

# Attraction of the Nordic Countries in International Migration

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## Introduction

The aim of this article is to give an overview of the international migration flows in the Nordic countries in the beginning of the 21st century. The analysis is conducted by country level and in some cases more detailed in regional and city-regional level based on the population statistics in the Nordic countries. The analysis reports the attractive immigration regions in the Nordic countries showing the differences between them. Special analysis is done for the EU-enlargement impacts in immigration flows i.e. have EU-10 countries started to be more often immigration origin countries towards Nordic countries.

This article is based on an international project in which it was studied Nordic immigration to better understand population development among the immigrants and the effects on population development in differing regions in the Nordic countries in the period of 2000–2004 (see Edvardsson et al. 2007).

## Immigration flows to the Nordic countries

In 2000–2004, the total immigration into Nordic countries was 869,364 persons. The largest amount of total immigration in the

period of 2000–2004 was directed to Sweden, 35.6 % (309,364), Denmark received 30 % (261,291), Norway 21.1 % (183,367) while Finland received 10.6 % (92,134) and Iceland 2.7 % (23,474). The highest annual in-flow was recorded in Sweden in 2002, 64,087 persons. Traditionally Sweden has been the main destination country for immigration in the Nordic countries. Looking at the totals in the period of 2000–2004 in the country, Sweden remains top with the largest number of immigrants in each year. Iceland, however, received the highest number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants in 2000–2004, followed by Denmark and Norway. In relation to the total population, Finland faced the least immigration in 2000–2004, and the figure was the lowest in 2000, at 3.3 per mille, whereas Iceland had 18.5 per mille. The immigration peak to the Nordic countries occurred in 2002, at 179,315 immigrants while the lowest figure was 170,214 in 2000. When we take the size of the total Nordic population into account, there were 7.1 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants in the Nordic countries in 2004.

Net immigration in the period of 2000–2004 has been positive for the Nordic countries. The exception here was Iceland, which had two negative net immigration years; there was a total net immi-

gration loss of 408 as more people left Iceland than entered in 2002 and in 2003. Of the net immigration, 268,601 persons, into any Nordic country from abroad in 2000–2004, Sweden received the most, 52 per cent (138,514). In 2004, fifteen of the highest net immigration regions in terms of numbers in the Nordic countries were located in Sweden, Norway and Finland. Eight of the regions (Skåne, Stockholm, Västra Götaland, Västerbotten, Kronoberg, Värmland, Jönköping and Norrbotten regions) with the largest number of immigrants in the Nordic countries were in Sweden. Six regions (Oslo, Akershus, Rogaland, Hordaland, Nordland and Sør-Trøndelag) were in Norway and one region (Uusimaa) was located in Finland. However, the greatest numbers of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants were located in only six of those fifteen regions the figures being 4.9 per thousand in the Kronoberg region, 4.5 per thousand inhabitants in the Skåne region, 3.9 per thousand inhabitants in the Västerbotten region, 3.4 per thousand inhabitants in the Rogaland and Nordland regions, 3.3 per thousand inhabitants in the Norrbotten region, and 3.1 per thousand inhabitants in the Värmland region while the highest rate was 640.5 per thousand inhabitants in Fljótsdalshreppur, Iceland. In 2004, three Nordic regions ex-

