

Policies, Practices and Prospects: The Unaccompanied Minors in Sweden

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1 Introduction

UAM are defined as children under the age of 18 who are outside their country of origin and came to Sweden unaccompanied by their parents or legal guardians, which is also the definition used in UNHCR. Children are a very important part of the displaced populations and the numbers of UAM have been growing. The proportion of children, out of the 65 million forcibly displaced individuals by the end of 2015, has increased from 41% in 2009 to 51% in 2015 (UNHCR 2016). We do not know the number of UAM worldwide including many major borders in Europe. The global movement of UAM and separated children presents challenges and responsibility for the children's rights and well-being but also a need to observe the actual situation to understand their needs and to initiate creative solutions.

This group is considered the most “vulnerable” population of the different types of migratory flows. The fleeing process but also the asylum and reception processes in the destination countries involve special challenges for children without guardians. These children face increased risks for exploitation and violations of their rights by virtue of their age and status. On one hand these children are treated as asylum-seekers, thus subject to asylum regulations and policies but on the other hand they are treated as special rights holders due to their position as children and lack of a guardian. This is clearly stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Even though the CRC is ratified by all EU Member States, which is to be implemented by using “The Principle of Best Interests of the Child” (BIC) as an overarching principle and guidelines, the applications by the Member States vary widely across the EU (CEU 2010; Derluyn/Broekaert 2008; CRC 2009). In some cases national policies of certain Member States clearly violate the CRC and the BIC such as detaining of UAM or lack of requirements for the provision of guardians for UAM, in other Member States although these requirements are in place at the national level there are challenges and inconsistencies in the application of these principles. These principles are expected to influence law-making, administrative decisions and all other actions affecting the children. When these principles are adopted by nation states they are considered as policies in a broad definition within this paper. Thus, in this paper we define policies and regulations broadly as decisions at the national level and as rights and procedures to be granted and followed by all municipalities. The main purpose in this paper is to address the Swedish case with regard to specific policies and regulations that apply to UAM. We do this by identifying and describing the stages that these regulations refer to, where UAM are treated as a specific group. The definition and categorization of UAM are solely dependent on their arrival status and almost all the regulations that are specific to UAM are related to the initial stage. Thus, we will explain and discuss the situation in Sweden with regard to the specific rights and regulations for UAM regarding the initial stage. We will also discuss shortcomings and challenges in these areas. Even in cases where the necessary policies and regulations are in place, how these

are applied in practice and whether they really comply with the BIC or not varies across and even within the municipalities. Since there is no nationwide evaluation system regarding whether and how these regulations are applied in practice, we discuss some of the challenges in relation to practices by a literature review to demonstrate the Swedish case not only in relation to the regulations in place but also in relation to the challenges in the application of these policies. Furthermore, what happens in the introductory stage is not only important for the children's well-being during those stages but has important effects for their later outcomes both in the short and long run. Majority of the UAM arrive at the ages 16, 17 and there are only a few years to their transition into adulthood, although they suddenly fall out of the category of UAM. However, their challenges and current situation does not change. We argue that this group of youth is of special interest and their situation and conditions cannot be isolated from their previous conditions. Thus, including later outcomes in education and labor market into the discussion in terms of the situation of UAM in a destination country is very important. However, there is a lack of research and empirical evidence with regard to the link between the rights and conditions of UAM at the introductory stage and their later outcomes. One way of doing this is directly analyzing the effect of introductory conditions on later outcomes if possible. However, another way of doing it is comparing refugee children in terms of their outcomes, where different reception regulations apply due to their status at arrival. In this paper we will discuss this issue by looking at previous analyses that compares UAM with accompanied minors with a comprehensive nationwide data set in relation to the factors that facilitate or hinder the development and adjustment of this group in Sweden. Integration is the missing chapter with regard to our knowledge on UAM. Although this group is defined and recognized as a group in need of special protection and the care and reception practices for this group differ from those children who arrive with their families there are several challenges this group faces that are specific to them. Thus, we need better knowledge to shed light on the situation and conditions of UAM in each destination country. Thus, we discuss the Swedish case in terms of how UAM are treated at the initial stage as well as their situation after the initial stage in terms of education and especially employment. It is very important that well-being, and adjustment are not only understood as a temporary process defined only in relation to the initial stage but also in relation to success and integration during and after transition into adulthood with a holistic approach that includes mobility, improvement and opportunities both at the national and EU level.

