

# 10 || WELCOME INFORMATION FOR HIGHLY SKILLED LABOUR IMMIGRANTS IN SWEDEN: LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

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## INTRODUCTION

The reception by the host country is important for immigrants. It is, therefore, suggested here that in a situation of increasing labour migration, additional resources should be allocated to improved reception. On the other hand, as economies develop dependence upon labour migration and the competition for talent grows, a welcoming reception becomes not only a matter of the hospitality of the receiving state but an economic and social necessity for its prosperity. As we are going to see below when discussing good practices, certain countries and, especially, cities have already started welcome initiatives, trying to make the transition process more optimal for the newcomers. There is a movement of making cities more welcoming around the world (Belkhodja, 2009; Welcoming America, 2012; Ahn, 2017; Huang and Liu, 2018; Cities of Migration, 2019). Nevertheless, there is a gap in each country's intention to attract and welcome highly skilled immigrants (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017). Only a few countries, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, have been pursuing a long-term strategy to attract and welcome migrants and most of the research is focused upon these countries (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2008). Overall, there is little literature on the topic of welcome policies and welcome information in other countries.

In the midst of the discussion of how to attract, integrate and retain highly skilled immigrants, we would like to focus upon how to provide those who already decided to move/have recently moved with necessary information. More specifically, this paper focuses upon the case of highly skilled immigrants to Sweden, a phenomenon that has not been receiving enough attention either in practise or in research. Only comparatively recently has this issue come up on the national policy and the administrative and organisational agenda in Sweden and many previous integration/welcome initiatives are not evaluated (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018). Initiatives and information for immigrants may differ according to the migration stage: pre-departure, arrival, settling, leaving (Tendensor, 2014a; Tendensor, 2014b) and understanding that certain information/initiative can have multiple aims, we would like to focus upon the pre-departure and arrival stages.

Moreover, highly skilled labour immigrants themselves have not received a lot of attention in the discourse of integration since they are not seen as individuals who, due to their employment, would need extended assistance and integration efforts (Emilsson et al., 2014). Thus, we will correspondingly provide information on highly skilled immigrants to better understand the challenge and match good practices to address it.

Therefore, taking all of the above into account, this paper has numerous implications for practitioners in various areas: governmental and state authorities, public and private sector institutions, academia as well as private individuals. Other countries face a similar situation with a rising number of immigrants, including those highly skilled, and the proposed practices can be applicable in the context of those countries as well. This paper also lays the ground for discussions among practitioners in their respective countries on how they may draw inspiration from the proposed good practices.

## BACKGROUND

The number of **international migrants** worldwide is increasing. In addition, there is a change in characteristics of those deciding to go abroad, making immigrants a more diversified group (Thomas et. al, 2005). The nature of global business is also being transformed. Global companies appear while the increasing number of small and medium sized companies aim for global opportunities and strive to reduce the costs of international assignments (McKenna and Richardson, 2007). Hence, the global economy and the transnational companies start to significantly blur the boundaries of national states (Tyler, 2003). As the competition was becoming fierce, in the combat for profitability, employees were recognised to be one of the crucial strategic resources (Banai and Harry, 2004; Näsholm and Jacobsson, 2010). Likewise, international careers seem to have increasing boundaryless characteristics with a transcending organisational membership (Arthur, 1996; Eby, Butts and Lockwood, 2003; Arthur, 2008; Kuen and Nesbit, 2013). Along with altering migration and expatriation trends, the nature of the interdependence between an individual and an organisation is changing and becoming increasingly complex, influenced by context of the larger environment (Holt Larsen, 2004).

For this paper, we adapt the following understanding of highly skilled individuals based upon several definitions:

- A highly skilled individual is someone with at least four years of academic or university education following primary and secondary education with possibly supplemental qualifications (Lowell and Findlay, 2001).
- In Sweden, highly skilled immigrants are individuals with a higher education, individuals with highly skilled occupations and former students (Emilsson, 2014a; Emilsson, 2014b).

We will now briefly describe the highly skilled migration context of Sweden relevant to the good practices proposed. Sweden is one of the most attractive countries for labour immigrants primarily because of career opportunities, living

conditions, travel prospects and the country's work-life balance. It ranks number-seven in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (Global Talent Competitiveness Index, 2019). Sweden is also one of the top destinations for highly skilled women immigrants (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017; Bailey and Mulder, 2017). Moreover, most highly skilled immigrants are labour migrants rather than humanitarian migrants (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017).

