International Journal of Social Science Research and Review (IJSSRR)

In collaboration with

3RD STUDENTS' LETTERS CONFERENCE, 2025
INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, EÖTVÖS LORÁND
UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST

Special Issue: Social Change in Global Perspectives:
Migration, Populism, Postcolonial Legacies, and the Language of Transformation

Welfare Regimes in Crisis

Policy Divergence in Sweden and Norway's Reception and Integration of Ukrainian Refugees

Aysenur Polater

Faculty of Social Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 1053, Hungary

https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7914-4227

Email: aysenurp@student.elte.hu

http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v0i0.3460

Abstract

This paper examines the contrasting policy responses of Sweden and Norway to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, revealing how two seemingly similar Nordic welfare states have adopted distinct approaches to refugee reception and integration. Although both countries share humanitarian traditions and welfare-oriented governance models, Sweden has pursued a more restrictive and bureaucratic policy, limiting access to long-term residence, welfare benefits, and integration programs. In contrast, Norway has implemented more flexible and inclusive measures, enabling broader access to employment, housing, and language training. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative comparative approach based on secondary data analysis. It draws on governmental policy documents, official reports, academic articles, and media sources to trace differences in institutional design, implementation practices, and discursive framing of the Ukrainian refugee response. This multi-source strategy enables an in-depth understanding of how each state operates on humanitarian protection within its welfare and migration systems. The paper argues that these policy divergences reflect broader political discourses and welfare governance orientations: Sweden's turn toward securitization and administrative control contrasts with Norway's pragmatic, community-based approach. By comparing these two cases, the study contributes to debates on the resilience and transformation of Nordic welfare regimes under crisis-driven migration pressures.

Keywords; *Sweden**;** Norway**;** Ukrainian Refugees**;** Integration Policy**;** Welfare State**;** Migration Governance*

INTRODUCTION

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 caused a humanitarian crisis in Europe that hasn't been seen since the Second World War. In just a few months, millions of Ukrainians left their homes in search of safety, creating an unprecedented humanitarian crisis for neighbouring countries. As reported by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024), over 6.5 million refugees have been documented throughout Europe, while approximately 3.7 million individuals are still internally displaced within Ukraine. In March 2022, the European Union implemented the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) to respond to the unexpected displacement, granting Ukrainians the ability to live, work, and utilize social services for a duration of up to three years. The application of this directive has put a strain on European welfare systems and raised concerns about solidarity and shared accountability among both member and non-member states (Alam, 2024).

The Nordic nations, known for their strong welfare systems and commitment to humanitarian values, provide an interesting setting to examine this crisis. The primary objective of the welfare state has historically been to guarantee the welfare of its citizens. In the Scandinavian countries, this includes significant roles in supporting immigrants (Isaksen, 2019). Sweden and Norway, in particular, are often seen as models of social democracy, fairness, and inclusive governance. Both countries have a history of addressing humanitarian crises with generous approaches and asylum policies. However, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has changed the usual understanding of the Nordic model, introducing new dynamics.

This leads to the central question of this research: why have Sweden and Norway, despite their shared social democratic roots, responded so differently to the Ukrainian refugee crisis? This paper argues that while both nations remain within the broader Nordic welfare tradition, their practical strategies have diverged significantly. Sweden's approach has become increasingly defined by administrative barriers and a focus on security, while Norway has adopted a more flexible, locally-driven pragmatism. These differences reveal how national political cultures can reshape welfare policies when a crisis hits.

To investigate these topics, the paper is structured into five parts. After this introduction, Section 2 reviews current studies on migration management and responses to crises. Section 3 details how the TPD was actually put into practice in both Sweden and Norway, while Section 4 provides a direct comparison of how refugees access welfare benefits in each country. Finally, Section 5 looks at what these findings mean for the broader concept of "Nordic solidarity" in the future.

Shifting Paradigms in Nordic Migration Policy: A Review of Scholarly Perspectives

Studies on refugee integration within Scandinavian welfare states examine migration governance from multiple angles, such as state policy design, civic participation, and refugees' own experiences. Much of this research highlights how the shared foundations of universalism and equality have produced similar institutional models, yet varied practical outcomes across countries.

