



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report - Sweden

Written by Eva Andersson
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Unit E.3 — VET, Apprenticeship and Adult Learning

Contact: Mantas Sekmokas

E-mail: EMPL-E3-UNIT@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

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1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW

1.1 Trends for the entire population

1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographic area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	>80
Member State	76.3	78.1	78.1	79.4	79.4	79.8	80	80.5	81.2		

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

At 81.2%, the Swedish employment rate exceeded the EU2020 target by 6.2 percentage places in 2016 and has exceeded this target for many years. The EU target is likely set so that most EU-countries will have a realistic chance to reach it and be encouraged and not deterred from it.

-Comparison to National 2020 target

The Swedish employment rate of 81.2% in 2016 also exceeds the national target of having an employment rate above 80%. This suggests that a new national targets set at a higher level might now be worked toward.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

At 81.2% in 2016, the Swedish employment rate is far above the EU-28 average rate of 71%, by more than 10 percentage points.

-Evolution over time

Since the year 2000, the Swedish employment rate has slowly increased year by year from 76.3% in 2000 to 81.2% in 2016, an increase of 4.9% over this period. Unusually, in relation to other Member States, there has been no decrease or fluctuation in the rate over this period, in the light of the economic recession (only a flattening of the rate at 2011/2012).

Sweden has traditionally had a high employment rate and the general boom in the economy during recent years has reinforced this situation. The former conservative coalition Government that came into office in 2006 cut the unemployment subsidies considerably and made it also economically harder for the long-term sick (some benefits, but not all, have been reintroduced by the present social democratic coalition Government). Besides, several measures have been taken to keep the employment levels up, not least in the form of educational opportunities (see further below). According to the present Government, last years' problem has been the maladjustment between the qualifications needed in the workplaces and the competence in the workforce. (Eurydice (March 2017) Sweden)

September 20, 2017 the Swedish Government presented the state budget for 2018.¹ The Government predicts the employment rate to increase further the next coming years and the unemployment rate to decrease. However, the unemployment rate is very unequally distributed. While the unemployment was less than 3.9% among the Swedish born between 20-64 years the last week in 2016, it was 15.1% of those born outside Sweden.²

1.1.2 Participation rate – entire population

Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographical area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8		
Member State	21.6	17.4	24.7	25.3	27	28.4	29.2	29.4	29.6	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	See below

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code *trng_lfse_01*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

Sweden's national targets 2017:

- The share of people aged 18-24 who have not completed at least two years of upper secondary education and are not participating in any form of study is to be less than 7% in 2020.
- The share of people aged 30-34 with at least a two-year tertiary education is to be 45-50% in 2020.

¹ Government proposition ([2017/18:1](#))

² SCB, unemployment statistics 2016

Since all upper secondary programmes are three years long in Sweden, it seems inadequate to set targets for the share that have not completed two years. The first cycle in the higher education is also three years long, accordingly a target for the share of people with three years of higher education would be more appropriate. The Government Office writes that: "Over a fifth of young people aged 20-24 lack a three-year upper secondary education and unemployment is twice as high in that group as among young people with an upper secondary education."³ However, this comment may only be relevant in relation to eligibility to further studies on a higher level. Two years of studies in some of the initiatives for the newly arrived, language introduction and vocational courses, may well lead to employment.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

The Swedish participation rate in education and training of adults aged 25-64 years was almost twice the level of the EU2020 target in 2016, at 29.6% at the national level compared to 15%. Whilst this target clearly is set with the level of EU-28 participation on average, the target is 'low' with respect to Sweden's rate, given that the national rate has well exceeded the target.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The Swedish participation in education and training of adults aged 25-64 years (29.6%) was far above the EU-28 average of 10.8% in 2016. This gap has increased over the years from 7.8 percentage points in 2005 to 18.8 percentage points in 2016. Sweden has a long tradition of adult education, starting with the popular adult education in the middle of the 19th century.⁴ The number of participants in non-formal education is extensive. Associations, political parties, churches and similar organisations/stakeholders cooperate to a high extent with the popular adult education (study associations and folk high schools) and organise their study activities in the form of study circles and the like. Beside the formal municipal adult education, formal and non-formal popular adult education has received extensive state funding for a long period of time. The demand for statistical monitoring has also been strong, which has made participation in adult learning education programmes and courses visible. The non-formal learning activities taking place in different organisations in other countries may be underestimated because a lack of statistics capturing this activity. Therefore, the statistics in Sweden might be more realistic as incorporate a higher relative quantification of non-formal adult education activities. The gap between Sweden and EU-28 might therefore appear larger than it is in reality.

³ [Eurydice Sweden, March 2017](#)

⁴ The Swedish word *Folkbildning* can be translated into "popular adult education", "liberal adult education" and sometimes just "popular education". *Folkbildning* refers to two things in Sweden: (1) the studies taken place within study associations and folk high schools and (2) a wider concept including all activities aimed at learning in an informal or non-formal way (i.e. libraries, museums, some TV and radio programmes etcetera). In this report, "popular adult education" is used in the first sense. In the text below, *Folkbildning* will be translated to "popular adult education".

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Still another explanation to the increased gap between Sweden and the EU-average can be the number of newly arrived in recent years of which many are low educated and therefore study in different educational forms.

-Evolution over time

The participation of Swedish adults aged 25-64 years in education and training has increased continuously since 2005 (from 17.4% to 29.6% in 2016). However, between 2000 and 2005 the participation decreased as a result of an extensive adult education initiative that ended in 2002 (The adult education initiative with 100,000 extra places a year in 1997-2002).

The participation rate in Sweden is high relative to other member states, partly because there has been a diversification of pathways to adult education alternatives. In 1994, all upper-secondary programmes, vocational as well as general, became three years long. Some of those who had shorter education used adult education to complete their education to the new upper secondary level. Between 1977 and 2008, Sweden had something called the "25:4 rule" which meant that people aged 25 or older who had worked for four years or more were automatically eligible to higher education. When this possibility was cut out, studies at the municipal adult education or folk high schools became the alternative beside the National Scholastic Aptitude Test. In 2008, another possibility to enter higher education was taken away. Previously one could get additional credits for work experience at the entrance examination. When this was no longer possible, studies in adult education became the way to complete upper secondary level for those who lack grades from upper secondary school.

After a pilot phase, a new post-secondary form of education was launched in 2002, qualified vocational education. In 2009, the name changed to higher vocational education and a special authority was established. This educational alternative has grown in popularity. In addition, several shorter educational initiatives have been launched over the years. On the other hand, many places in labour market training have been withdrawn in favour of less costly kinds of labour market measures.

1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

1.2.1 Share of low qualified adults

Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
Member State	22.8	16.4	18.8	18.4	17.6	16.8	16.3	15.7	15

Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat_lfse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The share of low qualified adults in Sweden was 15% in 2016, 8% below the EU-28 average.

-Evolution over time

The share of low qualified adults has gone down continuously since 2010. Prior to this, the share was 22.8% in 2000, fell to 16.4% in 2005 and increased again to 18.8% in 2010. Overall the share has fallen from 22.8% in 2000 to 15% in 2016.

Today it is very hard to get employment without upper secondary education in Sweden. The requirements, even for very simple working tasks, are most often a completed upper secondary education. Only a small proportion of youngsters do not continue to upper secondary level. Older adults and newly arrived adult migrants are more often low educated. The possibilities for studies in adulthood are good and have so been for a very long time. The legal right to study at the municipal adult education in order to become qualified for upper secondary school goes way back and from 1 January 2017 the legal right is extended to a legal right to study to be eligible to higher education.

1.2.2 *Employment rate of low qualified adults*

Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
Member State	66.5	66	64.7	65.8	65.4	63.8	63.6	63.3	63.3

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code lfsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The employment rate of low qualified adults in Sweden was 63.3% in 2016, 9 percentage points higher than the EU-28 average.

-Evolution over time

The employment rate of the low qualified adults has decreased overall by 3.2 percentage points between the year 2000 and 2016. The national rate fluctuated slightly during this period (decreasing between 2000 and 2010 by 1.8 percentage point, increasing to 2011 by 1.1 percentage point, then decreasing up until 2016 by 2.5 percentage points).