Another factor that contributes to a country's attractiveness is the agglomeration affect (Lindqvist, Malmberg, and Sölvell, 2008; Kerr, Kerr, Özden, and Parsons, 2017). When certain industries in the country advance, the number of highly skilled professionals in these and connected industries grows, forming agglomerations of professionals. The most prominent examples of such agglomerations would be Silicon Valley and Bangalor as well as IT, engineering and oil and gas industries in certain countries. Such agglomerations make a positive impact upon the economy and surrounding areas, hence, many policy-makers are interested in fostering them (Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis/Tillväxtanalys, 2017). This agglomeration affect is probably why one would meet a lot of highly skilled individuals in certain areas of Sweden. However, it would be a slightly delusive impression to think that there are too many of them. In fact, according to the Swedish Public Employment Service, the country annually needs approximately 60,000 new foreign employees in order to keep up the development phase and welfare system (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015).

Generally, all labour immigrants to Sweden can approximately be classified into three major categories: those moving for skilled jobs as computer specialists and engineers, for low-skilled jobs in the private service sector and for seasonal work in the berry picking industry (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2013; Emilsson, 2014a; Emilsson, 2014b). In order to facilitate labour immigration from non-EU countries, major changes were made to the labour immigration regulations in 2008 (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013). Legally, these regulations created the most open system for labour migration among all OECD countries where the state tries to exercise minimal control over the labour market (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013; Emilsson et al., 2014a; Swedish National Audit Office/Riksrevisionen, 2016; Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis/

Tillväxtanalys, 2017). The Swedish labour immigration scheme is demand-driven, hence, there is an actual demand for incoming highly skilled migrants in Sweden. Moreover, Sweden's system is exceptional as compared to other systems since the labour migration law is equal for all individuals and does not depend upon their education and professional background (Emilsson, 2014a; Emilsson et al., 2014). This differs from the scheme prior to 2008 where mostly highly skilled individuals were employed (Emilsson, 2014a). However, there has not been any major change in the rules for granting work permits and few employers address the labour shortage by recruiting abroad (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingen, 2012; Triadafilopoulos, 2013; Emilsson et al., 2014; Stockholm Chamber of Commerce/Stockholms Handelskammare, 2019). Work permits for highly skilled individuals are concentrated around certain professions and there are few instruments that facilitate matching and recruitment (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingen, 2018). The introduction of tuition fees for citizens of non-EU countries limits the number of incoming students who could become future highly skilled employees in the Swedish market (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2013). While there is a need to eliminate other conditions that lower the attraction/employment and a significant part of the discussion is concentrated upon them, these factors also serve as one of the arguments supporting the improvement of welcome information and the reception of immigrants.

Moreover, highly skilled migrants are very mobile (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017). The quality of life and other factors matter greatly for them when choosing a country to which to migrate. At the same time, research shows that this group has substantial hardships to overcome; for example, their employment rates and salaries are lower as compared to natives and they face a higher education-to-occupation mismatch (Irastorza and Bevelander, 2017). Besides, similar hardships faced by other groups of immigrants also apply such as the lack of social integration, discrimination and so on (Cohen et al., 2016). According to a recent study, migrants do not always get sufficient on-arrival support from their employer, including in document processing, getting housing or insurance and others (Emilsson et al., 2014). They are disappointed with the long waiting times for governmental services and say that the rules for permanent residency and citizenship can be unclear (Emilsson et al., 2014). Consequently, these hardships affect their decision

of staying in or leaving the host country. Moreover, highly educated migrants are a group that is less likely to receive permanent residence in Sweden. Many highly skilled labour immigrants only stay in Sweden for a short period as compared to migrants who come for other purposes such as low-skilled labour migration, humanitarian migrants or migrants who come for family reunification. Thus, the above described facts show that highly skilled migrants are a group that also requires attention and assistance. As also mentioned above, highly skilled labour immigrants have not received a lot of attention in the Swedish migration discourse since they are not seen as individuals who, due to their employment, would need integration (Emilsson et al., 2014). However, highly skilled migrants, who also include recent university graduates, are often not so well-established. Moreover, as mentioned above, only some get assistance upon arrival. All newly arrived immigrants have a lot to learn about the host country's system no matter to which migrant group they belong.

