



## Discussion Paper



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### The incorporation of the „immigrant dimension“ into the Scandinavian welfare states: A stable pioneering model?

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Discussion Paper 16, 11/2011

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**Where is EU Gender Policy Going? Balance and Perspectives in  
the Field of Employment and the Labor Market**

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- Employment and equal opportunities considering the Scandinavian Model,
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- The concept of discrimination in the legal norms of the EU and the extension of non-discrimination principles to other social features,
- Strategies and lobbying of gender equality political players,
- Gender dimensions of the present economic and financial crises. Speakers from European and national research contexts presented their recent work.

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Organized by: Dr. Ingrid Biermann and Prof. Dr. Friederike Maier.

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**The incorporation of the 'immigrant dimension'  
into the Scandinavian welfare states:**

**A stable pioneering model?**

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**Abstract**

The general question raised in this paper is whether the relatively harmonic image of a Scandinavian welfare model characterised by nearly full employment, generous welfare benefits and ambitious principles of equality are downsized when we are dealing with immigrants. In other words, is the Scandinavian welfare model a stable pioneering model when the 'immigrant dimension' is incorporated?

The paper sheds light on this rather broad question by examining two sets of empirical questions concerning the output (the incorporation of the 'immigrant dimension' into welfare state policies) and the outcome level (the impact of the Scandinavian welfare state on immigrants' integration into the host society), respectively:

1) *Output*: Are the ambitious principles concerning solidarity, universalism, equality and redistribution downscaled when it comes to welfare state policies substantially targeted at immigrants? 2) *Outcome*: To what extent have the Scandinavian welfare states been successful in promoting labour market inclusion and reducing poverty and gender inequality among immigrants?

The paper argues that the relatively harmonic image of a stable model and unified group of generous Scandinavian welfare states falls apart at some point when the 'immigrant dimension' is incorporated.

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## 1 Introduction

The Scandinavian welfare states (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) have traditionally enjoyed a good reputation internationally and are often regarded as 'pioneers' for, among other things, combining high socio-economic equality, high market economy efficiency and high employment figures for men and women alike (Greve, 2007). The Scandinavian welfare states are also often heralded as forerunners in terms of gender equality, which among other things refers to the predominance of a dual breadwinner model and well-developed, women-friendly welfare policies. In addition to the high employment figures for women, gender equality is also reflected in the low poverty rates for single mothers, high education levels etc. (e.g. Siim and Borchorst, 2008).

Of course, this rather harmonic picture has been questioned and widespread criticism has been raised against the institutional structure of the Scandinavian welfare states. The so-called 'immigrant challenge' has been a particularly controversial topic in recent years. Hence, some authors argue that ethnic diversity poses little problem for liberalistic welfare states but represents a dramatic challenge to the social democratic model, which has historically been rooted in uniform, homogenous and collective class identities (e.g. Necef, 2001; Koopmans, 2010).

The Scandinavian welfare states are interesting cases to explore when it comes to how ethnic diversity is handled, and they illustrate the importance of going beyond the traditional welfare state regime typology (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1990).

When it comes to welfare policies and the institutional and political structure of the three Scandinavian welfare states in general, the existence of a distinct 'Scandinavian welfare model' is widely acknowledged. All three countries are generally seen as very ambitious in terms of living up to their ideals about solidarity, universalism, equality and redistribution (e.g. Brochmann and Hagelund, 2010), and '*...the Scandinavian countries stand out as both "strong welfare states" and "strong work societies"*' (Kildal, 2003: 10). These goals have been pursued by providing relatively high social protection and generous benefits, high minimum wages and a compressed wage structure, universal, predominantly tax-financed welfare state arrangements, a high degree of public involvement, strong labour union involvement and comprehensive work/family policies. And finally, as mentioned above, these welfare states have received international recognition for their comparatively high level of redistribution, comparatively high employment rates among men and women, and high degree of gender equality.

Conversely, when it comes to immigration and integration policies, it is commonly held that the Scandinavian countries differ in several ways. Denmark and Sweden are especially known for two contrasting characteristics: Denmark for its very harsh tone and

many rigorous rules, while Sweden is often idealized as a country founded on diversity, pluralism and equality (e.g. Jørgensen, 2006; Hedetoft et al., 2006; see also Brochmann and Hagelund, 2010).

This paper examines the relationship between the Scandinavian welfare states and the 'immigrant dimension' more deeply. The overall question raised is whether the relatively harmonic image of a Scandinavian welfare model characterised by almost full employment, generous welfare benefits and ambitious principles regarding equality are downsized when we are dealing with immigrants. In other words, is the Scandinavian welfare model a stable pioneering model when the so-called 'immigrant dimension' is incorporated?

The paper sheds light on this rather broad question by examining two sets of empirical questions concerning the *output* and *outcome* levels, respectively. The *output* level is broadly defined by referring to the 'policy response' to immigration by focusing on the incorporation of the 'immigrant dimension' into welfare state policies. The *outcome* level is also broadly defined and refers to the 'impact' of the Scandinavian welfare states on the integration of immigrants into the host country. At stake here is therefore not the impact of concrete policies but more the impact of broader patterns and policy principles (see also Andersen, 2007b).