There are four main reasons why Sweden is an especially important case study with regard to this issue. Firstly, UAM have been coming in greater numbers to Sweden to seek asylum¹ than to other countries in Europe until 2016 (Eurostat 2015). Secondly, due to the increasing number of arrivals in Sweden and the unique characteristics of this flow combined with the fact that Sweden has historically adopted particularly child friendly policies led to an especially increased attention to this group by politicians as well as the media. Thirdly, in Sweden, UAM have been arriving predominantly as asylum seekers instead of through other channels which means that we can observe most of those who entered the country. In the case of large numbers of entry by undocumented minors who do not end up applying for asylum then these children are not observed in the system and as a result in the data. Thus, in such an analysis the data would not represent the whole population of the group of UAM in that country or their situation in the destination country. Fourthly, these facts, combined with high

¹ Although more UAM crossed the Italian border, they do not appear in the statistics since they were in the form of irregular or undocumented flows rather than asylum claims.

quality data facilities provide a unique opportunity to discuss the situation of UM for the whole population of this group with regard to their situation in terms of their later outcomes.

The goal of the paper is to address the Swedish case. Thus, we focus on the situation of UAM in Sweden in relation to the policies and practices in the introductory stage namely reception and asylum processes as well as integration in relation to their prospects in the labour market. We begin by looking at the development of this type of migratory flow to Sweden as well the demographic makeup of this group and how research on UAM has developed in Sweden. In Section 3 our goal is to summarize the research on UAM in Sweden in relation to the introductory stage but especially focus on research that indirectly bridges the initial stage with later outcomes regarding education and employment as well as identifying areas, where further research is needed. Our choice of literature is based on the main focus of this paper, which is the conditions of UAM during the introductory stage in relation to policies and practices as well as their outcomes in relation to education and employment. The introductory stage is analysed at two levels, reception and asylum namely, care and initial screening, appointment of a guardian, accommodation placement as well as education and health as a part of the reception process as well as clearance processes and processing times as a part of the asylum process, which are all integral parts of the introductory stage. Finally in the last section we discuss the situation and prospects of this group in terms of coming of age in the case of the labour market. To do this we utilize our previous research conducted in this area in Sweden utilizing the whole population of this group.

2 Basic figures and information on unaccompanied minors in Sweden

This section provides a general background to the development and the demographic makeup of the migration of UAM to Sweden. The number of UAM seeking asylum in countries around the world has been increasing year after year. Since 2010 Sweden has been the country that received the most asylum applications from UAM in Europe (Eurostat 2015). This has been the case including 2015, but we do not know how 2016 will look like by the end of this year. In 2013, Sweden received 3,852 asylum claims by UAM, where this figure was 7,050 in 2014, 35,250 in 2015 and 2,190 in 2016. The decline in the number of asylum applications by this group was largest in Sweden compared to all EU Member States, making Germany the largest receiver country for 2016. This decline in Sweden was mainly due to the restrictions that has been brought about at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 in terms of entering the EU and freedom of movement within the EU as well as several restrictions such as strict border controls in Sweden. The proportion who had their asylum claims granted was around 66% in 2013, 75% in 2014, 66% in 2015 and 72% in 2016 (Migrationsverket 2017). There are various reasons for being granted asylum and consequently a residence permit: 1) refugee in accordance with the UN Convention, 2) otherwise in need of protection and 3) special distressing circumstances. A child arriving applying for asylum is for a short period placed in centers in a few municipalities and after that placed in a municipality when the Migration authority is processing the application and taking a decision (that process takes most times several months). The composition behind the reasons for the decision varies from country to country and from year to year. The proportion to receive a positive decision² is high for those from Syria (92%), Eritrea (85%), Somalia (65%), Iraq (65%) and Afghanistan (61%), whereas it is low for those from Russia (17%), Kosovo (5%) and Serbia (2%) – i.e. countries in Europe.

² This information applies to all refugees, not just UAM, however it is roughly the same for UAM.

From this point onwards in this section we will utilize the dataset that includes the whole population of UAM who have been registered in Sweden during the years 2003–2012. When their asylum claim is accepted and they receive a residence permit each individual has to be registered in Sweden to receive a personal identification number.

2.1 Data

The data used stems from register information at Statistics Sweden (SCB). Once receiving a permit, every person is registered in Sweden and receives a personal identification number. This high-quality register data, where every person has a record, is the by-product of registers held for administrative purposes. The Population Registry, which includes detailed demographic and labor market information, is administered by the Swedish Tax Agency. The personal identification numbers are anonymized when used for research purposes. For our purposes, we use data on the entire population of UAM who are registered in Sweden between 2003 and 2012. There are 9897 UAM registered in Sweden during the years 2003–2012.

