

Summary

The State and civil society in the
integration process (RiR 2014:3)



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The National Audit Office has examined whether the State has managed to overcome obstacles and create the conditions for civil society's participation in government initiatives aimed at the reception, establishment and integration of new arrivals to Sweden in the labour market and in society at large. The term civil society refers to “an arena, separate from the State, the market and the individual household, where people, groups and organisations act together in the pursuit of common interests”.

The National Audit Office's overall assessment is that the ambition of involving civil society in the State's integration work in different ways has not resulted in a corresponding development in the relevant government agencies' actual operations. Civil society organisations are not actively employed in an executional role to any great extent within the state integration policy, while the sector to some extent has a different, more complementary role. Civil society's limited participation in the integration process means that the diversity of activities, which according to the Riksdag and the Government can contribute to a more effective establishment and integration process, has not been fully achieved. Though some measures have been taken to create better conditions for civil society to be an active player, the National Audit Office's assessment reveals that there is a need for further measures to create the desired diversity of activities within the area of integration.

Assessment background

The assessment covers the Government, Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish Public Employment Service), the county administrative boards (länsstyrelserna), the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket), the Swedish ESF Council (Svenska ESF-rådet, the Integration Fund) and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (Ungdomsstyrelsen), and focuses on one of the roles (the provider) that civil society can take in relation to the public sector.

Reasons: The Government's integration policy has focused on effective establishment and integration. According to the Government, integration policy implementation requires initiatives within many policy areas and by a large number of actors, including civil society. By participating in civil society activities, establishment and integration can be facilitated, while at the same time providing new arrivals with support, networks and contacts. In decisions regarding Govt. Bill 2009/10:55 *En politik för det civila samhället [A policy for civil society]*, the Riksdag and the Government have highlighted the role of civil society, both in society at large and in integration policy. The Government has also concluded an agreement with idea-based organisations within the



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area of integration and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, where the work preceding the agreement, among other things, addressed obstacles and opportunities for civil society.

Purpose: The aim of the assessment was to look at whether the State has been able to overcome obstacles and create the conditions for civil society participation in the area of integration. The assessment has focused on government measures to enable civil society to contribute to a diversity of executors. This, in turn, is expected to increase the quality and efficiency of the establishment and integration process.

Assessment results

Civil society is to a small extent an provider in the state integration work

The National Audit Office's assessment shows that the level of civil society participation in government measures to promote integration is not particularly high, although there are variations. According to the National Audit Office's assessment, there have not been any major changes in the outcome following the parliamentary decision on Govt. Bill 2009/10:55 and the agreement with idea-based organisations within the area of integration. The assessment also shows that the extent to which the organisations are willing and able to shoulder the role of provider varies. Those parts of civil society that, in the role of provider, are willing to participate in the State's integration work can do so in several ways. The National Audit Office notes, however, that civil society is not to any great extent a provider of services as a result of Arbetsförmedlingen's and the Swedish Migration Board's procurements in competition. For Arbetsförmedlingen, civil society's share of the Act on System of Choice in the Public Sector (LOV)-procured establishment guides was only 8 per cent, while at the same time civil society organisations have only signed a few contracts following procurements under the Swedish Public Procurement Act (LOU). Following changes in "organised activities" the Migration Board has for the time being ceased its procurement from civil society. The National Audit Office also notes that civil society's participation is greater as a complement to activities that the organisations themselves have identified a need for, and which are financed by the National Board for Youth Affairs or the European Integration Fund. The National Audit Office therefore draws the conclusion that civil society's role is to a greater extent a complement to the government initiatives, as opposed to being a provider of services that replaces another body. The assessment also reveals that the collaboration between civil society and state actors involved with integration policy has been developed to varying extents where, for example, all county administrative boards work together with civil society, while Arbetsförmedlingen's local agreements within the establishment activities involve civil society to a very small extent.



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The Government and the government agencies do not steer

There are several explanations for civil society's limited participation in the State's integration work. The National Audit Office finds that Govt. Bill 2009/10:55 and the agreement within the integration area have, during the assessment period, not resulted in any changes in the Government's steering of the agencies covered by the assessment. One exception is the county administrative boards which have a clear mandate to promote cooperation in the area of integration. The National Audit Office also notes that the action plan which the Government has committed to implementing in the context of the agreement within the integration area contains many measures that concern general policy for civil society, but that it lacks, for example, measures addressing the agencies' procurements as per the Public Procurement Act or collaboration with civil society.

