



A Handbook for Asylum Seekers in Sweden

Ginbot Abraha



ASYLUM RECEPTION IN FOCUS

A series from NTN-asylum & integration

No. 5 | 2007



WHAT IS THE NATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORK ASYLUM & INTEGRATION?

The National Thematic Network Asylum & Integration (NTN Asylum) is a project co-financed by the European Social Fund, the Swedish National Labour Market Board, the Swedish Integration Board and the Swedish Migration Board. By bringing together and putting the magnifying glass on examples of good practices and project experiences and results springing from the Community Initiative EQUAL, the European Refugee Fund and other relevant research and development activities, NTN Asylum's objective is to improve relevant systems and policies and to promote greater knowledge and awareness on issues of relevance to the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. More information can be found on NTN Asylum's website:

www.temaasyl.se



EQUAL is a European Community Initiative whose purpose is to counter discrimination and exclusion on the labour market. Project activities under EQUAL's asylum theme aim to improve the situation of asylum seekers during the period they wait for a decision on their asylum application by putting in place more effective measures for social and vocational integration and re-integration.



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Foreword

There is a real need among asylum seekers in Sweden for information in the form of a handbook that covers *both aspects of the Swedish asylum process*, namely the processing of asylum claims and the asylum reception. The information which exists today is primarily the product of the government – i.e. the Swedish Migration Board. And though a number of NGOs also provide information and support to asylum seekers, it is restricted to the limited scope of their respective fields of activity.

The National Thematic Network Asylum & Integration (NTN Asylum), funded by the European Social Fund/Equal, has previously published a report on asylum seekers' social and economic rights – *En värdig levnadsstandard* (*A dignified standard of living*). The report gives an account of asylum seekers' rights under international law, European Union law and national law. Examples of relevant national law are taken from the United Kingdom and Finland.

The *Handbook for Asylum Seekers* is written by Ginbot Abraha, former chairman of AEASS – Association for Eritrean Asylum Seekers in Sweden (since 2005 EDHR – Eritreans for Democracy and Human Rights). Ginbot Abraha has also previously produced a report for the NTN Asylum, entitled *Av egen kraft* (*On One's Own*). It is a highly interesting account of the growth and activities of AEASS, a unique and successful target group driven organisation providing support and counselling service by and for asylum seekers.

The experiences of AEASS in delivering social support and counselling to asylum seekers have proven instrumental to being able to put together this handbook. Ginbot Abraha himself has personal experience as an asylum seeker in Sweden. The handbook responds to what asylum seekers themselves have been asking for, namely information on their rights and obligations as asylum seekers in Sweden. The handbook is the latest link in a logical chain of publications produced by NTN Asylum on asylum seekers social and economic rights and on asylum seekers' empowerment and self-organisation.

Christian Råbergh
National Co-ordinator
NTN Asylum & Integration

Preface

Dear asylum seeker,

This handbook aims at giving you basic information related to your stay as an asylum seeker in Sweden. The need for such a handbook arises from the fact that when you come to a country as an asylum seeker you face a new reality. The availability of correct information relevant to your asylum request, including rules and regulations, cultural behaviour, traditions, mannerisms and many other things you need to know to get by day to day is a key to making your stay as pleasant and productive as possible.



- What happens in the asylum seeking process?
- How can I find work?
- Can my children go to school?
- What if I need health care?

You probably ask yourself these and others questions during your asylum period.

In the following pages of this handbook, I would like to share with you information that I think is important from an asylum seeker's point of view. I share with you what I have learned from my own experiences as a former asylum seeker as well as those of others I have come in contact with.

Some of the information might not entirely reflect what the Swedish authorities will tell you. Nevertheless, I think it is important to speak frankly and openly. The people who assigned me to write this handbook wanted me not to regurgitate the official picture but instead to teach you useful things that will guide you and help you in managing your situation as an asylum seeker in Sweden.

I also provide you with useful addresses and contact details.

Stockholm, September 2007

Ginbot Abraha

Email: gahiyabu@yahoo.co.uk



Asylum

www.migrationsverket.se

DEFINITIONS

What is asylum (*asyl*)?

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” An asylum seeker hence is a person who has left his country and sought asylum in another country and who is still waiting for a decision on his application for asylum. The right to seek asylum, however, does not necessarily imply that the person has an absolute right to get asylum. Eligibility is determined after undergoing a careful investigation of the applications submitted by the asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are different from economic migrants.

Who is a refugee (*flykting*)?

Article 1 (A) of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees states that a refugee is any person who “owing to race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group of political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...”

A person satisfying these criteria is called a convention refugee. Recently some countries including Sweden have added sex and sexual disposition as ground for granting a refugee status.

A refugee is also someone who is stateless and who, for the same reason, is outside the country of his or her habitual residence and who is unable or unwilling to return due to such fear as stated above.

Who needs protection (*skyddsbehövande*)?

According to the Swedish Aliens law, persons who are found not to be “convention” refugees under the 1951 Refugees Convention may also qualify for asylum under a category known as ‘persons in need of protection – *skyddsbehövande*’. This includes those that have left their native country and have good reason to fear capital punishment, torture, need protection due to war (internal/external) or an environmental disaster in their native country

Are there other grounds which can allow me stay in Sweden?

- Serious illness which can not be treated in home countries
- Adaptation to life in Sweden
- Situation in home country

What is the Dublin Convention and why my fingerprints are taken?

www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/factsheets/dublinconvention4.html

The Dublin Convention is essentially a mechanism for determining which Member State of the European Union is responsible for examining an application for asylum lodged in one of the contracting States. Asylum seekers must lodge their application for asylum in the first EU country in which they arrive and may be returned to another EU Member State if it can be shown that they have either passed through the border of another State (by air, sea or land), made an application for asylum in another Member State or were issued a visa or residence permit by one of the Member States. When you seek asylum in Sweden, the Migration Board takes your fingerprints to establish if you have entered the EU without the necessary papers and if you have already applied for asylum in another EU member state. These fingerprints are compared with fingerprint data transmitted by other participating States and already stored in the central database. If EURODAC (European Automated Fingerprint Recognition System) reveals that the fingerprints have already been recorded, you can be sent back to the country where your fingerprints were originally recorded. This process is known as the Dublin Convention signed in Dublin on 15 June 1990. Under the EURODAC system, each participating State has to promptly take the prints of all fingers of every asylum seeker over the age of 14. These fingerprints are compared with fingerprint data transmitted by other participating States and already stored in the central database.

Under which circumstances can my asylum application be examined in Sweden even if I have a Dublin case?

If an asylum seeker has a family member who is residing in another Member State as a recognised refugee; he/she has the right to have his/her application processed by that State. The draft regulation expands upon this entitlement to include the applicant's family member who has an asylum application that is being considered under the normal procedure and also expands on the definition of a family member.

Separated Children – Allows for the transfer of an application of a separated child if he/she has a relative in another EU State who is willing to take charge of him/her and if it is in the best interests of the child.

Time-limit – Where the request to take charge of an applicant is not made within a period of three months, responsibility for examining the application for asylum lies with the Member State in which the application was lodged. Where the transfer does not take place within the six months' time limit, responsibility lies with the Member State in which the application for asylum was lodged. This time limit may be extended up to a maximum of one year if the transfer could not be carried out due to imprisonment of the asylum seeker or up to a maximum of eighteen months if the asylum seeker absconds. The Member State called upon to take back the applicant shall be obliged to make the necessary checks and reply to the request addressed to it as quickly as possible and under no circumstances exceeding a period of one month from the referral. When the request is based on data obtained from the Eurodac system, this time limit is reduced to two weeks.

What is the Schengen Information System (SIS)?

SIS allows border police, the customs and others to search for and exchange information. Each SIS member may enter computerised particulars about persons, vehicles or objects that are missing or wanted.

The SIS also has a blacklist that allows the participating countries to keep a record of persons they do not wish to see entering the Schengen zone. This list is consequently of major importance for the individual.

A person on the blacklist may have committed a serious crime, for instance, or may have been expelled or deported and ordered not to re-enter a country for a specific period of time.