**Output:** As mentioned above, Denmark, Norway and Sweden are seen as very ambitious when it comes to living up to ideals regarding solidarity, universalism, equality and redistribution: *Are these principles scaled down when it comes to welfare state policies that are primarily targeting immigrants?* In other words, do we see tendencies towards welfare chauvinism and a 'welfare state light' for immigrants?<sup>1</sup>

**Outcome:** As mentioned above, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have been successful at generating high employment rates, reducing gender inequalities in general and in the labour market in specific, and fighting poverty: *But to what extent have the Scandinavian welfare states been successful in promoting labour market inclusion and reducing poverty and gender inequality among immigrants?*<sup>2</sup>

The paper argues that the relatively harmonic image of a stable model and unified group of generous Scandinavian welfare states falls apart at some point when the 'immigrant dimension' is incorporated. Particularly when considering the policy principles, Denmark stands out as the only Scandinavian country in which the social rights of immigrants have been the object of labour market and social policy reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> This part is mainly based upon analysis of policy documents (legislation, green-papers, white-papers etc.).

<sup>2</sup> This part is based upon a discussion of previous research as well as national and international statistics.



Previous research has pointed out how the Scandinavian countries have not succeeded when it comes to erasing ethnic differences (e.g. Borchorst, 2009; Morissens and Sainsbury, 2005). The paper supports this conclusion to some extent. At some point, however, we also see that the Scandinavian welfare states have reduced ethnicity-related inequality and how the employment figures for immigrant have improved in recent years.

Due to the length of the paper, some parts focus predominantly on the Danish case. Nevertheless, the similarities and differences between the three countries have been taken into account as much as possible.

The paper is structured in five sections. The next section outlines and discusses some of the assumed 'immigration challenges' facing the Scandinavian welfare states. The third section outlines how the 'immigrant dimension' has been incorporated into welfare state policies, while the fourth section outlines and discusses the extent to which the Scandinavian welfare states have succeeded in promoting equality, labour market participation and gender equality. Finally, the fifth section sums up the findings.

The generic term 'immigrants' covers a broad group of different categories: labour migrants (or economic immigrants), refugees, asylum seekers, family members, undocumented immigrants etc. By immigrants, this paper refers to persons who have gained entry to a foreign country to live there permanently (born outside of Scandinavia) and with permanent legal resident status. The definition therefore includes several categories but excludes asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants. Immigrants with a non-Western background are the particular focus of the paper.

## **2 The Scandinavian welfare model and the immigration challenge**

Taking the many assumed challenges the welfare state is facing such as globalization, demographic changes, Europeanization etc. into account it has in particular been the so-called 'immigration-challenge' which in a Scandinavian context has been the most controversially discussed one<sup>3</sup>. This matter has developed as a result of the inflow of non-Western immigrations into many European countries since the 1960s/1970s (Larsen, 2010).

In many ways, the three countries share a parallel history of migration (Olwig, 2011). Until the 1960s and 1970s, emigration exceeded immigration in all three countries. In

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<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the Scandinavian welfare states (as well as the European welfare states and the US) require labour. Migration can therefore be seen as both a 'burden to' and as 'the salvation of' the welfare state (Brochmann, 2008).

the 1960s and early 1970s, however, they all experienced a dramatic increase in the import of temporary labour. The economic slowdown in the 1970s brought an end to the import of temporary labour but did not halt the inflow of migrants. To the contrary, many of the temporary workers settled permanently, and the flow of immigrants and asylum seekers towards Europe continued (Givens, 2007: 67–68). While the history of migration to the three countries is more or less parallel, the number of foreign-born residents in Sweden is roughly twice as high as in Denmark and Norway (does not include descendants): 13.9 per cent of the Swedish population in 2008 had been born outside of the country, whereas the corresponding figure for Denmark was 7.3 per cent and 10.3 per cent for Norway (OECD, 2010: 299).

Several perceived challenges and tensions have been pointed out in the literature, three of which are explored in greater detail in the following. They are chosen because they are often referred to in previous research and because they are related to some degree to the two questions raised in this paper. Discussing these tensions also helps clarify the focus of the paper.

## **2.1 The tension between ethnic diversity and public support for universalistic welfare policies**

This tension<sup>4</sup> concerns the impact of immigration on the welfare state, e.g. the size of the welfare state and public support for the welfare state, where it has been argued that the very presence of sizeable ethnic/racial diversity undermines the welfare state. More precisely, the assumption put forward has been that immigration poses a threat to the cultural homogeneity in the Scandinavian countries, which is seen as an important precondition for solidarity and public support for universalistic welfare state provision (for a discussion of this tension, see e.g. Banting and Kymlicka, 2006; Alesina and Glaeser, 2004; Crepaz and Damron, 2009; Larsen, 2010; Bay and Pedersen, 2006).

This tension stems from the so-called 'Black American experience' concerning the in-group/out-group mechanism (Larsen, 2010). Among other things, it has been argued that the lack of an American socialist party was due to the ethnic heterogeneity of the American working class (Lipset, 1996) and that the race issue in America blocked many welfare schemes (Larsen, 2010: 1). One of the questions which has been raised is whether we will come to see the same trends in the European welfare states as a result of increased ethnic heterogeneity (e.g. Larsen, 2010; see also Alesina and Glaeser, 2005; Gilens, 1999). In other words, can the American experience be generalized to European welfare states, or does this American literature represent 'American exceptionalism'?

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<sup>4</sup> Also referred to as the heterogeneity/redistribution trade-off hypothesis (Banting and Kymlicka, 2006).

