

MIXITIES: *Making Integration Work in Europe's Cities* *Delivering the Integrating Cities Charter*

PEER REVIEW – CITY OF STOCKHOLM September 2011

FEEDBACK REPORT

1. Executive summary

In September 2011 a team of city officers and representatives from migrant organisations visited Stockholm to carry out a peer review of its work on introductory and language courses as part of the MIXITIES project coordinated by EURO CITIES and financed by the EU's European Integration Fund. The review compared Stockholm's work with an EU-wide benchmark or standard of good practice, which MIXITIES developed as a tool to help cities in implementing the EURO CITIES Integrating Cities Charter (Stockholm is a Charter signatory). The visit was facilitated by MigrationWork CIC as thematic leader of the peer team.

This report summarises the team's findings and provides in-depth assessments of the elements highlighted in this executive summary.

Conclusions

Strong political consensus is a key feature of Stockholm's approach to integration, in a city where 22% of the population are migrants. The importance of language learning, orientation courses and programmes supporting entry to employment are stressed. The City's provision goes well beyond statutory requirements. In particular the peer review found:

- **Strong commitment** to offering high-quality civic orientation and language courses to newly-arrived migrants, as a way into its labour market and social life.
- Exceptional efforts to **tailor timing, delivery and content of its courses to meet migrants' needs**.
- **Development of migrants' skills and potential**, targeting support for more vulnerable individuals.

However these challenges were also noted:

- **Rigorous planning of courses but no overall strategy** for civic orientation and language learning that would make objectives, standards and target groups publicly visible.
- **Consultation with employers and migrant groups is not systematic** and relatively informal.
- **Risk of excluding some groups** not in receipt of benefits or seeking work, and longer-term residents who have still to learn Swedish.

These key conclusions are based on over 20 interviews carried out by peers and material supplied by the City. The evidence collected was used to test - against the benchmark - how Stockholm performed on 15 key factors essential to reaching this Integrating Cities standard: *The city welcomes migrants by promoting and supporting introductory and language courses which improve their access to city services and their integration into the community and workplace.*



Key factors: how did the City of Stockholm compare with the benchmark for Introductory and Language (I&L) Courses?

Key Factor	Peer review findings
1. Policy	<i>This key factor is partly matched. The City has been strongly committed over a long period to the integration of migrants, but it has not so far opted to set out an explicit, comprehensive strategy to steer work on I&L courses, or on migrant integration more broadly.</i>
2. Responsibilities	<i>This key factor is partly matched. Peers found that most people were aware of the City's responsibilities. Co-ordination in the City and with other public authorities generally worked well, although consultation with external stakeholders was weaker.</i>
3. Improving on basic entitlements	<i>The key factor is matched. Stockholm goes beyond its statutory duties and provides a wide range of language courses, support services and projects to meet the diversity of its immigrant population.</i>
4. Needs assessment	<i>This key factor is partly matched. There was evidence of systematic research and consultation for some programmes, but consultation with employers and migrants' organisations is relatively informal and irregular.</i>
5. Transparent organisation of provision	<i>The key factor is partly matched. Stockholm does not have an explicit integration policy or a public statement outlining responsibilities, but does have information for different kinds of migrants on their entitlements.</i>
6. Facilitating access	<i>This key factor is matched. Although there could be more effort to reach longer term residents and those not on benefits, Stockholm ensures that migrants have excellent and timely access to courses.</i>
7. Flexible course delivery	<i>This key factor is matched. Stockholm offers an exceptionally wide range of SFI courses at different times and places and in various study modes.</i>
8. Responsiveness	<i>The key factor is matched, with a very wide range of learning approaches designed to meet students' individual needs and prior experience.</i>
9. Orientation	<i>This key factor is matched. The content of both Civic Orientation and Swedish language courses is based on practical aspects of everyday life.</i>
10. Skilled and sensitive staff	<i>This key factor is matched. The City shows a strong commitment to training staff and ensures that staff understand and respect diversity and equality issues.</i>
11. Host community supports integration	<i>This key factor is partly matched. The City has mentoring programmes to help migrants to integrate, especially into the workplace, but there is little emphasis on sharing cultural activities or engaging with migrant groups.</i>
12. Vocational Relevance	<i>The key factor is partly matched. In the impressive vocationally-oriented language courses and work preparation activities, employers' involvement ranges from close co-operation to irregular, informal consultation.</i>
13. Next Steps	<i>This key factor was matched, Though some learners felt under pressure to enter the labour market too quickly, the city offers advice, support and good systems for recognizing migrants' prior learning.</i>
14. Recognition of Achievement	<i>This key factor is matched. The certificates awarded for SFI are nationally recognized and understood, although some employers still prefer informal assessment of applicants.</i>
15. Monitoring and Evaluation	<i>This key factor is partly matched. The city closely monitors the performance of its SFI provision and uses external evaluators to report on special projects, but there are some gaps in data.</i>

Recommendations - summary

1. Adopt a **more structured approach to consultation** on the City's learning provision for migrants so that employers and migrants' views can be heard, in particular through:
 - a roundtable of **employers' representatives**
 - a consultative body for **migrant communities**, chaired by a senior City political leader.
2. Develop **stronger outreach work** targeting particular districts and groups within migrant communities where there are greatest risks of exclusion, by:
 - making excluded migrants **better aware** of learning opportunities
 - where appropriate, **delivering services directly** to them
 - involving host and migrant **communities** in activity to support learning.
3. **Share good practice** across city departments and municipalities, and more widely to influence national provision.
4. Improve **post-course monitoring** to analyse reasons why learners dropping out of language or job preparation activities, and the longer-term effect of doing so. This should include:
 - analysing the reasons for early drop-out, by age, gender and background
 - carrying out a sample study of those who quit these activities and remain workless.
5. Adopt and publicise an **overall strategy for the City's introductory and language courses** so that stakeholders have a clearer idea of priorities and achievements. Incorporating key points from existing business plans, this strategy should:
 - **set out goals** for introductory and language learning
 - lay down **standards**
 - specify **priorities and target groups**
 - assign work to **partners** and identify mechanisms to coordinate their activity
 - incorporate **methods of consultation** with key stakeholders.

2. Introduction

The MIXITIES peer review visit to Stockholm from 26 to 30 September 2011 brought together a team of practitioners from cities and local migrant organisations in the MIXITIES partnership, to find out how the host city compared with an EU-wide standard of good practice in work on introductory and language courses. This report gives feedback from the team to the City of Stockholm.

MIXITIES peer review: aims and method

The transnational MIXITIES project aims to help the cities of Europe to build capacity for promoting migrant integration. In particular the project aims to equip them with tools to implement the Integrating Cities Charter, launched by EUROCITIES in 2010, in which city authorities commit themselves to core principles and goals for the *'integration of migrants and the promotion of well-managed migration in our increasingly diverse cities'*.

Led by EUROCITIES and funded by the European Integration Fund, the MIXITIES partnership uses the method of peer review to develop these instruments for more effective work on integration. It proceeds through these steps:

- From the Integrating Cities Charter MIXITIES drew out three major themes. For each theme a 'headline' statement summarises the standard required to fulfil the Charter. The Stockholm review focused on the theme of Introductory and Language Courses, where "introductory" refers to courses for new migrants, often called "orientation" courses. The **Integrating Cities standard**, as defined in the benchmark on Introductory and Language Courses,¹ is: *The city will welcome migrants by promoting and supporting introductory and language courses which improve their access to city services and their integration into the community and workplace.*
- MIXITIES then developed a more detailed model or **benchmark** for each theme, showing what needs to happen in a city to achieve the Integrating Cities standard. The benchmark is built up from **key factors** that are found to make the difference in reaching that Europe-wide standard. These factors were identified from a survey of known good practice across Europe, together with the experience of MIXITIES partner cities and members of the EUROCITIES Working Group on Migration and Integration themselves.
- A distinctive feature of the MIXITIES method is that – while applying a Europe-wide model – it also invites the participating city explicitly to identify **contextual issues**, which, in a specific local case, may explain why it varies from the benchmark. These could include for instance characteristics of local population and economy, financial pressures, the structure of service provision in the city or national legislation.
- MIXITIES brings a **team of peers** to the host city to apply the benchmark for a given theme. A peer (or 'equal') is a practitioner from a partner city whose work also relates to migrant integration, so they can understand host city experience. They include people from NGOs based in migrant

¹ As defined in the benchmark on Introductory and Language Courses

communities. The peer team checks the host city's activity systematically against each key factor in the MIXITIES benchmark, to see if it is fulfilled or not.