What is the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket)

www.migrationsverket.se

The Swedish Migration Board is the administrative authority with headquarters in Norrköping and decentralised regional offices in Malmö, Göteborg and Stockholm. It has full and exclusive responsibility for deciding on entry into the country and interviewing applicants for asylum, carrying out all other investigations during the procedure as well as making first instance decisions. In order to establish applicant's identity, fingerprints and photographs are compulsory. Applicants may also be subject to a language test in order to ascertain their nationality or ethnic group. All asylum applications, whether at border points or

within the country, are submitted to the Swedish Migration Board. At border points, in particular, the border police have no authority to decide on entry of asylum seekers and must refer all cases to the Migration Board. There are Migration officers present at all main border points. However, if the person does not/will not seek asylum then the border police decides in the case and this can imply after a summary investigation, the person can be expelled without the case being referred to the Swedish Migration Board.

PROCESS AND REGULATIONS

What happens when I first arrive in Sweden to seek asylum?

When an asylum seeker arrives in Sweden he/she must report him/herself as soon as possible to the nearest office of the Migration Board. Doing otherwise might negatively affect the individual's asylum request. A person who is afraid of persecution is expected not to delay reporting to the authorities where he/she ends up. If you do not have the necessary identity and other documentation in support of your application, do not wait until they arrive. You can always submit them to the Migration Board after applying for asylum. When you contact the Swedish Migration Board, the following must be submitted:

- Name, age
- Nationality
- Identification papers (if present)
- Fingerprints/photograph
- Applicants may also be subject to a language test in order to ascertain their nationality or ethnic group

The asylum seeker through an interpreter is given information about:

- Asylum regulations, the Dublin Convention, Schengen system.
- Daily allowances, language classes, work, health care, legal support (lawyer).
- Respect national laws/regulations.
- Secrecy and the right to collect information about asylum seekers from governments and organizations but not from their governments.
- Return to home land if asylum application proves unsuccessful.

The asylum seeker undergoes a medical check up paid for by the Swedish Migration Board. The asylum seeker is also issued a general id-card known as LMA kort "Lagen om mottagande av asylsökande" with some personal details and photo of the holder on it.

After this initial contact the person has two options. He/she can either stay with families, relatives and friends (independent housing/ EBO) or stay in one of the receptions centres (housing) provided by the Swedish Migration Board (ABO). If the asylum seeker chooses the first option then he/she leaves after giving contact details of the address where he/she is going to stay.

Unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers under 18 years old (*ensamkommande barn*)

Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are processed under the normal refugee determination procedure. Upon their arrival in Sweden, they are appointed both a guardian and a legal representative. The task of the guardian, a so-called “good man”, is to assist the child during the interviews – sometimes along with the legal representative – and to ensure that his/her rights and special needs are taken into consideration. The support provided by the guardian aims to ensure that, upon coming of age, the child has developed to his maximum capacity.

Do I have the right to legal assistance and for how long (*offentligt biträde*)?

If the Migration Board determines that your asylum application will be processed in Sweden, then a lawyer is appointed to you at the cost of the Migration Board. If the Migration Board establishes that the asylum application is straight forward and the person is likely to be granted a residence permit then a lawyer is not appointed. You have the right to legal representation as long as your asylum application is being examined. If a final negative decision, which can't be appealed against, is made ordering you to go back to your country, you lose the right to legal assistance arranged by the Migration Board.

In case of detention, persons have the right to an appointed lawyer if they stay more than three days in detention.

Can I suggest /change a lawyer?

Normally the Migration Board asks if you have or know a lawyer to assist with your asylum application. To change a lawyer, you must have objective and clear reasons. Under the following circumstances, for instance, it is possible to change your lawyer: if you change residence and that becomes a problem between you and the lawyer; if the lawyer has not begun working with your case within reasonable time; or if the lawyer neglects your case and/or if there are serious difficulties hindering cooperation with the lawyer. To change your lawyer, you must submit an application explaining your reasons to the case officer handling your asylum application at the Migration Board. Depending on your reasons and costs involved, the

Migration Board makes its decision. It is also possible to request the Migration Board to have a legal representative appointed to you as early as possible.

Do the Migration authorities have the right to collect information about me from other governments and NGO's?

Yes. The Migration Board has the right to collect and investigate into your background, your asylum claims and your records in other countries and contact organizations such as the UNHCR, Red Cross and others. For this purpose there is a document which the Migration Board asks you to sign giving your consent. The Migration Board, however, cannot contact your home country government to get information about you.

How can I prove my identity and is it true that if I submit my national passport, the Migration Board can deport me without examining my case?

Usually national passports are accepted for establishing one's identity. If, however, you do not possess a passport from your home country, you can always present other identity documentation to help establish your identity.

Sweden, like all asylum countries, never sends people back to their home countries before carefully assessing their protection needs. It is your grounds for seeking asylum that are important. Submitting a passport or any other document proving your identity has positive effects on your asylum application. If you are granted asylum even though your identity has not been established, your travel document will note that your identity is "un-established". Therefore, do not hesitate to submit identification documents (passport/id-cards) if you have any.

What does it mean when an asylum case becomes a security case (*säkerhetsärende*)?

When it is found that the presence of a certain person in the country could constitute a threat to national security then the application is classed as a security case. In such a situation the Migration Board refers the case to the government to make a decision on the application for asylum.

How is my asylum application processed (*asylprövning*)?

(www.migrationsverket.se/infomaterial/om_verket/ny_ordning_en.pdf)

The Swedish Aliens Act emphasises that the examination of an asylum application has to focus on the protection needs of the individual asylum seeker. In Swe-

den, unlike in some other asylum countries, the definition of a refugee extends to include people who are persecuted for reasons of their gender or sexual orientation/disposition. The provisions on persons otherwise in need of protection is also extended to include people fleeing because of severe conflicts in the country of origin and feeling a well-founded fear of serious abuses. Particularly distressing circumstances such as the applicant's state of health, adaptation to life in Sweden and the applicant's situation in the country of origin may in exceptional cases lead to a residence permit being granted if none of the grounds of protection are applicable. This, however, requires an overall assessment when examining these cases.

According to the Aliens Act appeals against negative decisions made by the Swedish Migration Board on asylum applications are submitted to a court of law known as Migration Courts. In appeal cases this means that the asylum seeker and the Swedish Migration Board meet as two parties in a court of law if a decision to reject an application is appealed. This is intended to make the asylum process more transparent and more oral.

The following is a description of the procedures and processes an asylum application goes through from the day it reaches the Swedish Migration Board until a final decision is made.

The Swedish Migration Board – First instance decision

Under the Aliens Law, the Lawyer in the presence of an interpreter makes an interview with you in order to put together reasons/grounds for your asylum and then sends your application to the Migration Board. Here you are expected to give all information that is related to your need for protection. In the interview, through an interpreter speaking your language, you answer/explain the reasons that made you leave your country and why you need protection. The information you provide in this interview becomes your application for asylum which is then used by the Migration Board to decide whether you are entitled to stay in Sweden or not. If you have documents in support of the information you are providing, you must submit them. It is extremely important that you explain clearly in your application why you are in need of protection in Sweden. Saying that the government in your country violates human rights or the general situation in your country is unstable is not sufficient to allow you to stay in Sweden. You must be able to make a credible case that your government has "interest" in you and/or the government cannot or will not provide you protection from non-state actors which in either case might result in you facing persecution and/or serious human rights violations.

The interpreter has the duty of confidentiality but if you feel that they are unreliable or biased in their political opinions, you have the right to request a

change of interpreter. Female asylum seekers can also request to have a female interpreter if they think that is essential for the interview.

In your asylum application, if you provide any information which is not true, it may lead to the authorities becoming suspicious of other information which you have provided. If it is discovered that you have gained a residence permit on the basis of false information, your permit may be evoked. Information concerning this is usually given to you by the Migration Board.

When a written application is prepared and submitted, the case officer at the Swedish Migration Board calls the asylum seeker to a supplementary interview before making a final decision on the asylum application.

The waiting period varies from case to case. It can be a few months or much longer. If a positive decision is made then the asylum seeker gets a permanent residence permit (PUT) – sometimes it can be temporary residence permit (TUT) – in Sweden and is automatically written off from the Migration Board and is placed (settles) in a municipality. If a negative decision is made on the application the asylum seeker is given two options: either to accept the decision and return to his/her home country, or appeal the negative decision to the Migration Court (Migrationsdomstol). Normally asylum seekers appeal a negative decision.