A number of studies have been conducted to elucidate these questions and the relationship between ethnic diversity and support for welfare policies and/or the size of the welfare state. The results are rather contradictory, however, and 'no smoking gun' has been found (e.g. Larsen, 2010: 3).

What is in focus in the *output analysis* in this paper is not the impact on the welfare state as such, but rather the impact of ethnic diversity on the part of the welfare state which immigrants are entitled to and confronted with. Hence, what we have seen in recent years – in many other European countries – is not a downscaling of the welfare state in general, but rather tendencies towards welfare chauvinism, dualization and a 'welfare state light' for immigrants.

## **2.2 The tension between redistributive equality and employment**

From an economic perspective, the Scandinavian countries have been highlighted as some of the most vulnerable countries and among the countries facing the greatest challenges in terms of integrating immigrants into the labour market (e.g. Orrenius and Solomon, 2006; Tranæs and Zimmermann, 2004). Basically, the rationale is that the incentives embedded in the social security system not only prevent immigrants from entering the labour market but also tend to attract weak and disabled immigrants to the country. It is also argued that there is tension between the low level of qualifications among many immigrants and a labour market system characterized by high minimum wages and generous social security. Accordingly, fewer welfare benefits and lower wages would provide better access to employment. These arguments and this reasoning have also been raised against the Scandinavian welfare states in general, where combining egalitarian income distribution with economic efficiency and high employment in a globalised world has been regarded as impossible. But the Scandinavian countries have proven to be highly resistant (Andersen, 2007b).

The paper touches upon this tension in both parts of the analysis: The *output analysis* touches upon how the three countries 'coped' with this presumed tension at the policy level; that is, by upholding the principle concerning universalism or redistribution or by increasing the financial incentive to find employment. And the *outcome analysis* explores the extent to which we have seen unfavourable integration outcomes in terms of labour market participation.

### **2.3 The tension between gender equality and diversity**

Within this third source of tension, the equality principle is also at stake in reference to whether the ideal of equality that is fundamental in the Scandinavian welfare states challenges the recognition of diversity.

According to Siim and Borchorst (2008), one of the reasons why the Scandinavian countries have been highlighted as challenging diversity from a feminist perspective is that:

*'The [Scandinavian] countries have been labelled as women-friendly welfare states, but this has been criticized for glossing over inequalities between women in ethnic majorities and the immigrant minorities'* (Siim and Borchorst, 2008: 1).

The Scandinavian countries have coped very differently with this perceived tension in recent years. Particularly since 2001, there has been a widespread notion among most Danish politicians that the greatest gender equality problems exist among ethnic minorities. Gender differences in the patterns of labour market participation for men and women with roots outside of Denmark have been emphasized by the government, the underlying assumption being this perceived unacceptable gender inequality (e.g. The Danish Government, 2003).

The political rhetoric has also been marked by a widespread assumption that immigrant women are not in the position to make voluntary choices on the grounds that they are subjected to strong cultural and religious norms (e.g. The Danish Government, 2003). The 'headscarf debate' in the Danish parliament in 2008 also illustrates this tendency, where gender equality and cultural diversity were articulated as being in conflict with one another. Hence, many politicians have argued in recent years that a ban on headscarves is necessary in order to promote gender equality among immigrants, particularly among younger girls.

The integration of immigrants into the labour market also has a high priority in Sweden and Norway, and the political discourse in both countries emphasizes the importance of gender equality among immigrants. What is unique to Denmark is how equality and diversity are articulated in the dominant political discourse as being conflicting principles (see also Langvasbråten, 2008).

The issues above raise many interesting questions (for discussions hereof, see e.g. Okin, 1999; Siim and Borchorst, 2008), which the paper in hand only touches lightly. Hence, the paper discusses gender equality outcomes in relation to labour market participation

in the three countries and goes into greater depth with the Danish case, where the relationship between gender equality and diversity has been debated in a more controversial manner than in Sweden and Norway.

### **3 Output: The incorporation of the 'immigrant dimension' into welfare state policies**

The Scandinavian welfare states are seen as very ambitious when it comes to living up to ideals regarding solidarity, universalism, equality and redistribution. The question is whether these principles are downscaled when it comes to the welfare state policies substantially targeting immigrants.

Although the welfare states in the three countries share several features, they have responded quite differently with respect to some of the challenges related to immigration. Denmark stands out. Hence, since 2002, Denmark has repeatedly reduced the level of benefits provided to immigrants. Norway and Sweden have not followed suit. First was the introduction of the so-called 'start assistance' or 'introduction allowance' for newly arrived immigrants, which was followed by reduced social assistance in a number of specific situations, including requirements for families in which both adults receive social assistance to each work a minimum of 300 hours over a two-year period (increased to 450 in 2008). This introduction of economic sanctions and incentives that particularly target immigrants has occurred in other EU countries, but not in Sweden and Norway.

Recent changes in Denmark are explored more deeply in the following, the focusing being on two conspicuous reforms illustrating this tendency: 1) The introduction allowance/start assistance and 2) the 300/450-hour rule<sup>5</sup>. Recent tendencies in Sweden and Norway are thereafter briefly discussed.