2.2 Mapping of the group of UAM in Sweden

Although the numbers arriving from each country varies over the years depending on where the crises is most acute, the most important source countries have been quite stable over the years since these variations are relatively small and the main source countries have not changed very much over the years. The source countries, where the largest numbers of UAM arrive from are Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Eritrea and Syria. The majority of this group consists of boys (75%) although the gender composition varies by country of origin and thus, slightly across the years. The large majority from Afghanistan and Iraq are males, whereas in the case of Eritrea and Somalia for example the gender composition is quite balanced. For example if we look at the four source countries, where the largest number of UAM have arrived from in 2012, we can see that 11% from Afghanistan were females, whereas 44% from Somalia, 46% from the group “Rest of Africa” and 56% from Eritrea are females. Majority of this group is 16 or 17 years of age by the time they are registered in Sweden. Males are on average older than females. Between 2011 and 2012 the largest increase in the number of UAM has not been observed for the most common group, which is males who are 16 years of age and older. The largest increase in numbers has been observed for younger age groups. Although this group is still small the increase in younger age groups is especially concerning (Çelikaksoy/Wadensjö 2015a). Furthermore, we can see that the gender composition is quite different across the different age groups, while 50% of those who are 11 years old or younger are females, only 25% of the older age group are females³.

Education is not only central to integration in the Swedish society but it is crucial for rebuilding social capital, re-establishing routines, providing a safe and stable environment to develop relevant skills for the well-being of refugee children but especially of UAM. All children in Sweden have a right to go to school regardless of what stage of the asylum process they are at. The only difference is that children who are seeking asylum are not obliged to attend school. The majority of UAM arrive in Sweden when they are upper-secondary school age, or at the age of higher classes of the compulsory school. However, generally speaking they cannot be directly placed into the regular school system. Education in Swedish is commonly the first step of education. The situation varies depending on the age of the child as

³ For more detailed information on the characteristics of this group as well as trends, see Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö (2015a).

well as previous education of the child. As a rule, the younger the child, the easier it is for them to catch up and follow regular classes of their age group. Other forms of introductory education are available before the child is placed in the regular education system. At age 18, we can see that around 90% are in the educational system, where 98% of those are at the upper-secondary school. However, the proportion of those who are under education falls sharply after age 21. When we look at those who are 22 years old, we can see that 35% of males and 43% of females are under education. When we look at the types of studies they follow we can see that they are studying in *Komvux* [adult education]. Thus, clearly UAM may follow different paths to complete their education when compared to the native born population.

3 Research overview

International as well as Swedish research on UAM is growing. There are currently several reports, a few journal articles in Swedish journals and a handful articles in international journals on UAM in Sweden. These reports and articles are written mainly in Swedish except for those published in international journals. All together they cover a wide range of issues regarding the asylum and reception processes, accommodation, education, labour market, where a large proportion focus on health. UAM have been coming to Sweden for a long time. The most discussed previous experience is that of the Finnish children who arrived during the Second World War (Paksuniemi 2015; Santavirta et al. 2015). However, majority of the studies are on the relatively more recent arrivals. Swedish research also follows the discourse on resilience versus vulnerability to a certain extent as in the case of international literature in the area of health and well-being but also show the coexistence of both traits as well as highlighting environmental factors that emphasize competence (Wallin/Ahlström 2005; Hessele 2009; Ramel et al. 2015; Eide/Hjern 2013; Wernesjö 2011; Stretmo/Melander 2013; Stretmo 2014).

Clearly, education is one of the most important areas and a gate way into the Swedish society for this group. There is a constant ongoing effort to improve the support and opportunities provided to UAM in the educational system in Sweden. However, research in this area clearly shows that there is still a very long list that needs to be accomplished. On the other hand, research in the area does not necessarily have a consensus or clear guidelines regarding the direction or the methods to be followed in dealing with the complexities of the issue. As discussed earlier, for all newly arrived children but especially in the case of UAM, education is not only a space for learning new skills but also a secure and safe place for development. Since this group does not have their family as a source of social capital schools have an even bigger role for accumulation of capital. Accumulation of human capital involves combining previous human capital and experiences with new ones. The Swedish curriculum recognizes the role and need for promoting an international perspective and an understanding of cultural diversity (Skolverket 2011). It is also recognized that the detailed and concrete identification of the level of education of UAM at arrival is crucial for determining their needs. A concrete plan for their development that is suitable for their specific needs is not possible otherwise. In addition, a very close cooperation between social workers, health officials and education experts who have been involved with the children at the initial stage and their current educational institution is very crucial for their continued development and successful transition into the regular educational system. However, the implementation and concrete execution of the aims in the curriculum especially in the case of UAM is quite weak (Niemeyer 2015). This means that previous capital and experiences of UAM are not effectively utilized for their development. However, it is stated that in 2016 schools across the