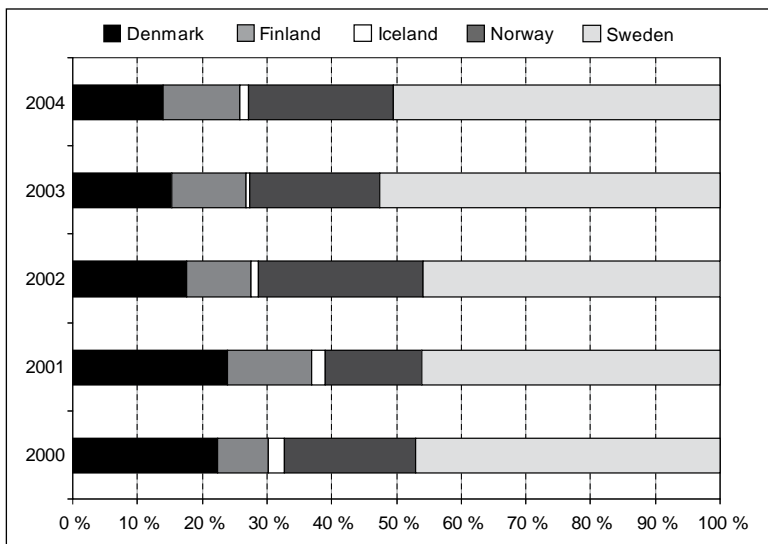


Figure 1. Foreign net immigration by country in 2000–2004 (in per cent of Nordic immigration).

perienced a net immigration loss, and they were located in Iceland (Capital area -70, Northwest -37 and Southwest -22), though in total Iceland witnessed a net immigration gain of 530 persons in 2004. Seven of the fifteen regions with lowest immigration in absolute terms were in Iceland, six could be found in Finland and one both in Denmark and Sweden.

In Table 1, it can be noticed that the highest immigration numbers are for native return migrants in all Nordic countries, and Denmark's share is the largest here in per cent of Nordic immigration. Immigration within the Nordic countries has been directed most often to Sweden and next highest immigration flows have been to Denmark and Norway. Immigrants from the EU-15 countries, excluding other Nordic countries, have been attracted to Denmark and Sweden, and among immigrants from the New Member States (NMS), i.e. EU-10, the first choice has been

Sweden and then Denmark. Actually, immigration flows have not been as large from the New Member States as was originally expected given the obvious GDP differences. Immigration from distant countries has, however, been more substantial in volume, for example in the case of Asia than from closer New Member States. Among single New Member States, for example, Estonians have been moving to Finland, Iceland has attracted immigrants from Poland, and Norway from Poland and Lithuania. There are signs that immigrants have been moving, not only to capital regions, although they are the main destination areas, but also outside the major towns and metropolitan areas. Immigrants are thus to be found in relatively high numbers in other regions such as that of Eastern Iceland, and in the counties of Troms and Finnmark in Norway. Explanation for these immigration flows and their destination areas are usually to be found

in relation to specific demand of economic sector(s). Immigration from the most distant continents like Oceania is quite small in size.

Table 2 shows that the rate of immigration has increased from the European Union enlargement on 1st of May 2004 but also that no major immigration has occurred. In the five years 2000–2005, the Nordic countries received 65,635 immigrants from the NMS countries. The main destination countries have been Denmark and Sweden. Sweden together with Great-Britain and Ireland allowed free movement of NMS nationals into their labour markets (Heikkilä 2007: 14), which could explain why Sweden among the Nordic countries had the highest immigration flows from the NMS countries. Nevertheless, in Norway, Iceland and Finland the impact of immigration flows has increased since the turn of the century.

### The role of the city regions in international streams

One of the main features of the development in the geographical distribution of population – not just in the Nordic countries but globally – in the 21st century has been the movement of people to urban areas and the subsequent depopulation of rural areas. Also the vast majority of Nordic immigration in the 21st century has directed into capital city areas. Overall, the immigration shows the same settlement pattern as the national and foreign population in Nordic countries. There is a general movement from non-urban regions to the major cities. Young people tend to make these geographical shifts to take up

Table 1. The gross number of immigrants to the Nordic countries in 2004 by exit country/continent (Source: National statistics offices). \*Luxembourg is missing.

