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Different policies, different outcomes. The reception of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden and Norway

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Summary

By the end of April 2023, Sweden and Norway had registered 54,575 (Sweden)[1] and 47,383 (Norway)[2] applications for protection from Ukrainian refugees. Facing record high refugee arrival numbers following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the two countries have chosen different strategies. What may appear to be a minor difference – that Sweden gives these refugees rights as asylum seekers while Norway gives them rights more or less equivalent to other refugees – has consequences for both the individual refugee, and the societies at large. The minimalist Swedish approach is characterized by limited economic protection and integration efforts. Norway, by comparison (as most other north European countries), offers Ukrainian refugees more extensive services and benefits.

Methods

This policy brief draws on analysis of policy documents from the two countries, as well as interviews with policymakers, civil society actors and Ukrainian displaced in eight municipalities in Norway and three in Sweden. Those in Norway include both urban and rural areas, while the three municipalities in Sweden are all urban areas in southern Sweden – one was classified by the Swedish Migration Agency as having extensive social and economic challenges and therefore as an area where refugees are discouraged from settling. You can read more about our fieldworks in the end of this report

The limited rights for Ukrainians in Sweden may have resulted in lower arrival numbers to Sweden than we otherwise would have seen. By not giving access to language courses and other integration measures that refugees normally get, Sweden has also reduced the associated short-term costs of the influx of displaced Ukrainians. Simultaneously, this strategy has been accompanied by rapid entry into the labour market for Ukrainian refugees – as survey data indicate that a majority of working age Ukrainians in Sweden had had some paid work by the spring of 2023. However, their jobs are usually in migrant-dominated sectors, where work tend to be temporary, part time, low paid and physically demanding. In our fieldworks in Sweden, we have met employed Ukrainian refugees who still struggle to put food on the table. The ones who cannot work, or cannot find work, talk about major food security problems.

The likelihood of repatriation for Ukrainian refugees influences what policies European governments develop for this group; if most of the refugees on temporary collective protection can be expected to go back to Ukraine soon, it may be sufficient to primarily cover basic needs until they go back. If substantial groups can be expected to stay more long term, it may it be more beneficial to the host societies to offer policies and rights that secure the long-term integration. Both available survey data and qualitative interviews indicate that a majority of the Ukrainians in both Norway and Sweeden intend to stay long term, even if the war was to end soon.

Compared to Sweden, Norway has made more investments in the long-term integration of Ukrainian refugees. This appears to reduce their economic vulnerability substantially, and increase the refugees' ambitions, and probably also ability, to enter the more formalised and well-organized parts of the labour market. If this investment-strategy will result in higher employment rates and higher levels of self-sufficiency over time, is too early to tell.

[1] Arrivals in Sweden. https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Statistik/Sokande-fran-Ukraina.html. Accessed 22 May 2023. The Swedish Migration Agency estimates that about 20 percent of those applying for protection have left for other countries, or returned to Ukraine.

[2] Arrivals in Norway: UDI 2023: "Registrerte søknader om beskyttelse fra ukrainske borgere i 2022-2023" from https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/statistikk/asylsokere-fra-ukraina-i-2022/ Accessed 22 May 2023.

Different legal categorizations cause large differences in access to economic support

Income levels and costs of living are similar for the general population in Norway and Sweden. However, the levels of economic support offered to Ukrainian refugees in Norway and Sweden differ substantially (see Table 1). This is because Norway provides refugees from Ukraine with the same economic benefits as other refugees with temporary or permanent residence, including access to universal welfare benefits, while Sweden only provides refugees from Ukraine access to the benefits available for asylum seekers.

In Norway, Ukrainians participating in the Introduction Programme are offered economic support while learning about Norwegian society and the language. Most Ukrainians in Norway take part in the Introduction Programme for refugees and receive between 6 and 12 months of training along with the introduction allowance (Dapi and Tyldum 2023). The introduction allowance is equivalent to 39 percent of median income in Norway.[3] If a Ukrainian refugee decides not to take part in the Introduction Programme or is too old (55+), they are eligible for social support if they are unable to sustain themselves financially.

The introduction allowance is taxable income, and should in theory cover all expenses, including housing. However, refugees are eligible for needs-based welfare benefits such as housing allowance (for persons with low income and high housing expenses) and supplementary social support if needed. Refugees who work in addition to participating in the Introduction Programme can still keep their introduction allowance but may lose supplementary social support and housing support if their income reaches a certain level.

In Sweden, Ukrainian refugees can get a daily allowance of €5,2/SEK 61[4] if they are not able to support themselves. The income is not taxable and equates to about 5.4 percent of monthly median income in Sweden in 2022.[5] The Swedish Migration Agency also provides free housing for refugees who settle in municipalities approved by the agency. However, as we will come back to below, only one in three Ukrainians in Sweden has chosen to settle through the agency, thereby gaining the opportunity to access free housing.

These benefits are only for refugees who cannot otherwise support themselves; if they find a job or receive other income, they will lose both the allowance and access to free housing. Persons with temporary collective protection in Sweden are not eligible for social assistance. Consequently, Ukrainians must support themselves either by finding employment or by relying on the minimal benefits intended for asylum seekers.

Sweden has introduced a list of "residential areas with extensive social and economic challenges", where they want to prevent newly arrived refugees from settling.[6] Refugees who settle in these areas will forfeit their right to all benefits, even the minimal benefit intended for asylum seekers.