Historically, Sweden and Norway—and the wider Scandinavian region—have been viewed as leading examples of how nations can successfully include refugees and people seeking asylum within their social fabric. This "Scandinavian Exceptionalism" was built upon the foundations of the Nordic Welfare Model—a system characterized by universalist social services, high levels of social equality, and proactive state intervention in the labor market (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). However, the 2015 European refugee crisis and the subsequent 2022 invasion of Ukraine have served as critical "stress tests" for these models. Recent scholarship suggests that the traditional image of Scandinavia as a humanitarian sanctuary is undergoing a profound transformation, influenced by neoliberal reforms, the rise of right-wing populism, and a shift toward securitized migration governance.

This review synthesizes academic literature from 2010 to 2025 to trace the evolution of integration policies in Sweden and Norway. It explores how these states have navigated the tension between their historical humanitarian commitments and the contemporary pressures of border control and economic

sustainability. By analysing the shift from "state-assisted integration" to "conditional temporariness," this review highlights a growing divergence between two nations that were once seen as nearly identical in their approach to welfare.

In the early 2010s, literature on Scandinavian integration focused primarily on the robust, state-led mechanisms designed to incorporate refugees into the host society. Bunar and Valenta (2010) provided a seminal comparative analysis of Sweden and Norway, introducing the concept of "state-assisted integration." This model was defined by its reliance on two central pillars: housing and employment. Unlike the more laissez-faire or inadequate policies found in other parts of Europe, the Swedish and Norwegian governments took direct responsibility for the resettlement process, providing refugees with subsidized housing and mandatory introduction programs.

However, even during this period of perceived generosity, Bunar and Valenta (2010) identified a persistent "integration gap." Despite the high level of investment in education and housing, the unemployment rate among refugees remained three times higher than that of native-born citizens. This discrepancy suggested that structural support alone was insufficient to bridge the social and economic divide. The authors argued that the extensive support systems had a "limited impact" on actual social cohesion, as refugees remained marginalized in the secondary labor market and segregated in specific residential areas.

Expanding on this structural analysis, Olwig (2012) offered a cultural and anthropological perspective on Scandinavian integration. She argued that integration in the Nordic context is not merely a bureaucratic process but a project of "moral citizenship." According to Olwig, in Scandinavian welfare societies, inclusion is often tied to shared cultural expectations about how a person should live, contribute, and take part in community life. In this view, integration is an asymmetrical process where the "immigrant" is expected to adapt to the "host's" moral and social standards. Thus, the perceived failure of integration in the early 2010s was framed not just as an economic issue, but as a failure of cultural and social "belonging."

Research by Dahlstedt and Neergaard (2016, 2019) connects these national case studies to larger transformations in European welfare states, and they argue that Europe is in crisis regarding to the restrictive migration policies, rising of the radical right parties, and changing attitudes towards migration and refugee agency in recently. Through the Swedish case, the authors aim to analyse these changes in Sweden, inspired by historical and sociological perspective.

The Swedish welfare model, developed after World War II, is widely recognized around the world as a successful balance between capitalism and socialism. It is based on Keynesian ideas, focusing on keeping people employed through active labour market policies and government efforts to boost the economy. Sweden has low unemployment and strong market integration. It also offers extensive social insurance programs and a broad system of public services (Esping-Andersen, 1990). However, since the late 1980s particularly after the economic crisis of the early 1990s the model has undergone significant neoliberal reforms under both left- and right-leaning governments. These changes prioritize individual autonomy, flexibility, and market competitiveness over centralized welfare provision. Economic policy has overtaken social policy, and welfare expenditures are increasingly viewed as production costs rather than tools for redistribution. Although not entirely replaced, the traditional model has shifted toward one where citizens' duties are emphasized over their rights, and welfare is increasingly linked to labour market performance rather than universal entitlement. (Dahlstedt and Neergaard, 2016).