country must carry out individualized assessments of each new student to aid educational placement and planning. This is a step in the right direction if implemented appropriately. It is also argued that simultaneous education in both the mother tongue and Swedish has positive effects in the learning process (Eriksson 2013). Simultaneous teaching in both languages and detailed individual assessments of previous education can be a more efficient way instead of preparatory classes that might take up to several years (Brendler-Lindquist/Hjern 2010). UAM are a diverse group with regard to their previous experiences. Their displacement and migration process is one of the determinants of their previous educational attainment. The needs and methods best suitable for each group will likely vary. Thus, there is a need for research to identify the best methods that suit each group's development needs and preferences as well as follow up studies to see the outcomes in education and employment later in life.

The introductory stage is a very crucial time for the well-being of UAM. However, the relationship between the introductory stage and their well-being in later stages in their life has not been the focus of many studies. In addition, neither in international agreements nor in the national legislation this group is recognized as a specific group at the time of transition into adulthood or during school and work careers since they no longer identified as a specific group when they turn 18. What happens during the introductory stage has potentially long lasting effects even several years after arrival (Söderqvist et al. 2014; Söderqvist 2014; SNBHW 2013, 2013a; Hjern et al. 2012; Stretmo/Melander 2013; Malmsten 2014). Thus, the introductory stage is an integral part of integration. The introductory stage in the broad sense includes (1) the asylum process which includes different stages such as assessment of identification, grounds for asylum, age assessment if necessary, etc. (2) the reception process which includes placement in an accommodation, appointment of legal guardian as well as provision of health care and education. The Migration Board receives and makes decisions on the asylum applications; assigns children to their arrival municipality; establishes the child's age, traces family members and is responsible for children whose applications are rejected. The municipality's Chief Guardian Committee appoints a legal guardian to the child who is to act in the child's best interests since every child has the right to appear in front of any official persons with the representation of a legal guardian. Although this is a crucial regulation for the rights of the child, there is a lack of research and follow up studies in the area of the quality of the services provided by legal guardians, the selection and follow up process of legal guardians as well as education and support provided to the legal guardians who are providing their services voluntarily.

UAM are first offered a temporary place to stay in the arrival municipality but are as soon as possible to be sent to their assigned municipality. This accommodation is intended to be temporary, however for many children it becomes long term. Studies on this issue show the importance of keeping this duration as short as possible for the well-being of the child (Ombudsman for Children in Sweden 2016). After this the municipal social services of the assigned municipality are formally responsible for the children's care and for making decisions on accommodation. The importance of the type of accommodation as well as accommodation personnel as contact persons in the daily lives of UAM for navigating in the Swedish society have been highlighted in several studies (Stretmo/Malender 2013; Fällidin/Strand 2010; Iveroth 2015). However, there is a need for more systematic research in the area regarding the specific risks, challenges and positive support systems that work in the different forms of living arrangements (Brendler-Lindqvist 2004; Stretmo/Melander 2013; Wallin/Ahlstöm 2006).

In guidelines issued by the Migration Board, it is stressed that successful reception and integration rests on successful local collaborations between social workers, legal guardians, staff working at homes for Care and Housing, teachers and a number of other professionals at school (The Swedish Migration Agency 2012). However, reception of UAM is subject to several challenges that are driven by lack of interconnections between actors and absence of systematic evaluations and long-term follow-ups of how the reception affects integration (Wimelius et al. 2016). Thus, there is a need of further research in the area of how to improve the interconnections between the actors.

As discussed earlier resilience versus vulnerability is also one of the main discourses followed in the Swedish literature as in the case of international literature. In addition, Stretmo (2014) shows that the media as well as Swedish policies regarding UAM also reflect this discourse, where they are seen as either vulnerable victims or as strategic migrants trying to enter Sweden. We argue that a good understanding of the outcomes of this group later during their youth would contribute to a better understanding of their real potential and their needs that would guide and improve the guidelines in relation to both during the introductory stage and during their transition into youth. Thus, we propose a model where the stages of childhood and youth are bridged with a strong link in terms of both policies and practices and where, we acknowledge the role of the introductory stage on their later outcomes. In addition, the introductory stage policies and practices should be improved according to our knowledge on their educational and labor market needs and potential later during their youth. Thus, this model suggests new lenses for policy making, where UAM are seen as future integral parts of the society as adults, as entrepreneurs, employees, employers, experts in their field, care takers, educators, etc. In this model, the introductory stage is seen as a major process for building social capital for a smooth and easy transition into youth. Bringing this view at the core of how UAM are perceived would improve international and national policies and practices that determine how UAM are treated.