In line with the raising qualification demands in the labour market, the possibilities for the low qualified to get a job decreases. The measures taken in recent years to stimulate the supply of low qualified jobs have not been very successful. Subsidies for those workplaces that create trainee jobs and the like have not resulted in regular positions to the intended extent. It has also been challenging to find employers who are willing to employ low qualified adults even if they get subsidies for doing so. Another issue is that as the labour market has now recovered, many young people get jobs in the labour market and do not see the need for trainee places.

2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

Life-long formal and non-formal learning has a long tradition in Sweden, starting with the preparation for the examinations in the parish catechetical meetings in the households in the late 17th century, lectures in library associations and other associations during the 18th century, the establishment of folk high schools in the middle of the 19th century, and study associations in the beginning of the 20th century. The Swedish universities started even earlier, the first one being in Uppsala 1477. Distance education has also a long tradition, going back to the late 19th century. The first evening school was established in 1938 by the State secondary grammar school, and the first secondary grammar school for adults opened in 1953. In 1968, the responsibility for the formal adult education was transferred from the state to the municipalities and the number of participants grow rapidly. Municipal adult education includes both general and vocational education, the later can be school-based or in the form of apprenticeship. In 1991, the adult education was deregulated and became steered by goals and evaluations, instead of state regulations.

The number of students that participated in adult education peaked during the National Initiative for Adult Education (Kunskapslyftet) which took place from 1997-2002. Over 350,000 students participated in this initiative. The adult education initiative also opened up for tendering processes, which resulted in many private and public providers of municipal adult education. Regarding vocational education, there were also major changes in the beginning of the 1990's. Non-formal vocational educational training (labour market education) has traditionally been one of the measures used by the National Labour Market Board. However, the state grant for vocational education was reallocated into the formal education system, and the number of participants in labour market education decreased heavily during these years. In 2001, qualified vocational education was permanently established and was provided by universities, municipalities or private providers. This study form was later transferred into post upper secondary higher vocational education that started in 2009 governed by the Agency for Higher Vocational Education. In 2012, a state initiative with extra places in vocational adult education and the possibility to apprenticeship education also in the adult education was launched. In-service training has existed in a more or less organised way at least since the formal education in the apprenticeship system in the four estates and later on in non-formal and informal ways at the work-places.

Today, a large proportion of adults in Sweden across all age groups are involved in formal and non-formal lifelong learning activities. Generally, more women participate in learning activities than men. An example of non-formal studies is the so-called study circles. In 1995, a government report⁵ showed that 75% of Swedish adults aged between 16-64

⁵ Government Official Report (SOU 1995:141)

years had participated in at least one study circle⁶ and the number of participants in the popular adult education is still impressive.

In terms of aims, the focus has shifted several times during the years: from the state wanting to control the people's religious thoughts and behaviour, to groups of adults struggling for their admission to educational activities, to the state trying to raise the level of the people's competence to make them more employable at the labour market. At the same time the focus has shifted between knowledge for citizenship, knowledge for personal growth and knowledge for the labour market.

Table 2.1 presents figures on the number of adults that participated in formal education in 2015. To put the figures presented in Table 2.1 into perspective, there were almost 9.9 million inhabitants in Sweden 2016, 5.9 million of them aged between 18 and 65 years of age.

Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age

	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)			
Primary	16,601	115,675	132,276*
Lower secondary	5,344	26,470	31,814*
Upper secondary	74,231	107,219	181,450**
Post-secondary non-tertiary education		14,075	
Short-cycle tertiary education		15,269	
Bachelor's or equivalent level		124,544	
Master's or equivalent level		69,869	
Doctoral or equivalent level		20,906	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ_uoe_enra02)", accessed 2017.08.21

*The figures include municipal adult education, adult education for students with intellectual impairments and Swedish for immigrants.

** The figures include municipal adult education and adult education for students with intellectual impairments.

⁶ In the study circle, a small group meets to learn together based on a plan of study and with a study circle leader

2.2 Provision

In short, the following forms of adult education exist in Sweden:

Municipally-run adult education is governed by the Swedish National Agency for Education⁷. Municipal adult education includes general and vocational adult education on compulsory and upper secondary level (Komvux), education for adults with intellectual impairments on compulsory and upper secondary level (Särvux), and Swedish for immigrants (Sfi). These courses are accessible to students aged over 20 years old, the eligibility age is however lowered for immigrants to 16 years. In 2016, in total 375,644 students participated in municipal adult education. The official statistics is sourced from the agency's website⁸. (Further described under 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 below)

Folk high schools provide formal as well as non-formal adult education. There are general as well as vocational formal education programmes on upper secondary or post upper secondary level and non-formal courses often arranged in co-operation with associations of different kinds. Statistics on folk high schools and study associations can be accessed from the Swedish National Council of Adult Education's website⁹. The Council is responsible for distributing the state grants and evaluating learning activities organised by folk high schools and study associations. (Further described under 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 below) The folk high schools also provide tendered formal adult education to the municipalities but those activities have to be accounted for in special terms. Those participants are not in the statistics for popular adult education.

Study associations mainly arrange non-formal study circles (general "school subjects" or hobby subjects) and cultural programmes (lectures, performances etc.). The study association also provide tendered formal adult education to the municipalities, accounted for in special terms in the same way as the folk high schools. (Further described under 2.2.3 below)

Special state granted establishment courses and courses in "Swedish from day one" for newly arrived people are provided by the folk high schools, and "fast tracks" for newly arrived are arranged in co-operation between the employment offices and the parties on the labour market. (described further under 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 below)

Regional vocational adult education. (described further under 2.2.2 below)

Art and cultural education is a new education form that started in 2015, and is administrated by higher vocational education colleges. (Further described under 2.2.3 below)

⁷ www.skolverket.se

⁸ www.skolverket.se

⁹ www.folkbildningsradet.se

Non-formal learning activities organised by libraries, museums, associations, churches, radio and TV, social media etc (Further described under 2.2.3 below)

Higher vocational education programmes on post upper secondary level arranged by universities, municipalities or other local authorities or private training companies. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is responsible for funding higher vocational education programmes in Sweden and decides which higher vocational education programmes that will get a permit to start. (Further described under 2.2.2 below)

Vocational courses for the unemployed are arranged by the employment offices, most often provided as contracted education from different public or private education providers. These are often short time courses directly connected to some identified shortage at the labour market. (Further described under 2.2.4 below)

Different forms of subsidies to employers to employ unemployed adults, often including part time studies. In the budget proposition 2018 the earlier forms of such support will be replaced by one single support called "introduction jobs".¹⁰ (Further described under 2.2.4 below)

Higher education provided by the universities or university colleges. (Further described under 2.2.5 below)

The private providers of education for adults that are contracted by the municipals and employment offices do often sell short courses to enterprises as well, for instance courses in different software and leadership. A few providers do also sell places on courses to individuals. Within arts and crafts, there are some private providers that arrange courses or give private lessons for a fee. Another type of course are those arranged by travel agencies, in which the participants first read about the country they are going to (like an evening course) and then travel in that country with a guide.

Recognition (validation) of prior learning and real competences at the validation centres, and within the education system.

These learning activities for adults can be arranged as campus courses, as blended learning courses, or as distance-based courses.

2.2.1 *Helps adults improve their Basic Skills*

Basic Skills are mainly in focus in municipal adult education at compulsory level, including students with intellectual impairments and students in Swedish for immigrants (Sfi). The number of students in compulsory adult education was slightly more than 42,000 in 2016. All together approximately 3,880 students with intellectual impairments participated in adult education in 2016, 46.4% studied at compulsory level, 29.5% below compulsory level (training classes) and 32.1% at upper secondary level. The number of immigrants in

¹⁰ Government proposition, ([2017/18:1](#))

Swedish language courses has increased in the last years (from 2010-2016) to over 150,142 in 2016. The participation rate for women in Sfi has decreased over the years, from 58% in 2009 to 51% in 2016. All forms of municipal adult education are free of charge for the students, and living costs can be covered by student financial aid (allowance and loan).

