



# **National system overview on education systems in Europe**

2011 Edition





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# SWEDEN

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## 1. Education population and language of instruction

Sweden has a population of 9.4 million people and in 2010 3 397 503 were between 0-29 years old. Almost half the Swedish population is involved in some form of organised education and around 886 000 are pupils in compulsory school. The main language of instruction is Swedish. There are state schools for the Sami population in the north of Sweden, with teaching in Swedish and Sami.

## 2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In Sweden, all pupils attend publicly funded schools, of which 12 % in compulsory school and 24 % in upper secondary school attend grant-aided independent schools (2010/11). Such schools are open to all, follow the same curricula and receive grants from the municipalities as municipal schools do. There are around ten private higher education institutions, some of which receive state subsidies.

All education in the school system and in higher education institutions – except for students from non-EU/EEA countries – is free of charge. Study support for university students is primarily intended to cover the student's living costs during his/her higher education period. The study support system is equal for all, includes almost all citizens, is given directly to the student and is principally granted independently of parents' or family's financial situation. It consists of a loan and a grant and can be granted for full or part-time studies. A study allowance promotes high participation in secondary school and contributes to the costs of young people's education. It is given in addition to other societal support to families with children. There are various other types of study support intended for specific groups of students, for example disabled students.

Education in Sweden is steered by goals/learning outcomes defined at central level. The government has the overall responsibility for education and sets the framework for education at all levels, but the municipalities are responsible for providing and operating schools at primary and secondary level, and adult education at basic and secondary level and Swedish tuition for immigrants. For schools there are curricula, goals and syllabi. Higher education institutions are responsible for tertiary education. Laws and ordinances set their legal framework and stipulate degrees in first, second and third cycle tertiary education and their requirements. Post secondary vocational education (at ISCED level 4) is organised and run by a specialised agency, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (*Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan*).

Monitoring and evaluation of the system is delegated to central authorities:

- The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) is responsible for monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of pre-schools, schools and adult education, among other tasks.
- The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) is responsible for the supervision of pre-schools, schools and adult education. For grant-aided independent schools at primary and secondary level, the inspectorate is responsible for granting operating licenses. Inspection could result in a decision to withdraw the school's license to operate or its right to subsidies. There are general inspections and quality evaluations which focus on a particular area – a school subject or a more overall area (e.g. access to special assistance for students). Pupils, parents and others can file a complaint and the inspectorate can initiate investigations following, for example, media reports. Following an investigation it may criticise the school organizer.
- The Child and School Student Representative (*Barn- och elevombudsmannen*, BEO) is part of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate but also functions independently. BEO works to counteract offences against children and pupils by investigating complaints.
- The Board of Appeal for Education (*Skolväsendets överklagandenämnd*) is an independent national authority linked to the School Inspectorate. It can re-evaluate decisions, for example, on the admittance of pupils.
- The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (*Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten*) coordinates state support and supports school management. The Agency also promotes access to teaching materials, runs special needs schools and allocates funding to pupils with disabilities and to education providers.
- The National Agency for Higher Education (*Högskoleverket*) is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation, follow-up and supervision of higher education institutions, as well as for international cooperation and the provision of information to students in tertiary education.
- 1 July 2009, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (*Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan*) was established to develop and oversee a new form of publicly funded vocational education and training at post upper secondary level.
- The Higher Education Appeals Board (*Överklagandenämnden för högskolan*) is the public authority responsible for hearing appeals against decisions made in the higher education sector and in the sector for post-secondary vocational education and training.

A new Education Act is being implemented as from 1 July 2011. The new Act covers all educational areas. It clarifies the division of decision power between local authorities and the government. The new Education Act introduces changes in, e.g., the following areas:

- pre-school is now a part, in its own right, of the education system;
- as far as possible, the same legal framework now applies to both public and grant-aided independent schools;
- enforced rights for pupils in need of special support;
- higher qualification criteria for the teaching profession;
- an increase in and clarification of teachers' and school heads' disciplinary powers in the classroom.