Policy interactions cause differences in control over refugees' settlement

In both Sweden and Norway, access to some benefits is conditional on settling in a municipality approved by the authorities.[7] Both countries have an official policy that refugees should be dispersed throughout the entire country, rather than concentrated in a few areas. The conditionality in access to benefits is intended to prevent that segregation takes place as a consequence of concentration of newly arrived migrants in some settlements. Compared to Norway, Sweden has traditionally allowed refugees to settle more freely and have less benefits linked to accepting a designated municipality.

The share of Ukrainians settled in municipalities allocated by the authorities is significantly higher in Norway than in Sweden. In Norway, 96 percent of persons with temporary collective protection arriving in 2022 were either settled or in the process of being settled in a municipality allocated by (or approved by) the authorities.[8] In contrast, only one

[3] The introduction allowance equates 2G (€ 1615/NOK 18,580 per month in 2022). Persons aged 18-24 receive 2/3 of the allowance if they live alone and 1/3 of the allowance if they live with their parents. According to statistics Norway, median monthly income in Norway for 2022 was €4139/NOK 47,680. https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/lonn-og-arbeidskraftkostnader/artikler/hva-er-vanlig-lonn-i-norge

[4] Rates are adjusted to age and household composition. Persons living alone get SEK 10 more a day. Children get less.

[5] Median income in Sweden in 2022 was SEK 34,200. https://www.ekonomifakta.se/Fakta/Arbetsmarknad/Loner/median-lon-och-genomsnittslon-i-sverige/

[6] Migrationsverket (2023) "Accommodation for those who have protection under the Temporary Protection Directive", https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-under-the-Temporary-Protection-Directive/Accommodation.html

[7] In Sweden, Ukrainian displaced will get the payment from the Migration Agency (but no housing support) even if they do not accept the municipality offered to them, as long as they do not settle in one of the areas listed by the Swedish Migration Agency as having extensive social and economic challenges. In Norway, Ukrainian displaced may still be eligible for social assistance if they do not move to their designated municipality, but will not be eligible for the Introduction Programme or housing support.

[8] According to data provided by the Directorate of integration and diversity (IMDi)

in three Ukrainians requested settlement with the assistance of the Migration Agency in Sweden in 2022, with the majority settling independently.[9]

Three factors may have interacted to create this divergence. Firstly, the Ukrainian refugees in both countries often stayed with family or private volunteers while their application for protection was being processed, thus forming ties and preferences for where to live before the state agencies were able to distribute them to designated municipalities. In Norway, the government issued a new policy, making it possible for municipalities to settle refugees directly, without going via the Directorate of integration and diversity (IMDi) who normally allocate refugees to municipalities.. Thus the refugees arriving in a municipality could stay there – without moving into shelters of the migration agency.[10] Most of these refugees could later be settled in the same municipality – as long as the municipalities had not filled up their quota.

In Sweden, refugees from Ukraine who had first stayed in private homes would have to stay in one of the Swedish Migration Agency's temporary accommodations while awaiting the Migration Agency's arrangements [11]. This would often require the refugees to move away from where they had first settled, and therefore involved risking the loss of those private support networks. This may have discouraged refugees from settling through the migration agency, even if this would give access to free housing.

Secondly, there is a significant difference in the benefits associated with accepting the allocated municipality in Norway and Sweden. In Norway, this acceptance is a precondition of access to the Introduction Programme for refugees, with its free language courses and substantial introduction allowance. Ukrainians in Norway who are eligible for the Introduction Programme therefore have an economic incentive to accept the municipality offered to them. In Sweden, settling with the help of the Migration Agency gives access to free housing, but this benefit is withheld as soon as the refugee finds a job. Those who seek employment thus have little incentive to request a settlement through the Migration Agency, but may prioritize settling in an area believed to have a favourable labour market, or where they know someone who can help them find work.

The third factor to consider is the list of "residential areas with extensive social and economic challenges" in Sweden that may have further discouraged refugees from requesting settlement through the Swedish Migration Agency, if indeed they wished to live in one of these areas. When we visited one of these areas in May 2023, we did not have any difficulty finding Ukrainian refugees living there. They told us they had settled there despite not getting any economic benefits because this was where their relatives lived before the war, or because housing was cheaper than elsewhere.

Refugees we interviewed in Sweden explain this choice to settle independently with their desire to live where they have networks, in areas where there are more opportunities in the labour market and where food distribution and other services for Ukrainian refugees are available. Thus, access to jobs, social support and networks were more important for these respondents than access to free housing.

However, the choice to settle independently had consequences for their quality of housing. Our respondents in Sweden who had found housing without the help of the Migration Agency often talked of overcrowding.[12] Living in small urban apartments housing three to five adults per room was not uncommon. Others still lived with families who took them in when they first arrived, and who did not get any economic compensation for this. This could be either Swedish volunteers, or close or distant relatives or acquaintances from Ukraine who lived in Sweden before the war. Those who lived with volunteers or acquaintances expressed worry that they had outstayed their welcome. They knew their hosts wanted them to find other housing, but they did not have the economic means to pay rent on their own. This signifies a vulnerability to exploitation, as they may not be able to move into alternative accommodation, if they are exposed to violence or a host who demands services in exchange for housing.

[9] According to statistics made available by The Swedish Migration agency, about 1/3 of the Ukrainian displaced have been given settlement in a municipality. We do not know if they have actually accepted this and live in this municipality.