#### **3.1 New legislation in Denmark**

National elections in November 2001 resulted in a Liberal-Conservative minority coalition government, which depended on the support of the populist right-wing *Danish People's Party*. One of the key issues – if not *the* key issue – for the latter is immigration and the perceived threat immigration poses to Danish culture. In 2002, proposed legislation placing further restrictions on immigration also included the so-called '*start assistance*' or

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<sup>5</sup> Also 'More people at work', from 2002, reduced the social assistance for many persons receiving social assistance for a consecutive six-month period. The initiative is a general social policy element, but most of those affected were immigrants (Andersen, 2007a).

'*introduction allowance*'<sup>6</sup> (paid amount is the same), which was to replace the social assistance for newly arrived immigrants<sup>7</sup>.

Start assistance is some 35-50 per cent lower than ordinary social assistance, depending on the family situation (reductions being lower for families with children) (Andersen, 2007a; Hansen and Hansen, 2004). Whilst Danish social assistance is comparatively generous, the start assistance and introduction allowance schemes are among the *least* generous schemes in north-western Europe (Hansen, 2006). The introduction allowance is paid to people for the first three years after arriving in Denmark if they participate in an introduction programme. Afterwards, they are eligible to receive 'start assistance' for a four-year period. The benefit level is therefore the same for the entire seven-year period. For immigrants coming to Denmark after July 1 2006, the transition from start assistance to social assistance after seven years requires that the recipients have had ordinary, full-time employment for at least two and a half of the last eight years.

The formal political argument for introducing lower benefits was to reinforce the financial incentive to find employment. Since its introduction, the start assistance programme has been fiercely debated in the public as well as in research communities, the question being whether strengthening the financial incentives for newly arrived immigrants actually increases their labour market participation or whether this reduction increases poverty or exacerbates their life situation.

The second remarkable reform aimed at immigrants is '*A New Chance for All*', introduced in 2005. The most controversial aspect of this reform was the so-called '300-hour rule' (which later became the 450-hour rule), formally introduced in 2006 and in effect as of April 2007.

The reform stated that married couples receiving welfare benefits lose their right to social welfare if they work less than 300 hours over a two-year period<sup>8</sup>. Before losing their benefits, the legislation requires that the person in question receives a warning six months beforehand so that they have opportunity to find work in the meantime.

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<sup>6</sup> The first national integration legislation was already implemented in 1999 under the Social Democratic government, which also included the introduction of an 'introduction allowance' targeted at newly arrived immigrants, which was considerably lower than the ordinary social assistance level (Ejrnæs, 2001). The new introduction allowance was criticized, among others by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, which viewed it as discriminatory. The government subsequently withdrew the introduction allowance in late 1999, but the formal argument was that increased financial incentives did not improve employment among newly arrived immigrants and that the savings to society were therefore limited (Ejrnæs, 2001). It was not subjected to criticism when introduced in 2002, because it was also aimed at citizens with Danish roots who had been outside the country for seven years or more and had returned.

<sup>7</sup> 'Newly arrived immigrants' refers to refugees and those who have come via family-reunification who are subject to the Danish Integration Law and have obtained a permanent residence permit within three years.

<sup>8</sup> In the first year, from 1.4.2007–1.4.2008, the requirement was 150 hours of ordinary work within the last year.

The rule was formally implemented in April 2007. In 2008, the work requirement was increased to 450 hours and the legislation was modified so as also to include the married recipients of social assistance, regardless of whether one of them was in employment. The rule applies to four out of five 'matching groups'<sup>9</sup> – except those where 'no job functions are possible at all'. The 450-hour requirement only covers regular employment and excludes jobs with wage subsidies, practical training, participation in activation programs etc. The 300/450-hour rule applies to everybody, regardless of citizenship or ethnicity; in practice, however, it is primarily targeting immigrants – especially immigrant women. This was underscored in the official reform documents issued by the Minister of Employment (The Danish Government, 2005).

The rule is very controversial due to the fact that it contains considerable work requirements and economic sanctions and that it is used for testing whether immigrant women are actually available for the labour market. Moreover, moral and paternalistic arguments have been highlighted. Hence, the notion of the 'housewife mentality' and the ambition to increase gender equality among immigrants clearly figured as core arguments for legitimizing the 300-hour rule when it was introduced (Breidahl, 2011).

### **3.2 Recent tendencies in Sweden and Norway**

The social security provision provided for newly arrived immigrants and social assistance recipients with an immigrant background, and passive income maintenance schemes have also received considerable attention in Sweden and Norway in recent years. All three countries are displaying a closer coupling between income maintenance schemes and employment-promoting measures (Breidahl, 2010).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Norwegian politicians thus started discussing problems related to the large group of immigrants receiving social security benefits and their weak connection to the labour market. This debate resulted in a Norwegian 'introduction law', and an introduction allowance for newly arrived immigrants was introduced in 2004. The declared intention of this legislation was to stimulate and motivate the target group to remain in the programme and promoting the transition to active participation in the labour market. Unlike in Denmark, however, this level did not change the *level* of social security provision, dealing solely with the *conditions* for benefits and the relation between rights and duties.

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<sup>9</sup> Match group 1) Good match with the labour market, 2) Good match, a few qualifications missing, 3) Partial match, some relevant qualifications, 4) Low match, only very limited job functions are available, 5) No match, no job functions.

This topic has also been subjected to debate in Sweden in recent years, and a reform of the so-called introduction programme was introduced in December 2010. As in Norway, the new programme meant a stronger link between rights and duties. Once again, however, the question about the relationship between participation and social security provision was at stake as opposed to questions concerning the general reduction in benefits provided to immigrants (Breidahl, 2010).