### 3. Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education and care consists of pre-school (*förskola*), pedagogical care (*familjedaghem*) and open pre-school (*öppen förskola*). The municipalities are required to provide pre-school for all children aged 1 to 5 whose parents work or study. Parents of children younger than 1 year usually are on parental leave from work or studies. Children of parents who are unemployed or on parental leave have the right to a place for at least 3 hours a day or 15 hours a week. 'Pre-school' is the name used for pre-school institutions and is also the term used for pedagogical group activity for children from 1 year until they start pre-school class (*förskoleklass*) or compulsory school (*grundskola*). In 'pedagogical care' a family childminder receives children of pre-school or school age into his or her own home. The 'open pre-school' is for children between 1 and 5 years accompanied by an adult.

Universal pre-school gives all 3, 4 and 5-year-olds the right to pre-schooling for 525 hours a year. This is generally provided in pre-schools (*förskola*) and is free of charge for the parents.

Pre-primary education is jointly financed by the municipal budget (state grants plus local tax revenues) and parental fees. There is a maximum fee system, for all other parts than the universal pre-school of 525 free-of-charge hours a year, which regulates families' cost.

The municipalities are required to provide pre-school classes (*förskoleklass*) for 6-year-olds for at least 525 hours a year. These are usually organised within compulsory schools and it is part of the Swedish school system and thus free of charge. Attendance is voluntary, but nearly all six-year-olds are enrolled (96 % in 2010/11). The same curriculum applies to the pre-school class as to compulsory education, but there are no syllabi or timetables for the pre-school class.

Percentage of children attending in 2010/11	Age 1-3	Age 4-5	Age 6
Percentage of children in all pre-school activities	78.7 %	98.0 %	1.4 %
Percentage of children attending <i>Förskola</i>	75.3 %	94.3 %	1.4 %

### 4. Compulsory education

#### (i) Phases

<i>Grundskola</i> (Institution providing primary and lower secondary education)	Age 7-16
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Compulsory school starts at age 7 and is attended for a compulsory period of nine years, organised in a single structure. Early admission is possible: 1.2 per cent of those in the first year of compulsory school 2010/11 were 6 years old.

#### (ii) Admissions criteria

Admission is governed by parental choice, but over-subscribed schools run by municipalities give priority to pupils living nearby. All schools are free of charge.

#### (iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year comprises at least 178 days between the end of August and early June. Schools are open five days a week. The school decides the number of hours per week and the length of the school day (not more than six hours in the first two years and eight in later years). National regulations specify the minimum number of hours taught over the nine years of compulsory schooling to 6 665 in total for all subjects.

**(iv) Class size/student grouping**

Class size is determined locally by the municipality and the school. Children are usually grouped by age; age integrated classes exist where there are few children and sometimes as a pedagogical tool. In the first three years the class teacher normally teaches all subjects. In classes 4-5, specialised teachers teach languages, mathematics, craft and art. From class 6-7, all teachers are specialised to teach two or three subjects. There are leisure-time centres that cater for pupils in the morning and in the afternoon, and their staff often participates in school activities during school hours.

**(v) Curriculum control and content**

The curriculum is determined at national level and is the basis for the municipalities' school plan setting out the general objectives. Within this framework, teachers and institutions are free to select teaching methods and teaching materials. The same curriculum covers the compulsory school, the pre-school class and the leisure-time centres and prescribes compulsory subjects, subject syllabi and educational goals. Swedish, English and mathematics occupy a prominent position. All pupils study practical arts subjects, social sciences, natural sciences and one more foreign language. There is a nationally valid timetable stating the number of hours per subject over all nine years of compulsory education – 6 665 hours – but each municipality/school decides on the distribution of hours and in what year a subject is introduced.

**(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications**

There is continuous assessment throughout compulsory education. Compulsory national assessment involves tests in mathematics, Swedish and 'Swedish as a second language' at the end of the third year, and Swedish, English and mathematics at the end of the sixth and ninth years. At the end of the ninth year there are compulsory national assessment tests in biology, chemistry and physics. In year 8 the grades Pass, Pass with Distinction and Pass with Special Distinction are introduced. Pupils automatically move to a higher class. A school leaving certificate is awarded to students after finishing the final year. This can be completed later through tests or further studies.

In 2009, the Parliament adopted a new grading scale for the compulsory school, the upper secondary school and municipal adult education with six levels and a seventh coding. The levels A-E will denote pass results and an F a non-pass, to be implemented gradually in compulsory education year 6 from school year 2012/13.