[10] GI-04/2022 – Instruks om alternativ mottaksplass for personer fordrevet fra Ukraina som får midlertidig kollektiv beskyttelse, jf. utlendingsforskriften § 7-5 a, jf. utlendingsloven § 34

[11] Migrationsverket (2023) "Accommodation for those who have protection under the Temporary Protection Directive" https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-under-the-Temporary-Protection-Directive/Accommodation.html

[12] Eurostat defines overcrowding as: A person is considered as living in an overcrowded household if the household does not have at its disposal a minimum number of rooms equal to:
one room for the household;
one room per couple in the household;
one room for each single person aged 18 or more;
one room per pair of single people of the same gender between 12 and 17 years of age;
one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age and not included in the previous category;
one room per pair of children under 12 years of age.

Refugees are at risk of poverty in both countries, but the risk is substantially higher, and poverty more severe, in Sweden

The differences in economic support available for Ukrainian refugees in Norway and Sweden are striking, as described above. Still, in both countries, the level of benefits, without additional income, puts the refugees at risk of poverty. Although the economic support offered to Ukrainians in Norway is much higher than in Sweden, refugees that receive the introduction allowance in Norway will have income well below the EU defined poverty line (60 percent of median income) if this is their sole household income (Furuberg et al., 2023). However, Norwegian policy accommodates a combination of incomes and benefits for this group that can alleviate the risk of poverty, and compared to the Ukrainians we met in Sweden, Ukrainians we have met in Norway are economically considerably better off.

Some of the Ukrainian refugees we met in Sweden were not able to work, or had not found work yet, when we interviewed them. They describe a daily life marked by severe poverty and food insecurity; being able to buy enough food for SEK 61 (approximately EUR 5.40) a day is challenging with current food prices in Sweden. They told us that basic hygiene products or new clothes were generally out of reach. The Ukrainian refugees in Sweden were often totally dependent on civil society actors distributing food and second-hand clothes. Even with the help of these civil society actors they often lack basic necessities and some even say they go hungry because they cannot afford food.[13]

We also met parents in Sweden who described how poverty restricted their children's quality of life. They had to make harsh choices in order to afford food and basic necessities and described how this caused social exclusion for both adults and their children. Boys and girls who used to participate in organized activities in Ukraine, who had their own bicycle, computer and mobile phone before the war, have to make do without. One respondent told us her son could not participate in activities after school, even if they were free of charge, because she could not afford the bus tickets. In the city where they live only the school bus is free.[14] Importantly, the above examples are all from regions where refugees are allowed to settle, and they were entitled to the allowance from the Migration Agency. Our respondents in the area listed by the Swedish Migration Agency as having extensive social and economic challenges would normally have one household member with income from work, if not, they would not be able to remain there.

All in all, the economic support available for Ukrainian refugees in Sweden is so limited that the refugees live with high risk of food insecurity. Ukrainians in Norway can also struggle to make ends meet, and Ukrainian refugees line up for food distribution in Norway as well. However, we have interviewed Ukrainians nationals in line for food in several places in Norway, and not met any with challenged food security. Some told us they line up for food distribution in order to save up money – either to send to Ukraine, or to save up for an uncertain future. Others choose to line up for food distribution instead of accessing social services – but know that social services are an option if needed.

Non-compulsory schooling may explain lower enrolment rates in Sweden

In both Sweden and Norway, most of the Ukrainian children with temporary protection appear to be enrolled in school. But while enrolment in primary and lower secondary school is compulsory in Norway, Ukrainians with temporary protection can choose if they want to send their children to school in Sweden.

The available statistics suggest that most Ukrainian children in Norway attend schools there; if they don't wish to, they must apply to their municipality for an exemption. Following online distance learning from Ukraine is not in itself regarded as a valid reason for exemption from compulsory education in Norway.[15]. A survey of Norwegian municipalities has shown that 95 percent of Ukrainian children in pri-

[13] Svitlana is a 69-year-old woman from Mariupol. She came to Sweden alone after her son insisted she left the city for her own security. As he is of fighting age, he could not leave himself, but he sent with her all th eir savings. When we met her, the savings were gone, and she had one Euro left in her bank account. There were still many days to go before her next payment from the Migration Agency. To eat, she was totally dependent on the NGOs and churches distributing food. She is lucky to live in one of the major cities – where there are soup kitchens open several times a week. "It is a bit humiliating to line up at the churches' soup kitchens for food", she says. "But luckily, we Ukrainians are used to living on little."

[14] Tanya says that she is starting to realize that they probably will remain in Sweden, but her 12-year-old son insists that they have to go back as soon as the war is over. They live in a city where transport is not free for Ukrainians, and a bus ticket is out of reach, making it difficult to participate in activities or go to meet friends after school. He misses his bicycle and computer, she tells us. It is not easy to make friends in Sweden without the opportunity to play computer games online or participate in organized activities which cost money.