It is common to distinguish between two strategies, whereby active reforms of income maintenance schemes can promote unemployed people's (re)integration into the labour market: 1) A strengthening of the financial incentive to find employment by reducing benefits levels and 2) a redefinition of the relationship between rights and duties by introducing a closer link between income maintenance schemes and employment-promotion measures. The latter of the two has been taken up in all three countries, while the former has only been applied in Denmark.

Returning to how the three countries have 'coped' with the presumed tension between redistributive equality vs. employment (cf. section 2), we see how Sweden and Norway have upheld the principle concerning universalism or redistribution in many ways, whereas Denmark has gone its own way by increasing the financial incentive to find employment by reducing benefits levels.

#### **4 Outcome: The impact of the Scandinavian welfare states on the integration of immigrants into the host society**

The Scandinavian welfare states have succeeded in generating high employment rates, reducing gender inequalities in general and on the labour market in specific and fighting poverty. But to what extent have they been successful at promoting labour market inclusion and reducing poverty and gender inequality among immigrants?

##### **4.1 Labour market participation**

As mentioned above, the Scandinavian countries have been highlighted as some of the most vulnerable countries and as being among the countries facing the greatest challenges in terms of integrating immigrants into the labour market (cf. section 2), and it has become commonly held that the employment figures for immigrants stand in stark contrast to participation rates among natives in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. That native born men and women in Denmark, Norway and Sweden have a higher labour market participation rate than those born outside of the respective countries is true. But whether there is a stark contrast and whether the Scandinavian countries are doing much worse than other European countries is a more complicated question.



First, it is generally difficult to find reliable and comparative statistical data on this issue, partly because data on the total immigrant population have suffered from differences from country to country as to how to define who is an 'immigrant' (OECD, 2008: 11).

The Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC), which Table 1 is based on, has no such problem regarding the definition issue; however, it does not distinguish between immigrants from Western vs. non-Western countries, the composition of the immigrant population within each country is not taken into account, and the national statistics the database is based on are rather old (for the years 2000–2003).

Table 1 presents the employment rates for the foreign-born and native-born in the OECD countries. The employment rates for foreign-born men and women in the Scandinavian countries are found towards the bottom. Hence, only Belgium and Finland were faring worse at the time with respect to foreign-born men. For women, more countries are at the same level as Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Hence, the employment rate among foreign-born women in the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, France, Slovak Republic, Greece, Hungary, Spain and Italy are also at around the 50 per cent level. If the foreign-born employment rate relative to native-born employment rate is calculated, the Scandinavian countries are lagging behind due to high employment rates among natives in general. The question then becomes whether this is a measure that is appropriate to use. I don't think so.

<b>Table 1. Employment rates among foreign-born<sup>10</sup> and native-born men and women, OECD countries, Percentage of the 15–64 population (2000–2003)</b>				
	Employment rate foreign-born men	Employment rate foreign-born women	Employment rate native-born men	Employment rate native-born women
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>59.8</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>83.7</b>	<b>75.5</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>75.2</b>	<b>72.0</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>59.6</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>68.9</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	69.4	50.5	84.2	65.0
<b>Belgium</b>	54.9	34.5	67.8	52.9
<b>Finland</b>	52.1	39.7	66.1	63.5
<b>Germany</b>	68.8	52.0	74.2	60.4
<b>United Kingdom</b>	69.9	53.4	76.3	64.2
<b>Czech Republic</b>	68.3	52.2	74.1	60.9
<b>France</b>	65.2	46.4	67.2	54.8
<b>Austria</b>	75.0	56.8	76.5	61.7
<b>Australia</b>	72.5	54.8	76.6	64.0
<b>Switzerland</b>	83.3	62.7	87.6	69.5
<b>Canada</b>	78.1	62.5	77.8	68.5
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	61.5	46.0	59.7	48.4
<b>Ireland</b>	72.7	53.3	72.2	51.1
<b>United States</b>	73.3	54.6	78.1	68.4
<b>Portugal</b>	79.1	65.6	75.1	56.9
<b>Greece</b>	78.5	45.6	68.2	39.9
<b>Hungary</b>	63.3	46.9	58.6	47.6
<b>Spain</b>	68.1	47.0	67.2	39.7
<b>Italy</b>	75.4	42.6	67.1	42.4
<b>Luxembourg</b>	78.2	56.5	70.7	49.0

Source: OECD (2008); The Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC) (based on data from 2000-2003)

In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture, it is also important to take more recent tendencies into account. Hence, the more recent employment figures for immigrants in the Scandinavian countries have improved.

When comparing the employment rates for immigrants from countries outside the EU-27 (based on the Eurostats labour force survey) who have settled in EU-15 countries (see

<sup>10</sup> Descendants are therefore excluded.

Table 2), Denmark ranks fourth, with an employment rate of 60 per cent, only surpassed by Greece, Portugal and Italy, whereas Sweden is at the bottom together with France and Belgium, with employment rates around 47 per cent<sup>11</sup> (Table 2). The pattern appearing in Table 2 therefore differs in many ways from the pattern in Table 1. Again, we must consider different calculations and definitions. Table 1 is based on older statistics (based on national statistics for the years 2000–2003) and distinguishes between foreign-born and native-born, whereas Table 2 is based on a labour force survey for the years 2006–2009.