- The team draws partly on **documentary sources** of information: for Stockholm, a detailed self-assessment report completed by the City authority before the visit, plus a range of other documents which it helpfully supplied.
- The review is however based mainly on **interviews carried out by peers** with city officials and other stakeholders working in the field of introductory and language (I&L) courses, where they seek evidence on how the city compares with the MIXITIES benchmark. Each piece of evidence from interviewees is recorded. In Stockholm peers completed 21 interviews with respondents from across sectors, generating more than 130 items of primary evidence.
- Peers end their review by drawing out **preliminary overall conclusions** about how the city performs against the benchmark, which are presented directly to host city colleagues in a special feedback session. Their conclusions are set out more fully in this post-visit report. It adds **recommendations**, guided by peers' findings, to help the city to strengthen still further its well-established work to challenge discrimination and make the most of diversity.

Through its peer review visits, the MIXITIES project also **pilots and tests the benchmark** itself. All participants in Stockholm were invited to comment on how well it functioned as an instrument to assessing the host city's activity: for example, whether it defined key factors in the right terms. However learning about the benchmark is applied by MIXITIES separately, in preparing toolkits later in the project. Here in the feedback report, we focus on findings about the City of Stockholm.

The peer team and their report

The Stockholm review was carried out by the following peers:

- Hala Akari (Athens)
- Luis Oswaldo del Castillo Miranda (Barcelona)
- Iwan Kempenaar (Amsterdam)
- Néstor Navarro Salvany (Barcelona)
- Danilo Parodi (Genoa)
- Hans Thieleman (Ghent)
- Riikka Merimaa (Helsinki)
- Alexandra Mentjes (Munich)

All are employed by the respective city authorities except Hala Akari (Hellenic Society for Child Help and Support) and Luis Oswaldo del Castillo Miranda (ACATHI – Catalan Association for the Integration of Homosexual, Bisexual and Transsexual Migrants). The team was supplemented by Ana Feder of EURO CITIES. Team leaders were Anna Reisenberger and Richard Stanton of MigrationWork CIC, UK, who drafted this report on behalf of the team.

Section 3 briefly indicates some key aspects of the **context** for work on migrant integration in Stockholm, forming the background for the team's analysis. Section 4 then presents the team's **findings** for each key

factor (KF) in the MIXITIES benchmark for introductory and language courses. In each case the KF is cited, followed by a summary paragraph giving peers' assessment of how the City of Stockholm stands in relation to that factor: the KF is matched by the city's work; it is not matched; it is partly matched; or peers found insufficient evidence to make a decision on this KF.

Lastly Section 5 sets out overall **conclusions** and Section 6 the team's **recommendations**. Peers have not tried to make separate recommendations to respond to every challenge identified by their review: Section 5 focuses instead on larger-scale recommendations, most of them addressing several key factors.

All statements in the report are based on information either in documents supplied by the host city, or from interviews. To ensure open responses, peers gave a guarantee of anonymity to everyone they interviewed. This report therefore removes all references that could identify its content with specific interviews. These interview references are listed in a separate file, to be held confidentially by MIXITIES as an 'evidence trail' for the peer review.

The report focuses on the work and role of Stockholm's elected public authority which represents, administers and serves its people – in Swedish, *Stockholms Stad*. The reader should note that **City (with capital letter)** is used here to denote this public authority. Stockholm as a place, urban society and economy is referred to as the 'city' (with lower case).

The team gratefully acknowledge the skilled and dedicated work of City of Stockholm officers – in particular Eva Woll Tegbäck – in preparing for their city's peer review and giving support to the team throughout their visit. They also thank the City authority for opening itself frankly to this intensive enquiry, and thank all their interviewees from across sectors who reflected honestly and thoughtfully on the challenging questions posed to them.

3. Context of the peer review

Stockholm's migration experience

Over the past two decades, Sweden has become a country of sustained net in-migration. During the last five years in particular its rate of immigration relative to population has been well above the EU average.² Already in 2008 when Sweden's population stood at 9.3 million, migrants – people born outside the country – made up 14% of the total, or 18% if residents of foreign background (ie. those born in Sweden to migrant parents) were also included.³

Refugees account for a higher proportion of Sweden's migrants than for many other EU states. Between 1980 and 2010, Swedish authorities granted residence permits to 1.3 million migrants.⁴ Of this total number of permits, 29% (378,000) were issued to people recognised as refugees or otherwise in need of protection. A further 10% went to family members reunited with refugees. Overall therefore, almost two-fifths of Sweden's residence permits granted over these three decades were for people who came to seek protection or for their family members. The country's emphasis on the right to protection is reflected in its relatively high rate of recognition of refugee status, with around 50% of asylum applications accepted (for instance) in 2007 and 2008.⁵

Most migrants choose initially to live in Stockholm. Between 2000 and 2009, the city's resident population rose by 80,000 or just under 11% to stand at 830,000. Its migrant population increased more than twice as fast over this period - by 27% - accounting for almost half the city's total growth in population. By 2009 Stockholm had a foreign-born population of 181,000, so more than one in five residents (22%) was a migrant.

Over the three years 2008-10, the City estimates, Stockholm experienced an annual inflow of foreign nationals of more than 11,000. With asylum seeker numbers declining internationally, most of these newly-arrived foreign nationals had come for family, work and study reasons, and a substantial proportion were EU nationals (especially from Poland, Finland and Germany). However Sweden's long record of receiving asylum seekers was reflected, over the same period, in the registration of around 1,200 refugees per annum as new Stockholm residents.⁶

² EUROSTAT, Crude rate of net migration per 1000 inhabitants – Sweden compared to rate for EU-25 countries, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database

³ Statistics Sweden

⁴ Includes people granted subsidiary forms of international protection eg. humanitarian protection.

⁵ Data on residence permits from Swedish Migration Board

<http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.63b7904d12ece36769a80001426/Tab+1+-+Residence+permits+granted+1980-2010.pdf>; for asylum decisions 2007 and 2008, Swedish Migration Board and Statistics Sweden

⁶ City of Stockholm MIXITIES Self-Assessment Report (Aug. 2011). Note that this City estimate refers to nationality, not to country of birth which defines 'migrant' in preceding paragraphs.

Demand for the introductory and language courses reviewed in this report is of course one measure of the importance of immigration in Stockholm's development. During 2010 the City's Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) service registered 16,000 people for its courses, and up to 20,000 registrations were anticipated for 2011.⁷

Policy consensus – city level

Strong political consensus is a key feature of Stockholm's work on migrant integration. The City's budget book 2011, in presenting its goals for the Labour Market Board, includes an emphatic statement that *'Immigration enriches Stockholm. It is positive, welcome and necessary that people seek to come to Stockholm. Those who come...from another land shall have a real opportunity to establish themselves here. So reception of new arrivals must aim at integration, jobs and participation...'*⁸ The importance of language learning and orientation courses is stressed, as well as the role the city plays through initiatives like Jobbtorg in supporting entry to employment.

The weight given to these services is illustrated by the City's financial allocations to them. Its budget for 2011 assigned the equivalent of about €17m to SFI and €21m to Jobbtorg (mainly catering for migrants). The combined provision of about €38m for these two major integration-related services made up more than half the total budget for the Labour Market Administration, set up in that year. It was almost 50% more than the resources allocated for Stockholm's whole adult education service.⁹

Stockholm's Vision 2030 outlines the City's aspiration to become a world class and international city. The Vision emphasizes the intention to work with business, *'so that people can learn a new language, find a job and feel at home in the new culture'*. The value of a pluralistic society is also asserted *'Stockholm represents a diversity of cultures and people's differences are seen as an asset both in cultural and working life.'*¹⁰

The City's commitment to integration is demonstrated also through its recent signing in 2010 of the EURO CITIES Integrating Cities Charter. For 14 years it has sponsored the Nelson Mandela prize awarded to an individual, project or activity that has made a significant contribution to improving integration and understanding between people of different backgrounds.