Since the end of the 1990s, municipalities have acquired the option to tender adult education and contract different providers (or to provide the adult education themselves). The aim behind this change was to make adult education more flexible by broadening the supply of study forms to give the participants a choice. Formal adult education is provided by a number of organisations including folk high schools, study associations and private education enterprises. Between 1999 and 2016 adult learning provision purchased by municipalities increased from an average of 19% to 45.5%. However, some municipalities arrange all adult education themselves, others contract 100% of the courses. Of the Swedish language courses for immigrants, 63% was organised by the municipalities, while 31% was purchased from private organisers, 3% from folk high schools and 3% from study associations.¹¹ The increase in the number of participants taking part in courses provided by contractors reflects an expansion of private providers across the whole school system.

The following data concerning the general and vocational adult education provide some indicators to provide a preliminary assessment of quality. The rate of pedagogically qualified teachers has increased, going up from 76% in 2011 to 85% in 2016. The rate of qualified study and vocational counsellors has also gone up from 77 to 80%. Finally, the number of full-time students per full-time teacher position was 16.5 in 2015 and the number of fulltime students per full-time counsellor was 142.¹²

Given these changes in the landscape of provision, the author is of the opinion that it is important to evaluate the consequences. The problems with the marketization of the adult education is discussed further below under "6.2 Weaknesses".

There is no national "basic competence project" as far as the author knows. Smaller projects, aiming at validating the employees' knowledges in Swedish, mathematics, digital skills etc., are organised by some workplaces, and sometimes in cooperation with the municipalities or private education providers. However, the Government has commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to prepare a supportive material to facilitate the municipalities work with newly arrived with short previous education.¹³ The intention is to combine Swedish for immigrants the social orientation courses and with other courses in municipal adult education, for instance in basic mathematics.

¹¹ The folk high schools and study associations also have "places of their own", which means they arrange more Swedish for immigrants than the education they conduct on commission from the municipalities.

¹² www.skolverket.se

¹³ Government commission ([U2017/02921/GV](https://www.government.se/press-releases/2017/02/20170221))

2.2.2 *Help adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

Municipal adult education on upper secondary level qualifies for studies in the higher education at the universities, the university colleges and higher vocational education. Almost 179,300 adults participated in municipal adult education in 2016 and 1,245 in upper secondary education for adults with intellectual impairment. The rate of women was higher in municipal adult education (61.8%) than in the education for adults with intellectual impairment (49.4%).

There are 154 folk high schools in Sweden; some have local secondary branches. The folk high schools organise two types of qualifying programmes, general programmes and special programmes (long courses). The general programme is equivalent to courses at upper secondary level and qualifies for higher education. The special programmes include vocational programmes, for instance to become leisure time supervisors, journalists and cantors and programmes in arts and crafts. Students accessing these programmes do not have to pay fees; however, those at boarding schools have to pay for their board and lodging expenses. In 2016, folk high schools had approximately 30,000 participants on long courses per term, which most often equals full-time studies. Of these, 41% studied general programmes, and 59% special programmes. The rate of women in the general programme was 55% and in the special programmes 65%. There is a special teacher education for folk high school teachers, but the folk high schools do also employ teachers with a general teacher education.

Higher vocational education programmes are sometimes classified as "adult education" in Sweden. These programmes were originally called "qualified vocational education". Higher vocational education programmes are arranged in cooperation between public or private education institutions and actors at the labour market. The public providers can be universities/university colleges, municipalities, counties, folk high schools and study associations. The providers apply for a permission and subsidies to start a higher vocational programme. The content should be tailored for the need of the labour market. Higher vocational programmes often cover one to three years full-time studies in different areas, for instance "economy, administration and selling", "technology and production", "data/IT", "society construction and construction technique" and "health, care and social work". In 2016, 47,800 students participated in higher vocational education courses, of which 53% were women. 1,900 higher vocational courses (programmes) were funded. 91% of the students had a job one year after the examination.

Regional vocational adult education is a Government initiative that started 1 January 2017. Municipalities can receive extra state grants if they plan and carry out vocational education in cooperation with other municipalities and the labour market parties in a region. The programmes have to be in vocations with a shortage of qualified labour force in that region.¹⁴

State subsidised arts and culture courses in the higher vocational education are mainly in subjects like dance, music, theatre, film, art and fashion. Since 2015 they are

¹⁴ Government Ordinance ([2016:937](#))

administered by the higher vocational education. Most courses/programmes qualify for further studies in higher education, but there are also short courses in different handicrafts.

The Swedish Government appointed a National Delegation of Validation in 2015-2019 to develop a Government Memorandum on how to validate individual competences. It recommended that the definition of validation in the Education Act be made clearer, and that different authorities work together on how to validate prior learning.¹⁵ The Memorandum also proposed that education providers be bound by law to validate prior learning. This right is already written in the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100, chapter 6, §7). The National Delegation of Validation presented a report in 2017.¹⁶ The target is that considerably more individuals shall have their competence validated and that validation shall be possible in the whole country. The aim is to follow up, support and encourage a nationally coordinated development work both on national and regional level. The possibilities to recognise (validate) knowledge prior learnt in non-formal or informal settings has been more organised during recent years. Municipalities or regions have their own validation centres. These validation centres issue a certificate which attest students' competences. However, the possibilities for validation are still not fully used, according to the National strategy for validation.¹⁷ Organisational solutions and resources distributed to give incentives for validation, as well as improved information and guidance, are among the priorities for the further development of the validation system.

2.2.3 Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes

Popular adult education¹⁸ involves a range of different learning activities; most are of non-formal or informal nature. The non-formal learning activities in the form of courses or study circles are mainly organised by folk high schools and study associations but people's learning is also the aim of a range of other institutions and organisations such as libraries, museums, associations, churches, radio- and TV, social media.

The folk high schools organise different forms of non-formal courses. There were 75,470 participants in short courses (less than 15 weeks), 17,870 in open activities (an attempt to reach new target groups with more loosely structured study forms), 3,030 in study motivating courses, 3,240 in establishment courses for the newly arrived, 3140 in "Swedish from day one" and 209,130 in "cultural programmes" in 2016.

There are ten study associations in Sweden. Study associations organise three kinds of activities: (1) study circles where people often meet once a week during one semester; (2) other group activities, for example week-end courses for elected representatives in the member organisations, i.e. unions, political parties and associations of different kinds, and (3) cultural programmes, such as those delivered at folk high schools. Many associations (such as political parties, unions, churches etc.), cooperate with the study associations for

¹⁵ Government Memorandum ([Ds 2016:24](#)).

¹⁶ Government Directive ([2015:120](#)).

¹⁷ Government Official Report (SOU [2017:18](#))

¹⁸ English translation for Swedish non-formal education also known as 'liberal'.

study activities targeted at their members and members with commissions of trust. The unions have a long tradition of organising non-formal and informal learning activities for their members in Sweden. Also, organisations that support those who have retired organise a large number of non-formal and informal learning activities, and also have one folk high school. Approximately half of the study circles are provided in cooperation with member associations (unions, political parties and associations in different fields of interest); these are mostly free of charge. Study circles that are available to the public incur fees from SEK 500 (approximately €50) to several thousands.

The number of individual students that participated in study circles was approximately 624,000 in 2016, since many of them studied in more than one circle; hence, the number of study circle participants in that year was 1,663,100 (official statistics count participants as number of registrations per course – if an individual attends more than one course, this could result in a multiplication of the number of individuals counted as participating in a study circle). However, 8% were between 13-19 years old and thus not strictly adults. 56% of the participants were women. Compared with other organised study activities for adults' participants in study circles are generally older. Over a third, 37%, were 65 years of age or older in 2016. The number of study circle participants has however gone down since 2010 when there were 1,809,300 participants. On the other hand, the number of participants in other group activities has gone up, from 731,900 in 2010 to 804,100 in 2016 (more than 400,000 individuals). In addition, the number of participants in cultural programmes has also increased from 16,400,000 in 2010 to 19,960,800 participants in 2016. This illustrates how popular the popular adult education is in Sweden.

2.2.4 Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)

Vocational training is one of several labour market activities. Today, vocational training in Sweden consists of short vocational courses, most often less than six months. These courses are aimed at addressing labour market shortages. The courses are tailored to the needs of employers, and are paid for by the Employment office.

There were more than 1,200 vocational courses delivered in August 2016, however the proportion of students on vocational training has been on the decline since 1990. In 2014 approximately 10,000-12,000 participated in vocational training. The courses are free of charge and the students are provided with financial support to cover their living costs.