Second instance – Appeals

Responsibility for re-examining first instance negative decisions made by the Swedish Migration Board lies with three Migration Courts (*Migrationsdomstol*) and a Migration Court of Appeal (*Migrationsöverdomstol*).

Through this court and procedural arrangement the Migration Board is the first level on which your application for asylum will be examined. Another division – the Administrative Procedure – is responsible for all appealed cases. This is where the Litigation Officers are based and they are the ones who represent the Migration Board in the two-party process in the Migration Court.

If the Migration Board makes a negative decision in the first instance and you wish to appeal, your appeal first goes to the Migration Board which re-examines the decision and changes it if it appears that the first decision was incorrect. It is the Litigation Officers at the new Administrative Procedure Units who re-examine the appealed decision. If the Board stands by its original decision, your appeal and a statement pass to one of the three administrative courts of appeal – in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö – that are designated Migration Courts. The court process generally commences with a written process where the facts put forward by you and the Migration Board are sent to you and your legal representative and the Litigation Officer at the Migration Board. When all the facts have been presented the court is required to reach a decision. To make a decision supplementing the written material with oral proceedings could be

justified. Proceedings could take place either on your request or the court's. The court summons you, together with your legal representative, and the Migration Board to the oral proceedings. The court notifies its decision in writing to all concerned. If you, despite a summons and without a valid reason, fail to appear at the proceedings the court can reach a decision based on the material that already exists in the case.

In the Migration Court, the Litigation Officer represents the Migration Board and appears as your counter-party. The documents presented by the Litigation Officer in support of the Board's decision should in principle be public and be available to all parties concerned (There is still discussion going on concerning secrecy/ confidentiality). To satisfy the openness requirement, it is stated that most of the Migration Board's country information ought to be available on the Board's website (www.migrationsverket.se). This helps the asylum seeker/his lawyer to see on what grounds the Migration Board/Court base their decisions. If the Migration Court upholds the initial negative decision of the Migration Board and you still wish to appeal against it you can do so to the Migration Court of Appeal. However, it is required that permission to appeal to the Migration Court of Appeal is granted by the Administrative Court of Appeal in Stockholm. If permission to appeal is not granted, the Migration Court's decision stands. The Court mainly takes up matters for review which are of importance as a matter of principle and which could offer guidance in future decisions.

What happens after these two negative decisions?

After these two negative decisions it is not possible to submit a new application for a residence permit under the Aliens Act. Instead the focus shifts to the so called impediments (*verkställighetshinder*) to enforcement, which could be considered by the Migration Board. This means that each refusal of entry or expulsion should be preceded by considering whether there are impediments (obstacles) to the enforcement of the decision. The Migration Board can conduct a review on its own initiative or on request by the rejected asylum seeker on the existence of impediments to expel him/her to his/her home country. If impediments to refusal of entry or expulsion are medical or practical it is the Migration Board which decides and its ruling may not be appealed. However, if there are new protection circumstances which have not been examined before, a rejection decision from the Migration Board can be appealed to the Migration Court. If the Migration Court finds that such impediments exist, the matter is referred back to the Migration Board for further examination and a new decision.

Following examination in the Migration Court, and sometimes also in the Migration Court of Appeal, it is the Migration Board that will also in the future either issue a residence permit or provide the person who has been refused entry/

expelled with support and practical help with voluntary repatriation. If force is required for the person who has been refused entry/expelled to leave the country, the Board hands over the matter to the police who have the authority to make sure that the person in question leaves the country.

How long does it take to have my asylum application decided upon?

The length of time it takes to reach a decision depends on such factors as the number of asylum seekers who have arrived in recent months and how complicated their cases are. To speed up and make the asylum application assessment smoother, provision of all relevant documents including identification documents is very crucial for your asylum request. Asylum seekers are therefore recommended to submit such relevant documents.

Why does it take so long to process certain asylum applications?

Lack of identification cards/documents makes the process difficult. To investigate un-established identities demands much time and resources. This is one of the major factors that can affect applications' assessment periods. Therefore it is recommended that you submit identification papers to avoid such effects. On the other hand, if a certain asylum case was found to be an unfounded application – a Dublin case where there are no grounds for asylum/protection – a decision can immediately be made refusing entry and removing the person from Sweden.

What will be the end result of my asylum application?

Permanent Residence (*Permanent uppehållstillstånd PUT*)

If the concerned authorities establish that your claim for asylum is trustworthy then you are granted refugee status, permanent residence and a travel document if you satisfy the criteria for a Convention Refugee (see who is a refugee). If you were granted a permanent residence permit on grounds of protection needs, the Migration Board can issue you an alien's passport if you cannot obtain your home-country's passport. You can also be granted a permanent residence permit on certain medical grounds. If you were living in an independent accommodation and you get a residence permit you have two alternatives. You can either continue living at the same address (independently) or accept help from the Migration Board to place you in one of the municipalities willing to accept you. In the first case the municipality is responsible for any financial assistance that you might be in need of and for drawing an introduction plan for you. In the second case the receiving municipality arranges housing in addition to financial assistance and draws up introduction plans for a period of time. In both cases the government

pays agreed amounts of money to the municipality for every received refugee. The permanent residence permit allows you to stay in Sweden for good.

Temporary protection/residence permit (*tillfälligt uppehållstillstånd TUT*)

This is a temporary residence permit given to asylum seekers whose protection needs are considered to be temporary. In principle, the maximum duration of the temporary protection period is two years. However, if some form of return programme has been established before the expiration of these two years, the temporary residence permits may be extended for up to another two-year period. Persons granted temporary protection are entitled to family reunification with their spouse and children under 18 years of age and they may apply for a work permit.

Return (*återvändande*)

If the Migration Board establishes that you do not have any grounds for protection in Sweden then you must return to your home country or to any other country which will receive you. In this case, if the person willingly returns, then the Migration Board can assist him/her with arranging the trip back home. Organizations such as the IOM and the Red Cross also can assist in such repatriation. However, if you are not willing to return to your country and remain/hide then the Migration Board can stop/cut your daily allowances, withdraw your LMA id-card, and inform your employer to terminate employment if you have one. Depending on your situation the Migration Board can decide to put you in detention or transfer your case to the police who have the authority to keep you in detention and forcibly send you back to your country. In the Aliens Law, a decision ordering someone to leave the country is valid for four years (*utvisningsbeslut*).

What do I do if I am still in need of legal assistance?

If you have the means you can always appoint a lawyer at your own expense. There are also humanitarian organisations which can either appoint a lawyer or act as a lawyer for you. The Swedish Refugee Advice Centre (*Rådgivningsbyrån*) is the most competent body which can give you the necessary legal advice and assistance in this regard. You can find their contact details at the end of this handbook. Here it is important to remember that any application/appeal you intend to send to the concerned authorities should only be done through a competent lawyer.

When does an asylum seeker become 'illegal' and what does it mean to remain in the country illegally?

When an asylum application is examined and reasons to grant residence permit

were not found then the person is ordered to leave the country. If the person does not leave the country and continues to live in Sweden his/her stay in the country becomes illegal. This can mean that the person does not have any status, lacks rights and access to social services.

What is detention and who is detained (*förvar*)?

Detention is a special centre where asylum seekers (and other aliens) over 18 years of age may be detained. There are three categories of detainees:

- Unclear ID or identification detention, allowing for aliens to be detained if their identity is unclear. Under this category people can be held in detention for 2 weeks while their identification is being ascertained. This can be extended to a maximum of 2 months
- Investigation detention, where the right of the detainee to be released into the community is being investigated. This is generally when there are questionable aspects to the alien's identity and further investigation is needed, particularly if there is a possibility of national security being at risk if they are released. This category can be held in detention for 2 months and extended to a maximum of 4 months. It is possible that a detainee can be transferred from an ID to an Investigation category, meaning they can be held in detention up to 6 months. Identity investigations are undertaken by the Migration Board's Asylum Bureau with aid from the Foreign Affairs Department and the Police.
- When the alien, in all probability, will soon be deported or that it is expected that they will go into hiding if released. In this case, detention continues until travel documents are prepared. If it exceeds 2 months, then an appeal against detention can be submitted to Migration Courts. Normally after three days in detention the individual has the right to have legal assistance. It is important to note that all detainees are aware of their rights in detention and the length of time they can be held in detention. All detainees have a right under Swedish law to appeal their being held in detention. Appeals are sent to the Migration Courts. As an alternative to detention someone can also be put under supervision, i.e. a person reports regularly to the Migration Board or to the police to confirm his cooperation and that he/she is in the country. Which authority it is that decides whether to take someone into detention depends on where the asylum application is in the asylum process. Under Swedish law, no child under 18 years shall be held in detention for more than 3 days. In extreme circumstances this can be extended to 6 days. Normally the individual has the right to have a lawyer after three days in detention. Some organizations, such as Amnesty International, Red Cross, Swera and others pay visits to people in detention centres and try to assist when possible.