## **5. Post-compulsory education / Upper secondary and post-secondary level**

### **5. a) Upper secondary education**

**(i) Types of education**

<i>Gymnasieskola</i> (Institution providing upper secondary education)	Age 16-19
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A new structure for the upper secondary school was introduced 1 July 2011. The current 17 national programmes are replaced by 18 national programmes; 6 higher education preparatory programmes and 12 vocational programmes. The individual programme is replaced by five introductory programmes, individually adapted to the pupils. History is introduced as a new common core subject for all programmes.

For students enrolled in upper secondary education before July 2011, the former structure will apply through 2011/12 and 2012/13. There are 17 three-year national programmes. Furthermore,

there are specially designed programmes, as well as local variations of the national programmes. There are also individual programmes aimed primarily at making pupils eligible for a national programme or a subject focussed programme.

### (ii) Admissions criteria

In the new upper secondary school, from autumn 2011, the entrance requirements are reinforced. In order to be eligible for the preparatory programmes for higher education, pupils must have achieved a minimum of a pass grade in Swedish, English and mathematics and in at least nine other subjects. To be eligible for the vocational programmes, pupils must have a pass grade in Swedish, English and mathematics and in at least five other subjects. Pupils who do not meet the qualification demands may follow an introductory programme.

Pupils may attend schools outside their home municipality. Upper secondary education is free of charge.

### (iii) Curriculum control and content

Teachers and schools work with the nationally determined curricular framework. Of the 17 national programmes in place, 14 are vocationally oriented. All programmes provide a broad-based general education and general eligibility for tertiary education. Each subject is taught as shorter or longer courses. Common core subjects are Swedish/'Swedish as a second language', English, mathematics, religion, civics, science studies, physical education and health and artistic activities, which cover about one third of the tuition time. The remaining time is used for programme specific subjects and individual choices.

The new structure for the upper secondary school – comprising 6 higher education preparatory programmes and 12 vocational programmes – provides apprenticeship training and the introduction of an upper secondary diploma, one for general upper secondary education and one for vocational education and training programmes. An upper secondary vocational diploma can be obtained through vocational education at school or through an apprenticeship scheme. Students in any of the 12 vocational programmes should be given the possibility to follow courses leading to the upper secondary diploma giving access to higher education.

### (iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Assessment is continuous with marks awarded at completion of each course. These marks are based on how well the pupil reaches the objectives of the course. If a student does not pass a course special support can be provided, but there are no formal criteria for a pupil to proceed to the next level. Assessment also involves national tests in Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English and mathematics. The grades awarded are Pass, Pass with Distinction, Pass with Special Distinction, and Not Passed. There is no final examination, but a leaving certificate is awarded on completion. It contains a summary of the courses taken and the grades awarded.

A new grading scale with six levels and a seventh coding is introduced alongside the new structure for upper secondary school in the autumn of 2011. The levels A-E will denote pass results and an F a non-pass. Two new certificates are introduced: an upper secondary certificate as preparation for higher education and a vocational certificate to be obtained through vocational education at school or through an apprenticeship scheme.

## **5. b) Adult education and post-secondary non-tertiary education**

### **(i) Types of education**

The Swedish school system for adult education includes municipal adult education comprising basic adult education and upper secondary adult education (*kommunal vuxenutbildning*), education for adults with intellectual impairment (*vuxenutbildning för utvecklingsstörda*), and Swedish tuition for immigrants (*svenskundervisning för invandrare*). Adult education is also offered through liberal adult education (*folkbildning*); folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*) and study associations (*studieförbund*).

The new structure for upper secondary school will be applied to upper secondary adult education as from 1 July 2012.

Post-secondary vocational education (at ISCED level 4) (*Yrkeshögskoleutbildning*) serves the needs of job seekers and high competence demands from the industry. Higher vocational education courses prepare learners for jobs which are related to a specific trade or vocation. Subject areas range, for example, from manufacturing industry to health care and media and design, and comprise hands-on activities as well as problem solving.

### **(ii) Admissions criteria**

Law stipulates the right to basic education for all adults over 20 who do not have a compulsory school-leaving certificate. Upper secondary adult education is available for those older than 20 with short previous education and those with less than two years of upper secondary education, as well as for those who want to supplement their upper secondary education or change careers.

Higher vocational education courses require completed upper secondary education or equivalent, and a management group is responsible for admission to and examination from these courses.

### **(iii) Curriculum control and content**

Municipal adult education and education for adults with intellectual impairment follow the national curriculum for non-compulsory education (*Läroplan för de frivilliga skolformerna – Lpf 94*).