According to a report from the Swedish Agency for Public Management vocational education training programmes are more expensive to fund than adult education at an upper secondary level mainly due to the following reasons: (1) students studying on these training programmes are further away from the labour market; and (2) whereas municipalities tend to base their decisions on whether or not they purchase higher vocational education on price, employment offices tend to focus on quality, content and

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whether the training matches competences demanded by employers.¹⁹ Vocational courses are also more expensive than other labour activities for the unemployed.

The Employment Offices receive public funds from the Swedish National Financial Management Authority, and has financial discretion to choose how to spend these funds between different labour market activities. (The Employment offices receive a budget for employment activities all-together, vocational training activities are included in employment activities and there is no earmarked vocational training fund).

Government measures have also been implemented to facilitate newly arrived immigrants entrance to the labour market. "Fast tracks" are organised in cooperation between the employment offices and the parties on the labour market. The fast tracks include validation of prior learning, practice at workplaces, language practice and education. So far, fast tracks have been agreed in 13 branches for instance in health and care, the construction sector, teaching and preschool teaching and food provisions. In March 2017, 3,540 adults had started their participation of which 30% were women.²⁰

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) has published a progress report on the "fast tracks".²¹ They conclude that experiences on local level should result in education and labour market policies on national level. Further, they emphasise the need for evaluations, and for more formalised and strategic national work in which the Government, the Employment Office and the parties on the labour market are included. One problem, according to SKL, is that there is a lack of information and that the employment offices lack specific knowledge about the branches. That in turn lead to problems for the employers to orientate and find accurate information. In 2017, the Employment Office conducted a follow-up study of the "fast tracks" and concluded that the possibility to get an employment after one year in a "fast track" differ between vocations.²² Between 33% and 52% had got a job. The rate was lower, 23%, for health and care vocations on a high level.

There have been five different forms of financial support to employers that employ unemployed adults of which some forms have been in combination with education, for instance the trainee-jobs. From the spring 2018 these will be replaced to one form, "introduction jobs" with a maximum salary ceiling of SEK 20,000 per month. The introduction work is directed towards the long-term unemployed and newly arrived, and can be "a flexible combination of work and education".²³

Another form of employment for youngsters, newly arrived and long-term unemployed is "vocational introduction employment". This implies learning a vocation with the help of a supervisor and with a salary of at least 75% of the salary in the collective agreement. The vocational introduction employment must be held for at least six months. The individuals

¹⁹ Statskontoret, 2012

²⁰ Arbetsförmedlingen, 2017

²¹ Sveriges kommuner och landsting (2017a).

²² Arbetsförmedlingen (2017)

²³ <http://www.regeringen.se/>

do not have to be registered at the employment office but they have to find an employer willing to employ them under these conditions.

2.2.5 *Opens up Higher Education to adults*

There are 14 state universities, two private universities and 34 university colleges in Sweden. Over 400,000 students participated in higher education in 2015/16 and 18,000 doctoral students. 86,000 students started a degree in autumn 2015, of which approximately 58% were female.²⁴ Students from outside Europe have to pay a student fee.

Some higher education institutions have set up a foundation year (*basår*) to broaden access. This year occurs in between the end of upper secondary education and a longer higher education degree. The aim is to strengthen individual skills and competencies ahead of higher education or a way to acquire subject specific knowledge if they want to change discipline. In 2014/15, there were 4390 such places occupied mostly by young men.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority has formulated a strategic plan for supporting a wider recruitment of students 2015-17.²⁵ The plan includes such things as supporting the higher education institutions in their work with widened recruitment and work towards equality and equal treatment. Another issue is to ensure that national websites are accessible for all. Another issue is to follow up the higher education institutions work with validation of real competences and alternative selection strategies. The plan also emphasises the endeavour to construct the National Scholastic Aptitude Test, so that no one will be disadvantaged because of social or ethnical background or dyslexia.

2.2.6 *Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills*

The official statistics from Statistics Sweden on in-service training are from 2012,²⁶ and show that Sweden was then in top in EU with 56% of the adults aged 25-64 years participating in in-service training compared with an EU-average of 28%. Women participated in a slightly higher extent than men. However, the in-service training was very unequally distributed. While only 28% of the employees with a pre-upper secondary education participated, the rate of participants was 70% among those with a post-upper secondary education.

2.2.7 *Other (if any)*

No other educational forms are identified by the author.

²⁴ <http://www.uka.se/>

²⁵ Universitetskanslerämbetet (2015)

²⁶ <http://www.scb.se/>

3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1 Context

Since 2014 the Government of Sweden is run by a coalition of the Social Democratic Party and the Swedish Green Party. However, they do not have a majority of their own, which means they have to compromise and seek support from one or several of the other parties to get their intentions realised.

There are 290 municipalities that have a relatively large freedom to choose how to use the municipal taxes. The municipalities also receive state grants and are free to decide on how to use them. Some state grants are however earmarked, for instance the extra places within the “knowledge boost” described below. The 20 counties are not especially involved in education but some of them do run a folk high school.

3.1.1 *Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning*

Municipalities are responsible for the quality of general and vocational education (school based and/or apprenticeship education) on compulsory and upper secondary level education, education for adults with intellectual impairments and Swedish language courses for immigrants delivered in Sweden. There is no earmarked state funding for adult education, municipalities are solely responsible for the budgeting of the provision, and for the number of places provided. However, since 2015 the Government has budgeted for extra places in adult education that the municipalities can apply for, the so-called “knowledge boost”. Students who study adult education courses provided by municipalities can apply for a study allowance (grants and loan) from the Swedish National Board for Student Aid (Centrala studiestödsnämnden). This is for living costs, seeing as there are no student fees.

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is the central administrative authority for the public schools’ system at compulsory and upper secondary education, including adult education. In-service training for teachers, curriculum and grading support are among the Agency’s responsibility areas. The Agency has prepared a new strategy for digitalisation of the school system, also covering adult education. Their vision for 2022 is that all adults develop digital competence.²⁷ The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) ensures that the municipalities follow the laws and regulations and make inspections of the local adult education.

The National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet) is responsible for distributing government grants to organisations who deliver popular adult education, i.e. the study associations and folk high schools. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education is a non-profit, membership-based association with certain authoritative tasks delegated to it

²⁷ Swedish National Agency for Education, 2016.

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by the government and the parliament. The National Council of Adult Education has three members:

- The Swedish National Federation of Study Associations (Folkbildningarförbundet), an interest association for the study associations.
- The Interest Organisation of Popular Movement Folk High Schools (Rörelsefolkhögskolornas Intresseorganisation) which is the umbrella organisation for the 108 Swedish folk high schools owned by civil society organisations.
- The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting) represents the 43 folk high schools operated by county councils and regions²⁸. "

Folk high schools do not have a national curriculum but are free to decide the content and how they structure their study activities. However, they need to have a course plan for each course or study circle.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) is responsible for post upper secondary higher vocational education and arts and culture courses. The Agency receives state subsidies that are distributed to the higher vocational education programmes. The Agency is also responsible for the implementation of the national qualifications framework introduced in 2015.

Sweden's Public Employment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen) is responsible for measures directed to the unemployed, among other activities short vocational courses and the new "introduction jobs". Who will receive such an education or "introduction job" is decided upon by the local employment offices.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslerämbetet) is responsible for quality assuring and appraising degree-awarding powers of public-sector higher education institutions. The Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet) coordinates admissions to higher education and give support and information.

3.1.2 *Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning*

According to the Education Act (2010:800) the individuals' needs and prerequisites shall be the point of departure when decisions are made about admission. Those with the lowest education shall be prioritised.

The major strategical documents are the state budgets. Since 2015 the budgets have included extra places in adult education within the "knowledge boost" (see below).

²⁸ [Eurypedia Sweden](#) (2016) 'Distribution of responsibilities', URL:

3.2 Adult learning policy framework

3.2.1 *A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010*

2009-2011

The higher vocational education was established and extra places were funded in upper secondary adult education for vocational courses

In 2009, the previous trials and projects with qualified vocational education resulted in the founding of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education.

The Government funded extra places in school-based and apprenticeship vocational education at upper secondary level for adults and for commercial drivers.