4 Legal framework and policy program structure

UAM usually enter countries that they do not wish to reside in, either transit countries outside of the EU or EU Member States with the intention to continue their journey towards another Member State. In many cases they do not even know why they have ended up in a particular Member State. Thus, the decision made by the destination Member State authorities, e.g. to return the UAM to the country of first entry, to allow them to stay and/or support them in joining their family in another Member State determine the faith of this group and their outcomes later in life. Children usually have often little control over their travel route and destination. In most cases the children's hazardous journeys are facilitated by smugglers. Smugglers adopt the routes and destinations to changes in border control strategies. UAM are also trafficked into Europe for the purposes of exploitation (EMN 2015). Interviewed Afghan UAM arriving in Sweden⁴ in 2015, leaving from Afghanistan stated security-related reasons, conflict and violence as their primary reason for leaving, while those leaving from Iran primarily referred to discrimination and lack of documentation. Main reasons of the choice of Sweden that came out from the same study were that Sweden is perceived to offer good education opportunities, to respect human rights, to have a fair and efficient asylum process as well to provide economic opportunities (UNHCR 2016). Once the UAM arrive to Sweden

4 See UNHCR, 2016 for information on the details of the study.

there are mainly seven broad policy related areas that affect the lives of UAM in terms of their well-being, health, development and prospects in different areas.

4.1 Introductory stage

The introductory stage⁵ consists of two levels: the reception and the asylum processes. Accommodation placement, appointment of guardians as well as education and health are the main areas of reception. The three main steps in the asylum process consist of initial age and identity assessment, investigating the child's family circumstances and finally investigating whether the child has substantial cause to be granted asylum. Reception and asylum processes continue simultaneously but are the responsibility of different bodies.

4.2 Reception

Reception is the responsibility of the local governments, thus Swedish municipal practice plays a main role. It is crucial that children meet with a social worker from the local social services soon after arriving in a municipality. The initial screening, listening to the child and identifying their needs is crucial for the best interests of the child principle. Social workers are supposed to identify the child's needs and make sure that appropriate steps are taken in the right direction. This means that other authorities must cooperate with the social workers and should be obliged to take the necessary steps. This way even in the case of delays in the system further traumatization of the children through inappropriate accommodation placement or not offering immediate psychological care can be avoided. The children are supposed to meet a social worker within the two weeks of arrival; however, this is not the case in reality. Furthermore, even in cases where the child is assigned to see a psychiatrist, there are several instances reported, where the care needs of UAM are not met (HRW 2016). Thus, it is crucial that the child meets a social worker qualified and trained to be able to support an UAM and that the report of the social worker is communicated to the relevant authorities and that there are cooperation and feedback systems across the different bodies responsible.

Swedish laws are generally consistent with international standards. UAM are not detained in Sweden and are entitled by law to equal access to education regardless of the stage of the asylum process that the child is at. The municipal social services are formally responsible for the children's care and for making decisions on accommodation. The municipality appoints a legal guardian and a public council to help the child with the asylum procedures. The right for children in Sweden to have a legal guardian was established in 1948. In 2005, legislation was passed extending this right to include UAM. This legislation regulates the right to get a guardian. Before the child receives a decision of whether they will be granted a residence permit, the municipality's Chief Guardian Committee appoints a guardian who is to act in the child's best interest. The importance of a guardian at every stage of the process, an adult as the main contact and legal guardian of the child that the child, can trust and receive guidance, is emphasized in the report of Ombudsman for Children in Sweden (2016). There are however, several issues regarding the selection and inspection of the guardians as well as feedback from the whole process of guardianship. Furthermore, delays in appointment of guardians especially in the last year have impacted children's access to education, information, and support. A special custodian is appointed to a child whose application for asylum has been granted. The appointment of guardian/special custodian ends when the child

⁵ See Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö (2016a) for a detailed review of these processes as well as for an international comparison.

turns 18. It is shown that when the child loses this very important support when turning 18, support from fellow countrymen is very important (Eriksson et al. 2014).