### **(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications**

Assessment within adult education can be oral or written and is continuous. The grades are: Fail (IG), Pass (G) and Pass with distinction (VG). A leaving certificate requires a Pass in all core subjects (Swedish/'Swedish as a second language', English, mathematics and social science).

The grading scale within upper secondary adult education is the same as for upper secondary school and examinations can be the same, as well. The grades within education for adults with intellectual impairment are Pass (G) and Pass with distinction (VG). A leaving certificate requires a Pass in all core subjects (Swedish/'Swedish as a second language', English, mathematics and social science).

The new grading scale with six levels and a seventh coding will be introduced in basic and upper secondary adult education in the autumn of 2012. The levels A-E will denote pass results and an F a non-pass.

Higher vocational education courses last for at least six months and participant progress and outcomes are assessed and recognised by a certificate/diploma that validates their skills for employment.

## 6. Higher education

### (i) Structure

Tertiary education is provided in higher education institutions: universities (*universitet*) and university colleges (*högskola*).

### (ii) Access

The basic eligibility requirement for all courses and programmes is a school-leaving certificate from an upper secondary national programme. Most higher education courses and programmes also have specific requirements. If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of places available, a selection is made. Within a generally formulated framework, responsibility for the admission of students rests with the institutions.

### (iii) Qualifications

At higher education institutions there are four general degrees in the first and second cycle and about 40 professional degrees. The general degrees in the first cycle are the higher education diploma (two years of study) and the Bachelor's degree (three years of study). The general degrees in the second cycle are the Master's degree (one year) (*magisterexamen*) and the Master's degree (two years) (*masterexamen*). A previous degree of at least 180 credits is required for entering second cycle education. The programmes for professional degrees vary from two to five-and-a-half years.

## 7. Special needs

Most pupils with a physical disability attend mainstream schools and adult education, and at primary and secondary level, only about 1.4 percent of the pupils attend schools outside: education for pupils with intellectual disabilities (*särskolan*) and special schools (*specialskolan*). Pupils in *särskolan* are sometimes integrated into classes in the compulsory or upper secondary school system, 2010/11 they were about 2 500. State schools provide education in sign language for pupils with hearing impairment.

Education for adults with intellectual impairment (*särvux*) aims to help adults with learning disabilities gain the knowledge and skills that correspond to those that young people in *särskola* can acquire.

There are also state run special schools (*specialskolan*) at primary and lower secondary level for children with visual impairment and additional disabilities, deafness or impaired hearing, congenital deaf-blindness, or severe speech and language disabilities. The majority of children with these disabilities attend mainstream schools; 2010/11, about 500 children attended special schools.

According to law, tertiary education institutions have to actively support equal rights for students and applicants regardless of sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation and functional disability.

## 8. Teachers

An applicant for a teaching position without a teaching degree can be appointed for a maximum of 12 months at a time. To be permanently employed, a teacher must have completed a teacher education programme at a university or a university college. As of 1 July 2011, there are four teacher education programmes: pre-school teacher (*Förskolläraryexamen*), primary education teacher (*Grundläraryexamen*), subject-specialist teacher (*Ämnesläraryexamen*; for lower secondary or upper secondary education), and vocational education and training teacher (*Yrkesläraryexamen*). The new teacher education programmes will gradually replace the existing integrated teaching

degree, according to which all teachers have common basic competences combined with specialisation for particular subjects/subject areas and/or age groups. The length of studies varies from three to five-and-a-half years. A teaching degree can also be obtained through a combination of education and experience in subjects relevant to school with a special one and a half-year teacher training course. Teachers can be municipal employees or employed by a school organiser at a grand-aided independent school. Decisions on employment are taken at school level. Regulations on working time, salaries and other working conditions are set in collective agreements by the employers and teachers unions and in detail on local authority level. Teachers have individual salaries negotiated by the employer and the teacher (generally represented by the teacher union) at school level.

Teaching staff at universities and university colleges are professors, lecturers, junior lecturers or research assistants. Employees at public universities and university colleges are national civil servants. Applicants seeking permanent senior or junior lecturer posts must have teacher training for tertiary education or have acquired equivalent skills. Training in tertiary education teaching methods is required for post-graduate students in teaching posts.

Information provided by the Swedish Eurydice Unit.

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