Thus, one might still wonder why it would be beneficial for the host country, in the person of practitioners and researchers, to pay additional attention to this group. We would, first of all, argue that the increased migration, including for work, has to be managed in any case. Moreover, as also described above, there is a large number of migrants, including highly skilled immigrants, who are becoming more employer independent. This number will only be increasing in the upcoming years. In addition, a rather fierce competition for talent exists between countries (Wallen and Sanandaji, 2012; Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017). Such competition particularly exists in certain areas such as IT, engineering, medicine and others. These factors form a matter that has to be addressed and optimally resolved and they create a situation which has to be managed. Moreover, highly skilled migrants are highly mobile and have a choice of immigration countries (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017). There is a question of not only how to attract them or manage their flow but also how to welcome and integrate them and make it attractive for them to stay.

Besides being a situation that has to be managed, it is likewise a great opportunity for numerous reasons. First of all, we would argue that any well-managed migration and, hence, diversity, contributes to positive improvements. Similarly,

the international mobility of skilled individuals has become a crucial component in the process of innovation, scientific discovery and technology transfer (Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis/ Tillväxtanalys, 2017). Furthermore, according to various state and business sources, the European labour market, including the Swedish one, is in need of more highly skilled professionals. Complex challenges as “an aging population, stalled economic growth, cash-strapped social-security systems and the dearth of innovation potential and of skilled workforces (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2010)” emphasise their importance (Nathan, 2014; Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis/Tillväxtanalys, 2017; Bailey and Mulde, 2017). Studies have also correlated immigration with increased earnings of locals due to the significant purchasing power of immigrants (Huang and Liu, 2018). Some countries are working on and creating new policies and programmes tailored for highly skilled immigrants in order to facilitate their positive local and national impact (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2019). We would say that just the sole fact that businesses are willing to take such high expenses for highly skilled employees shows that they are a valuable resource and should give food for thought to the general public and governments to think how to attract and welcome them and make their transition and adaptation quicker. According to the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (2018), Sweden is a knowledge and service nation with technological development becoming increasingly complex, driving up the specialisation. The knowledge-intensive business services have grown rapidly and Swedish companies are becoming increasingly internationally exposed. Thus, labour immigration is an important contribution to the companies’ development and supply of skills. Labour immigration generates about SEK 10 billion (EUR 950 million) annually in production value in the business sector and contributes through increased tax revenue (The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise/Svenskt Näringsliv, 2018). Likewise, recruitment of one foreign highly skilled IT specialist creates two to four jobs for less experienced engineer or computer specialists (Tendensor, 2014b). Such development is hampered by issues such as finding the right skills to recruit. The shortage is most severe in the IT and other highly skilled segments which creates a risk for production relocation (Swedish Public Employment Service/ Arbetsförmedlingens, 2018; Almega, 2019). An estimated cost of labour shortage in Stockholm alone is SEK 18 billion (EUR 1.7 billion) in lost annual production (Stockholm Chamber of Commerce/Stockholms Handelskammare, 2019).

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Welcome information is essential for the smooth transition and adaptation of labour migrants in destination countries. For the purposes of this paper, we will define welcome information as information targeting the newly arrived immigrant and essential for his stay which he receives during the pre-departure and arrival stages before moving or when settling in another country. It refers to the information needed to settle in such as about housing, banking, insurance and other practical things to consider. It is not only a matter of individual importance since, depending upon the country, it is also obligatory to show proof of these matters when applying for permit/banking/other due to security reasons and other considerations. As they live in the country, immigrants get to know more information through formal and informal channels; however, they have to take many important decisions that greatly influence their life over an extended period of time if not forever immediately upon arrival: which housing to get, which bank, which medical insurance and so on. The welcome information is vital as it can influence the way the immigrants settle down in the new country and establish their living situation. These initial arrangements might be hard to change at a later stage. The lack of quality welcome information received in a timely manner influences the immigration and integration processes as well as the decision to stay in the country. Moreover, it is the first encounter with society and government, different from the one a tourist might get, which has a lasting first impression that affects their attitude towards society and government. In terms of Sweden, immigrants have high expectations and the welcome strategy influences if such expectations are fulfilled.

### **CHALLENGE**

The challenge discussed in this paper is to provide highly skilled labour immigrants in Sweden with sufficient, timely and up-to-date welcome information in order to ease their transition, faster adaptation to the new country and offer a welcoming reception to Sweden. Welcome information can be poor due to the lack of informational resources, its unsystematised nature, its varied quality, issues with access to necessary information, untimely manner of provision, a lack of good practices and so on.



This paper is principally based upon a literature review. In addition, we visited a Gothenburg regional initiative, “Move to Gothenburg,” and conducted informal interviews with its representatives on the subject of the activities of this initiative as well as the general situation of attracting and welcoming highly skilled labour immigrants in Sweden.