During this period, Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) went through several changes in order to make it more individually adopted and flexible and, at the same time, more directed towards working life.²⁹

2012

Changes in the Education Act

The new Education Act (2010:800) and the Ordinance on Adult education (2011:1108) became applicable for municipal adult education, with education for adults with intellectual impairment and Swedish for immigrants. The new Act strengthened the possibility of education tailored to the needs and situation of the individual, entitled all adults to study, to receive vocational guidance, and to have individual study plans and validation.³⁰

A new grading scale with six levels A-F was introduced. Five levels A-E denote pass results and F a non-pass result. The new grading scale is related to national goals and grading criteria.

2015

The Country Report Sweden 2015 outlines a number of challenges within the educational system "caused by reforms decided upon by the earlier right wing government", i.e. the decreasing number of participants in vocational programmes at upper secondary level, the declining equity in education and the implementation of decentralisation and school choice "not accompanied by centralised quality assurance mechanisms"³¹. Declining basic skills among the youth is another challenge set out in the report.

²⁹ Sandwall (2013)

³⁰ Eurydice Sweden, September 2017

³¹ European Commission, 2015b.

The national qualification framework was introduced

In 2015, the National Qualification Framework was introduced.

A new form of post-secondary education, art and culture education, was launched in the autumn 2015, replacing supplementary education.

The “knowledge boost” started

In the autumn 2015, the Government launched a “knowledge boost” with extra adult education places for municipal adult education, folk high schools, higher education and vocational higher education. The initiative has been designed to prevent unemployment, and can “...also be seen as an important initiative for lifelong learning.”³² The “knowledge boost” offered approximately 6,500 extra places the first year, distributed to higher education, adult education (including vocational education) and additional places in the general courses at folk high schools. In the National reform programme 2016, the Government sets out the aim of the “knowledge boost” as follows: “The knowledge boost is intended to give people the chance to educate themselves so that they can secure a job, retrain for a new occupation, become eligible for admission to higher education, acquire advanced education to improve their career opportunities, and enlighten and empower themselves to more fully participate in society or simply for personal development”³³.

Measures to recognise prior learning (validation)

“The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education introduced a project to investigate the effect recognition of prior learning has on diversity. The agency also aimed to create national methods for recognition of prior learning in vocational education through an economic incentive. The scheme started in the autumn 2015.”³⁴

Trainee jobs

In 2015 the Government also started to fund a new form of employment, trainee jobs targeted at 20-24 year olds, and composed of 50% paid work and 50% training. In Sweden’s convergence programme 2016 the Government aimed to “... broaden trainee jobs and vocational introduction employment schemes to newly arrived people.”

Measures to support the inclusion of immigrants

Measures to support the inclusion of immigrants that have obtained a residence permit but still live at Swedish Migration Board’s accommodation centres were proposed in the national programme 2015: “... the Government proposed funds to enable activities to be implemented in adult education, including study associations, to improve knowledge of

³² Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p.18

³³ Government offices of Sweden, 2016b, p. 27

³⁴ Eurydice Sweden, September 2017.

Swedish, of society and to promote participation in social life.”³⁵. These activities are regulated in the Ordinance (2015:521).

2016

Swedish for immigrants became part of municipal adult education

In July, 2016 Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) became part of municipal adult education and all students have the right to an individual study plan and a guidance counsellor. The Government’s ambition was that it would make the adult education easier to adapt to individual needs and life conditions, and that Sfi would become easier to combine with other courses in adult education.³⁶ In turn, the Government assumed that it would lead to shorter study periods, faster flowing through and less student aid.

Extended number of places in the “knowledge boost”

The number of extra places in the knowledge boost expanded in 2016 and educational contracts were introduced and organised by the municipal adult education and the folk high schools (see 5.1.3 below). The educational contracts were three part agreements between the employment offices, the municipalities and the unemployed. The unemployed had to be a young person aged 20-24 years, registered at the employment office and lacking an education on upper secondary level. Other measures in order to increase the interest in vocational education for this age group was to “strengthening the efforts to get more teachers in vocational subjects to obtain their teacher certificate”, “strengthen the collaboration between school and the workplace, (...) strengthen the workplace learning” and “develop the skills of guidance counsellors and extension the technological leap”.³⁷

Within the knowledge boost the folk high schools were extra funded to start study motivation courses for the unemployed.

Commission on coherent vocational educations in upper secondary school

The number of young people and newly arrived that are not eligible for studies at upper secondary level has increased in recent years. These students are directed to introduction programmes or to language introduction if they are newly arrived. The Government has commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to prepare propositions on, among other things, how to stimulate cooperation between the upper secondary school for the youth and municipal adult education, in order to be able to offer coherent vocational education also within the introduction programmes.³⁸ The propositions are to be designed so that they can function as additional educational packages that step-by-step can lead to an exam on upper secondary level. The Agency has to consult with the national programme counsellors for vocational upper secondary education and shall report in December 2017.

³⁵ Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p 24.

³⁶ Government Proposition (2014/15:85).

³⁷ Eurydice Sweden, September 2017.

³⁸ Government Commission ([U2017/01930/GV](#))

Increased funding for early efforts to facilitate establishment within the Swedish society

The government proposed increased funding for initiatives with the aim to increase employability among newly arrived, as well as to facilitate their establishment within the Swedish society. The reform concerns initiatives regarding for example tuition for Swedish, and Swedish society.³⁹

The Swedish National Agency for Education aims to support municipalities' work by validating newly arrived migrants who do not have upper secondary qualifications. In the state budget for 2016, extra funding was provided to the Swedish Council for Higher Education to support their validation of foreign qualifications initiative. This is in line with a new Ordinance which recognises foreign vocational qualifications and occasional vocational practice in Sweden.⁴⁰

In the National Reform Programme 2016, an initiative called the "100-club" where larger employers and companies offer jobs for newly arrived migrants has been launched. The Employment Office tailors these packages for those employers who are willing to take in at least 100 newly arrived migrants. 200 state authorities have also been commissioned to take in newly arrived migrants for training activities during 2016-2018."

Fast tracks for newly arrived that already have a qualification

Another measure that has been adopted in 2016 is to recognise prior learning for those who have degree qualifications from other countries. In cooperation with social partners, the Employment office and other authorities, the Government funds "fast tracks" to shorten this group's way into work for specific professions. The Employment office also offer shorter complementary educations (courses) so that newly arrived migrants with higher education can be matched to a job that meets employers' recruitment needs".⁴¹

The goal of the fast track training schemes is to offer work for newly arrived in sectors with labour shortages. A fast track is a cohesive process to offer work practice, language training, education and validation. It is the parties on the labour market and the Employment Office that decide which vocations that can have a fast track. In 2016 several new occupations have been included in the system. Agreements are signed concerning electricians, cooks, truck drivers, vocations within health and care, teachers and pre-school teachers, real estate business, employees in the construction and energy businesses, social scientists, social workers, animal keepers and the wood industry. (Employment Office, 2017).

The "90 days guarantee"

Another initiative linked to work and education was set out in the National reform programme 2016, the "90 days guarantee" for the youth. This initiative sets a limit on

³⁹ Eurydice, March 2017.

⁴⁰ Act (2016:145) and Government Ordinance (2016:157)

⁴¹ Government Offices, 2016b, p. 19-20

how long a young person, 20-24 years of age, can be unemployed before he or she is offered a job, or be involved in an activity in order to get a job or an education⁴².

Digital platforms

In the autumn 2016, the Swedish County boards implemented digital platforms designed for people seeking asylum.⁴³ All counties and regions have been offered to connect to a national platform aimed at strengthening the governance and planning of the healthcare for asylum seekers, and follow up the results. Nine counties and regions out of 21 did connect in 2016 and 2 will connect in 2017.⁴⁴ The results so far indicate that the consciousness of needs for methods and material to improve the healthcare has increased, as well as the knowledge and awareness among the staff. Courses to introduce the platforms to the staff have been held and 1,286 people from all counties and regions had participated by March 2017. The intention is that the knowledge will spread through local education. Another part of the initiative is a web-based tool-bank with those work designs, methods and material that are identified to work. For the first time, the number of medical examinations were higher than the number of new asylum seekers in 2016.