[15] Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet (2002) Prop. 107 L 2021-2022 "Midlertidige endringer i lovverket som følge av ankomst av fordrevne fra Ukraina", side 115

Overview of policy for refugees from Ukraine with temporary collective protection

	Sweden	Norway
Economic support, single-person household	A daily allowance (up to EUR 189/SEK 2,130 per month) for those without income. This is non-taxable income intended to cover food, clothes and personal expenses. Also payable to children but in reduced rates. In addition, refugees can apply to the Migration Agency for a "special grant" to cover other needs, for example, to buy glasses, strollers for children or winter shoes.1 Persons with temporary protection cannot register as a resident and are not eligible for benefits that residents have, such as child support, social assistance or unemployment benefits.2	An introduction allowance equal to EUR 1,600 (NOK 18,579) per month (rates for May 2022-May2023) is paid to those enrolled in the Introduction Programme for refugees (persons younger than 25 receive 2/3 of this sum). This is taxable income intended to cover all expenses, including housing.3 In addition, refugees have access to the same needs-based welfare benefits as other legal residents, including social assistance. After one year's residency, they are eligible for support under the National Insurance Act (folketrygdloven), including child benefits.
Housing policy	Free accommodation for those without income, if settled in a municipality designated by the Migration Agency.4	Municipalities assist refugees with access to housing. The introduction allowance is intended to cover housing expenses, but refugees can apply for housing assistance in addition.
Labour policy	All refugees with temporary collective protection have the right to work. They can register with the Swedish Public Employment Service to look for a job. They cannot access support such as employment training, validation of competencies, et cetera5. Some NGOs offer support for those seeking work.	All refugees with temporary collective protection have the right to work. Adults between 18 and 55 have a right to employment support as part of the Introduction Programme for refugees. Various forms of support and training are also available through the public employment agency (NAV).
Schooling for children	Right to a public elementary education, free of charge, but no obligation.6 University education is payable in line with other third country nationals, but some university courses are available for free	Right and obligation to primary and lower secondary education, free of charge. Those under 25 have a right to upper secondary school.7, and university education is available for free for those who pass the entry criteria.
Healthcare	Limited health rights as third country nationals without residence in Sweden (including emergency care, obstetric care, infection prevention). Full healthcare is a right for children under 18.8 Adults can access health services as asylum seekers at very reduced rates.9	The same rights to healthcare as other registered residents. Free healthcare for children under 16.10
Language training	Persons on temporary protection do not have the right to participate in the language course "Swedish for Immigrants (SfI)"..11 Free part-time language courses are offered by Folk schools, churches and study associations.	Adults have a right to participate in free Norwegian language training.12 The duration depends on the participant's education level (maximum 18 months for those with a secondary education or higher, maximum 3 years for those without, as of 1 July 2023).

[1] Migrationsverket (no year) "Financial support for those who have protection under the Temporary Protection Directive", last updated: 20 March 2023, available at https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-under-the-Temporary-Protection-Directive/Financial-support.html

[2] Försäkringskassan (no year) "När du har fått uppehållstillstånd i Sverige", last updated 26 June 2023, available at https://www.forsakringskassan.se/privatperson/flytta-till-arbeta-studera-eller-nyanland-i-sverige/nyanland-i-sverige/fatt-uppehallstillstand-i-sverige/nar-du-har-fatt-uppehallstillstand-i-sverige

[3] Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet (2016) Rundskriv G-01/2016 «Rundskriv til lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven)», dated 20 Sept 2016.

[4] Migrationsverket (no year) "Accommodation for those who have protection under the Temporary Protection Directive", last updated: 17 Jan 2023, available at https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-under-the-Temporary-Protection-Directive/Accommodation.html

[5] Arbetsförmedlingen (no date) "Are you from Ukraine and looking for work? ", available at https://arbetsformedlingen.se/other-languages/english-engelska/are-you-from-ukraine

[6] Skollag (2010:800) 7 chapt. § 2.

[7] Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (the Education Act)

[8] Migrationsverket (no year) "Work, school and health care", last updated: 25 May 2023, available at https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-under-the-Temporary-Protection-Directive/Work-school-and-health-care.html

[9] 1177.se (2022) "Care if you are an asylum seeker or do not have a permit to be in Sweden", last updated 5 April 2022, available at https://www.1177.se/en/Stockholm/other-languages/other-languages/soka-vard/vard-om-du-ar-asylsokande/

[10] Helsedirektoratet (2015) "Helsetjenester til asylsøkere, flyktninger og familiegjenforente", Oslo: Helsedirektoratet (last updated 31 March 2023, accessed 1 July 2023). Available at https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/veiledere/helsetjenester-til-asylsokere-flyktninger-og-familiegjenforente

[11] Municipalities are allowed to offer this to Ukrainians from 1 June 2023Förordning (2023:222) om ändring i förordningen (2011:1108) om vuxenutbildning

[12] Integreringsloven § 37

mary and lower secondary school age were enrolled in school in October 2022[16].

In Sweden, the level of enrolment appears to be lower. In a recent survey among persons on temporary collective protection in Sweden, seven percent of those surveyed respond that their school-age children follow online classes from Ukrainian schools only, while another seven percent respond that their school-age children are not enrolled in school at all (IOM Sweden, 2023). We do not know whether this last group is awaiting enrolment or if they will receive no organized education at all in Sweden, since this is left to their parents' discretion.

In one Swedish municipality we visited, municipal representatives estimated that 20 percent of Ukrainian children of elementary school age were not enrolled.[17] However, because persons on temporary collective protection cannot register as residents in Sweden, they do not appear in the municipal registers. As reported by our respondent, this lack of registration prevents the municipality from having a comprehensive overview or access to contact information for families with children who are not enrolled in school. Consequently, it becomes challenging to reach out to these children or their parents. Our respondent in this municipality assumed that these were children following Ukrainian online distance learning,[18] but there was no system in place to verify this.

Norway invests in language training for Ukrainians, while civil society compensates in Sweden

Sweden and Norway differ significantly when it comes to public investment in integration efforts and language training for refugees with temporary collective protection.

