Unaccompanied Minors in Sweden – Polices and Practices

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Basic overview

- Sweden primarily a **destination country** for UAMs
- Major destination country in the EU for UAMs until 2015
- **Record** number of applications from UAMs in 2015 – nearly 35,000
- Absolute majority **boys**

**Number of received first time applications from unaccompanied minors**

- **Source:** Swedish Migration Agency
Major trends

- Afghanistan major country of origin, followed by Syria, Eritrea, Somalia
- Major countries of origin largely the same as for adult asylum seekers
- However, Morocco and Algeria are among the top countries of origin of unaccompanied minors. Low recognition rate for these two countries.

Number of granted residence permits for unaccompanied minors – top 5 nationalities

Source: Swedish Migration Agency
Poll 1

Which are the most common UAMs to seek asylum in Sweden?
Legal framework and practices

• **Temporary act on restrictions of the possibility of being granted a residence permit in Sweden (2016)**
  • In force 20 July 2016 to 19 July 2019
  • Temporary residence permits also for UAMs
  • Beneficiaries of **subsidiary protection**, including UAMs, may only exceptionally have possibility to **family reunification**
  • Limits family reunification to **nuclear** family members, also for **UAMs**

• **Formal dispersal mechanism** (assigned municipality) (2015)
Basic legal rules and practices

• UAMs have a right to schooling, emergency/essential health/medical care, as other children, in the period pending a decision on their application ("principle of normalisation"); includes children in an irregular situation.
• In practice nearly all unaccompanied minors that come to Sweden apply for asylum
• UAMs appointed with legal counsel in asylum process, legal guardian
• Use of medical age assessment in some cases
• Variety of care/accommodation options
• Care normally terminated at 18 years, but can be extended until 21 years
• Municipalities important stakeholders
• Ombudsman for Children in Sweden
Recent challenges

- **Backlog** of applications at the Migration Agency following events of 2015
- Controversy over *medical age assessments* and *return*
- **Integration** of UAMs issued residence permits 2015 and later current major challenge
- Schooling – particularly upper secondary level, *shortage of teachers* of Swedish as a foreign language
- Reports of *mental ill health* among UAMs and challenges in access to /co-ordination of health care services
- Increased attention to UAMs who *abscond/disappear* and/or live in an *irregular* situation
Poll 2

What does the “principle of normalisation” mean?
Good practices

- Assessment of the **consequences** for the child compulsory in all decisions affecting a minor
- "**Principle of normalisation**" upheld in spite of massive influx in 2015
- Government measures in relation to UAMs who **disappear**; prevention, improved co-ordination, regional action plans
- Several examples of **web/interactive-based** communication:
  - The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society tasked to **improve knowledge** in the target group on **health, sexuality and gender equality** – website entitled **youmo** launched 2017; interactive on Facebook, podcasts
  - SALAR (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions) maintains website which collects **good practices**
  - **E-learning** for legal guardians
Poll 3

What do you consider good practice in reception and integration of UAMs?
Conclusions & Summary

• Sweden **major country of destination** for UAMs until 2015
• Major influx of UAMs up until 2015 period has triggered a **vast array** of policy shifts, projects, activities in the public sector and civil society
• **Integration** of those UAMs who have received (temporary) residence permits since 2015 current major challenge

Thank you!

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Information film aimed at UAMs in care facilities

Click [here](#) to view the film!