Policy change – national level

Stockholm's work on migrant learning, reviewed here, has to be seen against the background of a major change in national policy on delivery of integration services. It relates especially to 'newly-arrived' refugees and others granted international protection, and their families, who make up (see above) an important element of Sweden's migrant population. Since December 2010 the Swedish central government has taken over lead responsibility for 'introduction activities' for these groups, from

⁷ Lena Isaakson – emailed statistics

⁸ *Stockholms stads budget 2011* p83

⁹ *Stockholm Stad Budget 2011-2013* p.273. As presented in this source, the sums for 2010 current (non-capital) expenditure were: SFI service SEK161m, Jobbtorg SEK198m, with total budget of SEK667m for the Labour Market Board.

¹⁰ *Vision 2030: a guide to the future*

municipalities which previously led in this area.¹¹ The change is intended to improve coordination and to give a stronger focus on getting newcomers into work.

Through its Public Employment Service (PES), therefore, national government now co-ordinates integration work with refugees and others in need of protection. The PES prepares an individual 'introduction plan' for these newcomers, including their attendance at both Swedish language and civic orientation courses. Curricula for both types of courses are also determined at national level. However their delivery remains the task of local municipalities. So for recent refugees, Stockholm and the neighbouring councils commission or themselves provide civic orientation courses and Swedish for Immigrants to meet the needs of these communities.¹² For migrants in non-refugee categories, meanwhile, responsibility for introductory and language services remains wholly with municipal authorities like Stockholm.

In line with the national emphasis on employment as the key to integration, the City of Stockholm has assigned these complex tasks to its Labour Market Board.¹³ This high-level body sets goals for the Labour Market Administration, which is charged with delivering courses on Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) and orientation for newcomers, as well as adult education, vocational training and help with unemployment issues for people receiving income support from the municipality or other social benefits. These tasks are reviewed in the Board's annual business plan, elements of which can be viewed on the Stockholm City website.¹⁴

¹¹ This new introduction regime also covers migrants aged 18 or 19 with no guardian.

¹² Policy briefing is available online

¹³ *Regulations for Labour Board*, City Council decision Dec 2010

¹⁴ For example *Budget and Business plan in 2011 for Labour Market Board 31.1.11* at <http://www.insyn.stockholm.se/arbetsmarknad/insyn.aspx?page=record&nodeid=432916>.

4. Findings

Key Factor 1 Policy: The city's integration policy commits it to a strategy for supporting introductory/orientation activities and language support (I&L) courses

This key factor is partly matched. The City has been strongly committed over a long period to the integration of migrants- with well-developed plans for individual services and projects - but it has not so far opted to set out an explicit, comprehensive strategy to steer integration work in general or I&L courses in particular.

The MIXITIES peer review confirmed Stockholm's long-term commitment to the integration of migrants, backed by a long-standing political consensus that the city itself benefits by investing in the integration process. This consensus has been maintained through changes in patterns of migration and in political control. It is reflected for example (as Section 2 has shown) in the City Council's Vision 2030 document and in its budget, as well as initiatives like its endorsement of the Integrating Cities Charter and the Nelson Mandela Award.

Recent changes in the delivery of orientation courses, have given greater control to national government, who have also been seeking to raise completion and achievement rates in language courses. At municipal level policy-makers decided to move SFI and adult education into a new Labour Market Department whose labour market measures that help people to progress more quickly from welfare into work.

To steer this work, the City Council has carefully developed business plans for specific services and projects. The Labour Market Board, as noted above, adopts an annual business plan and budget which sets out key policy aims for the coming year. But this covers all services administered by the Board, migrant and non-migrant, and is not a fully-developed strategy.

Closer to the theme of this peer review is the City's annual workplan for its Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) service. It is a published city document, which the peer team saw. But the team heard some evidence that it may not be widely known, even among people working for the SFI service. Moreover it is mainly a list of actions needed to provide a good-quality service over the year, rather than a strategic view of basic integration goals it will fulfil, its partners' roles and how SFI should develop in future.

In any case this workplan relates to language learning only, rather than to I&L courses as a whole, as specified in this KF1. When asked if an overall strategy for I&L courses was available, respondents replied that it is built into the budget, so that politicians demonstrate their commitment through the substantial sums allocated to supporting Jobbtorg, the range of SFI courses and related provision. But apart from the short statement cited above (Section 3), the City budget does not set out specific objectives for work with migrants or assign responsibility for fulfilling them. Such aims are simply subsumed in the budget's general indicator that Stockholm residents will increasingly 'become self-sufficient'.

As an alternative to a strategy specifically for I&L courses, cities may prefer to adopt an overarching strategy for migrant integration in which its aims for I&L learning are one component. But, peers noted, this sort of wider framework has not been adopted in Stockholm either. Even those in senior roles were not able to point peers to an explicit, public and comprehensive strategy of this kind which - across the range of Stockholm's integration services - would identify key needs and spell out

- overall goals for this area of work, such as the balance between integration through work and social integration
- what standards the City expects
- which groups are supported, and whether any should be specially targeted for support.

Whilst the Vision 2030 plan adopted in June 2007 makes a powerful pledge to support integration and promote diversity, this consisted of two paragraphs only. Interviewees could not identify documents showing how it was being taken forward at present or (for instance) how measures to welcome and orientate new migrants and improve their Swedish are tied into Vision 2030.

Two reasons were given for the absence of an explicit, visible strategy on integration – whether for migrant learning services as such, or for integration work as a whole. The first was Stockholm’s long-term consensus on this issue: political leaders saw no need to highlight publicly the implicit goals and priorities on which they have been acting for many years. Their implicit objective was summed up as providing newcomers with good enough knowledge of Sweden’s language and working life to enable them to become full and valuable citizens. Secondly it was argued that, with much integration policy set by national government (see KF2), the scope for an independent City strategy was limited. For instance the City does not prepare welcome packs for newcomers because national government does this.

However peers noted several effects of the lack of public, overarching strategy. One consequence was that relationships with some key stakeholders could be unclear and uncertain. From those involved in collaboration with Stockholm I&L services, peers heard some scepticism about the City’s delivery of targets for this work and complaints that it did not adequately recognise the difference between its own financial resources and those available to smaller authorities. Even within the City it was acknowledged that their budget was not always flexible enough to meet the needs of migrants in poorer districts.

Whilst strong professional commitment and good internal communications do enable practitioners in these services to coordinate much of their work effectively, the absence of a strategic framework could – peers felt – eventually put at risk some of their achievement. They concluded that KF1 is only partly met.

Key Factor 2 Responsibilities: The city’s strategy for I&L courses clearly assigns responsibility for delivering them between the municipality and other partners, to ensure adequate provision for its migrant citizens

This key factor is partly matched. Although there is no written strategy, peers found that most people were aware of the City’s responsibilities. Co-ordination within the City and with other public authorities generally worked well, although consultation with external stakeholders was weak.

Responsibility for provision of Civic Orientation courses changed in December 2010, as noted above, when central government through its Public Employment Service (PES) took over the co-ordination and introduction plans for the large group of Sweden’s migrants who need protection as refugees. But municipalities retain important roles in delivery: responsibility for Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) and orientation for newcomers is assigned in the City of Stockholm to its Labour Market Department. Although there is no public integration strategy setting out the responsibilities for language and civic orientation courses, internal structures do show clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

Peers heard some positive evidence about the way this new structure is developing. City officers and external stakeholders were clear about the Labour Market Department’s role in linking institutions. It was reported that co-ordination and co-operation between initiatives like Establishing in Stockholm, Jobbtorg, SFI and Civic Orientation providers is good. The national PES and Labour Market Department have a local agreement to utilise resources effectively, collaborate on the ground in different districts and resolve problems that arise, and it was reported that they do cooperate well in practice.

There is some internal co-ordination between the City of Stockholm and the district municipalities in the County of Stockholm that surround it. They sit together on the Stakeholder Committee for Civic Orientation, which also includes the SFI and the PES. This committee also has an advisory working group to deal with practical matters, comprising municipal managers who deal with new migrants and PES managers from different parts of the county of Stockholm.

Nevertheless peers found uncertainty about the way responsibility is divided between key actors in this system, at three main levels:

(a) City and PES: Between the City's Jobbtorg initiative, which targets 10,000 long-term unemployed (including immigrants) per year on social benefits to help them get into work, and the Public Employment Service (PES) with 20,000 registered jobseekers per month, responsibilities continue to overlap and it was acknowledged that there was an on-going debate about this. Peers found some evidence that because there is an overlap in orientation activities in different courses, there are some difficulties in co-ordination between the PES and the private Civic Orientation Providers. Peers were also told that there was no co-ordination between PES counsellors and SFI counsellors. Given the impressive range of advice, counselling and coaching available in SFI, Jobbtorg, and PES, it is important from the new migrant's point of view that this advice and action planning is well-integrated and is not confusing.