Vocational upper secondary education can be organised by the vocational higher education

Changes within the vocational higher education were also launched in 2016. According to Eurydice Sweden, the vocational higher education providers were "given the opportunity to provide education programmes on upper secondary level to increase the number of students eligible for higher vocational education. The changes, including increased requirements regarding the competence and the ability of education providers to provide high quality education programmes", came into force as of 1 January 2017.⁴⁵ "In order to increase the quality of higher vocational education, there has been several changes in the Higher Vocational Education Ordinance during 2016. The requirements to obtain a higher vocational education diploma or an advanced higher vocational education diploma are since 1 February 2016 based on the national qualification framework and a thesis is now also included in the requirements. Another example is that the steering group for each course included in the system of higher vocational education should include a representative from the Swedish school system. There have also been changes that concerns the quality assurance process by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education."⁴⁶

⁴² Government Offices (2016b, p. 18)

⁴³ Government Offices of Sweden (2016a).

⁴⁴ [Sveriges kommuner och landsting \(2017b\)](#)

⁴⁵ In a document dated 24 January 2017 the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education writes that it will continue the work to make it possible for providers of higher vocational education to apply for qualifying pre-education in 2018. (MYH2016/4541).

⁴⁶ Eurydice Sweden, September 2017.

Special employment support

Some changes concerning state subsidies to “special employment support” came into effect in July 2016.⁴⁷ Special employment support can be paid out if an employer hires an unemployed person that participates, or are about to start studying, in adult education in Swedish for immigrants, Swedish as a second language or Swedish vocational language.

Overhaul of the admission to higher education

The Government had decided to overhaul the admission to the universities and university colleges in 2016. This overhaul includes a decreasing emphasis on the university entrance exam, more weight being placed on the merit points and potentially taking work experience into consideration for admission to higher education.⁴⁸

Final report from the Digitalisation committee

In December 2016, the Digitalisation Committee presented its results in an official report.⁴⁹ The committee states that the dialogue between the education system on upper secondary level, and above and the labour market, is crucial in a digital society, and that the present forms for cooperation need to be developed and completed. One recommendation is to prioritise competence building to ensure welfare and growth in the digital society. On the other hand, the committee stresses that there will be difficulties to balance between improvements of welfare services for the individuals and the state’s interference in the personal sphere. The committee states that the digitalisation will gain the high educated more than the low educated. “Data-driven innovation can help to improve the efficiency of the public sector, introduce automated decision-making and design better welfare services. Increased use of public data can also facilitate the control of management, increase transparency and democratic development, as well as making individuals more involved in decisions and processes.” However, one conclusion is that “protection of privacy needs to be weighed against the potential for development of the society and innovation”. (SOU 2016:89, p. 33-34, the author’s translation).

2017

Extended legal right to study at municipal adult education

In 2017 changes in the Education Act came into force that made adult education on upper secondary level a legal right for those who lacked eligibility to higher education. Citizens who are eligible for studies in municipal adult education now have the right to take upper secondary courses to become qualified for higher education.

⁴⁷ Government Ordinance (SFS [2016:427](#)).

⁴⁸ www.regeringen.se

⁴⁹ Government Official Report (SOU [2016:89](#)).

Extended number of places in the “knowledge boost”

A number of extra places were state funded within the knowledge boost in 2017 (see Table 3.1 below).

Preparation courses and individual courses in the higher vocational education

Another change in 2017 is that higher vocational education will include preparation courses and individual courses that can be on upper secondary level.

A new “start studying support”

Already in 2016, a Government Memorandum proposed a new allowance, the start studying support, to help the unemployed aged between 25 to 56 years to start a training course.⁵⁰ The start studying support was implemented from July 1, 2017. Students can get up to SEK 9,117 (approximately € 960) per month during the first 50 weeks to study. To benefit from the allowance the students shall have been unemployed and registered at the Employment office for at least six months. According to the proposal, approximately 15,000 unemployed people in the above age group are likely to benefit from this new initiative. The same Government Memorandum also proposed to abolish the possibility for students who go directly from upper secondary education to higher education to have their debt written off (the current study allowance combines a loan and a grant) from January 1, 2018.

Regional vocational adult education

In October 2016, the Government decided on state subsidies for regional vocational adult education, orientation courses and courses in Swedish, Swedish as a second language, English, Mathematics and Social sciences.⁵¹ All cohesive programmes within the regional vocational adult education have to include workplace learning to at least 15% of the content. Cohesive programmes have also to be offered in the form of apprenticeship education. Single courses in vocational subjects shall be offered in accordance with the student needs. The ordinance entered into force 1 January 2017.

The subsidies can be obtained for adult education and special adult education on upper secondary level, planned in cooperation between at least three municipalities and in cooperation with the labour market. The municipalities have to co-finance the education. State subsidies for orientation courses can only be paid out for students who also study in the regional vocational adult education. When distributing the state subsidies, the National Agency for Education is to consider the regional need of competence at the labour market and the size of unemployment in the concurrent municipalities. The aim is to develop competences needed in the labour market through a wider range of vocational education.

The National Agency for Education has also been commissioned to give suggestions for cohesive programmes with combinations of courses corresponding to labour market needs.

⁵⁰ Government Proposition ([2016/17:158](#))

⁵¹ Government Ordinance (SFS [2016:937](#))

Since many newly arrived are in their later teens, it is also important to gather experiences from those municipalities that have developed models for transitions from vocational introduction to adult education. Vocational counsellors have to be appointed with the task to develop cooperation between adult education and the work places. The counsellors are also to contribute to evaluations and follow-ups.

Part of the activity programme is phased out

Part of the activity programme for long-term unemployed is phased out and replaced with educational opportunities.

3.2.2 Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning

The Swedish lifelong learning strategy, "The Swedish strategy for lifelong learning - A summary of principles and orientations" was developed in 2007.⁵² In the strategy, responsibility for adult education is apportioned to three groups: the individual, the state and the employer".⁵³

Municipally run adult education is regulated in the Education Act (2010:800, chapter 20) and in the Ordinance of Adult Education (2011:1108). Adult education run by municipalities is designed to support and stimulate adults into learning, and enable adults to develop their knowledge and skills in order to strengthen their position in the labour market, and help to promote their personal development. Adults that lack education at compulsory level have the legal right to attend adult education from the age of 20 if they live in Sweden. Adult education has its own curriculum in which the goals and guidelines are specified.

Some new paragraphs were added in 2015 (Law 2015:482). According to the changes people with low qualifications will be prioritised. Municipalities have to offer study and vocational counselling to those who are about to start an adult education at compulsory level.

Popular adult education is regulated in the Government Ordinance (2015:218). In the Ordinance, the aims of the state subsidies are set out as follows: "(1) to support activities that strengthen and develop the democracy;(2) contribute to the possibilities for a larger diversity of people to influence their life situations and create participative involvement in societal development; (3) bridge educational gaps and raise the level of education and cultural awareness in society; and (4) broaden the interest for, and increase the participation in, cultural activities". The target, formulated in the Government Proposition (2013/14:172), is to "give all people, together with others, the opportunity to increase their knowledge and Bildung for personal development and participation in society".

Higher vocational education is regulated by Law (2009:128) and Ordinance (2009:130). The higher vocational education law guarantees that post upper secondary vocational

⁵² Ministry of Education and Research, 2007

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 8

training activities are linked to labour market needs. The law emphasises that the training provided: "(1) is grounded in knowledge generated in the production of goods and services and in science, and have a high quality and relevance for the labour market; (2) offer theoretical, practical and experienced knowledge needed in order to be able to perform qualified tasks in the working life, independently and in teams; (3) is characterised by strong connection to the working life and be theoretically anchored; (4) is developed and conducted in cooperation between the working life and the educational suppliers; and (5) contributes to a break of traditional sex bounded educational- and vocational choices" (Law 2009:128, prefatory directions §6, authors translation).

A summary of the content of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) is presented on the Swedish Higher Education Authority's website (www.uka.se). The Act includes basic regulations about the courses and programmes offered by higher education institutions (HEIs). For example, it sets out what should characterise these courses and programmes at different levels. It also has regulations about the duties of teachers and contains provisions about student influence. HEIs must also foster equality of opportunity and broaden recruitment.