## **WHY THIS BECOMES A CHALLENGE?**

A complex interplay of factors can contribute to the emersion of such a challenge. We will name a few of them and provide a general context.

Both humanitarian and labour migration to Sweden have increased. Therefore, quality information has to be provided to more people and this process has to be efficient.

From a migration policy and labour migration point of view, Sweden has gone from rather restrictive labour migration policies to more liberal ones, starting around 2000 (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017). There might be an issue that welcome strategies did not catch up with this liberalisation of migration (Osanami Törngren and Holbrow, 2017). At the same time, Swedish labour migration law is equal for all individuals and does not depend on their education and professional background (Emilsson et al., 2014). Highly skilled immigrants can be viewed as well-established individuals who do not require much assistance and so more focus has been given to other immigrant groups (Emilsson et al., 2014). Generally, integration policies in Sweden are horizontal and integrated in different policy areas such as the labour market, education and healthcare; however, these measures are often generic and targeted measures are only introduced if necessary (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018). In 2007, the Swedish Integration Agency (Integrationsverket) was closed and some of its responsibilities were transferred to local municipalities. This agency had been working on helping local municipalities in receiving newly arrived immigrants and promoting integration

(Immigrant-institutet, 2007). It is hard to assess how this influenced the welcome information and integration of highly skilled individuals.

Currently, there is increasing focus upon evaluating the existing migration legislation and work permits regulation. Some attention is given to the availability of information for immigrants and employers. For example, it is stated that the legislation is rather complex, which requires a good understanding from the representatives of state authorities, which influences the services and information provision (The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise/Svenskt Näringsliv, 2018).

As seen from the experience of other countries and the emerging discussion in Sweden, this topic is only now entering the agenda and is underresearched. Discussions have started on national branding and an improved strategy to attract and retain immigrants, including those highly skilled, while previous strategies are being revisited (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015). At the same time, many of the previous integration initiatives are not evaluated (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018). Nevertheless, the focus now is upon providing information for attracting immigrants which is sometimes difficult to distinguish from welcome information and reception initiatives.

## **PREVIOUS STRATEGIES**

Upon the basis of desk research, it is rather problematic to distinguish if the found initiatives are aimed at providing information or marketing and attracting talent as well as estimate their scale and effectiveness. Definitely, each initiative may be simultaneously aimed at a few of these goals. Likewise, even information aimed at attracting talent can be used by those who have already decided to move/have moved. As stated before, we found increasing focus in the literature upon attracting talent and marketing and branding in addition to discussions about current labour market regulations. The provision of information and the reception of immigrants is discussed predominantly in this key. Thus, we decided to also include practices

that predominantly have other aims but help provide information and contribute to the welcoming reception/settling down of immigrants. Similarly, it is hard to say if in the context of Sweden current initiatives are sufficient as well as estimate the information's availability and quality. Thus, the division of initiatives into those aimed at availability and quality of information is approximate.

There is a number of initiatives in Sweden aiming at providing welcome information and services as well as marketing and attracting immigrants. They include:

- Official information sources. For example, Sweden's official portals [www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se), [www.work.sweden.se](http://www.work.sweden.se), [www.studyinsweden.se](http://www.studyinsweden.se) (Tendensor, 2014a). These portals have general guidance in different areas while detailed information has to be found in specialised sources such as an authority's website. However, for example, the target group of [workinginsweden.se](http://workinginsweden.se) that was previously defined as "third-country nationals" without the specification of an occupation or education background, was later identified to be too extensive in order to successfully design the portal and provide targeted information (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingens, 2012).
- Information on various state agencies' websites according to their specialisation. For example, the Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket has introduced a number of changes to improve the information for employers and immigrants during the application procedure (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingens, 2012). Its web system guides the applicant step by step through the application process (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingens, 2012).
- Information on websites of city and regional initiatives. For example, the Stockholm region portal: [www.visitstockholm.com](http://www.visitstockholm.com), Skåne/Southern Sweden portal: [www.movingtosouthernsweden.com](http://www.movingtosouthernsweden.com) (Tendensor, 2014a).
- Outside of Sweden, Swedish diplomatic missions circulate information about Sweden and conduct various promotional activities (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingens, 2012).