<b>Table 2. Employment rates among immigrants from countries outside EU-27 settled in EU-15 countries, Percentage of the 15–64 population, 2006–2009 (2009)</b>				
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
Luxembourg	47	55	37	53
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b>
Germany	48	50	52	52
Finland	48	49	52	52
Austria	59	60	60	59
Belgium	34	38	40	39
Netherlands	47	50	56	54
Great Britain	62	61	62	60
Greece	69	69	70	68
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>47</b>
Italy	67	66	66	63
EU-15	58	58	59	56
France	45	46	50	46
Portugal	72	72	72	66
Ireland	62	64	64	56
Spain	70	69	65	55

Source: Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, 2010a; Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The difference in immigrant participation in Denmark and Sweden in recent calculations also appears in the comparison of the 16–64 age group in Denmark, Norway and Sweden carried out by Brochmann and Hagelund (2010: 350) based on statistics from 2008 (Table 3). Here, Norway does best, followed by Denmark and then Sweden, but we must take into account the differences in the composition in the immigrant population and the number of immigrants, which in 2008 was highest in Sweden and lowest in Denmark (OECD, 2010: 299).

<sup>11</sup> Other calculations (AE, 2011) place Denmark close to the bottom – number 23 out of 28 European countries. These calculations differ from those above by comparing relative employment rates, EU-27 instead of EU-15, and by using more recent statistics from the first quarters of 2010.

**Table 3: Employment rate for the population as a whole, immigrants from Western countries and immigrants from non-Western countries: 2008, 16–64 age group, per cent (approx.)<sup>12</sup>**

	The general population	Immigrants from Western countries	Immigrants from non-Western countries
Denmark	78	62	56
Norway	79	78	59
Sweden	71	60	49

Source: Brochmann and Hagelund (2010) acquired their statistics from, respectively, Statistics Norway (NO), Statistics Denmark (DK) and Statistics Sweden (SCB 2010) (S).

Summing up: In all three countries, the employment rates among immigrants have increased in recent years, meaning that the employment gap between immigrants and 'natives' has decreased. Nevertheless, compared to persons with a native background (with some of the world's highest rates of participation in the labour market) the employment rate among immigrants – men and women alike – remains relatively low.

In order to illustrate this increase in employment among immigrants, the paper will go into greater detail with recent tendencies in Denmark in the following.

As appears in Table 4, the gap between the employment figures in the population in general compared to the employment figures among immigrants has decreased, and the employment rate for immigrants has generally increased considerably over the years – especially among women with a non-Western background.

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<sup>12</sup> Again, we must be aware of differences between countries with respect to the use of statistical parameters and definitions.

**Table 4: Employment rate for men and women from non-Western countries, Western countries and for men and women with a Danish background: 1997–2009, 16–64 age group, per cent.**

Year	Men from non-Western countries	Men with a Danish Background	Men from Western countries	Women from non-Western countries	Women with a Danish background	Women from Western countries
1997	41.7	79.9	64.1	26.8	70.7	54.8
1998	45.2	80.6	65.1	29.1	71.7	55.6
1999	49.4	81.4	66.8	32.3	73.4	56.8
2000	50.6	81.4	66.9	34.4	74	57.5
2001	51.6	81.6	67.7	36.5	74.6	58.5
2002	52.6	81.6	67.4	38.1	75.2	59.2
2003	52.1	80.2	66.3	38.3	74.2	57.9
2004	51.7	79.1	64.3	38.4	73.5	57.1
2005	53.2	79.2	65.3	39.4	73.5	57.8
2006	56.1	80.1	66.2	42.1	74.4	58.9
2007	60.7	81.5	67.9	46.2	75.9	60.2
2008	62.6	81.9	68.6	49.5	76.7	61.1
2009	59,6	79,7	66.0	48,8	75,7	59,6

Source: Statistics Denmark

In Table 5, where the employment rates among men and women from selected countries are outlined, we observe considerable differences between ethnic origins. Hence, women from Somalia, Iraq and Lebanon have the lowest employment rates, while women from Vietnam, Bosnian Herzegovina and Sri Lanka are found at the other end of the scale. For immigrant men, the overall pattern is similar, but the employment rates are generally much higher than for women. The table would also appear to indicate that the employment rates in particular have increased for some specific groups – particularly among the female immigrants from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Table 5: Employment rate among men and women from selected countries: 1. January 2007–2009, 16-64 age group, per cent.**

Ethnic origin	2007		2009	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Somalia	22	45	33	45
Iraq	24	47	32	48
Lebanon	21	47	27	48
Afghanistan	33	60	44	61
Pakistan	34	67	36	65
Morocco	39	62	42	61
Iran	50	59	54	58
Turkey	47	67	48	65
Bosnia Herzegovina	53	62	54	60
Yugoslavia	48	63	49	60
Sri Lanka	59	74	62	72
Vietnam	60	73	62	71
Persons with a Danish background	77	81	76	80

Source: Statistics Denmark

Multiple factors have possibly influenced the increase in employment among immigrants in Denmark, first and foremost, the favourable economic conditions and subsequent drop in unemployment in the period from 2004–2008. Second, since 2002, Denmark has repeatedly reduced the benefits provided to immigrants and made it more difficult to qualify for them (the 'start assistance/introduction allowance', the reduction of social assistance in a number of situations and the 300/450-hour rule), which may have boosted employment among immigrants. Generally speaking, however, the most socio-economically advantaged persons are those who have obtained employment as a consequence of the benefit reduction in Denmark (e.g. Huynh et al., 2007; Rosholm and Vejlin, 2010; Bach and Larsen, 2008; Breidahl, 2011).