Vocational training is regulated in the Government Ordinance SFS (2000:634). It aims to strengthen the employability skills of individuals. Only those who are at least 25 years old and registered at the Employment office can access vocational training, however, those with illnesses that affects their working ability, youth on "youth guarantee" schemes and refugees under 25 can access this training.

In-service training is normally non-formal and not regulated by laws or regulations, except training that offer certificates that have to be monitored on a regular basis. These include those that offer weld certificates according to an ISO standard⁵⁴ and training involving formal adult education courses.

Validation of prior learning is regulated in the same Ordinance as vocational training (SFS 2000:634). In March 2016, a new Act (2016:145) and Ordinance was introduced (SFS 2016:157). This Ordinance regulates recognition of vocational qualifications in line with the EU directive 2013/55/EU, for those who temporary want to exercise a professional vocation as an employee or as a private businessman.⁵⁵

3.2.3 *Main strategy(ies)*

The Swedish strategy for lifelong learning (2007) put forward the right of everyone to an education with quality. Accessibility, equivalence and coordination are emphasised.

The National strategy for digitalisation of upper secondary school and municipal adult education (2015) intends to clarify the commission to give the participants adequate digital

⁵⁴ SS-EN ISO 9606-1:2013

⁵⁵ Act (2016:145) and Government Ordinance (2016:157)

competence. The strategy states that headteachers and teachers shall have competence to choose and use appropriate digital tools and have sufficient digital tools to use.

The National strategy for validation (2017) aims to realise that significantly more individuals will have their real competence validated. Validation shall be possible all over the country, in all levels in the education system and directed to wider qualifications in working life.

The Government Proposition on experimental work with branch schools (2016) gives the municipalities the possibility to make an agreement with a branch school, implying that the school can execute teaching in vocational subjects.

The Commission on National Strategy for Internationalisation of Universities and University Colleges (2017) is commissioned to suggest goals for a national strategy on how more students can receive an international perspective in their studies, and how Sweden can be more attractive for foreign students.

The state budgets (2016; 2017) analyse the results from earlier years and suggest what educational forms that will be state subsidised the forthcoming years.

3.2.4 *Main implementing act(s)*

The Swedish economy has recovered ,and according to the Government there is now a space for reforms, not least within education. The state budget for 2018 contains several extra places in the “knowledge boost” that started in 2015. However, the state budget for 2018 and next coming years is not agreed on in the parliament but a proposition from the present Government (and a new election was held in September 2018).

The Swedish reform programme 2017 emphasises that “labour market matching must be improved”.⁵⁶ The “knowledge boost” and the new recruiting financial study aid, the “start studying support”, are measures in order to solve this situation. According to a new condition in the budget of 2017, municipalities that apply for the extra places for vocational adult education shall finance at least the same number of places as they are applying for themselves.⁵⁷

Table 3.1 Extra places within the knowledge boost (Government proposition 2017/18:1)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Municipal general and vocational adult education (from 2017: regional vocational adult education)	19,200	15,000	31,500	34,000	34,000	34,000
Commercial driver education			1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Apprenticeship education for adults			3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150

⁵⁶ Government Offices of Sweden, 2017

⁵⁷ Government Proposition, 2016/17:1, p. 203.

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report - Sweden

Higher vocational education	2,500	6,000	7,100	11,000	15,700	18,800
Folk high schools general and special programmes	3,000	3,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
Folk high schools, educational contracts and courses for the long-term unemployed	2,000	2,000	4,000	4,000	3,000	3,000
Completing education	125					
University and university colleges	7,925	11,125	20,030	22,516	23,923	25,235
Educational contracts in municipal adult education	3,675	3,675				
Trainee	3,551	5,451				
Education for time-limited employees in geriatric care, health- and medical care			4,000	4,000	1,000	
In total	41,976	46,251	78,780	87,666	89,773	93,185

Already in the spring budget 2017, municipal adult education was granted 10,000 extra places. Together with the extra places within the “knowledge boost”, 19,200 extra places were created for 2016. For 2017, the “knowledge boost” will provide 15,000 extra places for municipal adult education. The number of extra places is yet to be announced for 2018.

In the spring budget 2017, Swedish folk high schools received 2,000 extra places for their general programmes. Within the “knowledge boost” approximately 1,000 extra places are proposed for courses at folk high schools in 2016. Above that, the budget covers 1,000 study places for courses for the long-term unemployed. There is also a new initiative with 1000 places in vocational courses that last up to 24 months at folk high schools for the long-term unemployed in occupations with labour market shortages.

Educational contracts are only open for young people between 20-24 years. A contract is an agreement between the Employment office, the municipality and a young person registered at the Employment office who does not have upper secondary level qualifications. The studies are either full-time or combined with work or practice work. Students on these contracts can obtain Swedish financial aid for such studies.

The Government also set aside extra money in the budget 2017 to recruit and enhance teachers’ competences in teaching Swedish for immigrants, and for the newly arrived and adopted new regulations in connection to these means⁵⁸. The need for qualified teachers to teach Swedish for immigrants is large, only 40% have a degree in “Swedish as a second language”.⁵⁹ The Government has budgeted SEK 100 million (approximately €10.5 million)

⁵⁸ Government Proposition (Prop 2016/2017:1)

⁵⁹ Nordic network for adult education (www.nvl.org).

to educate approximately 1,000 teachers to teach Swedish for immigrants in the next few years.

Within the Government strategy "Roads ahead" (2015), the Swedish National Council of Adult Education also received extra state funding for 2016-2018, to help young individuals between 15-25 years of age without education at upper secondary level to develop skills and competences needed for the labour market.

3.3 National quantitative policy targets

Table 3.2 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
The share of people aged 18-24 who have not completed at least two years of upper secondary education and are not participating in any form of study is to be less than 7% in 2020			In 2016 the share was 7.5%, 8.2% for men and 6.7% for women.	Sweden has reached the goal for women but not for men. According to the Swedish reform programme 2017 the average share has increased slightly in 2016.
The share of people aged 30-34 with at least a two-year tertiary education is to be 45-50% in 2020			The share was 50.8% in 2016, 43.1% for men and 58.1% for women.	Sweden has reached the higher level of the goal in average, but not even the lower level when looking at the share for men. According to the Swedish reform programme 2017 the share has increased steadily over the past ten years, but the rate of

				increase has declined in the past year.
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3.4 Quality assurance

The municipalities are responsible for the quality of municipal adult education, including the adult education for people with intellectual impairment, and Swedish for immigrants. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate monitors and evaluates this activity. The Swedish National Council of Adult education evaluate and follow up the quality of the folk high schools and the study associations. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is responsible for the quality of post upper secondary vocational higher education. Sweden's Public Employment Agency is responsible for education directed to the long-term unemployed. The Swedish Higher Education Authority is responsible for the quality and evaluations of the tertiary education at the universities and university colleges.

The Schools Inspectorate conducts regular supervisions. If there are remarks, the municipalities have a certain time to attend the shortcomings. "If the principal organiser does not take action or seriously disregards its obligations, the inspectorate may decide to impose a conditional fine or measures at the principal organiser's expense."⁶⁰

In the state budget proposition 2018, SEK 315,000,000 is distributed to strengthen the quality in the regional vocational courses, give them better preconditions and broaden the educational supply.

3.5 Future policy developments

State budget proposition 2018

In the state budget proposition for 2018 the Government proposes an extended number of extra places in the knowledge boost for the next coming years (see table 3.1 above). From 2018 the Government intends to more than double the number of places to municipal adult education from 15,000 in 2017 to 34,000 in 2018 and introduce new extra places to apprenticeship education and education for commercial drivers. Furthermore, the extra places to the programmes (long courses) at the folk high schools will increase from 3,000 to 8,000 and their funding to educational contracts and courses for the long-term unemployed from 2,000 to 4,000. The extra places in vocational higher education is planned to increase from 6,000 to 7,100 and in higher education from 11,125 to 20,030. But, as mentioned before, there is an election in 2018 which make the future budgets most uncertain.

⁶⁰ Eurydice, 2017. Quality Assurance in Adult Education and Training.

Branch schools

The Government has proposed experimental work with branch schools.⁶¹ The experimental work implies that suppliers of vocational education within upper secondary school and municipal adult education can make agreements with a branch school to carry out certain tasks. The tasks that can be delivered are education in vocational subjects and education in the upper secondary examination work according to the Education Act. The experimental work will go on between 1st of July 2018 to last day in June 2023.