In addition, the internal governance of Arbetsförmedlingen and the Migration Board have not clearly emphasised that the government agencies should collaborate with civil society at a local level. Nor do the agencies follow up on any collaboration that takes place between civil society and the local reception units and public employment offices.

The design of the regulatory framework is reported to cause problems for procurement and local collaboration

The National Audit Office's assessment included whether or not the Government and relevant agencies have acted on the one hand to establish local collaboration, and on the other hand to eliminate barriers to procurement. The introduction of the establishment guides, which Arbetsförmedlingen offers the target group "certain new arrivals" and which is procured through the Act on System of Choice in the Public Sector (2008:962), means that the Government has acted to facilitate certain procurement from civil society. Beyond this, no other measures have been taken to facilitate government agencies' procurement from civil society. The National Audit Office finds that opportunities for civil society to submit tenders pursuant to agencies' guidelines are hampered both by the complexity of the procurement procedures carried out under the Swedish Public Procurement Act (2007:1091) and the way in which the agencies choose to divide up the procurements, both geographically and in terms of volume. In addition, both the Migration Board and Arbetsförmedlingen find that the agencies' local cooperation with civil society is made more difficult, as the agencies, for example, see obstacles to contributing financially to activities conducted by civil society at a local level. The National Audit Office's assessment has not included its own analysis of the potential space for opportunities within the Swedish Public Procurement Act. The National Audit Office is therefore unable to determine whether the agencies' analysis is correct and if they have exhausted the possibilities to increase the involvement of civil society via the design of procurements. Given that the analysis of Arbetsförmedlingen and the Migration Board is accurate, it indicates, according to the National Audit Office, that there may be a conflict of objectives for government agencies between the ambition to involve civil society in the



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integration work and the requirement to apply the Swedish Public Procurement Act in order to achieve high efficiency.

Changes in state funding pose problems for civil society's participation in the integration work

The National Audit Office finds that the Government has steered the state support that the National Board for Youth Affairs and the county administrative boards allocate in the integration area towards more delimiting project grants. The more long-term subsidies have also been given a clear direction, where at present – through the National Board for Youth Affairs – the State only provides support to ethnic organisations and activities against racism and discrimination. This has meant that civil society's ability to be an executor has increased by way of activities which the State has defined a need for, such as professional mentors and refugee guides. Following a regulation amendment in 2008, that part of civil society which, with government funding, wishes to conduct integration activities based on its own needs analysis, has been referred to the European Integration Fund. However, the National Audit Office's assessment has shown that funding from the Integration Fund is associated with a number of obstacles, such as extensive administration, requirements for co-funding and payment after delivery, which makes it difficult for civil society to take part in this funding opportunity.

Knowledge dissemination and collaboration with obstacles

Since 2012, the National Board for Youth Affairs has been commissioned, within the politics of civil society, to disseminate information and create networks for collaboration with government agencies, among others. The National Audit Office's assessment is that the work should now shift to a more operational phase. Furthermore, the National Audit Office finds that there is a need for the National Board for Youth Affairs' initiatives. The National Audit Office's assessment also shows that, at present, there certainly is collaboration to be found between agencies and civil society, but that the scope of the collaboration varies depending on the level of clarity of the agencies' steering. At the same time, the assessment reveals that the agencies involved in the assessment do not cooperate with each other to any great extent.

Assessment's recommendations

The National Audit Office recommends that the Government and the relevant government agencies implement the following measures.



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The Government should

- Perform a comprehensive analysis of the state funding of civil society in the area of integration.
- Request a follow-up from Arbetsförmedlingen and the Migration Board of the collaboration with civil society.
- Analyse the need to implement general support measures to facilitate civil society's participation in procurements.
- Clarify the role that the agreement within the integration area has in the Government's integration policy.

Arbetsförmedlingen and the Migration Board should

- Develop local collaboration with civil society.
- Develop procurement strategies that make it easier for civil society.

The county administrative boards should

- Develop their role as a regional resource in the integration process.

The National Board for Youth Affairs should

- Contribute to the coordination of state funding in the area of integration.