#### 4.2 Poverty

Have the Scandinavian welfare states erased socio-economic inequality and prevented poverty among citizens with an immigrant background? Again, it is important to take the time dimension into account and distinguish between the 1980s and 1990s (before Denmark started reducing social security for immigrants in a number of situations) and the 2001–2010 period.

Based on data from the 1990s, Morissens and Sainsbury (2005) concluded that a situation had developed in several countries in which the substantial social rights of immigrants were lagging behind the general population. This was also the case in Sweden, but it was in Denmark that it was most remarkable (Norway was not included in the study). Hence:

*'The magnitude in the differences between migrant and citizen households follows the same pattern. In the two social democratic regime countries, the percentage differences between the poverty rates of migrants and citizens were largest in Denmark and smallest in Sweden'* (Morissens and Sainsbury, 2005: 645).

They conclude further: *'When migrants are incorporated in the analysis, the robustness of the welfare regime typology survives mainly in the cases of the United States and Sweden. Otherwise the typology largely falls apart, with the social rights of migrants in the United Kingdom and Denmark posing the largest contradictions to the expected performance of regime types'* (Morissens and Sainsbury, 2005: 654).

It is also well-documented that poverty among immigrants was higher in Denmark than in Sweden in the 1980s and 1990s<sup>13</sup> (Blume et al., 2005).

But do these conclusions also hold for the 2000s? Is poverty among immigrants still higher in Denmark than in Sweden (and what about Norway)? And how have the differences been affected by the policy changes in Denmark since 2001 (cf. Section 3)?

It is tempting to draw the conclusion that poverty among immigrants remains much higher in Denmark than in Sweden. Unfortunately, however, no comparative studies concerning this issue have been conducted in recent years. Nevertheless, we know that immigrants (and their descendants) in Denmark are highly over-represented among those enduring poverty as well as long-term poverty and that the number of persons in general facing poverty and long-term poverty in the period from 2001–2007 has increased considerably – an increase of around 50 per cent from 2001 to 2007 (students living in poverty are not included) (AE, 2010). Poverty is defined as the number of persons with an income lower than the half of the medium income. To be long-term poor, a person must be defined as poor for at least three years (AE, 2010).

The increase in poverty from 2001 to 2007 has been steepest among the immigrants and their descendants from non-Western countries. Hence, the share of immigrants from non-Western countries living in poverty has increased from around 10 per cent in 2001 to 15 per cent in 2007. In comparison, the share of persons with a Danish background

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<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, there have not been any studies comparing Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

living in poverty has increased from 2 per cent in 2001 to 2.8 per cent in 2007 (AE, 2010: 34–35).<sup>14</sup> The share of immigrants (from underdeveloped countries) living in long-term poverty (defined as poor for at least three years) has also increased from around 2.9 per cent in 2001 to 5.4 per cent in 2007.

Moreover, calculations point out that around 2/3 of the persons receiving start assistance in 2007 (61.2 per cent) were living in poverty (AE, 2010: 52).

Hence, this pattern indicates that the benefit reductions launched since 2001 (e.g. the start assistance/introduction allowance and the 300/450-hour rule) have increased poverty among immigrants (see also Blauenfeldt et al., 2006). The persons affected by these reductions (in the period from 2004–2007) were mainly immigrants from non-Western countries (in particular from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan), and women were more often subject to these reductions than men (Breidahl, 2011; Hansen et al., 2009: 33).

This does not tell us whether poverty among immigrants in Sweden and Norway has also increased in the 2000s. Unlike in Denmark, however, benefit reductions primarily targeting immigrants have not been introduced.

On that background, the Scandinavian welfare states can hardly be claimed to have eradicated socio-economic inequality and prevented poverty among citizens with an immigrant background. Furthermore, Denmark has seen a steep increase in the share of immigrants living in poverty (particularly for immigrants from non-Western countries)

### **4.3 Gender equality**

As mentioned, the Scandinavian welfare states are often regarded as forerunners of gender equality. Among other things, this refers to the predominance of a dual breadwinner model and well-developed women-friendly welfare policies. High gender equality is reflected in the employment figures for women in (among the highest in the world) as well as low poverty rates among single mothers, high education levels etc. (e.g. Siim and Borchorst, 2008).

The relatively low employment rates among first-generation female immigrants and the differences in the employment figures among immigrant men and women (again, particularly within the group of non-Western immigrants) are relatively high in all three countries (cf. section 4.1).

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<sup>14</sup> The descendants of immigrants were highly over-represented among the poor in 2007 (AE, 2010).



Does this mean that the Scandinavian countries have failed in terms of promoting gender equality among immigrants and that female immigrants do not benefit from women-friendly policies? (cf. section 2.3).

Examining these questions in Denmark with a focus on education levels and labour market participation (and exclusion), both positive and more negative tendencies appear.