Country	Nationals (total)	Nordic countries	Old EU countries (excl. Nordic)*	NMS countries	Other Europe (excl. EU)	Africa	America	Asia	Oceania	Unknown
Denmark	21 990	8 438	13 512	3 400	8 772	2 221	5 013	7 737	1 203	583
Finland	5 222	4 963	3 751	2 358	3 234	1 099	1 300	3 140	201	287
Iceland	2 838	2 358	1 368	407						
Norway	8 618	8 147	5 860	2 765	4 417	3 875	2 853	8 848	354	256
Sweden	14 448	13 021	10 952	4 077	7 116	4 456	5 648	15 200	752	651
in per cent of Nordic immigration										
Denmark	41,4	22,9	38,1	26,1	37,3	19,1	33,8	22,2	47,9	32,8
Finland	9,8	13,4	10,6	18,1	13,7	9,4	8,8	9,0	8,0	16,2
Iceland	5,3	6,4	3,9	3,1						
Norway	16,2	22,1	16,5	21,3	18,8	33,3	19,3	25,3	14,1	14,4
Sweden	27,2	35,3	30,9	31,3	30,2	38,2	38,1	43,5	30,0	36,6
	99,9	100,1	100,0	99,9	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

study and working population to find work. Immigration and immigrants' country-internal migration further strengthens the movement of people to urban areas and the subsequent depopulation of rural areas (Heikkilä & Järvinen 2003). In addition, refugees relocate to major cities in the years immediately after they have been placed

to the municipalities. For example, in Finland a significant group of immigrants are refugees who are allocated to refugee receiving centers and due to this matter the settlement concentrates to specific regions, like Vuolijoki in Kainuu region in Finland.

Nordic countries have experienced a rapid growth in their for-

eign-born population in recent decades. In 2004, the residents of Nordic countries included 1,073,532 foreign citizens, 4.4 per cent of the total population. In Nordic city regions' in particular the population is growing faster than the total population of the Nordic countries. In 2000–2004, the majority of immigration into the Nordic countries

Table 2. The gross number of EU New Member States immigration to the Nordic countries in 2000-2005 (Source: National statistics offices).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Denmark	2 817	3 040	2 978	2 814	3 400	4 659	19 708
Finland	1 220	1 700	1 782	1 652	2 358	2 607	11 319
Iceland	537	662	429	247	407	1 912	4 194
Norway	949	1 215	1 668	1 384	2 765	4 805	12 786
Sweden	1 670	1 948	2 388	2 191	4 077	5 354	17 628
in per cent at national level							
Denmark	5,3	5,4	5,6	5,7	6,8	8,9	7,5
Finland	7,2	9	9,8	9,3	11,6	12,2	12,3
Iceland	10,3	13,2	10,2	6,7	7,6	24,6	17,9
Norway	2,6	3,5	4,2	3,8	7,6	12	7
Sweden	2,8	3,2	3,7	3,4	6,6	8,2	4,7

at the national level was directed to major Nordic city regions. Nordic city regions are presented here with capital cities and their regions (Figure 2). Helsinki city region includes the city of Helsinki and eleven other municipalities while Stockholm region includes, in addition to Stockholm city, 21 municipalities. Oslo region has 22 municipalities while Reykjavik region nine. Copenhagen region includes the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg and the regions of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg and Roskilde. In 2003, capital city regions received 35.8 per cent of all immigration to the Nordic countries. All of the Nordic capital city regions received immigrants, with Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm city regions clearly leading in terms of shares. The capital region of Denmark in particular (Copenhagen city region) tempted most immigrants with 35.7 per cent of the Nordic capitals total. In 2003, at the national level Reykjavik city region received 68 per cent of the immigration, but only 1.5 per cent at the Nordic level. Copenhagen city region received 43.9 % of immigration to Denmark and Helsinki city region 40.7 % of immigration to Finnish. Immigration at the national level in Sweden and Norway is also very much directed towards the city regions of Stockholm and Oslo, though a large proportion of immigrants also go to other city regions in Sweden and Norway. Among immigrants in Sweden and Norway another settlement pattern undoubtedly exists: many have settled along the borders of Sweden and Norway, where there has been a particular need for la-

bour, i.e. in the oil and tourist industries. Nordic labour market trends have differed: employment has been stronger in Sweden and Norway than in the other Nordic countries. This difference can be attributed to the fact that most labour migrants to the Nordic countries head to Sweden or Norway. It is obvious that labour migrants may be more attracted to those regions where work is available, i.e. the same regions national residents are attracted to.