Refugees from Ukraine in Sweden do not have the right to participate in the 24 month introduction programme for refugees or other adult training programmes provided by municipalities.[19] From the 1st of June 2023, municipalities are formally allowed to provide the municipal language course "Swedish for Immigrants" to Ukrainians, but the Ukrainian refugees still do not have a right to take part in such programmes and it is up to the local municipalities to decide of they want to offer this20 The spring 2023 only 39 out of 290 Swedish municipalities provided Ukrainians with access to "Swedish for Immigrants". For those taking part in Swedish for immigrants, only expenses for schooling is covered, and the refugees do not receive economic support to enable them to study full time, beyond the allowance from the Swedish Migration Agency. In a recent survey among persons with temporary collective protection in Sweden, more than half of the respondents point to the limited availability of language courses when asked what their unmet needs are (IOM Sweden, 2023).

There are numerous civil society actors who provide language training for Ukrainians in Sweden, but . due to limited benefits many Ukrainians prioritize work, and study Swedish in evening classes.

Almost all of our respondents in Sweden expressed a wish to learn the Swedish language – and all of them followed some sort of language class. The provision was often time limited (for instance a three-month course of 2 x 2 hours a week). No adults we met had language courses more than three times a week, and many only went occasionally, for instance to language classes offered by churches, where anybody who wishes to learn the language can come, regardless of their previous knowledge. Many reported they were so tired after work that they did not have time to study and that progress was slow.

In Norway, Ukrainians between the ages of 18 and 5521 have the right to participate in the Norwegian Introduction Programme for refugees. The Introduction Programme gives a small income while learning the language and enables participants to study full time if they want to. The content of the programme varies somewhat between municipalities, but should, according to the law, include preparation for work or education and Norwegian or English language classes. Thus far, most Ukrainians have been offered introduction programmes that are 6–12 months long (Prop. 107 L 2021-2022: 40-41, Dapi and Tyldum 2023). The Ukrainian refugees in Norway also have the right to take a free, publicly organized language exam to document their skill level, which is

[16] The process of enrolling a child from Ukraine in school can take up to three months. This may explain why the enrolment is not 100 percent, as new students continuously arrive, and the enrolment process is ongoing https://tinyurl.com/5ddmswfk

[17] Based on an interview with a senior officer in this municipality.

[18] Many Ukrainian schools and universities offer online distance learning. Some Ukrainian families have decided to let their children follow the Ukrainian curriculum, either instead of – or in parallel with – school in the country where they have protection. Two years of COVID-19 has equipped the schools and families with the experience and technology to make this possible.

[19] See https://www.skolverket.se/innehall-a-o/landningssidor-a-o/nyanlanda-barn-och-elever-fran-ukraina/fragor-och-svar-om-utbildning-for-barn-och-unga-fran-ukraina

[20] The government has set aside funds (SEK 1 million) to finance participation in the programme. This is, according to our respondents, assumed to cover participation for approximately 2,000 persons.

[21] Only refugees who reside in the designated municipality allocated them have access to the introduction programme.

not a possibility available to Ukrainian refugees in Sweden.

That the refugees in Norway do not need to work while they learn the language, and can study full time, is reflected in low rates of labour market participation among this group, as we will discuss later. This means that the true test of whether the language skills they acquire satisfy the requirements of potential employers is yet to come.

Consequences for refugees' labour market strategies, inclusion and exploitation

In both Sweden and Norway, policymakers explicitly encourage the Ukrainians on temporary collective protection to enter the labour market as soon as possible. However, the strategies for doing so differ and are likely to produce different outcomes.

Finding a job without knowledge of a Scandinavian language or English is challenging, but not impossible, in both Sweden and Norway. This is because migrant-dominated niches have developed in sectors such as cleaning, construction and agriculture because of extensive labour migration from Poland and Lithuania. In these niches, it is possible to work for persons who can communicate in Polish or Russian.[22] Employers and mid-level management in these migrant-dominated niches are often Polish or Russian speakers with knowledge of Swedish/Norwegian or English, while most employees are Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian or from other Slavic language speaking countries. Most Ukrainians will understand and often speak either Polish or Russian, and this creates opportunities for fast entry into these parts of the labour market.

In both Norway and Sweden, there are substantial differences between the sectors of the labour market where most nationals work, and the migrant-dominated sectors. In the migrant-dominated sectors of the economy, pay is lower and contracts are often short term and informal(Hoen et al., 2022). Informal employment (without paying taxes) is also more common. Neither Norway nor Sweden have legislation that determines a minimum hourly rate but leave it up to the unions and employers to negotiate pay through collective bargaining. In Sweden, there is a larger share of enterprises and workplaces that are regulated by collective agreements, compared with Norway(Nergaard, 2020). However, in Sweden, the differences between the enterprises that are covered by collective agreements and the ones that are not are larger than in Norway. This is because Norway has introduced the general application of collective agreements in several migrant-dominated sectors, to prevent social dumping and exploitation of migrant labour.[23] These collective agreements then determine what in practice becomes "minimum pay" in some sectors. As of 2023, this "minimum pay" was €18/NOK 207 per hour in construction and €17,7/NOK 204 per hour in cleaning in Norway. In Sweden, hourly pay in construction and cleaning are commonly reported to be at €11/SEK 130 in enterprises not regulated by a collective agreement. According to a representative for the trade unions interviewed for the project, there are cases of workers being offered pay as low as €3,40/SEK 40 per hour.

Irina, a Ukrainian woman whom we met at an evening English class outside Stockholm, speaks Polish to her boss, Ukrainian with her colleagues and a little English with the clients whose houses she cleans. She would like to learn Swedish one day, she said, as she and her boyfriend have decided to stay in Sweden. But right now, she does not feel a need for it.