The majority of those sanctioned by the 300-hour rule in 2007 were, as mentioned above, women with an immigrant background. Furthermore, the women at risk of being economically sanctioned by the 300-hour rule requirements were less likely to find employment than men, even when taking into account the significance of factors other than gender, such as illness, education, age etc (Bach and Larsen, 2008). These findings indicate that gender equality has hardly been improved for the sanctioned immigrant women as a result of the rule and the economic sanctions. Instead, it seems as though many of these women have simply become homemakers – or 'housewives' – without any contact to the municipal employment offices. This is paradoxical, considering that the 300-hour rule was framed as a measure to promote gender equality among immigrants. Conversely, the results also indicate that some women have gained employment and possibly become financially independent. Again, it is uncertain whether this can be due to the rule alone or also owing to other factors. And we must not forget how employment among female immigrants has increased considerably in recent years – as seen most dramatically among the female immigrants from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan (Breidahl, 2011).

This produces a situation in which we have very few clear-cut conclusions and are left with contradictory effects instead.

If we examine the female descendants from Western and non-Western countries, we see a number of positive tendencies.

Firstly, female descendants are becoming much better educated as compared to women with a Danish background in the same age (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, 2010a; LO, 2007), and descendants from non-Western countries complete their educations faster than natives and therefore enter the labour market earlier (DI Indsiget, 2010; see also Tranæs, 2008 (ed.)). When comparing female descendants from non-Western countries with male descendants, the gender differences disappear. Hence, this group of female descendants exceeded the employment rate among male descendants from non-Western countries in 2010 (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, 2010b).

## 5 Conclusion and perspectives

The overall question addressed in this paper is whether the relatively harmonic image of a Scandinavian welfare model – characterised by nearly full employment, generous welfare benefits and ambitious principles of equality – holds when we are dealing with immigrants?

In order to cast light on this rather broad question, two sets of empirical questions were put forward concerning the output and outcome levels, respectively:

**Output:** *Are the ambitious principles concerning solidarity, universalism, equality and redistribution downscaled when it comes to welfare state policies substantially targeted at immigrants?* **Outcome:** *To what extent have the Scandinavian welfare states been successful at promoting labour market inclusion and reducing poverty and gender inequality among immigrants?*

Concerning *output* – the incorporation of the 'immigrant dimension' into welfare state policies – Denmark stands apart from Sweden and Norway when it comes to upholding the principles concerning equality and redistribution due to reduced benefits levels: These reductions have occurred, firstly, for newly arrived immigrants as a result of the replacement of social assistance benefits with the lower, so-called 'start assistance/introduction allowance', and later by reducing social assistance in a number of situations, including the minimum requirements for couples receiving social assistance to work 300 hours (now 450) hours in a two-year period.

In a welfare state perspective, this difference is remarkable considering that Denmark, as opposed to Sweden and Norway, has shifted away from some of the basic principles in the Scandinavian welfare state, such as income security and generous benefits. So even though the social security provisions provided for newly arrived immigrants and for social assistance recipients with an immigrant background have also been subjected to debate in Sweden and Norway and reforms have been implemented, only Denmark has dropped some of the basic principles in the Scandinavian welfare state, such as income security and equality. Nonetheless, there have also been common tendencies on other points.

The question is whether we also more generally – when considering the Danish welfare state as a whole and not merely activation reforms – are seeing tendencies towards the development of a dual welfare state and a general undermining of immigrants' social rights.

The picture becomes more nuanced when considering the Danish welfare state as a whole. Most welfare arrangements, including those for immigrants, remain tax-financed, universal and unrelated to the contribution records of those benefitting from them; for example, disability pensions, health care and elderly care (Andersen, 2007a).

However, proposals concerning cuts to immigrants' social rights within a number of welfare arrangements have been up for serious consideration. In 2010, a cross-ministerial working group was established in order to shed more light on this topic, and immigrants' social rights concerning child benefits and pensions for refugees were downscaled.

Concerning *outcome* – the impact of the Scandinavian welfare state on the integration of immigrants into the host society – positive and negative tendencies become apparent.

Empirical evidence from the 1990s and early 2000s indicated that the Scandinavian welfare states have not managed to erase inequality related to ethnicity to the same extent as they have managed to erase inequality related to gender and class. With respect to fighting poverty, Denmark was lagging after Sweden (unfortunately, Norway was not included in the comparison). And when it comes to promoting labour market participation among immigrants, Sweden was lagging behind. In all three countries, however, we have seen improvements in the employment figures for immigrants.

Gender equality was mainly discussed in the paper in relation to the Danish case. The conclusion was that the gender differences in the labour market among immigrants have decreased – and for descendants they have disappeared – but that some female immigrants have been excluded from the labour market more permanently as a consequence of the 300-hour rule (implemented in 2007).

It has not been possible to provide clear-cut answers to the questions raised in the paper. Rather – in some instances – a more nuanced picture has been put forward, and it has been demonstrated that it is fruitful and important to take into account the part of the welfare state which immigrants are entitled to and confronted with. The relatively harmonic picture of a Scandinavian welfare model is not directly downsized when we are dealing with immigrants; instead, new dimensions and tensions have appeared.

The notion of the 'immigration challenge' will likely continue to figure as a controversial topic in the Scandinavian context. But in what direction and which tensions it will receive attention depends on what the future will bring: Taking the evidence from this paper into account, there are reasons for optimism as well as concern.

Future research must therefore hold a strong eye on the incorporation of the 'immigrant dimension' into the Scandinavian welfare states.

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