In the assigned municipality the UAM are placed in either network placements or public accommodation. Network placements (EBO) is when the child has relatives or other acquaintances in Sweden and wishes to live with them. Public accommodation is accommodation provided by the Migration Agency (ABO), home for care and accommodation (HVB housing), and some children are placed in a foster home. Studies show that there are differences in several aspects between the different types of living, where one of the main focuses is on contact with the Swedish society (Stretmo/Melander 2013). This is a crucial time for building social capital in the form of networks and an understanding of the workings of the Swedish society as well as learning the language. Since UAM spend a large amount of time in their accommodation and this is one of the main spaces other than their educational institution, where they are supposed to accumulate social capital that will equip them with the necessary tools for a smooth transition, the characteristics and opportunities available in these accommodations are of importance. The personnel of the housing are crucial for UAM since they are the ones who support and guide them in many aspects and they have a daily contact with each other. However, there is a lack of clear goals, standards, training and support for these personnel to guide them in working in the best interests of the child. Inappropriate accommodation such as placement of lone girls in group housing with boys and multiple relocations is reported in studies. This had a profound effect on some of the children (HRW 2016). In addition, there is a lack of a clear vision of building human capital during this stage. Furthermore, studies highlight institutional, legal and ethical issues regarding the process and aftermath of private accommodation (Backlund et al. 2012). As a rule, the youngest are placed in foster homes. Up until 2014, the placement in a municipality was entirely based on agreements between the Migration Agency and various municipalities. Thus, there was large variation across municipalities with regard to which municipality offers to receive UAM and how many. This variation is shown to depend on political factors, where those with larger support for parties that are sceptical about immigration were less likely to receive UAM. Population size and human capital levels were found to be positively related to receiving practices. Financial compensation from the state, humanitarian motives, sharing the burden, as well as creating jobs, improving the demographic composition with a young population and a view of UAM as resourceful potential in the society were some of the main motivations highlighted as a reason for receiving UAM by the municipality officials (Liden/Nyhlen 2015). As of 2014, the Migration Agency has the authority to place UAM in all municipalities, without there being such agreements. Furthermore, as of autumn 2016 the state does not pay the local authorities for UAM after their 18th birthday and the state compensation to municipalities for UAM is far less than before as of 2017. These factors will have a big impact on the well-being of this group.

On the other hand integration is an integral part of the introductory stage. There are guidelines issued by the Migration Agency for a successful reception and integration. National integration goals include equal rights, duties and possibilities for all regardless of cultural and ethnic background (The Swedish Government 2013, p. 13). Integration is a difficult concept to define. From a broad view, the Swedish debate resonates with the framework of Ager and Strang (2008), where it is a process of inclusion enabling development and opportunities covering all the areas such as employment, housing, education, and health encompassing equal rights. However, further budget cuts with regard to the introductory stage of UAM and a lack of a clear vision where the introductory stage is seen as a major process for building

human capital can hardly be seen as a gateway to successful integration. Furthermore, systematic research on municipal integration efforts and on the extent to which such efforts are successful is very scarce. Since UAM lack the familial system to support them in an entirely new society the adoption and integration is instead replaced by a system of reception (Wimelius et al. 2016). Relevant and responsive education that offers stability and purpose, opportunities to rebuild social capital, re-establishing a routine and continued development of skills and knowledge is required for UAM. Schools are criticized regarding the lack of systematic cooperation between the school and parents and the community in the case of newly arrived students. However, in the case of UAM different actors and institutions take on the role of the parents and the community for these children. Thus, lack of cooperation and clear guidelines regarding this cooperation between the school and these actors are crucial for the development and well-being of this group. Furthermore, close cooperation between the introductory classes and the regular classes is also crucial for this group for a timely and a smooth passage from introductory education to regular education. Thus, absence of an overall policy approach at the national level and guidelines with regard to how this cooperation is to take place in practice at the municipal level with regard to how a familial system is to be replaced by the institutions and the personnel involved and how the cooperation across all the parties is to take place for a successful integration is missing. This also brings attention to the assumed role of the family in the integration process of the children of newly arrived families. Wimelius et al. (2016) argues that the most obvious and critical challenge facing the reception system is the interactions between the various microsystems. These clearly should involve the health care professionals as well. Among other things the main challenges regarding health care are access and follow-up. All children have a right to health care but, information regarding available care as well as taking the step of seeking help is not always straightforward for this group. There are several shortcomings regarding health screening at arrival as well as providing the right care and support for the children's mental and physical health needs.

