



# Migrants, Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, and the Swedish Legal System



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## Two Weeks in Sweden

For the duration of my project I stayed in Stockholm, conducting most of my interviews there. For two interviews I traveled by train to a very small lakefront town, Strängnäs, as well as the 4th largest city in Sweden, Uppsala.



## Why Sweden?

Sweden is recognized as having one of the most **progressive justice systems in the world**, being focused on prevention and rehabilitation rather than punishment. The past few years have been characterized by **significant influxes of refugees** into European countries. Sweden now faces challenges of diversity, of governing populations **becoming increasingly marked by difference in skin color, ethnicity, and religious background**. I was curious if Sweden is holding true to their justice philosophy, if their system is **willing to be so generous and empathetic with these new populations**.



Kompis Sverige



The UN Refugee Agency



Polisen  
Swedish Police



Svenska kyrkan

## Asylum-Seekers in Sweden

2014

Sweden's Prime Minister famously encouraged Swedes to "open their hearts" to refugees seeking shelter.

2015

**162,877** asylum-seekers arrived in Sweden in 2015 alone.

In December, Sweden tightened their historically open borders.

2016

Temporary legislation enacted that makes family reunification much more difficult, as well as limits the number of people granted permanent residency.

2017

The Swedish Democrats, the far right political party, gain attention and support on their anti-immigrant platform.



## Outcomes

The final product of my project will be a paper submitted to my faculty advisor and sent to interviewees.

## Skills Utilized/Developed

1. **Outreach** with stakeholders and advocates.
2. **Policy research** and **analysis**.
3. **Relationship-building** and **active listening**.

## Project Information

**Objective:** Examine if migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, are treated as equal to native Swedes in the Swedish legal system.

**Method:** Conducted interviews with relevant Swedish NGOs, government agencies, and other individuals.

## Classroom Connections

 **SW 521: IP with Individuals, Families, and Groups**

 **SW 522: Basic Social Work Research**

 **SW 683: Evaluation in Social Work**

## Lessons Learned

Social workers are critical in making connections between services and policies, as well as centering focus on often forgotten vulnerable voices.

For better and for worse, people are more similar than they are different,

## Career Connections

In my social work career I will continue to advocate against the criminalization of vulnerable populations, going beyond what is comfortable to do so. While my passion is reforming the U.S. criminal justice system, I look forward to continue developing connections across borders to fight systemic injustices.

## Advice

1. **Stay flexible**, your project may go through changes right up until your departure date and even while abroad!
2. **Keep emailing!** When developing a project on your own, you may lack direct connections in your desired site and it's all on you to do outreach and follow up!
3. Stay for **more than a week** if able, and schedule **down-time**.

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