Can I officially get married in Sweden during my asylum period?

Asylum seekers like others have the right to get married after meeting some criteria. To be able to get married in Sweden a couple must first complete a procedure for an investigation into possible impediments (*hindersprövning*). The Local Tax Office (*Lokala skattemyndigheten*) handles this procedure, applicable to all foreigners, in the district in which the parties are registered. If they are not registered with a local tax office, they must contact the local tax office in the district where they are staying temporarily or where their wedding is to take place. All applicants must appear in person. The local tax office determines whether there are any impediments to the marriage. It is recommended that the applicants contact the office early to find out what documents are required:

- A document of identity. A passport is usually accepted.
- An affidavit listing the general impediments to marriage in the country of the persons in questions. This document contains only the general impediment to marriage in that particular state, and does not refer to a specific case and is merely a guide for the Pastor or Civil Authority to be used to determine whether any impediments exist in that particular State for the intended marriage.
- Evidence regarding the current marital status. An affidavit stating that the person in question is not married is usually considered sufficient. Two individuals who know the applicant well should sign this affidavit. The document should be notarised.

Can I get the right to stay if I get married to a Swedish National?

Getting married has nothing to do with your need for protection. If you get married or want to get married when your asylum request has been rejected, then normally the person has to return to his home country and apply for residence permit on family reunification grounds at the Swedish Embassy/Consulate.

Who are my contact persons at the Migration Board?

Normally an asylum seeker has two case officers (*handläggare*). One of them is in charge of examining the asylum application (*Asylenheten*) whereas the other looks after the economic and social needs of asylum seeker during the waiting time (*Mottagningsenheten*). For questions concerning your asylum and the right to work (AT-UND), you can contact the former and for issues such as daily allowances, school, medical expenses etc you contact the latter. You can also contact your lawyer if you have any questions about your asylum application.



Photo: Jim Elfström/IKON

The reception system

www.migrationsverket.se

By reception of asylum seekers (*mottagande av asylsökande*) is meant the type of assistance, socially and economically, given to persons during the period their asylum application is being processed. According to the Geneva Convention, the European Unions Reception Directive and the Swedish reception system, asylum seekers are entitled to some rights during the asylum period. These include the following:

Do I have the right to housing?

While an asylum application is being investigated, the Swedish Migration Board organizes accommodation for asylum seekers in reception centres which consist of rented ordinary furnished self-catering flats/apartments. Families generally live together, while single persons are accommodated in shared flats, normally at least two persons per room. The concerned authorities are usually informed about what it means to have asylum seekers living in the municipality. Unlike in some other asylum countries, asylum seekers in Sweden have the possibility, if they wish, to arrange their own accommodation for example with family, relatives and friends all over the country. This entails that asylum seekers in Sweden have freedom of movement without restrictions within the country. When asylum seekers prefer to arrange housing on their own, they are required to provide a physical address of the place where they will be staying. This is required in order to enable the Migration Board and the lawyer to reach the person when necessary.

Do I have the right to financial assistance?

The Swedish Migration Board offers economic assistance to asylum seekers who so wish and who have no other means of providing for themselves. This economic assistance which takes the form of daily allowances is meant to cover the daily expenses of asylum seekers while waiting for a final decision. This includes clothing and shoes, medical treatment and medicine, dental treatment, toiletries and leisure activities. Financial assistance granted to asylum seekers who arrange their own accommodation and to those who stay in self-catering housing provided by the Migration Board, is calculated as follows:

Adults:	71 kronor per day
Couples living together:	61 kronor per person per day
Children (0-17):	37-50 kronor per person per day.

For asylum seekers who stay in accommodations arranged by the Swedish Migration Board with meals included, the daily allowance is as follows:

Adults:	24 kronor per day
Couples:	19 kronor per day per person
Children (0-17):	12 kronor per child per day.

Apart from this financial aid, the Swedish Migration Board can grant a special one-time allowance. For instance, when an asylum seeker comes to Sweden during the winter and needs warmer clothing (winter jacket) and when newly arrived female asylum seekers give birth to children needing infant articles such as a buggy (*barnvagn*).

Do I have access to health care (*hälsovård*)?

Adult asylum seekers:

All asylum seekers are entitled to emergency medical and dental care. When first arriving in Sweden, asylum seekers undergo a medical examination paid for by the Swedish Migration Board.

For any visit to a health centre or hospital, adult asylum seekers pay only 50 kronor for the visit or examination and 50 kronor when buying a prescribed medicine from the pharmacy. For a medical transportation they pay a maximum of 40 kronor. If they have paid more than 400 kronor for doctor's appointments, medical transportation and prescription drugs within six months, asylum seekers can apply for a special allowance. The Migration Board can compensate for costs over 400 kronor. The county administrative board receives payment for the medical examinations and medical care from the Migration Board. The county administrative board can, following an application, receive payment for special costly care. In cases of medical emergencies asylum seekers are entitled to dental care.

Asylum seeking children:

Asylum seekers' children are entitled to free of charge medical and dental health care services as children resident in Sweden.

Pregnant asylum seekers:

Pregnant female asylum seekers have the right to receive free maternity care. They also have the right to do an abortion as well as receive contraceptive advice services free of charge.

To get compensation for medical expenses you are required to submit receipts. Normally there are certain local health centres (*vårdcentral*) where asylum seekers can go if they need to see a nurse or a doctor for minor health issues.

The Swedish Migration Board informs the asylum seeker where he/she can turn if they need to see a doctor in non-urgent situations.

Which activities does the Swedish Migration Board provide during the asylum period (*organiserad sysselsättning*)?

During the waiting period which varies from case to case all asylum seekers aged between 16 and 65 years are supposed to take part in activities organised by the Migration Board. This usually takes the form of schooling for young people and Swedish/computer lessons for adults. Other examples of organised activities are repairing furniture, helping newly arrived fellow countrymen to settle in, taking a course or a practical work placement.

Do asylum seekers' children have the right to schooling and child-care (*dagis*)?

Children and young people who are seeking asylum are not obliged to attend school although the municipal authority is responsible for ensuring that those who wish to attend school are offered a place on the same terms and conditions as other children and young people in the municipality. This applies to pre-school, primary and secondary/high school. It is the municipal authority that is responsible for schooling although it is the Swedish Migration Board that pays the cost.

All children between 7 and 16, including those of asylum seekers, have the basic right to education. The Migration Board is responsible for the education of children of asylum seekers. These children normally start in special classes for asylum seekers.

The residence centres have organised child-care based on the participation of parents themselves. When parents take part in the compulsory activities, child-care is arranged for their children. In addition, after-school activities are also made available in the residence centres. If you are living in an independent accommodation and have children who need day-care and schooling, contact the Municipality in which you are living.

Do I have the right to work as an asylum seeker (*rätt till arbete*)?

According to the Swedish asylum regulation, if an asylum application is estimated to take more than four months then the Swedish Migration Board exempts the asylum seeker from the requirement to have a work permit (AT-UND) in order to be able to take up employment. When that exemption is issued the asylum

seeker is required, before taking up any employment, to contact the Tax Office in order to get a 10 digit personal identification code which is used for purposes of tax payment. On the temporary id-card known as LMA (*Lagen om mottagande av asylsökande*) it is normally mentioned that the holder of the ID card is exempted from the requirement of holding a permit to work. When you start work, taxes are directly deducted from your monthly salary. Make sure to have an employment contract (*anställningsavtal*) signed by you and your employer.

Can I join the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union and enjoy benefits of unemployment insurance (a-kassa) under my asylum period?

Yes, you can be a member if you have an income generating job. You can either do that through your employer or directly by contacting the union. If you meet certain general conditions such as payment of membership fees, length of period worked then you can have the right to unemployment insurance if you lose your job for a period of one year. Becoming a member of the workers Union also entitles you to a rebate in the cost of home and travel insurance.