The implications of having little knowledge of the Swedish language, and few opportunities for learning or using it, may be that Irina and other workers like her will find it hard to move out from the "migrant" sector of the economy. From a policy perspective, and to prevent poverty and increased inequality however, it may be desirable to facilitate trajectories where Ukrainian migrants can move into the well-organized parts of the labour market with collective agreement coverage and pay levels closer to what Swedish nationals earn.

Having access to welfare benefits influences people's reservation wage – the minimum wage level for which they are willing to work rather than being unemployed.[24] Migrant workers who don't have access to unemployment benefits and social welfare can be willing to work for lower pay than members of the host populations in Northern welfare states,

[22] According to representatives of the trade unions in both countries, as well as interviews with the refugees themselves.

[23] Allmenngjøringsloven §1: Lovens formål er å sikre utenlandske arbeidstakere lønns- og arbeidsvilkår som er likeverdige med de vilkår norske arbeidstakere har, og å hindre konkurransevridning til ulempe for det norske arbeidsmarkedet

[24] A worker's reservation wage is the minimum wage that the worker requires in order to participate in the labor market. It represents the monetary value of an hour of leisure (broadly defined as any non-labor-market activity) to the worker. If the wage offer does not meet or exceed the worker's reservation wage, then the worker's utility is maximized by remaining unemployed. The reservation wage of any given worker is determined by both micro- and macroeconomic factors that affect the worker's marginal utility of leisure or marginal utility of consumption when the worker is unemployed, (i.e., personal preferences, household production activities, unemployment benefits, and other non-labor income.). WAY, M. M. Reservation Wage. Wiley Encyclopedia of Management.

who normally have access to social welfare. Normally, refugees in both Norway and Sweden will also have access to social welfare and other benefits and can choose to not work rather than accepting pay that amounts to less than they would get in social benefits. However, Ukrainian refugees in Sweden cannot access other benefits than the allowance from the Swedish Migration Agency, and consequently may be willing to work for lower pay than Ukrainian refugees in Norway.

Most of the Ukrainians we met in Sweden started looking for work as soon as they arrived, and many found work quickly. They told us that in their experience, jobs in cleaning and construction are available for all who want to work. This is partially supported by a recent survey by IOM, which finds that 56 percent of respondents with Temporary Collective Protection in Sweden work[25] (IOM Sweden, 2023) . Our Ukrainian respondents who worked in Sweden, told us the work they do is often physically tough, and their pay low compared to the general salary level in Sweden. Contracts are often temporary, and many of our respondents work part time.

One of our female respondents in Sweden told us she worked almost full-time cleaning private houses, but was paid only 18 hours a week. She was not paid for the time it takes to travel between jobs, and the number of hours it takes to clean a house was often underestimated. Earning SEK 130 an hour, her monthly income equates to less than a third of the median salary in Sweden. Her disposable income after taxes is approximately the same as she could have received in social support for herself and her 10-year-old daughter, if she were entitled to this.[26]

The large number of Ukrainians seeking work in the same sectors of the economy at the same time increases vulnerability for exploitation in all countries across Europe. With large numbers of displaced Ukrainians competing for the same jobs, employers can set conditions that employees normally would not accept. In Sweden, the refugees' strong dependence on finding paid work (due to limited benefits) and lack of access to language courses (that could improve their access to jobs outside the migrant niches) are likely to exacerbate this. Several of our respondents in Sweden tell of employers who ask them to work a month for free in cleaning, before they offered paid work, and we have also heard numerous accounts of Ukrainians not being paid according to an agreement, or at all.

Some Ukrainian refugees in Sweden also take up work in the informal market. According to Alina, a Ukrainian woman we met in Sweden, she would earn the same per hour in her house-cleaning job if she paid taxes or not, because if she didn't pay taxes, her hourly salaries were lower (SEK 100 per hour, instead of 130). The customers, however, would often prefer to not pay taxes, meaning there is more demand for cleaners willing to work informally. Therefore, those who don't pay taxes can work more hours a week, increasing their overall income.

In Norway, most Ukrainians eligible for the Introduction Programme have spent most of the first year in Norway learning Norwegian and other subjects relevant for living in Norway. It is estimated that only two percent of the Ukrainian refugees in Norway had entered the labour market in the spring of 2023[27], compared with 56 percent in Sweden (IOM Sweden, 2023). It is too early to tell what sectors of the economy the Ukrainian refugees will eventually enter in Norway. During the summer of 2023, large groups of refugees from Ukraine will have finished the Introduction Programme and will be expected to enter the labour market, and only then will we be able to properly assess the differences between Sweden and Norway.

In some of the Norwegian municipalities we have visited, Ukrainians are encouraged to take up work in the migrant niches of the labour market where Polish or Russian is spoken. However, it is an explicit aim of the Norwegian Introduction Programme to work towards preparing refugees for long-term, stable attachment to the labour market.[28] In interviews with refugees and programme advisors in Norwegian municipalities, we heard many examples of Ukrainian refugees who state an ambition of finding semi-skilled or skilled work. Finding jobs in domestic cleaning and hospitality is perceived as a last resort. However, only time will show if 6-12 months of language courses is enough to enable the Ukrainian refugees to find work in other sectors than the migrant dominated niches.