The rationale for maintaining two services was in part that the City funds social benefits while the national government pays unemployment benefit. But - for instance - Jobbtorg clients were also encouraged to register with PES, which could be confusing for newly-arrived migrants.

(b) Within the City authority: The relationship of the Labour Market Department to other parts of the City Council, such as service providers responsible for social care, cultural activities, and other areas that are relevant to integration, was not explicit. This makes it difficult to see how orientation and language courses contribute to the Integrating Cities charter goal of "improving access to services". Peers heard that people from other departments, who play an important part in migrants' integration, are not involved in giving input to the courses. Some departments are represented on steering groups, but felt they were there to comment on results, rather than being able to shape provision.

(c) Between SFI providers: As part of a general approach promoting individual choice for migrants as well as Swedish citizens, there are ten private providers of SFI (run by ten companies) as well one municipal school divided into three sections. Tendering documents clearly specify the requirements of private providers of both SFI and Civic Orientation courses. SFI Stockholm's 2011 internal work plan outlines its responsibility for contract monitoring and supervision but is less clear on how City and private providers will co-ordinate SFI work.

Other municipalities which lost direct responsibility for introductory courses under the 2010 reform – both districts within Stockholm and in the City's periphery – are aware of having much less input to them now, even though they sit on a Stakeholder Committee for such courses with the City of Stockholm and other agencies (see above). Peers were told of their sense that *'the distance from us to steering introduction courses has got longer'*. Students were reported to have difficulty in transferring between the City's SFI courses and those elsewhere, because course standards were not fully aligned between Stockholm and other municipalities (including its neighbouring authorities).

Key Factor 3 Improving on basic national entitlements: The city adopts creative ways to improve the position of migrants within the host community, beyond the basic legal requirements

The key factor is matched. Stockholm goes beyond its statutory duties and provides a wide range of language courses, support services and projects to meet the diversity of its immigrant population.

Under present legislation municipalities have to provide SFI courses and are grant-funded to do so on a per capita basis. But the City has developed this basic role into an imaginative range of language services to meet learners' needs, from professional and vocational language courses, communications courses which can be attended whilst on a work placement to special programmes for non-literate people such as Right Step (Rätt Steg).

The City has demonstrated this commitment to go beyond statutory requirements by allocating funds to promote migrants' integration and language learning:

- The Jobbtorg programme has been mainstreamed by moving it from project to permanent funding. It offers guidance, coaching, job-matching and work placements for unemployed people who receive social welfare as they do not qualify for unemployment benefit. Of clients registered in 2010, around one-third were immigrants who had recently arrived i.e. had received their residence permit within the previous three years.
- The City also gives one-to-one support to migrants through projects' mentoring schemes and extensive personal and educational guidance services.
- Peers were told that whilst the total size of district budgets is fixed annually, the SFI budget in the Labour Market Department has scope to prioritise the SFI needs of particular disadvantaged groups. One example cited was the plan to build a new SFI college in an area with a high migrant population where people need more support.
- The annual Nelson Mandela prize for integration is promoted in a ceremony at the City Hall, with media coverage. Recent winners include: a company with a diverse workforce, the City police force who increased diversity and provided opportunities for unemployed young people who were not from Nordic backgrounds, and a teacher working in an organisation for intercultural dialogue.

The City also makes creative use of European funding to supplement its own resources and extend its range of integration projects, for example:

- The European Refugee Fund helps to finance the project "Support for New Arrivals" with an initial orientation and language course; bilingual Arabic and Somali coaches who offer support during subsequent work placements; a mobile phone tool for language learning (with both dictionary and pronunciation aids); and training for employers on inter-cultural skills and diversity within the labour market

- Establishment Stockholm project (Etablering Stockholm) is a joint project run by the City, PES and Red Cross with support from the European Social Fund (ESF), helping migrants to enter the job market quickly by developing appropriate skills and getting recognition for soft skills and existing competences, with close links to employers and other stakeholders to minimise barriers to employment.

However, peers found very few examples of cultural activities being used to strengthen integration or language learning, perhaps because both central government and the City of Stockholm emphasise early engagement in the job market as the key to integration.

Key Factor 4 Needs assessment: Courses and materials are developed and reviewed on the basis of research and consultation, which includes NGOs (non-governmental organizations), MSOs (migrant self help organizations), participants and employers

This key factor is partly matched. There was evidence of systematic research and consultation for some programmes, but consultation with employers and migrants' organisations is too sporadic and informal.

Potential demand for civic orientation (CO) courses was assessed using Migration Office statistics. However these provide information only about immigrants' country of origin, not about their language, which is of course crucial for planning CO courses in their mother tongue.

The SFX programme of vocationally related language programmes was researched, piloted, monitored, and externally evaluated and these results are being used to plan its wider application in SFI provision. Whilst consultation about needs with employers is mainly informal, they do influence the content and vocabulary of work-related and professional courses. For instance, the City consulted an employment agency to assess labour market demand for engineers, to guide it in launching a specialized course for this professional group. A new professional language course was started, peers heard, after an employer happened to have an informal conversation with an officer.

But evidence to peers suggests that (unlike internal stakeholders) external stakeholders such as employer bodies and migrant groups are not usually engaged by the City in a structured way to help identify need, either for SFI or for civic orientation courses. Although the City leaders and officers were open to dialogue with employers, this was not consistent. A representative of a business organisation had been invited into a consultation programme, which was then abandoned by the City.

The City does not use formal mechanisms for consulting NGOs or MSOs before or during the planning of services delivered by the Labour Market Department, though some were contacted once these services were running to comment on them. In particular, migrant organisations have no formal advisory role in Stockholm's integration work. The SFI centre is responsible for determining methods and the materials, and migrant community representatives appeared to have little opportunity to say whether courses and learning resources were appropriate.

Some feedback suggested that learners on CO courses were frequently consulted through written and oral evaluations. A provider described how the class and teacher meet every Friday to improve

communication skills, and discuss and review the development of their course. But it was not clear how far or how quickly courses change in response to what learners say about their needs.

Peers concluded that, though the City seeks to base its I&L course provision on research and consultation, it could do more to engage stakeholders systematically in this work. At present therefore KF4 is only partly matched.

Key Factor 5 Transparent organisation of provision: The city's strategy explains why introductory and language courses are separate or combined provisions, and why particular groups of migrants are prioritized or excluded

The key factor is partly matched. Stockholm does not have an explicit integration policy or a public statement outlining responsibilities, but does have information for different kinds of migrants on their entitlements.

- The City of Stockholm's online information explains entitlements to SFI for newcomers under Adult education, with information on curriculum, course levels, accreditation, courses for professionals, support, etc and links to the different providers. Information on the SFI bonus explains the role of the municipality.
- Newcomers' entitlements to measures to help them get into work are set out simply and can be read in different languages on the Public Employment Service website.
- Information on Stockholm's special projects such as Establishment Stockholm and JobbTorg, which also include which provides communications training as a complement to SFI, is found under Stockholm's website under "Work".

There is no publicity which sets out the relationship between SFI and civic orientation courses, or explains different groups' entitlements to different courses. For instance, access to civic orientation courses is limited to refugees, although when funding permits, the intention is to widen the intake. It is not explicitly explained that government policy means that asylum seekers are not entitled to join SFI courses and can only learn Swedish within the reception centres. The PES website explains to asylum seekers that they cannot work or get support to find work without a resident's permit.

Key Factor 6 Facilitating Access: Integration is promoted through accessible and timely introductory and language activities and courses for newcomers

This key factor is met. Stockholm employs a number of measures to ensure migrants have excellent and timely access to courses and are incentivized to join courses, although there is little effort to reach longer term residents and those not on benefits.

Integration is harder to achieve after a time gap. Sweden's national policy encourages early integration in some ways: for example, the law obliges refugees to take a civic orientation course within one year of registration if they want to receive social benefits. But Stockholm's own provision is clearly designed to

minimise the delay in engaging newly-arrived migrants. In particular, its SFI service has a rapid enrolment process which assists early integration.