Do I have the right to sickness allowance if I am working (sjukpenning)?

In order to be covered by benefits of the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*) one needs to be either living or working in Sweden and be registered at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. However, because asylum seekers during the asylum period cannot be registered at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency as residents in the country, they are not entitled to sickness allowances from *Försäkringskassan* if they become ill while working.

What can have negative effects on my asylum application?

Being an asylum seeker does not exempt you from legal persecution/punishment (See also under heading "What are my obligations/responsibilities?"). Depending on the kind of crime committed, you can be jailed, your asylum application rejected and be deported to your home land possibly with a non-return decision for a given period of time or for good.

What can affect my eligibility to the rights under the waiting time?

- Negative decision on your asylum application
- If you do not take part in the organized activities
- If you do not cooperate with the concerned authorities and make the asylum process difficult

- If you become self-reliant (lose the right to daily allowance)
- If you go in hiding

Do I have the right to get my daily allowances while getting salary from employment?

The daily allowances are given to you because you are believed to be lacking other income sources. Receiving this state aid and at the same time getting salary is not only immoral but also against the law. In such a case the Migration Board has the right to report you to the police and demand you pay back the amount of money which you did not have the right to receive. Above all this can probably negatively affect your asylum case. Therefore, it is very important to declare any amount of money you get from employment irrespective of how little or much it is. The Migration Board decides if you still need support or not.

How and where can I find a job?

Once you have been issued an exemption from holding a work permit, you are entitled to look for work and to take up employment all over the country. Depending on your former qualifications and past working experience it is also possible to get an internship (*praktik*) through the Migration Board at a given workplace. This internship program is intended to acquaint you with the Swedish labour market and give you the chance to practice the language. There are several means you can use to look for a job, including:

- Using your personal contacts (friends, relatives)
- Internet – (www.ams.se, eniro.se ...etc.)
- Visiting potential employers
- Internship (*praktik*) for a certain periods of time at a certain workplace

What are my obligations/responsibilities?

Asylum seekers, just like all residents, are expected to respect and conform to all laws and regulations.

As a condition to be entitled to daily allowances asylum seekers must take part in the organized activities offered by the Swedish Migration Board. If an asylum seeker fails to meet this requirement without good reasons, then his/her daily allowances are reduced.

If an asylum seeker participates in an income generating activity (work), then according to the law he/she must report this to the Migration Board. If the generated income is more than what the Migration Board provides as allowances

then the Migration Board pays no allowances to such asylum seekers. If an asylum seeker is found to be working and receiving allowances from the Migration Board then this is considered a crime and the person can be reported to the Police. The Migration Board normally informs the asylum seeker of such rules.

If I get a job, does this increase the chance of my asylum application being approved?

Asylum applications are assessed on the grounds of peoples' needs for protection. Getting a job has nothing to do with these needs.

How can I have my previous qualifications/education evaluated and can I access higher education in Sweden?

The Swedish National Agency for Higher education (*Högskoleverket*) evaluates qualifications awarded on completion of higher education programmes outside Sweden. The agency determines which Swedish program/level your previous qualifications correspond to. This evaluation assists you when applying for a job on the Swedish labour market. If you have university qualifications or school-leaving certificates from another country and would like to study in Sweden, you must contact the university or higher education institution you would like to attend and ask for information about the programs they offer, how to apply and how you can gain credit for your previous studies. However, in Sweden asylum seekers are not entitled to access higher education.

Box 7851, 103 99 Stockholm. Luntmakargatan 13.
Phone: 08-563 085 00. Fax: 08-563 085 50. Email: hsv@hsv.se.



Photo: Leif Öster/Sveaskog

About Sweden

www.sweden.se

Sweden, *Sverige* in Swedish, is a long narrow country with an area of 450,000 km² making it the fifth biggest country in Europe after Russia, Ukraine, France and Spain.

Sweden's *geography* is characterised by its long coastline, immensely beautiful countryside, dense forests, myriad lakes and extensive mountainous areas. More than half of Sweden's surface area is covered by forest in addition to approximately 100,000 inland lakes and tens of thousands of archipelago islands off the long coasts on the Baltic to the east and the North Sea to the west adding to the beauty of the country.

By the 16th century Sweden had evolved into a strongly centralized nation, with Stockholm as its capital. The size of the country has changed over the centuries. Finland was part of Sweden until 1809. During certain periods Sweden also had provinces on the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, and even colonies in North America and the West Indies. In 1905, a nearly century-old union with Norway was dissolved, but since 1812 Sweden's borders have been unchanged and the country has been spared from war since 1814.

Sweden belongs to the *Nordic countries* (Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland), whose central portion is called Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Denmark). Average temperature in July is +18°C. The winter temperatures average slightly below freezing and the snowfall is moderate. Northern Sweden has long and cold winters and bright summers with moderate temperatures; in June and July, daylight lasts around the clock.

Language and population

Swedish – *svenska* – is the official language of Sweden. The Swedish language belongs to the northern branch of the Germanic languages, along with Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic and Faroese and it is the largest of these Nordic languages. Swedish is spoken by the majority of the 9 million people who live in Sweden. In Finland, which belonged to Sweden until 1809, about 5.6% of the Finnish population (some 300 000) have Swedish as their mother tongue, making Swedish one of the official languages in Finland. Swedish can be understood by Norwegians, Danes and a number of second-generation Swedes in North America.

In addition to Swedish, five languages are protected as *minority languages* in Sweden. These are: Finnish, Meän Kieli (Torne Valley Finnish), Yiddish, Sami and Romany Chib. English is taught in schools as the second language and most

people speak and understand English in Sweden. It is estimated that about 11% of the population were born outside of the country.

As a new-comer, to learn Swedish avoid, using English as much as possible in your social interactions with the Swedes!

Religion

Sweden is one of the most secular countries of the world and most people in Sweden consider religion and faith to be private matters. Few people in Sweden are religious - even fewer are actively so. However, although they are not religious, many Swedes choose to be baptised, have their communion and get married and buried in the church. Until January 2000, every citizen in Sweden was registered as a member of the Swedish Lutheran Church (Svenska Kyrkan) at birth. Today the church and state are separated and this is not the case anymore. In addition to the church of Sweden which has the most members in the country, other known world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and a number of other Christian Churches are found in Sweden.

Democracy

Sweden is a *constitutional monarchy* in which the King is head of state, with royal power limited to official and ceremonial functions.

Sweden became a fully-fledged democracy in 1921 when the full and equal right of women and men to vote was introduced. The rights and freedoms enjoyed by Sweden's citizens are set out in the written Constitution. The Constitution states that all public power proceeds from the people and that the Parliament – *Riksdagen* – is the foremost representative of the people. As such, the Riksdag with its 349 elected members is a crucial component of Swedish democracy. The Government, headed by a prime minister, rules the country and it is responsible to the Parliament.

Sweden is divided into 21 counties (*län*) and 289 municipalities (*kommun*). Each county is headed by a governor, who is appointed by the central government. Each county has a popularly elected council with the power of taxation, and each council has particular responsibility for education, public transportation, health, and medical care. Elected municipal councils are headed by executive committees.

Parliamentary, county and municipal elections are held every four years. In these elections the Swedish electorate elect their representative at national, regional and municipal levels to govern and administer the country in the coming four years.

There is also the European level to which elections are held every five years

to elect representatives for the *European Union* which Sweden joined in January 1995 after holding a national referendum.

Throughout the 20th century, *Swedish foreign policy* was based on the principle of non-alignment in peacetime, neutrality in wartime. Since 1995 Sweden has been a member of the European Union, and as a consequence of a new world security situation the country's foreign policy doctrine has been partly modified, with Sweden playing a more active role in European security cooperation as well.

Rule of law

Rights and duties of people in Sweden are stated and protected by laws and regulations. In Sweden no one is above the law and it is only the courts that have the authority to punish people who break the law. To ensure legal security and rule of law the Swedish legal system is autonomous and independent from the parliament, the government and other public agencies.

Freedom of expression

Sweden is an old democracy where openness and freedom of expression are honoured and often admired by many countries in the world. In Sweden the right of expression is guaranteed by the constitution. Everyone has the right to express themselves, their ideas and opinions about issues concerning the society. In Sweden nobody can be persecuted because they spoke against the government.