The region of Uusimaa also gained the largest flow (1,367) of the overall net immigration to Finland; its proportion was 20.5 per cent. The metropolitan area of Helsinki in Uusimaa in particular gained a positive international migration balance: around 15 per cent of the net immigration to Finland was to the Helsinki capital city region, while the proportion for the city of Helsinki was 8 per cent. In the capital region, large cities such as Espoo and Vantaa have grown rapidly. Along with the city of Helsinki, Tampere (Pirkanmaa), Turku (Varsinais-Suomi), Jyväskylä (Central Finland), Rovaniemi (Lapland) and Oulu (Northern Ostrobothnia) were the municipalities that gained from this net immigration into Finland. In addition to these cities, the city of Salo (Varsinais-Suomi) gained a large amount of foreign immigrants, something that has to do with the location of Nokia Enterprises in the city. Varsinais-Suomi gained the second largest share of gross foreign immigration (8.6 %) to Finland in 2004 and the largest foreign flow was to Uusimaa, 39.7 per cent. Over a half (56.8 %) of all the foreign immigrants heads

for the regions of Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi and Pirkanmaa. The volume of migration can be seen as a factor of the competitiveness of the region. The high share of innovative manufacturing and co-operation among innovating companies explains the top ranking of Salo and Oulu. Human capital as a whole shows a regional concentration in an area around one hundred kilometers from Helsinki and other big cities: Tampere, Turku, Jyväskylä and Oulu.

Regions with a diversified economic structure and an annual positive net migration of human capital will experience, in relative terms, better economic development prospects than those with one dominant economic sector and a negative net migration of human capital. Changes in the demand for labour will be moderate (i.e. high) in the first case, but can change dramatically (from high to low or vice versa) in a region with one dominant sector. All regions are dependent on an annually positive migration of human capital to meet the demand from the growing knowledge-intensive production sector in either goods or services. As a result Nordic regions perform rather differently depending on how well they succeed in attracting these much-needed competences. As such it is expected that metropolitan areas will experience further expansion while areas supporting traditional manufacturing industry will continue to decline (Persson 2001).

The international migration flows are concentrated in capital city regions in each Nordic country, but there is also increased concentration among immigrants

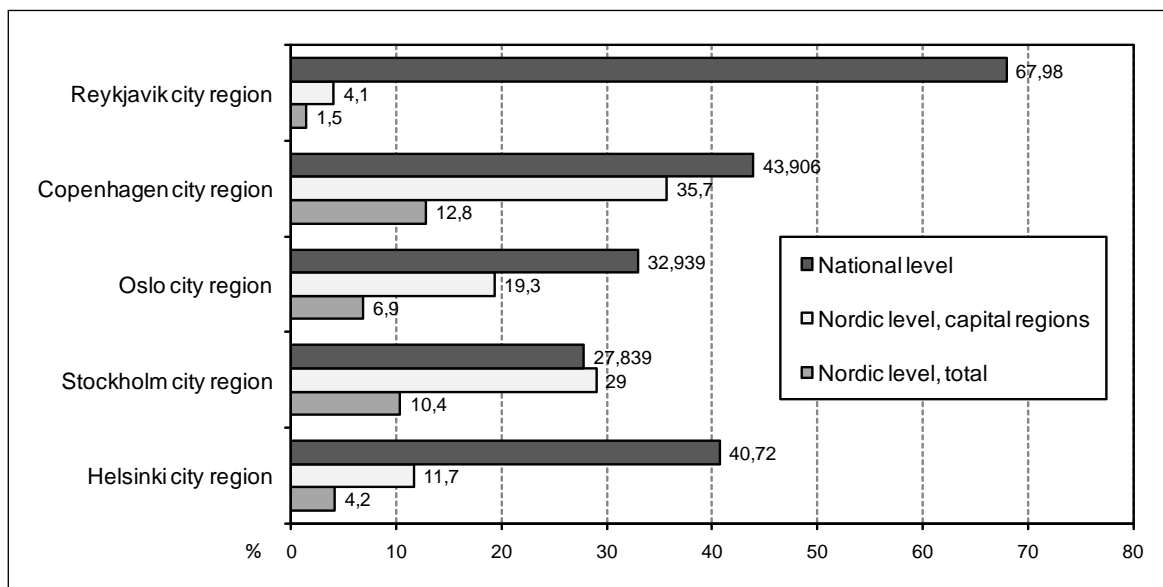


Figure 2. Share of immigration to the Nordic city regions in 2003 (in per cent at the national level, at the level of Nordic capital regions and Nordic level, total) (Source: Statistical Yearbook of the City of Helsinki 2004: NORD-STAT-database).