4.3 Clearance and asylum processes

While reception is mainly the responsibility of the local governments, the clearance and the asylum process are a nationwide procedure and the responsibility of the Migration Agency. Sweden has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and according to Swedish law the Migration Agency has to specifically consider a child's best interest. However, since these guidelines are rather vague concepts and there are not any national regulations regarding how to apply these guidelines, they are open to interpretation. Lundberg (2013) demonstrates that Swedish migration board officers often use the BIC in order to legitimize rejections of UAM's asylum applications (Stretmo 2014). Once the individual reasons for seeking asylum are examined, the Migration Agency official must examine as soon as possible the child's age, health, and maturity. The child has the right to be accompanied by an adult during the examination. In addition, the Migration Agency appoints a lawyer to every asylum seeking child. The proof of identity resides with the individual. Thus, the individual has to prove their identity with a passport or with other documents. In case such documents are missing it is the responsibility of the individual to obtain these documents while waiting. The staff of the Migration Agency assists in this process. In addition, The Migration Court of Appeal has made it clear that the burden of proof lies with the applicant to establish their stated age as probable, with the aid of supporting documents, where available (MA 2014). The benefit of the doubt is accorded to the asylum seeker. The Migration Agency has no duty to establish the age. If there are doubts about the age of the applicant based on observation and lack of documents then the individual is further questioned and offered a medical age assessment.

The individual is transferred to the procedure for adults if the Migration Authority decides the individual is 18 or above. Medical age assessment methods are criticized by experts in the area due to the considerable uncertainty in the estimations of these methods (Hjern et al. 2012). With the increase in the number of applications especially in 2015 there have been long delays and a high degree of uncertainty regarding the situation of the children. Thus, as a result increased anxiety and insecurity is experienced by the children.

5 Prospects for unaccompanied minors

How these children are received in the destination country and how the asylum process takes place determines the well-being of these children not only in the short run but the effects are long lasting and determine the well-being of these individuals as they enter into adulthood and the labor market (Carswell et al. 2009). To be able to incorporate an approach where the introductory stage is constructed as a stage for building human capital we need a good understanding of their situation during their youth in terms of education and the labor market. Thus, we investigate their situation in the labor market for the whole population in Sweden who arrived as UAM.

This section mainly summarizes findings from our previous study that followed the whole population of UAM in Sweden focusing on the labour market situation of this group. This is done by utilizing register data from Statistics Sweden on the entire population of UAM who are registered in Sweden between 2003 and 2012. Labour market related outcomes are registered for those who are 16 years of age and above. Thus, there are 24,068 observations for those who arrived as UAM. The main limitation of this data is the lack of information for the introductory stage. Thus, we cannot observe the situation of UAM before they have been granted asylum and received their permit. However, as discussed earlier, one way of looking at the role of the introductory stage is to compare similar groups where different regulations apply. Thus, to explore this UAM are compared to those who arrived as accompanied minors. Accompanied minors are those who have arrived as children from the same countries of origin as the UAM but with their parents. A random sample of 10% of the comparison group is utilized. The number of UAM who are older than 28 are very few in the data, thus the sample is restricted to those who are 16-28 years of age. Thus, the total estimation sample is 101,290. Regression analyses are utilized to compare the groups and to look at the factors that influence their situation in the labour market.

The main results show that this group exhibits capacity and resilience in terms of finding employment and willingness to work. It is found that age at arrival, length of stay, education, and place of residence as well as family reunification situation has an impact on their situation in the labour market. When they are compared to their counterparts, accompanied minors, it is found that UAM are more likely to be employed after controlling for available characteristics. This points to their ability and willingness to work. However, large gender differences are found in the employment patterns, where females are less likely to be employed and belong to the NEET (not in education or training) group (Çelikaksoy/Wadensjö 2015c, 2016b). On the one hand, given the empowering effects of employment and inclusion in the labour market this will have further positive effects on the this group such as language skills, social skills, knowledge on the workings of the society and the labour market. However, on the other hand the success and well-being of this group depends on the types of jobs they are working in and whether they have the opportunity to give direction to their situation in the labor market in terms advancing their career rather than being stuck in certain types of jobs as well as continuing education. Most UAM lose most of the support that they receive when they turn 18. This is a very short period of time to be able stand on ones feet and start navigating in an

entirely different society, since the majority arrives at the age of 16, 17 and processing times can be long. Some municipalities extend this period up until the age 21 (Çelikaksoy/Wadensjö 2015b). The municipalities are not obliged to extend the period, but it is possible for them to do so. However, this will likely not be the case anymore as discussed earlier. There are yet no evaluations of the effects of extensions of the care period. In addition, we find that especially males drop out of the educational system at the age 21 and start working and the types of jobs they work at are usually low qualification requiring jobs. It is very important for this group that they are not stuck in these types of jobs and they have opportunities for further training and move on in their careers. Thus, these results reflect information that needs to be incorporated into the introductory stage as well as policies in relation to their transition into adulthood. On one hand, the results reflect the capacity and willingness to work for UAM, which could reflect the positive influence of the introductory stage for UAM compared to accompanied minors since they are treated differently at the introductory stage. On the other hand, the results also reflect potentially a higher need to work for UAM compared to other groups, which might be leading to the interruption of their education. Furthermore, the results also show that once they are in the labor market they need further training to move on in their careers since they have potentially interrupted their studies. In addition, the results could reflect that equal treatment of girls and boys in the introductory stage might not lead to the same outcomes in the labor market as the results clearly show. There are no gender specific policies in relation to the introductory stage or with regard to transition into adulthood. Thus, it is crucial that the introductory stage as well as the transition stage incorporates these capacities and needs into their policies within a human capital building framework.