Equality and equal rights

In Sweden, all people are equal and must be treated with dignity and respect. It is not allowed to discriminate against people on the grounds of gender, race, religion, nationality, age, disability or sexual orientation. Sweden is by many regarded as a society in which there is a relatively high degree of equality between women and men. Women and men are of equal status and must be accorded equal rights in all areas of society. According to gender equality all men and women must have the same opportunities, rights and obligations, at home, in the workplace, in politics and elsewhere in society.

Welfare system – *välfärdsystemet*

www.randburg.com/sw/general/general_10.html

Health care and social welfare services are regarded as very important parts of the Swedish welfare system. Both are seen as public sector responsibilities, which are supported by a national social insurance system. Responsibility for health care, both in-patient and out-patient, is the duty of 23 county councils and three large

municipalities. Responsibility for social welfare service rests primarily with the municipalities.

Health insurance

All residents in Sweden are covered by national health insurance. If a person is ill, or must stay home to care for sick children, he/she receives a taxable daily allowance, 65-90% of lost income, depending on the length of the absence. The patient is charged a fee for medical consultations and any drugs prescribed. The county councils, together with the health insurance system pay most of the hospitalisation costs and laboratory fees.

Parental leave/child allowance (*föräldraledighet/barnbidrag*)

When a child is born, the parents are legally entitled to a total of twelve months paid leave from work, which can be shared between them and used any time before the child's 8th birthday. They also receive a tax-free child allowance (1 100 kronor per month), equal for everyone, until the child's 16th birthday. Children who then continue their education are entitled to study allowances. At university level these consist chiefly of repayable loans.

Child-care (*barnomsorg*)

Child-care is a priority issue in Sweden because most children in Sweden grow up with both parents working and having the responsibility for supporting the family. Municipalities provide children with day-care and after-school activities at subsidised rates.

Old-age pension

A basic old-age pension, financed by both employees and employers, is payable to everyone from the age of 65. The State also pays an income-related supplementary pension financed from employer payroll fees. These two inflation-linked pensions are designed to provide two-thirds of a pensioner's average real earnings during their 15 best-paid working years.

Parental insurance

Parents receive 80 per cent of their income for 360 days and, in addition, they are entitled to an additional 90 days parental leave with 60 kronor per day guaranteed. Almost all fathers in Sweden take parental leave in connection with the birth of a baby. If a child becomes ill, one of the parents stays home to look after the ill child.

Elderly-policy

Sweden also has a policy for the elderly which aims at enabling older persons to live independently with a high quality of life. Older persons in need of care and social services are entitled to high quality help. Elderly care is provided in accordance with democratic principles and is mainly financed out of taxation revenue. The Swedish Parliament (*Riksdagen*) has defined the following objectives for national policy for the elderly. Older persons shall:

- be able to lead active lives and have influence in society and in issues affecting their daily lives,
- be able to age with security and with their independence preserved,
- be met with respect and
- have access to good health and social care services.

Education (*utbildning*)

www.randburg.com/sw/general/general_11.html

As part of its social welfare system, Sweden provides an extensive child-care system that guarantees a place for all young children from 1-5 years of age in a public day-care facility (*förskola* or *dagis*). Between ages 6-16, children attend compulsory comprehensive school, divided in three stages. After completing the ninth grade, 90% continue with a three year upper secondary school (*gymnasium*) leading sometimes to a vocational diploma and often to the qualifications for further studies at a university or university college (*högskola*). Both upper secondary school and university studies are financed by general tax revenues. A separate municipal adult education system (*komvux*) enables adults with inadequate schooling to reach the same level of education as young people. Altogether there are almost forty institutions of higher education in Sweden which are operated by the State and provide free instruction. Almost a quarter of Swedish adults have a higher education. Private, government-subsidised adult education associations arrange study circles for 2.5 million course participants a year.

Public libraries (*bibliotek*)

Public libraries in Sweden are regarded as one of the branches of popular education. There are public libraries in all municipalities in Sweden. Because Sweden is an old democracy, openness and freedom of expression are honoured and often admired by many countries in the world. People who come to Sweden from other parts of the world where free access to knowledge and information is not common enjoy coming to the libraries to read and borrow material as they wish.

With your temporary LMA id-card you can get a library membership id

which can entitle you to borrow books and other materials home. The use of libraries is free of charge.

Taxation (*skatt*)

www.maklarsamfundet.se/maklartemplates/WidePage.aspx?id=774

The public sector is responsible for the provision of many services in Sweden, including education, labour market and industrial policies, health care, pensions and other social security, as well as environmental protection. Swedish personal taxes are very high; the revenue however goes back to the taxpayers in the form of public service. In Sweden there are both direct as well as indirect taxes. Direct taxes generate from national income taxes (20 percent on annual taxable earnings) and local income taxes (depending on municipality between 25-36 percent), as well as tax on capital. Aside from these taxes there is a system where employers contribute to cover pensions, health benefits and other social security. The tax authorities administer a tax account for everyone obliged to pay tax or other charges. The tax is to be submitted monthly. The system is arranged in such a way that the estimated taxes are withheld and paid over the year. These preliminary tax payments should add up to the amount calculated according to a person's final tax assessment.

The Swedish police (*polis*)

www.polis.se

Unlike many other countries, Sweden has a national police service which is responsible to the Ministry of Justice. The police service comprises the National Police Board, the National Laboratory of Forensic Science and 21 police authorities, each responsible for the policing of the county in which it is situated. It is the duty of the police to safeguard the legal rights of the individual, to prevent and detect crime and to ensure that anyone who commits an offence is identified and brought to justice. The number for emergency situations requiring immediate response is 112 ("one mouth, one nose and two eyes" as they teach the number to children). This number is used to contact the police, ambulance or fire brigade in situations where a crime is happening or if anyone is in immediate danger. In non-emergency situations you should usually contact the local police in the area where the crime has occurred. To contact your local police you should either phone them at 114 14, or go to the nearest police station that has a front office open to the public. Do not be afraid to contact the police if you need to do so. Being an asylum seeker does not prevent you from contacting or enjoying police protection. The police in Sweden are for all. Other emergency calls: Ambulance,

rescue corps, dentist, doctor, information on poison, mountain rescue corps, as well as fire department call 112. Information on poison: 08-331231.

Purchasing and performing undeclared work (*svartjobb*)

Undeclared work, or “black work” as one says in Sweden, refers to income from work on which tax should be paid in Sweden but is not. According to Swedish tax legislation virtually all legal income should be taxed, from the first Swedish crown onwards, and no group of people exempt from this responsibility. Working black or purchasing services without paying tax on them is regarded as a minor infraction, whilst it is seen as a serious offence to enter incorrect information in one’s declaration of income. Because all social services in Sweden are financed by taxes and because the economic assistance and other social services provided to you as an asylum seeker are also financed by taxes, it is very essential that people pay taxes and to do so to purchase and perform declared job (white work).

Violence against women and children

www.sweden.se

In 1998, the Swedish government passed new legislation on the violation of a woman’s integrity, establishing tougher sentences for men who perpetrate violence on women they know. The police were also given a mandate to prioritize reports of violence against women. In addition, penalties now increase with each incident; in other words, a punch in the face that in other circumstances would count as “petty assault” can now be considered “gross violation of a woman’s integrity” if it is part of a history of abuse. This crime now results in a much tougher sentence. It is also forbidden in Sweden to hit children under any circumstance. Nobody, not even parents, are allowed to hit children! There are special centres to shelter and protect women and children who have been subject of violence or are threatened with it. Generally speaking any use of violence, be it physical or verbal, is not allowed in Sweden. If you have been subjected to any kind of violence you should report it immediately to the police.

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

www.aic.gov.au/research/drugs/international/sweden.html, www.sweden.se

All types of narcotics are prohibited in Sweden. There are some very strong regulations against using and dealing with drugs and also against drinking and driving. Prison terms are given for all drug offences. Only murder, robbery and arson give longer prison sentences than drug offences. Drug offences are classified into three categories depending on the gravity of the offence: minor, normal and ma-

job. Generally speaking, a conviction for selling drugs automatically leads to a prison sentence. Foreign citizens in possession of any type of illegal drug may be arrested and expelled from the country.