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- Social media pages organised by an expat network, official authorities and others providing information and advice (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingens, 2012).
- Possibility to contact the actors providing information via post, e-mail, telephone, chat and so on.
- Welcome brochures, guidebooks. In Sweden it is very common to send information, including official documents, by post. For example, each officially registered person receives a brochure describing the necessary actions in case of large-scale emergencies such as war, natural disasters and others.
- Informational and networking events, seminars, webinars.
- Open Desk Service. During consultations at the Open Desk Service, immigrants can get a consultation on different questions, including from representatives of state agencies (Move to Gothenburg, 2019).
- Seminars/informational support for companies/recruiters/human resource managers on recruitment from abroad (Move to Gothenburg, 2019).
- Translation and proofreading services (Helsingborg International Connections, 2019).
- Ambassador/citizen networks. For example, Jönköping ambassadors ([www.jonkopingsambassaden.se](http://www.jonkopingsambassaden.se)) with approximately 1,000 members (Tendensor, 2014b).
- Dual career/spouse services. Such services are aimed at providing career advice and training to the partners of immigrants such as the regional initiative, “Move to Dalarna” (Tendensor, 2014b) and events by the International Citizens Hub Lund (International Citizens Hub Lund, 2019).
- Kick-Start Programme/Career Programme. These programmes provide career advice and training that might be relevant for partners of immigrants, former students and others. (“Move to Gothenburg,” 2019; International Citizens Hub Lund, 2019).
- Welcome weeks and buddy programmes for international students organised by educational institutions.

- Physical centres for immigrants. Centres provide different services and organise events/activities, usually free of charge, aimed at providing information and attracting individuals such as “Move to Gothenburg” (Gothenburg) International Citizens Hub Lund (Lund) and Helsingborg International Connections (Helsingborg) (Move to Gothenburg, 2019, International Citizens Hub Lund, 2019; Helsingborg International Connections, 2019).
- Relocation services offered by employers. One of such programmes offers: “pre-arrival (information on housing and schooling, a welcome information package, a consultant, an orientation tour of the city), settling in service (orientation tour, assistance with local registration, setting up a bank account/telephone/Internet/driving license, introduction to community resources), cultural/language training, assisting in immigration processes and finally spousal support (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018).” Such programmes might illustrate the need for a larger variety of services from different actors than the ones available (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018).
- Pre-departure or pre-arrival measures. A number of companies in the private sector provide this type of support and it is recommended to extend such practice to other sectors/companies as well (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018).
- Servicekontor, which is a joint office of the Tax Agency/Skatteverket, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency/Försäkringskassan and the Swedish Pensions Agency/Pensionsmyndigheten. In the Servicekontor, an applicant can get: “general guidance and advice, help with forms and applications, information on ongoing cases, printing of certificates and evidence, help with self-service services, help booking meetings with administrators in specific cases etc. (Tax Agency/ Skatteverket, 2019).”

There have been suggestions to establish a one-stop-shop solution for labour immigration which already exists in other countries. In a one-stop-shop, authorities at the national and local levels are gathered in the same place to offer advice and

support to employers/employees. This would also mean a change of mindset from control to promotion and welcoming (Tendensor, 2014b). Moreover, according to a representative of the “Move to Gothenburg” initiative, a Servicekontor is a sign of moving towards such one-stop shop services which will be further improved. In addition, they stated that the questions of attracting and welcoming international talent are being raised at the national and regional levels in Sweden as well.

Similarly, a representative of “Move to Gothenburg” indicated that certain research and pilot studies are made to access the situation with attractiveness and needs in information/services, activities and networks surrounding reception and integration. One such regional pilot study states that such initiatives can often be too disjointed and small-scale, hence, there is a need to scale them up and to launch new ones (Tendensor, 2014a). There are recommendations to simplify the structure and information on websites (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013).

We found recommendations in the literature to strengthen the information and advice for labour immigrants and companies. The authorities should improve informational channels for potential migrants (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013; Swedish National Audit Office/Riksrevisionen, 2016). A strategy to increase informational effort for third countries was developed by the Swedish Institute, the Public Employment Agency and the Migration Board (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingens, 2012). Some highly skilled labour immigrants lack specific information about Sweden and may rely upon information from contacts to immigrate rather than upon information from official sources (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2008; The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013). This might indicate that those who intend to move to Sweden need to be reached earlier. For this and other purposes, the increased presence of Swedish organisations and initiatives abroad may facilitate such a provision of information (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013). Other sources also express a need for better marketing and branding for various groups of highly skilled immigrants (Swedish Government Official Reports/Stagens offentliga utredningar, 2018). Additionally, there is a suggestion to develop a national action plan for increased attractiveness to foreign students (Almega, 2019). The authorities consider it important to have a holistic view of the process

and improve marketing while matching and licensing are also important (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingen, 2012; The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise/Svenskt Näringsliv, 2018).

