



How has Swedish migration policy changed?

Sweden has been an immigrant country for a long time, where the last 40 years has been characterized by generous refugee and family immigration. Swedish migration policy has long been characterized by a humanistic and solidarity view of people, a country associated with open arms, with a welcome, wherever you are from, whoever you are.

During the autumn 2015, a refugee crisis occurred in the European countries which created ambiguity regarding the management of massive immigration. Within a few months, many millions of people left their homes to flee from war and devastation. Compared with the year before, the amount of migrants almost doubled. This created a severe pressure on European countries when many migrants crossed Europe's borders and sought protection from the Syrian war.

The refugee flows between Turkey and Greece, resulting in thousands of refugees entering the EU member states hoping to find a safer life's existence. This led to a new critical level for the European countries to deal with massive refugee flows. Germany was a welcome country in refugee reception and received over one million migrants.

Sweden, like Germany, pursued a generous refugee policy, which led to the fact that asylum searches increased drastically thereafter. It has been estimated that 162,000 migrants sought asylum in Sweden during this period of time, with 3000 applications a week, the refugee question subsequently became an important political issue for the Swedish citizens, and ended up high on the political agenda.

At the same time, disagreement arose about how the problem should be managed, in cities and municipalities in Sweden. The seated government, which consisted of social democrats and the green party, faced new challenges. The increasing number of asylum applications created challenges for municipalities in terms of accommodated housing for new arrivals.

In order for people to get shelter, the municipalities opened up the evacuation homes around the country, existing asylum homes were densified and a number of other measures were taken to increase capacity. Mostly, the Migration Board received 39 200 asylum applications in one month in 2015, which is a dramatic increase since earlier years. The problems encountered in connection with the increased volume of refugees were mainly the handling of asylum cases. Resources in the form of expansion of employees at the Migration Board, education, guidance and support for new employees were something that was in great need. Due to resource shortages, handling of cases slowed down and waiting for a decision has increased to more than 150,000 cases. The Swedish government has today changed from terms of solidarity and humanity, to argue that the situation is unsustainable. As a result, they have chosen to close the borders, regulate residence permits, and introduce ID controls. This is also very much reflected by the election result in Sweden lately.

How can this policy change be explained?

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