- SFI courses are provided soon after arrival, normally within one or two months though a little longer for those with special needs. Specialist professional courses (SFX courses) start three times a year. It was reported that waiting lists have virtually been eliminated in 2011. However, peers were told that if no suitable places are available, people have to come back and re-enrol, so they do not appear on waiting lists. About 17,000 enrolled for courses in 2010, with approximately 7,000 studying on any one day.
- Information on courses is widely promoted through leaflets and the internet, and to every migrant gaining a residence permit and new refugees which also helps them get onto courses quickly. Newcomers who are not employed receive an individual “introduction plan” which entitles them to state benefits, but also obliges them to take SFI courses and other work preparation activities.

The City has a good range of measures in place to reduce barriers to access and encourage take up of courses by those who are entitled to them.

- SFI courses are free, both for those on benefits and those who are working. Extra financial support is also offered: course materials such as books are free, there are reductions on travel expenses and help with childcare is available for those who need it.
- A government incentive promoted by the municipalities is the tax-free SFI bonus for students, designed to encourage speedier completion of SFI levels and targeted at particular groups. Applicants are informed of it on enrolment, during the courses and online. Peers heard from students on different pathways that they had been motivated to achieve the level required by the SFI bonus. However peers were told that there was as yet no statistical evidence on its impact on driving up achievement levels.

Despite these measures, it was acknowledged that not everyone is reached. Whilst examples were given of local publicity, e.g. through religious organizations, there was no evidence of how effective this was, and there was no clear outreach strategy targeting particular groups, for instance women who are not on welfare, or migrants who have been living for a long time in some settled communities.

A key limitation is that access to civic orientation courses is for refugees only. The Government originally intended them to cover other target groups, but peers were told that a large budget cut meant that they had to be restricted to refugees. The intention is to widen the intake if funding permits. Government policy prevents asylum seekers from join these courses and they can only learn Swedish within the reception centres.

Key Factor 7 Flexible course delivery: The Courses' timing and delivery methods are designed to help migrants with different commitments and learning styles to achieve course aims

This key factor is matched. Stockholm offers an exceptionally wide range of SFI courses by offering courses at different times and places and in various study modes.

SFI provision is designed to fit in with migrants' domestic or work responsibilities and to accommodate people's preferences for different modes of learning:

- Part-time courses are available in mornings, afternoons or evenings and on Saturdays.
- For those who cannot attend classes, distance or e-learning is also available and is being increased (though learners without access to computer at home or in the centre are disadvantaged). Some new projects are experimenting with learning via mobile phones, for workplace learners. Even those who do not take part in an SFI course can get support from or take a test at an SFI centre.
- Courses take place in colleges across the city, run by the municipality itself or private providers. Peers were told that most students find a centre near their home.
- Students were very positive about the opportunities for workplace learning which they found very effective. They learned about Swedish working life and got to know Swedish people as well as learning the language.
- Individuals appear to have sufficient time to meet the course aims, and for students who need longer to complete a stage - for instance those with limited literacy - there are alternative courses.

Choice and flexibility in the City's I&L courses were, peers heard, not always as great as they seemed. Describing the range of times and places available for courses, some interviewees felt that the decision was made for them, for example by the PES. Outreach provision is limited: for instance a very effective project for mothers with young children in a place where they meet but it stopped when project funding ran out.

Again, although the time allowed for learning seems adequate in general, learners are now under greater pressure to complete courses quickly and get into work, and there is less individual flexibility than in the past when migrants could continue their studies for years. There was also a suggestion that Civic Orientation courses extended over a longer period of time would be better for the learning process, and permit students to reflect more on their integration process.

On balance however peers concluded that the key factor is matched.

Key Factor 8 Responsiveness: The curriculum is differentiated to take account of particular groups' learning needs and participants' prior educational experience

The key factor is matched, with a very wide range of learning approaches designed to meet students' individual needs and prior experience.

The city's SFI provision caters for the needs of those who are not literate in their own language, those with craft skills or professional qualifications, women with childcare needs and people with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is backed up with strategies to provide individual support to learners.

The educational guidance and counselling offered is comprehensive:

- All students have an initial assessment to evaluate their needs, so that they can be placed in language courses at the appropriate level. Learning is further personalised as each student has an individual plan, setting out their aspirations for both learning and work, which they help to develop with the provider.
- Many colleges offer additional support activities such as tutoring in computing skills and help with homework or pronunciation.
- People with special needs get extra support from SFI counsellors, even one-to-one tuition if required.

Although the standard curriculum pathways are set at national level, there are a number of ways in which the Stockholm SFI tailors provision to meet particular learning needs:

- Specific courses are offered to those who are deaf or blind, have mental health problems, or have suffered trauma. Counselling support and one-to-one tuition is available.
- For people who need basic Swedish and have had little formal education, the SFI offers a dedicated route called Pathway One. However only 5% of SFI learners in Stockholm take this pathway, which - peers felt - raises the question whether those with greatest needs might not be reached by the standard SFI system.
- Other newcomers who need more help and may be further from the workplace, can learn Swedish through special projects like Establishment Stockholm. On Jobbtorg, 20% of participants take SFI Pathway One. However, for long-settled migrants who are not literate, there is only one course available.
- Vocationally oriented courses build on previously acquired competences and range from courses for lorry drivers, to courses for professionals like engineers, teachers and lawyers.

Feedback from SFI students with limited prior education was very positive overall. In particular they praised the teachers' encouragement and support, which enabled help individuals of different abilities learn together in the same group. Students were also very satisfied with course content and

communicative method, which enable them to cope well in everyday situations. Students appreciated the bilingual support workers who joined the class when needed, to explain things in their own language.

But some interviewees said that even when they were consulted, change was too slow. In the past, Civic Orientation courses were too focused on getting people to work - often in low grade jobs - not on how the system works, politics, or how to live in Sweden (although now these topics are certainly specified in the CO curriculum).

The course for higher educated newcomers is intensive. There are additional tests for students wanting to enter the professional and vocational SFX courses. (Of 200 applicants in the first nine months of 2011, 144 were successful in getting onto specialised courses.) Some were disappointed that failing the test meant going back to the "normal" SFI programme without a second chance.

Key Factor 9 Orientation: Introductory and language programmes cover relevant local knowledge and language for everyday life, and migrants' rights

This key factor is matched. The content of both Civic Orientation and Swedish language courses is based on practical aspects of everyday life in Sweden, especially in Stockholm.

The Civic Orientation curriculum, now specified at a national level, covers the integration process, practicalities of living in Sweden, learning and work, community life, health and family issues. The curriculum also covers individual rights and obligations and how to have an influence in the political and legal system. The teaching method of the new-style course in Stockholm was based on dialogue and reflection: for example students said migrants' rights and antidiscrimination was one of their discussion topics.

Students in language classes also reported that the emphasis on communicative skills (listening/speaking and reading/writing) was enabling them to deal with everyday challenges such as filling in forms and visiting doctors' surgeries and offices.

The new Civic Orientation provider has information on more than 100 migrant organisations and collaborates with women's groups and the Red Cross. Courses have visits from relevant organisations such as the Tax Office, and focus on practical information, advice and local knowledge.

But service managers and officers at district level stated that, whilst they had input when municipalities set the CO curriculum, they no longer influenced or contributed to the new course. They were not sure whether this would remain a problem in future. Peers noted that unless structures are in place to engage these providers, CO courses may lose opportunities to help newcomers get integrated into the community.

There was no information from other services in the council on how the introductory and language courses – or the civic orientation courses – worked with referral services or helped migrants to access their rights to local services (ie. to 'support equal access to services' such as housing and health which is an objective of the Integrating Cities' Charter).

Key Factor 10 Skilled and culturally sensitive staff: Teaching and support staff are appropriately qualified and take part in on-going staff development, including in intercultural competences

This key factor is matched. The City shows a strong commitment to training for its staff and contributes to the Integration Charter objective of ensuring that “staff understand and respect diversity and equality issues”.

Staff are appropriately qualified: the procurement process requires that all CO teachers must have a degree-level teaching qualifications, at least one year teaching experience, a high command of Swedish and knowledge of one of the minority languages such as Arabic or Somali. To ensure that all teachers maintain a high quality standard in their teaching skills there are regular workshops for the CO-teacher at the SFI Centre.

SFI teachers have to be equally well qualified and be competent in teaching languages. The city checks the qualifications of those employed against a national database.

The city offers a range of higher education opportunities and networks for teachers of language for immigrants. Regular on-going staff development is organised by the SFI centre to maintain quality standards. Both CO and SFI teachers have meetings to exchange good practice and learn from expert teaching staff. There is co-operation with the university to provide training to improve the staff skills.