Observations found in the literature suggest that there are certain issues in the welcome information that may require further evaluation and improvement. In terms of availability, possible issues may include:

- The existing informational resources are not well-known. For example, informational portals appear to be known among students while relatively unknown amongst employers; therefore, few can recommend these sources to potential employees (Tendensor, 2014a).
- The provided information is too general (Tendensor, 2014a).
- Shortage of certain information such as on healthcare or specialised for particular groups such as IT specialists (Tendensor, 2014a).
- Lack of sub-segmentation of target groups (Swedish Public Employment Service/Arbetsförmedlingen, 2012; Tendensor, 2014a).
- Scattered and unsystematised information in the official resources. Different actors providing their own information and lack of collaboration (Tendensor, 2014a).
- Distribution of information not in a written form (Vertelyte, 2016).
- Presented information only in written form and not through videos, roadmaps or infographics, for example (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013).
- Untimely information. Some of the information might be provided too late in the migration process (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013).
- Information available in one language only (Swedish or English) (Tendensor, 2014a). This especially concerns written information given to the newly arrived immigrants. Other cases include when a website is not available

in several other languages or the Google Translate option is available to translate the information on the page. As one may already know, Google Translate does not always provide proper translation, especially, from certain languages. Maybe, it is assumed that such websites are primarily used by Swedish-speakers; however, many times, especially for research purposes, one is redirected to these websites.

- Substitution of formal information sources by informal ones such as social media pages/groups and websites developed by organisations not affiliated with authorities and so on. It is undoubtedly beneficial to have advice and support from sources other than the official authorities. Some information is general and does not require to be stated by the official authorities. However, it might create certain difficulties when informal sources come to substitute information from official sources. Furthermore, it gets confusing to distinguish official information from private initiatives. One would have to look for additional information to identify the source of the information and probably not all do it. In other words, it creates a certain ‘alternative reality’ and opens possibilities to provide untruthful information and scams. Especially, certain groups tend to seek information from their peers and social media as opposed to official informational sources (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2008; Tendensor, 2014a; Tendensor, 2014b). Similarly, there is a need to detect and prevent misinformation (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2012).
- Information on the rules for the temporary work permit, permanent residence permit and citizenship is unclear for some of the highly skilled migrants, potentially affecting their choice to stay in Sweden (Emilsson et al., 2014). It should be further explored what it is that is making it unclear. The application procedure also needs to be well-understood by employers.
- Lack of coordination among different actors. For example, due to such discoordination, it is difficult to understand the process in order to handle all of the necessary paperwork (Tendensor, 2014a). Moreover, perhaps more actors might need to be involved in informational efforts (Swedish Government Official Reports/Statens offentliga utredningar,



2018; The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018). To achieve better labour integration, national authorities and bodies are already tasked to promote coordination and cooperation at the national, regional and local levels (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018).

There are also probable issues with regard to the quality of information such as:

- Partiality of information on available agency sources. This creates a need to contact an agency or provides an incomplete picture.
- Varying information provided by official sources or, especially, when contacting the official authority/low quality of consultation provided by the governmental agency representatives. This may be due to the fact that, first of all, the authority representatives that consult the immigrant are not properly informed about the procedures and rules as they are often not the ones making case decisions. Likewise, Swedish legislation complemented with EU legislation is complex and requires good assessment and knowledge (Swedish National Audit Office/Riksrevisionen, 2016; The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise/Svenskt Näringsliv, 2018). It should be ensured that all officials communicating with immigrants have a good knowledge/same interpretation of the legislation and provide standardised information (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2013).
- Long waiting times and bureaucracy in terms of service provision which include not only document processing but also information services (Emilsson et al., 2014).
- Little specialised information for groups of migrants or the occupational sector such as IT. This would be beneficial to have, especially, since there are many immigrants within the same profession.
- Lack of evaluation of multiple initiatives (The Swedish Migration Board/Migrationsverket, 2018).

## IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICES

In this section we would like to describe the existing practices that aim to improve the availability of information as well as its quality. Such practices already exist rather successfully in other countries and may be applied in a Swedish context. These are the practices we have discovered in academic/practitioner literature and existing welcome information resources. We aimed to present as many relevant types of practices as possible. Even though some of the practices exist in Sweden, we decided to provide additional examples/variations of such initiatives. Moreover, there are suggestions for good practices and improvements which we have made based upon the found inconsistencies.

