible as individuals with different needs. During the courses they could express their individual needs with the support of the native language speakers, they had an individual assessment of their skills, and the internship was organised on the basis of the individual’s desired job.

7.5 Uneven access

The access to Rätt Steg was restricted to low-educated or illiterate non-European people who arrived in Sweden no more than 36 months earlier. Despite the broad net of geographical criteria only people coming from Somalia participated in the project, as described in challenge 7.4.

The issue of access remains open also after the institutionalisation of Rätt Steg within SFI. The unit only operates in the school of Västerort, while pupils from the other SFI schools never had a chance to access to Rätt Steg, due to the internal tensions described in challenge 7.7. Moreover the current activities include no more than 15 people per year, while other newcomers still attend traditional courses only.

7.6 Avoiding responsibility

Rätt Steg is promoted and co-financed by the Municipality of Stockholm and involves public agencies acting both at the national and at the local level. The public administration has thus taken upon itself the responsibility to tackle the issue of unemployment for the newcomers. The Municipality invested 37 million SEK (around 4 million €) in the programme Etablering Stockholm.

7.7 Managing intra-organisational tensions

Managing intra-organisational tensions was a major challenge during the project and it is also the obstacle that prevented the initiative to be mainstreamed. A great distance between the staff involved in Rätt Steg and the other employees and teachers of SFI was reported. According to the interviewees, the organisation has not proved to be ready to harbour social innovation at different levels: the leadership, the principals, the teachers. The leadership has not been supportive towards the project, and did not show a real intention to make it become the ordinary way to work with SFI’s pupils. The principals of the schools have not supported the activities and methods of Rätt Steg sufficiently and have not strongly involved the teachers. The latter are reported to be very conservative and think in a traditional way: pupils must reach the level decided by the teachers before they can do anything. The
native language speakers have not been welcomed by the other teachers, since they felt threatened and they reacted to the innovation closing the doors to the change.

At the end of the project a year was specifically devoted to its integration within the ordinary activities of SFI. It should have been spread to other SFI schools but during this year the unit in charge of Rätt Steg has not had a contagious impact inspreading the new methods to other teachers and to convince the leadership, who has been reported to be reluctant. The reason, as reported by the interviewees, is that the project does not affect the Swedish labour market in large numbers, since it requires a intensive work that needs time and can be applied only to small groups of people. The results are more interesting from a qualitative perspective rather than on the quantitative side, and this could represent an obstacle from the macro point of view.

As a consequence, Rätt Steg has been institutionalised only in the SFI school Västerort and with a limited number of students. Furthermore, the methods are slightly different from the pilot project and rather similar to the traditional approach, since the teachers are different and the project is integrated in a system that is not supportive towards the new methods.

### 7.8 Enabling legal framework

As described in chapter two, the new Introduction Reform of 2010 was still not in force at the time of the launch of Rätt Steg. However, the political level was already working on the reform and the environment was favourable for such initiatives. The reform of 2010 binds the supply of benefits to newcomers to their active participation to the introduction programmes, including educational and vocational training and/or some employment preparation activities. This represents an enabling measure for projects like Rätt Steg, since it is a relevant incentive for the participation of beneficiaries. The same reform transferred the responsibility for all the introduction measures from the local government to the central government, namely to the Swedish Employment Service, in the attempt to overcome the traditional fragmentation of the proposed measures. This created a rather contested situation, keeping alive the historical conflict between national and local level in this issue (see chapter two). However, it could be transformed into a condition favourable for the implementation of programmes that have the purpose of promoting cooperation between the different actors, as is the case of Rätt Steg. The reform also assigns to the Employment Service the task of distributing the newcomers on the national territory, starting from the local conditions of the labour market. This measure could improve the efficacy of programmes like Rätt Steg, but it is not possible to put it into practice since Swedish law defines the right to choose where one wants to live as a universal principle.
References


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Appendix

Between April and December 2014, the Urbino team conducted:

- Analysis of documents concerning the innovative experience (e.g. project, agreements, final report, web sites of the actors involved). Analysis of institutional documents, data and researches to describe the local context (e.g. laws, public strategies, reports).

- 3 qualitative interviews involving the Project Manager of Rätt Steg, the principal of the SFI Västerort school located in Tensta, a teacher involved in Rätt Steg.

- A focus group involving 5 participants: the Project Manager of Rätt Steg; two mentors employed in Rätt Steg; two native language speakers employed in Rätt Steg.
ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe.
Social Policy and Innovation

Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE) is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The ImPRovE project aims to improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term. In the short term, this is done by carrying out research that is directly relevant for policymakers. At the same time however, ImPRovE invests in improving the long-term capacity for evidence-based policy making by upgrading the available research infrastructure, by combining both applied and fundamental research, and by optimising the information flow of research results to relevant policy makers and the civil society at large.

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?

How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?

The project runs from March 2012 till February 2016 and receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million under the 7th Framework Programme. The output of ImPRovE will include over 55 research papers, about 16 policy briefs and at least 3 scientific books. The ImPRovE Consortium will organise two international conferences (Spring 2014 and Winter 2015). In addition, ImPRovE will develop a new database of local projects of social innovation in Europe, cross-national comparable reference budgets for 6 countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) and will strongly expand the available policy scenarios in the European microsimulation model EUROMOD.

More detailed information is available on the website http://improve-research.eu.

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