Dahlstedt and Neergaard (2019) consider on the Nordic welfare model's (especially Sweden's) viability in the face of expanding neoliberal reforms and the growing power of right-wing populist parties. With reference to Polanyi's theory on the backlash against market expansion in the 1920s–30s, the authors suggest that contemporary right-wing populism may represent a similar reaction to neoliberalism. Although the Nordic welfare regime is not disappearing entirely, it faces fragmentation, with Sweden showing both signs of regression—such as restrictive migration laws and normalized extreme right party

rhetoric—and resistance, including strong anti-racist mobilization. Neoliberal economic changes since the 1990s, including deregulation, privatization, and increased inequality, have weakened traditional social democratic structures. These shifts have led to tensions between market-driven and public welfare ideals, and between inclusive gender regimes and exclusionary migration policies. The authors question whether we are witnessing the emergence of a new Nordic model shaped by exclusionary politics, and they highlight the need for further research to determine whether this is a transformation, fragmentation, or partial end of the traditional Scandinavian welfare model.

Adding an applied perspective, Asztalos Morell (2019) observes Sweden's shift after the 2015 refugee crisis, when administrative control and securitization began to overshadow humanitarian assistance. The introduction of economic measures and an increasingly securitized asylum regime from 2016 onwards led to practices such as medically based age assessments and the "writing up" of minors' ages, often resulting in rejected asylum claims and deportations. Morell (2019) also notes that this as part of a broader European trend where migration governance prioritizes state control and border security over humanitarian protection.

The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 presented a new challenge for Scandinavian migration governance. Alam (2024) provides a comparative overview of how the Nordic countries responded to this crisis, noting a strategic divergence between military and humanitarian priorities. While Denmark and Finland adopted a militaristic stance, Sweden and Norway focused on reception and integration. However, the way these two countries implemented the European Union's TPD revealed deep-seated differences in their respective governance models.

Lazarenko and Rabinovych (2025) argue that Sweden has taken a significantly harder line than its neighbours regarding Ukrainian refugees. Unlike its response in 2015, Sweden avoided passing any unique legislation to enhance the rights of displaced Ukrainians. Instead, individuals under the TPD were granted only the minimal rights associated with the "Reception of Asylum Seekers Act" (LMA)[1]. This meant that while Ukrainians were free to work, they were excluded from the comprehensive "Introduction Program" and had limited access to healthcare—restricted primarily to emergency care.

The consequences of this "minimalist" approach were stark. Lazarenko and Rabinovych (2025) document the phenomenon of "back-and-forth migration," where Ukrainians in Sweden would return to a war zone simply to receive necessary medical treatment that was unavailable or unaffordable to them in the Swedish system. This lack of economic and social support effectively crippled the integration prospects of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden, creating a class of "protected" persons with fewer rights than previous cohorts of refugees.

The most recent scholarship (2023–2025) emphasizes the widening gap between Swedish and Norwegian integration outcomes. Tyldum et al. (2023) conduct a rigorous comparison of the financial assistance and rights accorded to Ukrainian refugees in both nations. Despite having comparable economic standing, the two countries offered vastly different support structures.

In Norway, Ukrainian refugees were integrated into the existing "Introduction Program," which provides a stable income, language training, and labor market assistance for up to 24 months. In contrast, Sweden excluded Ukrainians from these programs, leaving them to rely on the LMA daily allowance—an amount that has not been adjusted for inflation since the 1990s. Tyldum et al. (2023) quote Ukrainian refugees who were acutely aware of this disparity:

> "*Swedish authorities do not want them to remain... Sweden is among the countries in Europe that gives the least rights and benefits.*"

[1] The asylum seeker card in Sweden is called the "LMA card" ("LMA-kort" in Swedish). "LMA" is an abbreviation of the Swedish phrase "Lagen om mottagande av asylsökande," which translates into English as "the Act on Reception of Asylum Seekers."

This policy difference had a tangible impact on migration patterns. While Sweden initially received more Ukrainian refugees than Norway in early 2022, the trend reversed by the summer of that year. Norway's arrival numbers surpassed Sweden's, as the former became a more attractive destination due to its superior social rights and employment support. This shift confirms that refugee agency is highly responsive to the quality of integration governance and the perceived "welcoming" nature of the host state.