In addition, as discussed in our model in Section 3 this is a two way process and studies that investigate the specific role of each introductory stage policy on later outcomes will also strengthen the connection between the different stages of the lives of UAM. Thus, there is a need for systematic research relating the initial stage to outcomes later in life. Thus, we need a discussion regarding the costs of not providing the necessarily support and opportunities during the introductory stage rather than the costs of providing them.

6 Conclusions and discussion

Sweden has been receiving the largest number of asylum claims by UAM in Europe. Thus, Sweden is a very interesting case study partly due to these large numbers but also due to its unique data availability as well as its special focus on the issue.

In this paper we have described the development of this type of migratory flow and explained the demographic makeup of UAM in Sweden as well as giving an overview of the literature in Sweden within this area. The literature review is done with a focus on the main areas of the paper which is the introductory stage and the prospects of UAM in the areas of education and employment, where we tried to identify the main areas where there is a need for further research. In addition, we have analysed the introductory stage in two levels namely, the reception and the asylum processes. We have focused on the issues of initial assessment, care, accommodation placement, guardianship, as well as education and health within the reception process and clearance processes and processing times under the asylum process. We have also discussed integration as an integral part of the introductory stage as well as a catalyst linking this stage to later outcomes of this group throughout their lives. It is shown that despite the efforts in each area there are still several challenges that needs to be dealt with. One of the main challenges relates to delays in processing times, as well as appointment times. The other group of challenges relates to lack of follow-ups and cooperation within the municipality level. There are several actors and bodies that are responsible from the child. However, lack

of coordination between these bodies can and do result in disastrous mistakes that has severe consequences for the well-being of the child.

Sweden has traditionally been sanctuary to people in need of international protection and seeking asylum but this has changed in the last year. In relative terms Sweden has had a well-developed system for unaccompanied asylum seeker and migrant children. Overall, the rights and regulations are in compliance with the social policy structure in Sweden regarding equal rights and non-discrimination. However, there are several challenges in the practices and the applications due to a lack of clearly set goals and procedures regarding the inclusion, well-being and integration of this group. First of all, no national agency has the responsibility to track or evaluate the success of the municipalities in fulfilling their responsibilities with regard to receiving, caring, housing, supporting and integrating UAM within the best interests of the child including the areas of education and health. This lack of feedback and knowledge makes policymaking and supporting the municipalities to ensure that the right methods and practices are used for the best interests of these children very difficult. In a country like Sweden, there are in fact very good opportunities to achieve a more incorporated and effective approach. One of the main issues in this respect is data related. Although each individual in Sweden has a personal number once they receive a permit and are registered in Sweden, those who are not yet registered do not receive a personal number. They do receive however another identification number, which in principle can be matched to the personal numbers. Thus, if all the information is also registered and followed even during the period before registration, this solves the above mentioned issues with regard to feedback and knowledge to a large degree.

Another important issue is that according to the Committee on the Rights of the Child asylum applications by UAM have to be prioritized. However, this is not the case in Sweden. UNHCR also clearly states that this is the most vulnerable group of all the different types of migratory flows and the challenges children face are different than those faced by adults, thus should be given priority.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child states the importance of a prompt appointment of a guardian to protect children from risks that can jeopardize their right to life, survival, and development, such as trafficking. The Committee expressed concern that the Swedish Act did not impose firm guidelines on the time frame as well as the training requirements of the guardians.

We argue that the strong link between the introductory stage and later outcomes should be acknowledged and investigated, thus a more holistic approach should be replaced in all policies and practices regarding the UAM including a gender specific framework. This requires a better understanding of the effect of the introductory stage on later outcomes as well as incorporating our knowledge on their later outcomes into policies and practices relating to the introductory stage. This means that their identified needs and capacities later in life is built into a social capital framework which becomes as an integral part of the introductory stage. We suggest that transition into adulthood is the missing link for these minors, which is partly due to a non-integrated approach at the policy level both at the international and national level.

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