The minimum purchasing age for buying beer from food stores is 18 and 20 years for buying other alcohol beverages at the 'Systembolaget' which is a state-owned enterprise and the only retail outlet that is allowed to sell alcoholic beverages that contain more than 3.5% alcohol. If you are under 25, you will probably have to present some proof of your age when buying. In bars and restaurants the legal drinking age is 18. To buy alcohol on behalf of a minor is strictly forbidden. You must be 18 years of age or over to buy tobacco in shops. It is banned to smoke in bars, cafes and restaurants, buses, trains and indeed all closed public areas.

Public transport (*kollektivtrafik*)

Public transport, including buses, commuter trains and the subway (in Stockholm) is available everywhere in Sweden and provides a convenient and fast way to get around. Transportation is fairly inexpensive if you buy a 30-day pass. Passes are valid for unlimited travel on the local network such as the subway (*T-bana*), local buses and commuter trains. To get on the train and busses you need to have a valid ticket or a monthly pass. If a person is not found to be in possession of a valid ticket/pass, the person pays a fine. There are special people who control tickets on trains/buses. It is recommended to have a valid ticket/pass if you want to use the train/bus to avoid fines and other probable consequences for your asylum request.

Alcohol and driving/can I drive with my national driving licence?

The blood/alcohol limit in Sweden is 0.02. It is best to avoid alcohol completely if driving. You can be prosecuted even if you have drunk only the equivalent of less than a can of beer. Police make frequent roadside spot checks. In Sweden wearing seatbelts are compulsory both front and rear. Children under 7 years old should be restrained in an approved seat for children. It is illegal to use a rear facing child safety seat in a car that has a passenger airbag. The minimum driving age in Sweden is 18. According to driving licence regulations in Sweden, asylum seekers can drive using a valid driving licence from their home country while waiting for a decision on their asylum application and for one more year when a residence permit is granted. Before starting driving it is advisable to contact *Vägverket* (Swedish National Road Administration) and see if your driving licence is valid. Remember that to be able to drive in winter requires special knowledge and skill which you might not have.

Prostitution and sex

<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/Ekberg.pdf>

Sweden criminalizes the buying of sex and decriminalizes the selling of sex. The novel rationale behind this legislation is that prostitution is regarded as an aspect of male violence against women and children. It is officially acknowledged as a form of exploitation of women and children and constitutes a significant social problem. It is forbidden for adults to have sex with a child who is under the age of fifteen. The Swedish law makes the purchase, or the attempt to purchase, sexual services a criminal offence. The offence is considered more serious if it is a child who is between fifteen and eighteen years old. (www.utanpapper.nu/en/Your_Rights/Children/). It is never allowed to have sex with somebody who does not want to (*våldtäkt*) (www.utanpapper.nu)

Punctuality: Time and appointments (tid)

Respecting appointments and times is very important in Sweden. If you make an appointment with any official/public servant etc, make sure to come in time because doing otherwise can result in you having to pay the cost of the interpreter (if ordered) as well as for any fees that are normally paid for visiting doctors/dentists. Therefore, if you cannot make an appointment then it is strongly recommended that you call to cancel or reschedule it.



Photo: Jim Elfström/IKON

Information and contacts

Are there other organizations which can assist me during my asylum period?

Because it is difficult to anticipate how long you will be waiting to have your asylum application decided upon, make sure to make the best use of your waiting time. Apart from the organized activities provided by the Migration Board during the waiting period, you can make use of your surplus time in attending free Swedish language courses, English, mathematics, computer lessons, sports, and other activities organized by several humanitarian organizations. Doing this can help you avoid waiting related stresses, obsession and anxiety and help you live a relatively normal life until your asylum application has been decided upon. You can also contact some of them to have assistance with your asylum application. The following is a list of some humanitarian organizations, NGO's and associations concerned in one way or another with asylum issues and which provide asylum seekers assistance in different ways.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – Protection Office

Using the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, the UNHCR ensures the basic human rights of vulnerable persons and that refugees will not be returned involuntarily to a country where they face persecution.

- Country of origin information
- Information about the asylum laws and process
- Assistance in cases of forcible deportation
- Investigate certain facts – registration within the UNHCR etc.

Contact the UNHCR office in your country if you are being sent back (if there is one)

UNHCR Regional Office in Stockholm, Ynglingagatan 14, 6th floor,
113 47 Stockholm. Phone: 08-457 48 80, 08-457 48 97.
Website: www.unhcr.org/se

Amnesty International/Sweden – Refugee Department.

Amnesty has its head office in Stockholm and district offices in Malmö and Göteborg. Amnesty also has refugee representatives (*flyktingombud*) in 18 districts in Sweden. For contact details of these offices and representatives visit Amnesty's home-page or call them.

- Documentation and country of origin information
- Amnesty International is against forcible return of individuals to countries where they might be at great risk of gross human rights violation.
- Intervention in certain cases which fall under its mandate.
- Help investigate and verify certain facts/ information in certain asylum cases if needed and requested.
- If you want to submit personal testimony about human rights abuses in your country
- Financial aid to former prisoners of conscience and their families and victims of torture.
- Information about asylum and human rights
- Contact details of Human Rights organizations in your home country if you are to be sent back (if they exist)

Box 4719, 116 92 Stockholm. Alsnögatan 11. Phone: 08-729 02 00/51
Website: www.amnesty.se, www.amnesty.org

Rådgivningsbyrån (Swedish Refugee Advice Centre)

- Free of charge legal representation
- Information and legal advice about the asylum laws and its process
- Legal advice about other issues related to staying or getting residence permit in Sweden

Rådgivningsbyrån för asylsökande and flyktingar.
Gyllenstiernsgatan 14, 115 26 Stockholm.
Phone: 08-660 21 70. Fax: 08-665 09 40.
Website: www.radgivningsbyran.se

The Red Cross (Röda Korset)

- Assistance in identifying and clarifying reasons for asylum
- Information supporting a claim to remain in Sweden on other grounds
- Assistance to people who wish to return to their country of origin
- Reuniting families

- Psychosocial support and assistance in the integration process
- Rehabilitation centres for victims of war and torture

Box 17563, 118 91 Stockholm. Hornsgatan 54.

Phone 08-452 46 00. Fax 08-452 46 01.

Website: www.redcross.se

For regional offices of the Red Cross visit www.redcross.se

Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children)

Information and assistance with:

- Child rights
- Rights of children/unaccompanied under the asylum process
- Asylum process for unaccompanied children
- Counselling

Rädda Barnen, 107 88 Stockholm. Torsgatan 4.

Phone: 08-698 90 00. Fax: 08-698 90 10. Website: www.rb.se,

www.utanpapper.nu

To get in touch with regional offices (11) of Rädda Barnen visit www.rb.se

FARR – The Swedish Network of Asylum and Refugee Support Groups

FARR has groups throughout Sweden which assist individual asylum seekers in the asylum procedure in co-operation with legal counsel. FARR's main objectives are:

- to defend the right to asylum
- to monitor that the Swedish authorities respect international and national refugee law when dealing with asylum applications
- to act as an umbrella organization for local asylum and refugee support groups
- to contact authorities on matters regarding refugee policy
- to represent our members in FOSIF – a consultative organ for Swedish humanitarian associations working with refugees.

Box 57, 776 23 Hedemora. Phone: 0225-147 77. Fax: 0225-147 77.

Email: info@farr.se. Phone: 08-617 69 86. Website: www.farr.se

To get in contact with regional groups of FARR visit: www.farr.se

Swera – Swedish Refugee Aid (Svensk flyktinghjälp)

Information, advice and help in asylum related issues.

Box 92011, 120 06 Stockholm. Textilgatan 43.

Phone: 08-21 16 05. Fax: 08-21 16 85. Email: info@swera.se. Website: www.swera.se

Sociala Missionen

The organization Sociala Missionen provides legal, social and psychological consultation on migration issues, including the following areas: asylum, family reunification, integration of new immigrants with residence permits and voluntary return of immigrants with residence permits.

Högbergsgatan 31A, 116 20 Stockholm.

Phone: 08-556 023 00. Fax: 08-556 023 29.

Website: www.socialamissionen.a.se

You can get contact details of local offices/activities of the Sociala Missionen through the above mentioned addresses.

The Swedish Church – Svenska Kyrkan

Consultation on migration/asylum issues and others.