The Swedish strategy is likely to encourage more rapid entry into the labour market than in Norway, and the share of Ukrainians who are already

[25] Most common occupations are cleaners, builders, IT specialists, teaching assistants, carpenters, waiters and waitresses, cooks and domestic workers

[26] Rates for social support in Sweden 2023 here: https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/dokument-webb/ovrigt/riksnormen-for-forsorjningsstod-2023.pdf

[27] According to data provided by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity

[28] §1.Integreringsloven: Lovens formål: Formålet med loven er at innvandrere tidlig integreres i det norske samfunnet og blir økonomisk selvstendige. Loven skal bidra til at innvandrere får gode norskkunnskaper, kunnskap om norsk samfunnsliv, formelle kvalifikasjoner og en varig tilknytning til arbeidslivet.

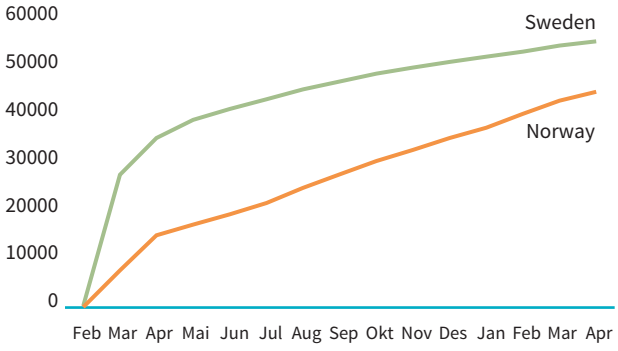
employed there is high (IOM Sweden, 2023). However, they mainly work in sectors of the economy that are associated with part-time work, temporary contracts, and low levels of income. For labour unions and most political parties in both Sweden and Norway, it has been a key goal to make sure those working full time earn enough to evade poverty. The Ukrainians we met in Sweden in the summer of 2023 could, however, often be classified as working poor – earning far below the EU's poverty line (60 percent of median income), in spite of working more or less full time.

The design of the Norwegian and Swedish policies makes it likely that it will take more time before the Ukrainians in Norway enter the labour market compared to Ukrainians in Sweden. The Ukrainians in Norway may also be more averse to working in the more problematic parts of migrant-dominated sectors because they have access to economic support that raises their reservation wage.

Consequences for new arrivals in Sweden and Norway

In the first weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sweden had higher Ukrainian refugee arrival numbers than Norway. The population of Sweden is twice the size of the population of Norway, but even relative to population size, the arrival numbers in Sweden were higher than in Norway in the first weeks after the February 2022 invasion. From early summer 2022, however, the pattern changed, and Norway's arrival numbers were similar to – and in some periods even higher than – Sweden's, making Norway's numbers significantly higher relative to population size (see Figure 1). At the time of writing, arrival numbers remain record high in both countries. The movements of refugees are shaped by complex factors, and we should be careful pointing to isolated policies as reasons for increases or decreases in arrival numbers, without a more systematic analysis.

*Monthly applications for temporary collective protection from Ukrainian nationals (cumulative distribution)**



*Statistics available at migrasjonsverket.se and udi.no

It is possible that the relative differences in benefits and rights for Ukrainians in Sweden and Norway has led to a reduction in arrival numbers in Sweden, and an increase in Norway. In our fieldwork in the two countries, we have seen a difference in how the displaced Ukrainians talk of how they have been received. The Ukrainians we met in Sweden were aware that that Swedish authorities do not want them to remain when the war is over, and they knew that Sweden is among the countries in Europe that gives the least rights and benefits to refugees from Ukraine. In Norway, on the other hand, the refugees expressed gratitude for the opportunities and assistance offered to them, and often praised the Norwegian government for its humane approach. These refugees are likely to share their experiences with their networks back home.

In both countries, the Ukrainian refugees talk of the host population at large as welcoming and helpful. This sentiment may be even more pronounced in Sweden, as the Ukrainian refugees there rely more on non-governmental support. This serves as a reminder that the experiences of Ukrainians in refuge are influenced by various factors beyond policies alone. Consequently, it is challenging to extrapolate refugees' preferences (and thereby new arrivals' preferences) solely from policy documents.

Consequences for returns during and after the war

Will the refugees from Ukraine return home after the war? With temporary protection in Europe, there is an explicit intention from policymakers that this group should return to Ukraine when the war is over. Ukrainian authorities also emphasize the importance of Ukrainians returning to rebuild the country when it is safe to do so. However, historical precedent shows that refugees often choose to remain in the countries where they sought protection, even after the conflict has ended.

Refugees in exile often hold onto a dream of being able to return to their homeland, and this narrative of return can live on in refugee populations for generations (Stefansson, 2004, Chatty, 2018). However, in reality, when armed conflicts last more than a few months, refugees frequently choose to remain in their host country, even if massive pressures are extended to make them return (Dorai, 2023, Omata, 2013). Sometimes, return never becomes possible because of occupation or ongoing conflicts. Additionally, some refugees remain in the countries that offered them protection because they, and their

children, have lived there long enough to form ties within the local community. The dream of return is often a dream of going back to the life they once had – but the refugees may have no home or job to return to, and friends and family may also be spread across the world. Even refugees who live on the margins of society in their host country may have obtained more to lose in their country of protection than they gain from returning to their country of origin.