State Responses to Ukrainian Displacement in Scandinavia

Sweden: From Humanitarian Tradition to Administrative Restriction

Sweden has long understood its national identity through its reputation for humanitarian openness. As noted in the literature, the Swedish state has a long-standing tradition of addressing the integration of diverse groups through robust, universalist welfare structures (Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003). However, the empirical data from the last decade reveals a dramatic institutional retreat.

The historical trajectory of Swedish migration reached an unprecedented peak in 2015, a period frequently characterized in scholarly and political discourse as the "refugee crisis." Statistical records from the Swedish Migration Agency indicate that the nation processed a record-breaking 162,877 asylum requests during this interval, with Syrian nationals constituting the primary demographic. This massive influx challenged the operational capacity of the Swedish welfare state, yet it was met with a framework that initially prioritized long-term residency.

The geopolitical landscape shifted significantly seven years later following the 2022 Russian offensive in Ukraine, which triggered a secondary wave of displacement across Europe. By the end of April 2023, Swedish administrative records documented 54,575 Ukrainian applicants seeking protection (Tyldum et al., 2023). While this figure is quantitatively lower than the 2015 zenith, the administrative response was markedly more restrictive, reflecting a fundamental change in Sweden's migration governance strategy. The implementation of the EU's TPD led to the creation of the Swedish Massflyktsdirektivet (Mass Influx Directive). Paradoxically, while this was intended to provide immediate safety, the findings show it functioned as a tool for "institutional decoupling." Displaced Ukrainians were classified under the Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers rather than standard residency laws. The most significant structural barrier identified is the systematic denial of a personnummer (personal identity number).

In the Swedish context, the personnummer is the "digital key" to society. Without it, refugees are effectively invisible to the state's digital infrastructure. This prevents them from opening bank accounts, signing housing contracts, or accessing digital healthcare portals (European Migration Network [EMN] Sweden, 2025). This administrative invisibility creates a state of "suspended citizenship," where the individual is physically present but institutionally absent. A critical finding involves the exclusion of Ukrainian refugees from the Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) program. Because SFI entitlement is traditionally tied to population registration, TPD holders are left to rely on ad hoc, fragmented language courses provided at the discretion of individual municipalities (International Organization for Migration [IOM] Sweden, 2023) Furthermore, while these individuals have a legal "right to work," they are excluded from the "Entry Programme for Newly Arrived Immigrants." This creates a paradox where refugees are expected to be self-sufficient but are denied the linguistic and vocational tools necessary to enter the high-skill Swedish labor market."

Sweden's financial support for TPD holders is characterized by severe stagnation. The findings show that the daily allowance—intended to cover food, clothing, and basic needs—has remained unchanged since 1994, ranging from SEK 24 to 71 for adults. Research by the IOM (2024) indicates that this amount is fundamentally insufficient to meet the contemporary cost of living in a high-inflation economy. This "allowance freeze" functions as a form of "administrative deterrence," effectively placing

refugees at risk of food insecurity and making them vulnerable to labor exploitation as they struggle to supplement their weak state support.

Norway: Pragmatism and Local Flexibility

On 11 March 2022, Norwegian authorities implemented a general provision under Article 34 of the Immigration Act, which allows for the granting of temporary collective protection for refugees coming from Ukraine, in accordance with the EU Directive. As stated in the report by Nordic Council of Ministers & UNHCR, Ukrainian refugees are classified as asylum-seekers and are granted all associated rights (including housing, financial support, access to education and healthcare, and the ability to reunite with family), except for the right to work while their application is under review (Berlina, 2022).

Shortly after the European Union put the Temporary Protection Directive into effect on March 4, 2022, Norway, which is not an EU member, introduced its own national version of temporary collective protection for Ukrainians seeking asylum in the country on March 11.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) developed a flexible registration and relocation system, prioritizing rapid processing and municipal autonomy. This autonomy was strengthened by a policy modification that enabled municipalities to directly settle refugees, circumventing the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), which has typically managed refugee distribution (Tydlum et al., 2023). Consequently, refugees had the opportunity to stay in the municipality where they arrived and be settled locally, as long as the municipal quotas had not been surpassed, demonstrating a decentralized approach to implementation within a nationally established framework. Ukrainian refugees were granted collective protection status for one year, renewable upon review (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration [UDI], 2023). In other words, Ukrainian refugees in Norway may settle anywhere in the country as long as they are financially self-sufficient; however, those who require public support must relocate to a municipality assigned through the national settlement system in order to access financial assistance and the Introduction Programme (Berlina, 2022).