These practices can be combined with other already existing practices or substitute them. We would like to remind the reader that highly skilled migration is essentially demand-driven, hence, there is an actual demand for it in Sweden and a large interest to make this process quick and efficient. Political support for attraction and welcome initiatives is already increasing according to representative of “Move to Gothenburg.” Moreover, additional political support can be gained by researching and raising this challenge among activist groups, employers or independent institutions.

Existing good practices that target welcome information availability:

- Welcome guidebooks/booklets/brochures (US, Canada, New Zealand, Netherlands) (Government of Alberta, 2019; Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2019; US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2019). It might be possible to send brochures even to electronic addresses or temporary addresses of unregistered persons instead of a permanent physical registered address. The content of these mailed booklets can be personalised and chosen by the immigrant. Moreover, they can be available online as well (XPAT.NL, 2019).
- Information portals/websites such as the Brainport Talent Box (Holland Expat Center South, 2019) not only provides information online but also offers webinars.

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- Informational and networking events such as the Expats Fair (Denmark), the Hub Eindhoven (The Hub Eindhoven, 2019) and Helsinki Region Welcome Weeks (Tendensor, 2014b).
- Education workshops for immigrants (Wuang and Liu, 2018).
- Seminars and informational support for companies/recruiters/human resource managers (Huang & Liu, 2016).
- Dual Career Centers (Tendensor, 2014b; Dual Career Network Germany, 2019).
- Kick-start/Mentoring programmes (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2018; Talent Tampere, 2019).
- Ambassador programmes (Tendensor, 2014b; Talent Tampere, 2019; ONLYLYON, 2019).
- Psychological spaces/hubs/other facilities where described above events can take place (Vertelyte, 2016).
- Expat centres/one-stop shops. We found one-stop shops in Denmark (Copenhagen), the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam etcetera), Germany, Belgium, Malaysia, Estonia, Finland and the Czech Republic among others. They are initiatives of local municipalities with support from the state. For example, the Amsterdam municipality and official state authorities such as the Tax and Immigration Agencies, started INAmsterdam (formerly Expatcenter Amsterdam) (INAmsterdam, 2019; Expat Center Utrecht, 2019; Expat Center Leiden Region, 2019; Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations, 2019; Rotterdam Expat Center, 2019; eXpats Service Centre, 2019; Holland Expat Center South, 2019; International Citizen Service, 2019, International house of Estonia, 2019; Expats Center Prague, 2019; Brno Expat Center, 2019).

One-stop shop services provide services for highly skilled migrant employees, scientific researchers, international entrepreneurs, international graduates and companies. In addition, diverse services are available for different immigration stages such as: arrival, settling, living and leaving. The range of offered free and paid informational services includes:

- Informational services drop-in, call and chat.
- Personal counseling for the expat and family.
- Consultation services on:
  - authorisation for regulated professions;
  - tax system;
  - housing and rental contracts;
  - economy;
  - medical insurance;
  - social security issues;
  - family reunification;
  - education and child care;
  - import of vehicles;
  - registration of vehicles and driving license;
  - language courses;
  - leisure.
- Translation/interpretation services.
- Emergency hotline for issues encountered during out-of-office hours.
- Expats online system to obtain updates on the application status via system notifications, emails and SMS.
- Consultation services for companies/HR departments about rules and procedures, legal aspects and application forms.

These centres have other initiatives and activities. Additionally, they serve as a network facilitator between the immigrant community and other actors.

- Pre-departure orientation and training. Among other benefits, it can help minimise unrealistic expectations and reduce feelings of frustration after arrival. Such pre-departure orientation is especially important for countries with significant cultural and language differences (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2013).

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- Provision of necessary information already during the recruitment process by the employer (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2018).
- Integrated Adaptation/Host Programme (Emilsson and Magnusson, 2013).
- City tours.

Existing good practices that target welcome information availability quality:

- Training of front desk/call centre employees of official governmental institutions as well as expat centres (Vertelyte, 2016; Huang & Liu, 2016). This is to ensure the quality of information and that it does not vary from one institution representative or institution branch to another.

There are also initiatives aiming at further social and economic integration and the retention of immigrants, among others. We do not include such initiatives here as they are beyond the discussed topic; yet they might be interesting for practitioners to consider.