inside some of the Nordic cities. Increased inflows of immigrants have led to the settlement of non-native groups in the capital city regions –urban regions– in the Nordic cities. Along with this development Nordic countries follow the European settlement pattern. However, concentration process among millennium immigrants is even higher compared to foreign citizens who are already living in the country. The concentration of immigration to the same cities where the native population is moving in the country-internal migration process has thus accelerated the urbanization process. This does not necessarily produce an optimal distribution of immigrants. In a broader sense, spatial polarization is also an issue as urban conglomerations grow at the expense of peripheral areas at the national level.

## Conclusion

The Nordic countries attract immigrants from all over the world. The numbers are small in some countries, for example in Iceland and Finland, while the main destination country remains Sweden. The diversity of immigrants' countries of origin can be explained not only by labour immigration but also by the fact that refugees have been received into the Nordic countries from across the globe. Only a small part of the total immigration to the Nordic countries is related to labour immigration, which is not surprising due to the relative limited demand, except for Norway and probably Iceland, for immigrated labour (Rauhut et al. 2007: 8). Within Nordic countries, the popular immigration regions appear to do well in number of jobs, employment rates and at-

tracting highly educated people and Research and Development expenditures. Furthermore, these areas have developed more advantage with their competitive establishment sectors than those of the vulnerable regions.

Geographic proximity and a common language affect the choice of destination country among immigrants. For example in Finland, the biggest immigration flows are from the neighbouring countries of Russia, Estonia and Sweden. Many of the immigrants from Russia and Estonia are perhaps also often familiar with Finnish language before moving there. Ahvenanmaa has, similarly, gained immigrants from Sweden as they can use Swedish language there (Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008).

Immigration flows from the EU-10 member states have not arrived in numbers once predicted,

although some increase did occur. Sweden has been the most attractive destination of the Nordic countries in terms of volume, but in terms of the national shares of NMS immigration Sweden's percentage has not been so remarkable. The proportion of NMS immigrants has been highest in Iceland. GDP differences between the Nordic and the EU-10 countries create the possibility that higher immigration flows could occur but in reality the countries of greatest attraction for the EU-10 immigrants have been the English speaking countries of Great Britain and Ireland.

At the regional level, the capital areas and major cities have been the most attractive destinations for immigrants to the Nordic countries. The concentration of immigration to the same cities where the native population is moving in the country-internal migration process has thus accelerated the urbanization process. There is also increased concentration among immigrants inside some of the Nordic cities. It is worth to note that immigrants can also further move within the countries and they can be settled to lower level urban centres. Refugee-receiving municipalities have also often acted as short-term living areas after

which many refugees subsequently move to the main growth centres (see Kokko 2002). This also indicates that immigrants concentrate to those areas where people of the same ethnic background are already located. Networking creates greater possibilities to adjust and/or integrate into the new country. Networking also reduces the risks connected with international migration. Thus, social and psychological costs can be reduced by the "family and friends" effect and also, in economic terms, it is easier to find a job through networking.

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## Kirjat



**Marko Juntunen ja Riadh Muthana: *Abu Ghraib – Varissuo. Irakilaismiehen matka Saddamin selleistä Suomeen.* Ajatus Kirjat. Gummerus kirjapaino Oy, Jyväskylä 2007. 235 s.**

Marko Juntunen ja Riadh Muthanan välisten keskusteluiden tuloksena on syntynyt kirja, josta voimme lukea irakilaismiehen elämäntarinan alkaen 1960-luvun Irakista ja päättyen Varissuolle Tur-