Unlike in Sweden, beneficiaries immediately received access to the Introduction Program (Introduksjonsprogrammet), which includes language training, vocational preparation, and financial support for integration. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) played a key role in linking temporary protection holders with job markets and educational opportunities (UDI, 2023).

Upon their arrival, they are temporarily accommodated in various facilities, including reception centres or emergency shelters, overseen by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration. After they relocate, refugees aged 18 to 55 are eligible to join the Introduction Programme, which offers language classes, job training, and civic education, alongside financial assistance during the program's duration of 6 to 12 months. Individuals aged 18 to 67 are entitled to language instruction, and all refugees gain access to career counselling and job opportunities once they receive a residence permit.

Education is assured for children aged 6 to 16, who are mandated to attend school within three months of their arrival, with initial teaching available in Ukrainian if necessary. Young people aged 16 to 24 can enrol in upper secondary education without needing to demonstrate proficiency in Norwegian, and the government has allocated additional funds to enhance university access for Ukrainians. Refugees also have comprehensive healthcare rights, which include free services for children under sixteen and pregnant women, along with minimal fees for selected services (Berline, 2022).

Overall, Norway responded to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees by relying on an already well-developed and comprehensive integration framework. Rather than creating a parallel system, the authorities adapted existing integration programmes to grant Ukrainian refugees' broader access to financial support, housing, language training, and labour market measures. This approach positioned Norway as one of the European countries offering particularly extensive and generous integration support to displaced persons from Ukraine. (Hernes et al., 2024).

Thus, Norway's approach reflects a pragmatic humanitarianism which is based on welfare-state resources and administrative trust and combines a strong humanitarian commitment to immediate protection and inclusion with practical policy decisions targeted at administrative efficiency, flexibility, and long-term system sustainability. By combining strong institutional capacity with decentralized implementation, Norway managed to maintain both efficiency and inclusiveness in refugee governance.

DIVERGENCE WITHIN A SHARED WELFARE TRADITION

The reception of Ukrainian refugees in Norway and Sweden reveals a profound divergence in state-provided support, illustrating a "bifurcation" of the once-unified Nordic welfare model. Despite sharing comparable wage structures and living costs, the two nations have constructed radically different socio-economic environments for displaced Ukrainians. This disparity is not merely financial; it is rooted in the distinct legal and institutional frameworks that govern the transition from "temporary protection" to "social inclusion."

The most visible manifestation of this divergence is found in the financial assistance provided to refugees. In Sweden, Ukrainian refugees remain legally tethered to the Reception of Asylum Seekers Act (LMA), a classification that restricts them to a minimalist, daily allowance of approximately EUR 189 per month (SEK 2,130). This stipend is intended to cover only the most basic necessities—food, clothing, and hygiene—and has not been adjusted for inflation in three decades (Tyldum et al., 2023).

By contrast, Norway's pragmatic approach incorporates Ukrainians into the national Introduction Programme, granting them a monthly allowance of approximately EUR 1,600 (NOK 18,579). While this amount is taxable and intended to cover housing, it provides a level of financial dignity and stability that is absent in the Swedish model. The Swedish approach reflects a "deterrence-based" logic, where low benefits are utilized to prevent "welfare pull factors," whereas the Norwegian model treats financial support as an "integration investment," facilitating the refugee's eventual self-sufficiency (Berlina, 2022).

Both nations seek to distribute refugees geographically to avoid ethnic or socio-economic concentration; however, their methods of "spatial governance" differ significantly. Norway employs a "benefit-linked" settlement strategy: access to the Introduction Programme, language training, and financial aid is strictly contingent upon accepting a municipality assigned by the state. This high-trust, decentralized model ensures that refugees are placed in areas with available institutional capacity (NIBR Report, 2025).