## **SUGGESTED GOOD PRACTICES**

Before talking about suggested good practices we would like to draw attention to the need for an overall informational strategy and possible revision of the current one. Similarly, we discuss the integration of different elements to this strategy that would be beneficial. Such an overall strategy would encourage and enable the implementation of the suggested practices.

First of all, in order to overcome this challenge, the topic would require more attention from the state institution as well as employers. It would require more attention from the academy as well in order to document this challenge properly, identify and describe it in more details and suggest possible solutions. Thus, as can be seen, such a complex challenge would need combined multisectoral efforts.

Moreover, there is already certain welcome information and an initiatives base which have been built up. The good practices provided in this paper have to be evaluated according to the national context and combined with welcome policies and strategies. Constant monitoring and evaluating of welcome information strategy and the state of matters around it should be implemented. Furthermore, further specification as, for example, for certain professions can be beneficial. Overall, the experience of other countries should be studied more closely by Sweden with conclusions drawn. Increased attention should be paid also to welcome information as opposed to attraction initiatives, especially for highly skilled immigrants.

There are good practices that will help in making the information more available and accessible. It could be beneficial to consolidated different websites and systematise information. As a newly arrived person one does not always know all the sources of information/agencies to address and even if they are hyperlinked to one other, this can still be confusing and the information might not always be perfectly systematised.

In addition, in order to improve the quality of information, we would suggest a few good practices as well. More interactive and memorable information solutions can be introduced instead of texts. These may include, for example, mind maps, infographics, slide presentations, images or videos. Another tool is online support chat with an organisation's representatives. This tool has been functioning for a long time in many business areas. It may require a lot of resources, yet that can help with providing information and resolving minor issues.

## **LIMITATIONS AND CONCERNS**

There are certain limitations and concerns to the discussed above ideas:

- It is difficult to distinguish welcome information practices from those aimed at attraction and marketing, for example. Thus, we aimed at providing various types of practices.

- There are also few evaluations available of the discussed practices and it is difficult to estimate their scale and effectiveness. Thus, we aimed at providing various types of practices.
- Implementing the proposed good practices, as any changes, might be quite a bureaucratic and time-consuming process. Hence, it might be advantageous to start an active discussion on this topic as soon as possible.
- Introduction of change management elements/activities may need to be considered both in involved institutions and the general society such as: an established change plan, clear communication to all stakeholders, change resistance management, monitoring and evaluation.
- The idea of focusing and prioritising highly skilled immigrants may stir a societal discussion with negative opinions. Therefore, solid arguments for the proposed strategy should be communicated.

A general concern is the impression that current literature talks predominantly about the benefits of highly skilled migration, forming the image that it is a solely positive phenomenon. While it is a phenomenon that brings a lot of benefits, however, an unbalanced/biased presentation of this topic is not beneficial either. This topic requires further attention. In addition, it is not clear in what way a rising anti-migration sentiment will affect highly skilled migration.

## CONCLUSIONS

Highly skilled immigrants hold unique transferable and widely applicable knowledge and skills which makes them an exceptionally valuable resource. It becomes increasingly obvious that countries that would like to attract and retain international highly skilled talents would have to adapt to numerous changes and implement new practices, including in the area of welcome information.

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In this paper, we primarily aimed to raise the topic of welcome information for high skilled immigrants, identify possible challenges and propose good practices as possible solutions. This paper focuses exclusively upon the area of highly skilled migration and certain issues raised here should be further reviewed by other practitioners such as welcome information by communication strategy makers and practitioners in the area of migration and so on.

Additionally, welcome information is only the start for immigrant journeys in a new country. It does not give all the answers for further integration and adaptation, among others, but helps in this process and makes a lasting first impression which is, as we know, quite important and sometimes unchangeable. Even though the group in focus is highly mobile, can choose their preferred country of residence and the length of their stay, welcome information along with integration activities may contribute to the length of their stay in the country. Highly skilled employees are important but also a costly asset for those who employ them; therefore, it will be beneficial to make the process of their adaptation and integration into the new country faster and smoother. Numerous countries are improving the way they are welcoming the newly arrived highly skilled immigrants; however, as in anything, all of them, including Sweden, have some room for improvement.

Undoubtedly, the proposed good practices should be evaluated taking the national context into account and yet may already serve as an example and inspiration for starting discussion and introducing change. Even if not all of these good practices are implemented, implementing some of them would still bring improvement. As extensively discussed above, such improvements would be beneficial not only for the immigrants themselves but also for the receiving country.



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