Staff development opportunities are not restricted to teaching staff. Jobbtorg is a partner in a transnational project where 200 of their employees are visiting peers in other European cities to learn from their experience.

Intercultural training is included in staff development: for instance, training in diversity is run in cooperation with mosques and all the staff of SFI and Jobbtorg Stockholm were required to attend. In the project “Language Support for New Arrivals”, job coaches who are from the same cultural group as the newcomer share their intercultural competences with supervisors in the workplace and there are courses for employers in intercultural competence. By September 2011, 236 employers had workplace training course on language development and diversity issues.

Peers did hear some criticisms of the quality of language teaching, though not from students themselves. Some outside stakeholders said that in certain cases teachers are not qualified to teach Swedish to migrants; do not motivate students to learn; and teach Swedish at a level which is not sufficient for the jobs where students get placements. However the basis for these claims could not be assessed.

Overall however the balance of evidence available to peers indicated that KF10 is matched in Stockholm.

Key Factor 11 Host community supports integration: The host community is involved in supporting I&L courses and activities

This key factor is partly matched. The City has mentoring programmes that enable migrants to integrate into the workplace, and to a lesser extent into everyday life, though it puts little emphasis on sharing cultural activities or engaging migrant groups themselves.

The Establishment project includes a volunteering programme organised by Red Cross for migrants with professional skills. It matches them with mentors or buddies in the community on the basis of common interests, helping them to develop a social network and contacts in the host community.

Another successful project has worked through the trade unions to match migrants with a mentor from their profession (engineering), and through this informal networking 30% got work; there are plans to roll this out to other professions, like teachers.

Civic Orientation course organisers stated that their activities are supported in various ways by members of the host community, through their continuous contact with social organizations, citizens' offices, social offices and NGOs like Red Cross.

The City has demonstrated its own commitment to integration through employment by giving newcomers opportunities to have work placements while they are on benefit or trainee jobs (limited employment with a salary) for three to six months in a range of its services. Private organisations, the municipality itself and civic society work together to provide internships.

However, perhaps because both central government and the city of Stockholm emphasise that the key to integration is early engagement in the job market, peers were given very few examples of cultural activities with either host communities or settled migrant communities being used to strengthen migrants' integration or language learning.

Key Factor 12 Vocational relevance: For I&L courses which have a vocational focus, employers are involved as key stakeholders

The key factor is partly matched. In Stockholm's impressive range of vocationally-oriented language courses, work preparation activities and supported work placements, employers have a variable level of engagement. There is a lack of systematic engagement of employers despite some close co-operation and in many cases consultation is sporadic and informal.

Stockholm has developed a wide range of vocationally-oriented SFI courses, not only language courses with specialist vocabulary but also, for example, combined vocational and language studies, professional updating, and courses with guaranteed work experience. They cater for a wide range of occupations from childcare, shop assistants, nursing and care for the elderly to courses for fork lift operators alongside vocational training and certification. The eight SFX courses combine language learning with specialist vocabulary and orientation into the Swedish markets, for different professions from lorry drivers to lawyers. Jobbtorg and PES are consulted to help identify skills gaps.

Language course organisers liaise with employers in a number of ways:

- Employers' representatives were involved in developing several courses - for example, for engineers and accountants - and help to define the specialist vocabulary they teach.
- Language teachers liaise with workplace instructors where students have work placements, and get feedback on students' performance. In other projects, employers contribute as mentors, helping candidates to prepare effective CVs.
- Recruitment to the SFX course for experienced lorry drivers reflects the vacancy levels communicated by employers to maximise chances of employment. It includes early work experience with hauliers, and most students who pass the course and driving test get positions in the industry. Every year the SFX programme is evaluated with employers.
- Further contacts are being made with private employers in areas where skills shortages have been identified and more vocational pathway courses are planned, working more closely with technical colleges.

Civic Orientation courses appear to have been developed essentially without employers' input, even though they recognize the importance of such learning. Employer representatives suggested for instance that it would be helpful if CO courses could teach intercultural differences at the workplace, so that immigrants can understand Sweden's informal, non-hierarchical working culture. As the new CO curriculum had only just taken effect at the time of this peer review, it gathered no evidence on whether these issues are being covered.

Similarly courses in Establishment Stockholm - focused on the basic skills migrants need in the Swedish workplace - were developed after consultation with employers on language skills which they would require from future employees. Jobbtorg Job Matchers liaise with local employers to understand their needs and then try to identify jobseekers who, with tailor-made vocational training, can meet their requirements.

However, peers heard that the City's engagement with employers as key external stakeholders can be inconsistent.

- Despite close liaison on the ground with various projects and colleges offering specialist vocational language courses, employers' role was not sufficiently recognised. Some reported that consultation with them seemed ad hoc and then dialogue stopped; for instance one employers' organisation was contacted only in the middle of a project.
- Another employer commented that the City had several initiatives which offered support to new migrants, but not to the employers. Although there are people who are responsible for Jobbtorg matching in the Labour Market department, some employers felt that no-one had the brief to engage proactively with them, understand their needs or deal with them as clients.

Key Factor 13 Next Steps: Learners are helped to progress to employment, further language learning or other integration activities

This key factor was matched, with advice, support and good systems in place for recognizing migrants' prior learning, although some felt under pressure to enter the labour market too quickly, without the opportunity to find employment that matched their capabilities.

Many of the projects are designed to facilitate the migrant's progression to employment. For example:

- At Establishing Stockholm the participants' prior learning and competences are recognised and validated with help of "Open College Network" certificates. Potential employers receive a report on the applicant's soft skills, and the project's close contact with them improves its understanding of employers' needs.
- In its Matching project, Jobbtorg organises internships for job-seeking migrants who are registered on its database, linking them with a wide network of employers.

The process for validating academic qualifications is more efficient than in other countries, taking between two weeks and three months. Every immigrant has access to the validation of their diplomas at the government agency Högskoleverket. After the validation of previous professional qualifications, there are several bridging measures like SFX-courses or university courses, so that the migrants can work in their profession. For example, an agreement has been made for engineering students to progress to the Royal Engineering University after their SFX course.

Through intermediaries such as job matchers, mentors, and professional guidance and counselling services the City provides plenty of one-to-one support. Students can also get the support of careers and educational counsellors - at the start of courses, during and after them - that can help them take the next steps to further studies.

However feedback to peers suggested that, unlike SFX students who can build on their existing skills and education, some migrants on projects or CO courses felt pressured into taking any job just to get them off benefits and into employment, without regard to their longer-term aspirations to study or to get a job that would match their skills.

Once migrants on benefits have taken the obligatory SFI or other programmes identified in their introduction plan agreed with PES, follow-on courses are not the City's responsibility, so they are generally signposted to other national programmes. However, some integration activities have been designed to follow up students' languages courses, for example: circus, handcrafts, paintings and cultural activities. These have been found to be successful in integrating people through helping them practice Swedish by using the language in common activity.

When students have completed one stage on an SFI pathway, they can move on to the next level with a new individual study plan. No data were available yet on where students progress to, once they have left SFI courses, although this is planned for 2011 and there was more evidence for Jobbtorg (see KF 15).

Key Factor 14 Recognition of Achievement: Achievement is assessed and course certificates are recognized by employers and education providers

Broadly speaking, this key factor is matched. The certificates awarded for SFI are nationally recognized and understood, although some employers still prefer informal assessment of applicants.

Swedish for Immigrants courses are aligned to the language levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Tests are set centrally by the National Agency (ministry) for Education and teachers who assess them have to be properly qualified. Students receive an SFI certificate from the City of Stockholm with the course level, grade achieved and a brief outline of the competences they will have covered, signed by the Principal. Those on Establishment Stockholm programmes also have OCN certificates, which detail a wider range of skills.

Students of the vocational SFX courses are assessed both for their language and professional competence; in 2010 three quarters succeeded. Many of them achieve national vocational qualifications as well as language certificates. It was reported that employers understand and recognise these certificates and their grades.

Some interviewees stated, however, that the CO and SFI certificates are not well-known by employers, as certificates were not as important to employers as seeing if the applicant's command of Swedish was sufficient for the job. For crafts, where recruitment is quite informal, employers set practical tests to assess if applicants have the necessary skills.

Key Factor 15 Monitoring and Evaluation: Courses are regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure they are fit for purpose, benefit participants and demonstrate improvement over time

This key factor is partly matched. The city closely monitors the performance of its SFI provision and uses external evaluators to report on special projects like SFX and Establishing Stockholm.