Sweden, conversely, offers greater flexibility in settlement, with only one-third of Ukrainians seeking housing assistance from the Migration Agency. Many opt for "independent living" (EBO) to be near existing social networks or potential jobs. Still, this flexibility comes at a cost. In Sweden, refugees who move to areas labelled as socioeconomically disadvantaged risk losing financial support, which places an added burden on people who are already trying to rebuild their lives. In practice, this policy puts refugees in a difficult position, forcing them to choose between staying in affordable neighbourhoods where family or community networks may exist, and relocating to approved areas where they can keep their financial support but may face greater isolation.

The disparity in "human capital investment" is perhaps the most critical long-term differentiator between the two models. In Norway, the education of Ukrainian children is mandatory, resulting in an enrolment rate of approximately 95%. In Sweden, enrolment remains voluntary and is severely hindered by the "administrative invisibility" of refugees who lack a personnummer (personal identity number). Consequently, approximately 14% of Ukrainian children in Sweden are either absent from the school system or exclusively enrolled in online Ukrainian classes, creating a "lost generation" of students who are disconnected from their host society (Berlina, 2022).

This gap extends to adult language acquisition. In Sweden, access to Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) is fragmented and municipal-dependent, with no financial support provided during study. This compels many refugees to prioritize immediate, low-skill employment over language education. Norway, meanwhile, integrates language training into the Introduction Programme, providing a stipend for full-time learners. While this may initially slow labor market entry, it ensures a higher level of "linguistic proficiency" and "vocational readiness" in the long term, contrasting with the Swedish model's focus on immediate, but often precarious, labor participation.

CONCLUSION: THE FRAGMENTATION OF NORDIC SOLIDARITY

The historical idea of "Nordic Solidarity" has usually been portrayed as a universal moral and organizational initiative, based on the assumption that the government is the primary protector of social equality and human dignity. Nevertheless, this research indicates that this solidarity is no longer a cohesive or uniform concept. Rather, it has become more conditional, fragmented, and stratified by nation. Through a comparative analysis of the responses of Sweden and Norway to the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis, the specific outcomes of this study are detailed below.

This research reveals a notable instance of "institutional decoupling" within the Swedish integration model. Although Sweden continues to adhere to humanitarian principles in its international discourse, its domestic administrative practices have evolved towards a system of "managed exclusion." The main evidence for this shift is the consistent refusal to grant a personnummer (personal identity number) to Ukrainian refugees under the Temporary Protection Directive. This administrative difficulty effectively establishes a condition of "institutional invisibility," hindering refugees from accessing crucial digital services, banking, and comprehensive healthcare. As a result, Sweden has moved from being an inclusive welfare leader to a minimalist humanitarian manager, where social rights now depend on a residency status that is increasingly challenging to secure.

Secondly, the research highlights a significant disparity in "human capital investment" between the two nations. Norway adopts a practical method by including Ukrainian refugees in its existing Introduction Program. This initiative offers immediate access to language courses, vocational assistance, and a consistent financial stipend, indicating a strategy that emphasizes investment in enduring social integration. Conversely, Sweden does not include Ukrainians in the national Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) program. The minimal daily allowance provided for food and basic necessities has not been adjusted for years, reflecting a focus on short-term financial constraints rather than long-term integration. This divergence indicates that the "Nordic Model" is evolving into two distinct approaches: one focused on proactive inclusion (Norway) and the other on a deterrent-based reception (Sweden).

Third, the findings show that these policy differences have changed the "geography of refugee preference." As the strict nature of Swedish administrative practices became apparent, Norway, which was initially a secondary destination, experienced arrival numbers that surpassed Sweden's in the second half of 2022. This demonstrates that refugees are logical individuals who react to the "quality of rights" provided by host countries.

Limitations of the Research

While this study offers an important comparison of two main welfare systems, it has its limitations. First, the research mainly relies on secondary data, including government policy documents, NGO reports, and existing academic literature. While these sources are strong, they lack the first-hand perspectives that primary ethnographic interviews with Ukrainian refugees would bring. Second, the quickly changing situation in Ukraine means that policy changes are ongoing; thus, the findings provide a snapshot of the governance landscape as of the early crisis. Finally, the study focuses only on the state-level response, which may overlook the important role that local grassroots organizations and informal solidarity networks play in filling the gaps left by state policies.