This makes it challenging to interpret expressions of return aspirations in refugee populations. In our qualitative interviews with Ukrainian refugees, expressions of aspirations for return are often contingent on what kind of life they believe they will be able to get in exile – and what kind of future they can imagine in Ukraine. It is far too early to tell how this will play out after the war. However, in light of the rapid forced displacement of the Ukrainian refugees, it was surprising that already in the early phases after the invasion, when the Ukrainian refugees were surveyed, return intentions were quite low. Surveys conducted in Northern Europe indicate that more than 70 percent of the displaced Ukrainians do not intend to return to Ukraine after the war (Kohlenberger et al., 2022, Panchenko, 2022). Similar results have been reported in recent surveys conducted among Ukrainians with temporary collective protection in Sweden (IOM Sweden, 2023) and Norway (Hernes et al., 2022). This intent to remain is also reflected in the way Ukrainians we met in Sweden and Norway talk about their future. In both countries, most of our respondents say they intend to remain when the war is over. They foresee years of hardship and reconstruction in their homeland in the post-war years, and often say they do not want to expose their children to this. It is reasonable to anticipate that as the duration of the war draws out, the proportion of refugees with intentions to return will diminish.

Some of the Ukrainians we met in Sweden told us that they had stronger return intentions when they first arrived, but appeared to be in a process of deciding to stay now. As a reflection of this change of intent, they had decided to take their children out of Ukrainian online distance learning after the summer. Having children follow Ukrainian online distance learning can be seen as an indication that these parents had held the door open to return to Ukraine, to enable the children to return to their old class. That they planned to take their children out of online school after the summer of 2023, and instead send them to Swedish schools, implied, as they themselves explained, that they had started planning for a future where they remain in Sweden.

Return migration in refugee populations is challenging to predict. The number of refugees under temporary collective protection in Europe who will eventually return to Ukraine after the war depends on various factors, including how long the war lasts, and how it ends. People are likely to be more favourable to return to a Ukraine with stable and well-functioning democratic and welfare institutions, and a vital labour market, than to a war-torn country with high unemployment, corruption and little social security – or to a country under Russian occupation.

Consequences for integration and marginalization

European governments sometimes worry that receiving refugees can be costly. There are, however, two different types of costs that politicians and academics worry about. On the one hand there is the short-term costs associated with providing housing and meeting basic needs for refugees upon their arrival, as well as language training and other integration policies that are intended to assist refugees in adapting to a new society and becoming self-sufficient. On the other hand – for egalitarian societies with extensive welfare states such as Sweden and Norway – there can also be long-term costs associated with high refugee arrival numbers, if those refugees fail to integrate in the economy and gain a stable attachment to the labour market (Brochmann and Grødem, 2017, Brochmann and Hagelund, 2011).

In the after match of the 2015 refugee crisis, we saw a "race to the bottom" in policies for asylum seekers in Europe. Across the continent, countries cut quality of housing, opportunities to seek family reunification and benefits for asylum seekers, in order to not appear too attractive relative to other European countries (Czaika, 2009). A similar pattern may take place during the current "refugee crisis", if the refugee movements out of Ukraine continue. But this time, the policies intended to facilitate long-term integration are also in danger of being cut. This may reduce the costs for the state in the short term, but may have larger long-term costs, both for the refugees and for the societies in which they settle.

If large groups of refugees from Ukraine choose to remain in Norway or Sweden long term, but fail to enter the formal, well-organized labour market, this can result in either increased inequality or increased pressures on the welfare system, or both (depending

on what welfare benefits the refugees get access to). As we have shown in this short report, , working in migrant-dominated sectors of the economy, coupled with a lack of access to benefits, is associated with social exclusion and working poor .

About the project and the data it builds on

The policy brief is the first of three in a study conducted by researchers at Fafo, commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Through this study we explore how Ukrainian refugees in various countries in Europe experience their first year in Europe, and how their experiences shapes migration decisions and how they think about future migration and repatriation to Ukraine.

The study is a continuation for our previous study of migration aspirations among Ukrainian refugees in Poland and Norway (Kjeøy and Tyldum, 2022). This far qualitative fieldwork have been conducted in Norway, Poland and Sweden – and this policy brief build on interviews from Norway and Sweden. We have interviewed policymakers, street level bureaucrats and NGO workers, in addition to refugees in all countries. Fieldwork in Norway is conducted between June 2022 and June 2023, while fieldwork in Sweden is conducted in April and May 2023. We have conducted 20 interviews with refugees in Sweden, and more than 50 interviews with refugees in Norway. The interviews that were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Respondents were selected with the aim of getting access to a variety of narratives about migration and return. In Sweden, fieldwork was conducted in three areas with different economic and organisational infrastructures: in the capital, Stockholm, a suburb of Stockholm that is defined as a region with social problems and where Ukrainians are encouraged not to settle, And in a mid-sized city in central Sweden, that still accepts new arrivals.

In Norway we have visited 8 different municipalities in Eastern, Western, Northern and Central Norway, and interviewed Ukrainians living in 14 different municipalities, as well as Ukrainians still living in reception centres.

In both Norway and Sweden the majority of respondents were recruited through language courses for refugees, but additional respondents were recruited through networks and NGOS, in food distribution lines, and, in Norway, through employers and reception centres.

Most interviews were conducted in Russian by a Russian speaking project worker. The respondents were given the option of being interviewed in Ukrainian with an interpreter, but our respondents did not mind speaking Russian with us. It was not our aim to access a representative sample of Ukrainian refugees, as this has little relevance in a qualitative analysis. Instead, we sought to maximise variance in narratives in order to describe the variation in strategies and narratives that exist in the various areas.

Mapping systems of reception and support for refugees in Sweden and Norway –we draw on both a review of available literature and laws, as well as interviews with key informants representing Swedisn national and local authorities, NGOs and labour organisations based in Sweden and Norway.

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