Monitoring and evaluation of Stockholm's very extensive introductory and language courses takes a variety of forms. Firstly, the SFI service has a comprehensive *work plan* for 2011 which itself lays down key success criteria, against which it can be assessed. This year's criteria are to increase the percentage of students who achieve their education goals within one year (currently 37%), and to increase the proportion of students who pass each course (67%). The plan includes clear objectives for teaching, reporting systems, informing students and following up students after completion. Within this framework, SFI providers' performance is regularly monitored and evaluated.

Secondly, the City sets quality criteria in its *tendering documentation* for these language courses: that this is effective was demonstrated by the fact that one of the ten private SFI providers was dropped because of quality concerns. As well as on-going monitoring, there is a new procurement exercise at the end of the (normally three year) contract, even if the private companies are fulfilling the requirements.

Thirdly City provision - whether municipal or out-sourced - is monitored by *inspections and other mechanisms* to assess how well it is performing:

- To ensure quality standards are maintained, central and local government regularly inspect the language courses run by Stockholm SFI, the ten private colleges, and the projects. Statistics and reports are collected, with sampling of students including those who have passed language tests.
- Evaluation of projects takes place on a regular basis, ranging from weekly to every two years. Long-term surveys are done in collaboration with the local university.
- The Civic Orientation Centre regularly sends inspectors to the CO courses delivered by private providers, sometimes unannounced.
- Interviews were conducted with a sample of about 40 participants in SFI-courses, peers were told, to evaluate their satisfaction with their courses and to assess further needs. Although SFI colleges are not obliged to carry out student satisfaction surveys, some private providers do so.

Fourthly, some external evaluation has been introduced, for example to monitor the process and results of SFX language courses for professionals:

- Ramböll Consultancy carried out an evaluation of SFX through focus groups, face-to-face and telephone interviews and surveys to parameters set by the city. The evaluators found that the courses and liaison with employers and other course providers on the whole worked well, although the access to work experience and mentoring could be improved. They recommended redefining the target group, developing modular courses including part-time or distance learning, ensuring that all students receive credit for contact with working life, and ways that the Steering Group could liaise and plan more effectively.
- The SFX organisers also check with employers to assess if courses are delivering the skills required and draw on external perspectives: for example the evaluation of SFX course for engineers, was done in collaboration with the KTH (Royal Technical University).

Some weaknesses in the coverage of the City's monitoring and evaluation were noted by peers. Statistical evidence made available to them showed some gaps in the data needed to explain why students do not complete courses or achieve pass grades:

- Whilst city statistics are collected on enquiries, enrolments and pass rates, they are not at the moment broken down by gender, age etc.
- 52% of all Jobbtorg registrations were deemed completed and in no further need of social welfare, though for those that drop out and are not entitled to benefits, this does not reveal what people learned or what they had achieved on the course.

- Across Sweden as a whole, a fairly high proportion of students leave before completing their SFI level. Private providers provide limited data, but Stockholm so far has insufficient evidence on reasons why students drop out, and on where they go next.
- CO courses finish by offering participants only a Certificate of Attendance, not a test of their learning. It is not possible to assess the progress made by learners by a standardised written test on the content, so this makes it harder to see if the courses themselves are improving over time.

Because of these limitations, the peer team concluded that KF15 is not fully met by the City.

5. Conclusions

Rates of immigration to Sweden have in the recent past been higher than in many other EU countries. The proportion of its migrants who were seeking asylum was also relatively high, until recently, and often as refugees they have then faced major barriers to integration. Across migrant categories, few new arrivals to Sweden speak its language before they get there. Most aim, initially at least, to live in the capital city.

The standards of the *Integrating Cities* Charter therefore present the City of Stockholm with a tough challenge. The MIXITIES peer review found that, overall, the City has gone a long way towards meeting the Charter standard for introductory and language courses. The political leadership, resources and pedagogic skills which it commits to them clearly put Stockholm among Europe's lead cities in delivering these crucial learning services. Yet MIXITIES peers also found that, in some important respects, the standard is still not fully realised.

Reviewing the detailed findings of section 4 above, this section draws out three key positive conclusions and then outlines areas where the peer team felt further action is needed to enable Stockholm to reach the MIXITIES benchmark for introductory and language courses. In Section 6, the team recommends steps the City could take to tackle these remaining challenges.

5.1 City commitment

The MIXITIES peer review confirmed that among both political leaders and key officials, the City of Stockholm shows a powerful commitment to offering high-quality civic orientation and language courses to newly-arrived migrants, as a way into its labour market and social life. At the political level this was suggested indirectly by positive statements about immigration and diversity in the City's *Vision 2030* and annual budget documents, and more explicitly by initiatives like the Nelson Mandela prize. Above all it was demonstrated by the level of resources invested in such services.

Asked where the City had set out its policy commitment to these learning services for migrants, respondents pointed to its budget. The civic orientation and language provision described to peers could evidently only happen with high levels of funding, and – in the case of SFI – its long-term development suggested that this financial support had been stable. The current City budget showed that it was continuing at a relatively high level through the recent upheaval in delivery of courses for migrants.

At the administrative level, the City's commitment to this area of work was clear from a wide range of evidence showing the energy and thought which officials put into planning services and working to improve coordination, for example through a complex venture like Establishment Stockholm. This commitment was shown also by the way officers, clearly with political backing, had innovated to provide services well beyond the minimum required by national legislation.

5.2 Access and responding to need

Backed by strong national policy in this field, Stockholm excels among European cities in its effort to make sure all newly-arrived migrants have the opportunity to learn the host language.

Firstly and crucially, access to Swedish courses is opened up by the City's high level of investment in them. Free enrolment to SFI courses is backed up by other financial help for learners such as subsidies to course materials and childcare. Provision is on a big enough scale to ensure that waiting lists have almost been eliminated, while Stockholm's rapid enrolment service helps to move migrants swiftly towards these learning opportunities. The City can offer SFI to migrants normally within one or two months of their arrival – much shorter than the average wait for language tuition in many other Member States.

Access to Stockholm's SFI service is assured not only by its scale and resources, but also by the efforts made to guide migrants towards it: through standard channels like leaflets and the internet, or via official procedures like registration as residents and applying for state benefits. The bonus payment for early completion of SFI also helps to promote engagement with language learning. Some of these measures stem from national rather than City policy. But they are complemented by the City's own initiatives, for instance its Jobbtorg service giving personalised support which can help to steer learners towards appropriate language courses.

Effective learning will not only be accessible but also respond well to students' needs. Stockholm has made exceptional efforts to tailor delivery and content of its courses for migrants – especially SFI - to varying needs within these communities. SFI is a unified service offering learners many options: courses at a variety of times and locations, including tuition in workplaces and online; content adapted to varying levels of prior education and different vocational needs; and provision for learners with special personal needs like childcare, health conditions or disability. The limited evidence from interviews suggested that the City's careful work to match diverse requirements with learning options was resulting in satisfied students, although there were some complaints, and, as peers did not see overall statistics on levels of student satisfaction, they were not able to reach a firm conclusion.

5.3 Using skills and potential

The third area of strength, which the MIXITIES peer team found in Stockholm's introductory and language courses, was their focus on developing migrants' real skills and potential. This begins with individual assessments and learning plans (above) which are generally the first step for learners joining these courses. The same focus is reflected also in the provision of targeted support - alongside language and CO courses - to those whose potential might otherwise not be recognised in the labour market: for instance more vulnerable learners, or those needing intensive training to tackle specific gaps in 'soft skills' including use of language.

The City has then taken imaginative steps to build bridges between jobseekers and employers, again helping to ensure that migrants' skills are not wasted. Formal qualifications gained before arrival in Sweden can be rapidly assessed, recognised and if necessary extended to meet national standards. The Open College Network (OCN) system adopted for the Establishment Stockholm initiative identifies and validates a wider range of 'softer' competences. More broadly, the City has liaised widely with employers

to design a range of vocationally-oriented language learning for migrants like the SFX courses, geared to specific professions and occupations.

Having developed migrant jobseekers' skills, the City matches them to employer requirements and can introduce them to one another, especially through the Jobbtorg programme. Where necessary this can be followed up with one-to-one support to migrant trainees or employees, improving their chances of sustained success in their new workplace.