Box 2016, 103 11 Stockholm. Munkbrogatan 2.

Phone: 08-508 940 36. Fax: 08-24 75 75. Website: www.svenskakyrkan.se

For local contact details for the Swedish Church visit their homepage or contact the above mentioned number.

Caritas Sverige

At local branches throughout the country, undocumented migrants may receive counselling on legal status or return as well as material.

Tegnérgatan 8, 4 tr, 113 58 Stockholm.

Phone: 08-55 60 20 00. Fax: 08-55 60 20 20. Email: caritas@caritas.se

For contact details of local offices visit www.caritas.se

Hiv-Sverige/Riksförbundet för hivpositiva (RFHP)

For information, support and advice on HIV/AIDS infection and asylum:

Tjurbergsgatan 29, 118 56 Stockholm.

Phone: 08-714 54 10. Fax: 08-714 04 25. Email: info@hiv-sverige.se

Website: www.hiv-sverige.se

RSFL – Riksförbundet För Sexuellt Likaberättigande

(RFSL – The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights). If you need to talk about coming out, sex, HIV/AIDS and other health issues, and relationships, as well as if you need assistance in your contact with the authorities and healthcare institutions and require legal assistance with your asylum application contact RSFL.

Box 350, 101 26 Stockholm. Sveavägen 59.

Phone: 08-501 62 900. Other local offices for RSFL can be reached via this number. Email: forbund@rfsl.se

Terrafem

Women who are victims of abuse may receive social, legal and psychological support. Terrafem runs a hotline (staffed by volunteers) in 27 languages where women can call to get help.

Box 891, 101 37 Stockholm. Phone: 08-643 05 10. Email: info@terrafem.org.

Website: www.terrafem.org

Centre Against Discrimination – Byrån mot diskriminering

The Centre against Discrimination is an anti-discrimination centre in Norrköping, Sweden, which aims to prevent all forms of discrimination in society based on ethnic origin, religion or other belief, sex, disability or sexual orientation.

Fröbelstugan, Södra promenaden 81, 602 34 Norrköping.

Website: www.diskriminering.se

Spånga Blåband

Information about Sweden, Swedish culture, work-life, norms, language and organized activities for people with post traumatic disorder.

Skäftingebacken 14, 163 67 Spånga. Phone: 08-795 83 40. Fax: 08-761 57 10.

Website: www.spangablband.nu

EDHR – Eritreans for Democracy and Human Rights.

Information and advice on asylum and its regulations and self-organizing. In co-operation with Studieförbundet in Sundbyberg/Stockholm, EDHR holds different activities aimed at empowering asylum seekers and helping them to have a meaningful life during the asylum waiting period.

Box 1316, 172 26 Sundbyberg. Humblegatan 34.

Phone: 08-981980. Fax: 08-98 45 82.

Website: www.edhr.org, www.eriasyl.com
Email: info@edhr.org, edhr-sweden@yahoo.com
Website: www.studieframjandet.se

GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Ombudsmannen mot diskriminering – DO (*Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination*)

The Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination (DO) is appointed by the government. The DO works to prevent the occurrence of ethnic discrimination in society on grounds of race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin or religious faith.

Box 3045, 103 64 Stockholm. Drottninggatan 89. Phone: 08-508 887 00.
Email: do@do.se. Website: www.do.se

Contact details for the main offices of the Migration Board

Göteborg

Asylum, reception units and Dublin cases: Detention:
428 80 Källered. Streteredsvägen 90.
Phone: 031-774 61 00. Fax: 031-795 53 30.
428 80 Källered. Streteredsvägen 84, hus 16.
Phone: 031-774 64 20. Fax: 031-774 64 22.

Malmö – Reception and Repatriation Unit

Box 3147, 200 22 Malmö. Östra Farmvägen 12.
Phone: 040-28 40 00. Fax: 040-28 40 63.

Malmö – Asylum Unit

Box 3147, 200 22 Malmö. Östra Farmvägen 5.
Phone: 040-28 40 00. Fax: 040-18 52 28.

Malmö – Dublin Cases

Box 3147, 200 22 Malmö. Östra Farmvägen 5.
Phone: 040-28 40 00. Fax: 040-18 52 28.

Malmö – Reception Unit

Box 3160, 200 22 Malmö. Celsiusgatan 35, 3 tr.
Phone: 040-28 40 00. Fax: 040-284065.

Märsta Detention Centre – Förvar

Postal address: Box 507, 169 29 Solna
Visiting address: Maskingatan 4E
Phone: 08-590 968 33. Fax: 08-590 968 59.

Märsta Repatriation Centre – Återvändandeboende

Postal address: Box 7, 195 21 Märsta
Visiting address: Maskingatan 4E.
Phone: 08-590 968 00. Fax: 08-590 929 25.

Norrköping – Reception Unit

601 70 Norrköping. Slottsgatan 81.
Phone: 011-15 60 00. Fax: 011-23 98 39.

Solna/Reception Unit (Stockholm)

Box 507, 169 29 Solna. Solnavägen 96.
Phone: 08-470 97 00. Fax: 08-470 99 30.

Solna/Asylum Unit and Dublin Cases

Box 507, 169 29 Solna. Pyramidvägen 2A.
Phone: 08-470 97 00. Fax: 08-470 99 30.
For contact details of other offices visit www.migrationsverket.se.

Sökandeombudsmannen (at the Migration Board)

If you feel you have not been treated with due respect by the staff at the Migration Board and/or if you have any suggestions in that regard you can contact the “Sökandeombudsmannen” whose job is to receive and investigate such issues. Note that the Sökandeombudsmannen has nothing to do with the examination side of your asylum. The number is 020-30 30 20.

Migrationsöverdomstolen – Migration Hight Court (Appeal)

Box 2302, 103 17 Stockholm. Birger Jarls torg 13.
Aktuariekontor/registratur: Birger Jarls torg 5, 111 28 Stockholm
Phone: 08-700 38 00. Fax: 08-14 98 89.
Email: kammarrattenistockholm@dom.se.
Website: www.kammarrattenistockholm.domstol.se.

Migrationsdomstolen – The Migration Court in Stockholm

Box 17062, 104 62 Stockholm. Drottninggatan 95 A.
Phone: 08-561 68 500, 08-720 90 00. Fax: 08-561 68 655.

Migrationsdomstolen – The Migration Court in Göteborg

Box 53197, 400 15 Göteborg. Sten Sturegatan 14.
Phone: 031-732 70 00. Fax: 031-711 78 59.

Migrationsdomstolen – The Migration Court in Malmö

Box 4522, 203 20 Malmö.

Kalendegatan 6, 211 35 Malmö; Avd 3 Kanalgatan 32, 291 34 Kristianstad.

Phone: 040-35 35 00. Fax: 040-97 24 90.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORK ASYLUM AND INTEGRATION IN THE SERIES ASYLUM RECEPTION IN FOCUS (IN SWEDISH ONLY):

No. 1. *Av egen kraft. Asylsökande organiserar sig.* Ginbot Abraha, Eritreanska föreningen för asylsökande i Sverige/NTG-asyl, 2006

No. 2. *"En värdig levnadsstandard" Asylsökandes sociala och ekonomiska rättigheter.* Lisa Tønnes, NTG-asyl, 2006

No. 3. *Återvändande i Sverige och Europa. Policy, praxis och projekterfarenheter.* NTG-asyl & integration, 2007

No. 4. *Mellan hopp och förtvivlan. Erfarenheter och strategier i väntan på asyl.* Rebecka Lennartson. NTG-asyl & integration/AROS-asyl, 2007

OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM THE NTN ASYLUM AND INTEGRATION:

Oviss väntan. En kunskapsöversikt. Svenska ESF-rådet/NTG-asyl, 2003

While we are waiting. Uncertainty and empowerment among asylum-seekers in Sweden. Jan-Paul Brekke, Institutt for Samfunnsforskning/NTG-asyl, Oslo 2004 (in English)

Asylum and Integration Theme. Information brochure about the NTN Asylum and Integration (in English)

Det finns gränser. Artiklar, kommentarer och intervjuer om nationellt och europeiskt asylmottagande. NTG-asyl & integration, 2007

All publications can be ordered from info@temaasyl.se or can be downloaded from www.temaasyl.se

**NTN ASYLUM AND INTEGRATION
- A WINDOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

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