Future Research Possibilities

Looking ahead, there are several promising paths for further academic work. Future studies should include longitudinal primary data, such as interviews and surveys with refugees, to evaluate how "administrative invisibility" in Sweden affects long-term integration initiatives compared to the Norwegian model. Also, a three-way comparison that includes a non-Nordic welfare regime, like Germany, could help determine whether the fragmentation seen in Scandinavia is a regional exception or part of a larger trend in Europe toward "welfare chauvinism."

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

Acknowledgments

The author did not receive any specific assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

Funding

This research received no external funding

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical considerations were respected throughout the research process.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

The author is solely responsible for the conception, design, analysis, and writing of this manuscript.

Additional Information

No additional information is available for this study.

REFERENCES

Alam, H. (2024). A comparative analysis of Nordic countries' responses to the Ukraine–Russia war. *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences,* 3, 24–34. https://doi.org/10.29013/EJHSS-24-3-24-34

Asztalos Morell, I. (2018). Contestations of the Swedish deportation regime: Civil mobilisation for and with Afghan youth. In M. Feischmidt, L. Pries, & C. Cantat (Eds.), *Refugee protection and civil society in Europe* (pp. 319–351). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92741-1_12

Berlina, A. (2022). *Implementation of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine: A systematic review of the Nordic countries* (Nord 2022:026). Nordic Council of Ministers & UNHCR Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries. https://doi.org/10.6027/nord2022-026

Brochmann, G., & Hagelund, A. (2012). *Immigration policy and the Scandinavian welfare state 1945-2010*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137012357

Bunar, N., & Valenta, M. (2010). State assisted integration: Refugee integration policies in Scandinavian welfare states—The Swedish and Norwegian experience. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 23(4), 463–483. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq028

Dahlstedt, M., & Neergaard, A. (2016). Crisis of solidarity? Changing welfare and migration regimes in Sweden. *Critical Sociology,* 45(1), 121–135. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920516668386

Daigneault, P. M. (2014). *Three paradigms of social assistance.* SAGE Open, 4(4), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014559020

Danielsen, Å., Hernes, V., Tvedt, K., & Staver, A. B. (2023). Sweden country report: *Governance and policy changes during times of high influxes of protection seekers* (2015–June 2023) [NIBR Working Paper No. 2023:114]. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), Oslo Metropolitan University.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton University Press.

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). (2025, May). *AIDA country report: Sweden.* Asylum Information Database (AIDA).

Heckmann, F., & Schnapper, D. (2003). *The integration of immigrants in European societies: National differences and trends of convergence* (Vol. 7). Lucius & Lucius.

Hernes, V., Aasland, A., Deineko, O., & Handå Myhre, M. (2024). Where does the future lie? Initial aspirations for return among newly arrived Ukrainian refugees in Norway. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 51(1), 79–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2383729

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Sweden. (2023, June 27). *Ukrainians and third country nationals under temporary protection—Needs, intentions, and challenges*. Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). https://dtm.iom.int/reports

Isaksen, J. V. (2020). The framing of immigration and integration in Sweden and Norway: A comparative study of official government reports. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research,* 10(1), 106–124. https://doi.org/10.2478/njmr-2019-0033

Lazarenko, V., & Rabinovych, M. (2025). Collective protection for Ukrainians in the EU: Laws, practices, and implications for EU and Ukrainian policies. In M. Rabinovych & A. Pintsch (Eds.), *Ukraine's thorny path to the EU: Palgrave studies in European Union politics* (pp. 91–115). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69154-6_5

Migrationsverket. (2025). EMN Study 2025:2 – *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and practices in 2023–2024* – National report Sweden. European Migration Network (EMN) Sweden.

Olwig, K. F. (2012). Integration: Migrants and refugees between Scandinavian welfare societies and family relations. In K. F. Olwig, B. R. Larsen, & M. Rytter (Eds.), *Migration, family, and the welfare state: Integrating migrants and refugees in Scandinavia* (pp. 1–14). Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203094793

Tyldum, G., Kjeøy, I., & Lillevik, R. (2023). *Different policies, different outcomes: The reception of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden and Norway.* Fafo Foundation. https://www.fafo.no/images/pub/2023/967-second-edition.pdf

Copyrights
Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).