5.4 Challenge: making the strategy clear

Peers saw convincing evidence of Stockholm's political commitment to providing introductory and language courses with the strengths outlined above in points 1 - 3. The City's Budget, described as its strategic framework for these services, dedicates relatively large sums to them. Individual services and initiatives have well-developed work plans – such as the Arbetsplan for the SFI section – setting out guiding objectives, standards and steps to realise them.

But the Budget is a low-profile document, some 400 pages long, in which the City's general statement about immigration occupies one paragraph. Its quantitative targets include a single goal related to migrant integration.¹⁵ Departmental work plans are even less publicly visible and each of them necessarily addresses one element of City work.

The MIXITIES review found in Stockholm no overarching strategy that sets out explicitly the policy framework for the City's work on introductory and language courses. Peers concluded that such a strategy, available both to its own managers and to stakeholders outside the City authority, would help it to address a number of remaining problems in this work:

- An overall strategy would spell out Stockholm's **core objectives** for migrant learning, from which more specific goals and targets could then be derived consistently for individual services. This would give a transparent basis on which to resolve (for instance) contradictions between objectives that may compete, like 'work first' and social integration; or uncertainty about the scope of a particular service - such as the SFX professional language courses where external evaluation highlighted the need to redefine what they aimed to deliver.¹⁶
- The strategy would confirm **standards** to be met by these services. This would support City managers in tackling weaknesses in delivery – whether in-house or by outside providers – as reflected in reports to peers about varying student experiences of SFI learning.
- It would explain in a coherent, accessible way which **target groups** within Stockholm's total migrant population are seen by the City as its priority for introductory and language courses – and why. In turn this should establish a clear rationale for excluding some migrant groups; for strengthening outreach work to others; or for scheduling service development (such as the possible extension of CO services to non-refugee migrants).

¹⁵ 'Immigrants in Stockholm shall be or are becoming self-sufficient' in the labour market, City of Stockholm Budget 2011-13 p.38

¹⁶ Ramböll Consultancy, *Evaluation of SFEX courses: summary and conclusions* (2011)

- Crucially, by saying clearly who takes responsibility for achieving its objectives and whose opinion is needed to steer this work, a comprehensive City strategy would offer a framework for **coordination and consultation** between the very wide range of agencies with an interest in the development of Stockholm's I and L courses, from core actors like the Labour Market Administration or PES to neighbouring municipalities, employers' representative bodies and migrant community organisations.

5.5 Challenge: consultation

Stockholms Stad is an authority with an 'open door'. MIXITIES peers heard from several respondents that both political leaders and senior officials in the City were readily accessible for outside stakeholders, and willing to exchange views informally about CO and language learning. Both employers and migrant representatives reported vigorous and frank dialogue with the City administration. These contacts were valued.

But the peer review found little evidence of more formal procedures through which the City consults external partners and stakeholders about introductory and language courses, especially once they are under way. Other municipalities – both districts within the City and its neighbouring authorities – are represented formally on a Stakeholder Committee to oversee the development of CO courses following the 2010 reform, But in practice they may feel they have little input to this process, even though they have past experience of running such courses and many learners are their residents. Employer bodies, though they influence the design of some courses at the start, could not identify any structure through which they could comment systematically to the City on how well courses perform; about emerging gaps in provision, or complementarity between courses; or on changes over time in demand for skills.

Similarly migrant organisations and other NGOs involved with migrant integration have no formal channel of communication with the City authority.¹⁷ They therefore cannot offer feedback on its I&L courses regularly, systematically or collectively, as organisations which stand outside the learning process but can see its results in their communities. The City thus loses the 'reality check' they could provide: reporting, for instance, on areas of genuine need that might be missed by current I&L provision.

¹⁷ As peers recognised in discussion with their hosts, this partly reflects a political and institutional tradition in which the public sector has taken far more responsibility for meeting social need, with a greater degree of democratic accountability, than in some other Member States where the state has had a weaker and less accountable role - leaving the third sector to respond to the needs of disadvantaged communities.

5.6 Challenge: risks of exclusion

Stockholm shows a strong commitment to opening up access to civic orientation and language learning for migrants who need it (point 2 above, KFs 6 and 7). In several respects its courses are very inclusive: for example by offering SFI and CO courses without charge and unconnected to state benefits. Besides, evidence about migrants' exclusion from services is particularly hard to gather. But the peer review raised the question whether some sections of these communities may still have little access to the City's CO and language learning opportunities.

Peers were concerned about this issue from four main angles:

- Whilst major services like SFI may be very open, policy on eligibility for other major areas of City provision may make them less inclusive. For example, a focus on newly-arrived migrants or (in Jobbtorg) on jobseekers receiving state benefits may in effect exclude a range of people who need support to enter the labour market: longer-term immigrants, or those – often migrant women – who do not take up benefits, even if entitled to them.
- National policy assigns responsibility for asylum seekers to central government rather than to the City. It therefore faces the risk that its Civic Orientation and language work with refugees could be undermined by the gap in learning between the stages of the asylum process. Peers felt it would be worth exploring ways of bridging this gap.
- The emphasis on getting people off state benefits and into work is again well-established national policy, endorsed by the City. For migrant integration it translates into the single key Budget goal cited above: City actions should maximise the number of immigrants who *'are or become self-sufficient'*. In planning I&L courses, Stockholm has made efforts to cater for migrants who – for whatever reason – cannot expect to achieve self-sufficiency in the near future. But the risk remains that some may lose opportunities to become better integrated in the longer term, if such learning focuses on people who may achieve self-sufficiency sooner through employment.
- Limited information on the reasons for drop-out, both in projects and SFI provision, makes it difficult to improve retention; to find out which students are most at risk; to see what measures would be most effective in enabling more of them to complete and succeed; and to judge what post-course guidance and counselling might help them re-engage in learning or enter the labour market.

6. Recommendations

In the light of its peer review, the MIXITIES team recommends that the City of Stockholm consider taking the following steps.

6.1 Consultation

Adopt a more structured approach to consultation on introductory and language courses with external stakeholders – that is, actors outside the City authority with a direct interest in the results of these courses and with knowledge that could make them more effective. In particular the City is recommended to work with relevant partners to convene the following two structures and to recognise formally their role in advising the City on the development of its learning provision for migrants:

- a roundtable of employers' representatives, including Stockholm-wide associations
- a migrant consultative body, chaired by a senior City political leader, which so far as possible will represent the range of Stockholm's migrant communities and their own diversity (and might choose to cover a broader agenda in addition to learning issues).

6.2 Outreach

Develop stronger outreach work for the City's I & L learning services, targeted both to districts of the city and to social groups within migrant communities where there are greatest risks of exclusion from such learning. This outreach initiative could:

- make excluded migrants better aware of learning opportunities offered by the City
- where appropriate, deliver services directly to them in community settings
- involve host communities and migrant communities in supporting orientation, integration and language learning through personal and cultural as well as employment related activities.

6.3 Sharing practice

Set up mechanisms to share innovative practice in introductory and language courses between units and programmes, both within the City and across agencies, to help Stockholm providers to achieve consistently high standards. This could be extended to sharing practice with other municipalities in Sweden to achieve a high national standard of language provision.

6.4 Strengthen post-course monitoring

Follow up students who have left SFI and CO courses early, in order to evaluate longer-term impact of these courses; improve future provision; and reduce the social exclusion of migrants. This follow-up action should:

- analyse the reasons for early drop-out from courses, including breaking down data by gender, age and students' backgrounds; and
- carry out a sample study of those who have left Jobbtorg, SFI and CO courses and still remain out of work or on benefits

6.5 Strategy

Adopt an overall strategy that sets out – transparently and for public discussion – the City’s policy framework for its introductory and language courses. More broadly it should:

- set out the City’s goals for introductory and language learning, and how they link with wider strategic aims
- lay down standards for provision of these courses
- in line with its goals, specify priorities and target groups for delivery of such courses
- assign major areas of work to partners (which may of course include unspecified future contractors) and identify mechanisms for them to coordinate their activity
- incorporate methods of consultation with key stakeholders as in 5.1 above.

Key features of the existing SFI workplan, and policy initiatives agreed annually by the Labour Market Board, could be incorporated into this strategy. It should be drawn up so far as possible through an inclusive process of assessing needs and setting priorities, and be subject to revision at agreed intervals.

The peer team believes that this set of recommendations could further strengthen the excellent introductory and language learning services already established by the City of Stockholm, confirming the gains it can make by building – as its Vision 2030 says – *‘with integration in mind’*.