A new commission on adult education

A new commission on adult education has been appointed by the Government.⁶² There are questions whether adult education for students with intellectual impairment will continue to be part of municipal adult education, or will become an educational form of its own. How to ensure that the teachers in municipal adult education get adequate in-service training is another question for the commission to address. Other questions concern selection of students, the grade scale, and preparatory higher education.

Study motivating activities and visiting work for female immigrants

The study associations will receive SEK 30 million from the Government in 2018 to organise study motivating activities and conducting visiting work for female immigrants. The aim is to give the participants increased knowledge about themselves and their environment, motivation and training in studies and work application. The activities are planned to start in January 2018 and is estimated to reach 4,000 females.

Commission on education for newly arrived with short previous education

The Government has commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to prepare a supportive material to facilitate the municipalities work with newly arrived with short previous education.⁶³ The intention is to combine Swedish for immigrants with other parts of municipal adult education, for instance basic courses in mathematics and social orientation courses.

Changes in the Swedish financial aid for students

Swedish financial aid for students comprise loan and allowance. The state budget proposition 2018 includes a raise of the study loan with SEK 200 and the allowance with SEK 300 per month of full-time studies. Altogether, the aid will reach SEK 10,450 for four weeks of studies, of which approximately SEK 3,150 is an allowance.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Government Proposition (Prop. [2016/17:161](#)).

⁶² Government Directive. ([2017:21](#))

⁶³ Government Commission ([U2017/02921/GV](#))

⁶⁴ www.csn.se

The Swedish Board for Study Support has got the commission to prepare the introduction of a state loan for drivers' licence education. The board is to present an account in August 2018.

Education obligation for newly arrived

Newly arrived that take part in the employment office establishment measures and who (according to the employment offices judgement) need education to get a job, can be obliged to start studying. Refusal can lead to suspended financial support.⁶⁵

Trainee-jobs and four other subsidised employments become "introduction jobs"

Five different forms of subsidised employment will be replaced by a new employment form, the "introduction jobs". According to the Government the rules for the subsidies will become easier and strengthened to increase employer will to employ people that are weakly anchored at the labour market. The introduction jobs will be able to combine with education in a flexible way, in order to strengthen the individuals as well as to meet the employers' need of competence. According to the Government, such a combination will start in the individuals' needs and not be an absolute demand which it is in today's trainee- and instep-jobs.⁶⁶

Vocational practice for newly arrived

The budget for "early efforts for the newly arrived" is increased in the state budget proposition 2018 and the newly arrived will have the possibility to language training and competence mapping already during the asylum period. Newly arrived who are registered in the establishment programme, will also have the possible to get practice in order to strengthen the possibilities at the labour market. This possibility was earlier only open for the unemployed in the "job and development guarantee". The employment offices offer several kinds of practice: to test a vocation, to show ones' competences, or to shorten the way to employment for foreign academics.

⁶⁵ Government Proposition ([2017/18:1](#))

⁶⁶ www.regeringen.se

4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time

Municipal adult education is mainly financed by the municipalities. The municipalities collect taxes but do also receive a lump sum from the state and sometimes time limited earmarked funding like the places in the "knowledge boost". 'Popular' (adult) education, i.e. folk high schools and study circles, is mainly state funded. Some, not all, municipalities and county councils contribute to the funding as well. Higher vocational education is mainly state funded, but cooperative partners can also contribute to the training. Higher education is mainly state funded, but in-service courses are also sold to private and municipal employers. Vocational training is state funded; however, there is no separate budget for this, the training is budgeted within the overall budget allocated to labour market policy initiatives. In-service training at the workplace is normally paid for by employers, this can also be offered as part of other projects such as the European Social Fund. In-service training for some professions, like teachers, is sometimes partly state funded. Non-formal education, for instance in associations, is paid for by the associations. Some may use the state funded activity support given to participants younger than 25 years of age. Non-formal courses, offered by private education providers are paid for from participants' fees.

4.2 Public national investment

Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment 2017 (Only the state budget, including the spring budget adjustments, in SEK)

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding (SEK)	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
Municipal adult education	State	1.453,775,000	15,000		2017
Popular adult education	State	4,244,165,000	No number is set		2017
Higher vocational education	State	2,161,588,000	App. 27,000		2017
Targeted study aid	State	448,000,000	10,000-12,000		2017
Competence development for teachers in Swedish for immigrants	state	100,000,000	No number is set		2017
Labour market training (no separate budget but included in the budget for labour market measures)					2017

Table 4.1 only includes the state budget. But since formal adult education is mainly finance by municipal budgets it does not give the full truth. Another way of presenting the investments is to look at the total costs for adult education in 2016. The statistics is caught from the agencies websites (which in turn in collected by the Statistics Sweden).

Table 4.2 Total costs for different educational forms in 2016.

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding (SEK)	Targeted number of participants	Target ed level of provisi on	Start / end date
Municipal adult education ⁶⁷	Municipalities and the state	10,281,545,000*	345,540		2016
Popular adult education ⁶⁸	State	4,022,776,000	See above 2.2.2; 2.2.3		2016
Higher vocational education ⁶⁹	State	1,740,200,000	47.800		2016
Higher education ⁷⁰	State	28,000,000,000**	400,000 (2015/16)		2016
Education for the unemployed and newly arrived ⁷¹	State	3,092,120,000***			2016

*Included in this sum is SEK 3,477,060,000 to municipal adult education, SEK 257,572,000 to the adult education for the intellectually impaired and SEK 3,069,853,000 to Swedish for immigrants.

**Approximately. The figure does only include education on first and second cycle.

***Approximately. Includes labour market education and preparatory education, but not the costs for the "job and development guarantee".

4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

4.3.1 Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework

The EU amount budgeted for Sweden for 2014-2020 was €730,186,558. Sweden added exactly the same sum in their national budget. Prioritised areas are to raise the employment rate and the participation in education for the youth between 15-24 years (10% of the budget), to strengthen the possibilities for adults who have problems to find their way into the labour market or education (60% of the budget), to raise the level of competence and qualifications principally for people already employed, but also for the

⁶⁷ www.skolverket.se (Siris)

⁶⁸ www.folkbildningsradet.se (Årsredovisning 2016)

⁶⁹ <http://www.myh.se/statistik>

⁷⁰ www.uka.se (Årsrapport 2017)

⁷¹ www.arbetsformedlingen.se (Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2016)

unemployed (25% of the budget). The Swedish EFS council lists 119 projects in programme area 1 (PO1 – skills supply) that have been granted so far.

4.3.2 *EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework*

The EU budget for Sweden for 2007-2013 was €691,551,158. Also during this period Sweden added the same sum. No private funding is registered. According to the EU statistics, Sweden had few participants compared to most other EU countries.⁷² But 1,276 projects in program area 1 (skills supply) are accounted for on the Swedish EFS pages. Most of them were small, some tens of thousands of Euros.

4.4 **Effectiveness of investment**

In the national EFS programme for 2014-2020 there is a comment about the evaluation of the period 2007-2013:⁷³ “Experiences from the programme period 2007-2013 show that evaluations of the implementation need to be marked off, directed to targets and more effective in order to improve the prerequisites to learn through evaluations” (author’s translation).

The final evaluation of the Swedish social fund I 2007-2013 was carried out by Ramböll.⁷⁴ Their summary states that the programme has worked out well and has reached more participants than planned for. The financial frame has been used and the ESF administration did receive good judgements. The evaluation concludes that the programme has had best effect on the individual level, especially within program area I, while the effects are less obvious on organisational level and weakest on structural level.

According to the evaluators, there is an inherent conflict between the programme goals and measures. The fund is supposed to lead to changes on organisational and structural level but are designed for supporting individuals on local level using short term activities. Another critical point, is that there had not been any “learning evaluations”. “Learning evaluations” differ from traditional evaluations in two respects: (1) they are to be carried out consecutively and not just in the end and (2) they are to cover a whole programme, not just single projects. The evaluations undertaken have therefore not been used as a foundation for new decisions. The focus has been on projects and individuals, and not on regions and long term structural effects, according to the final report. But the report admits that the fund has contributed to positive effects like individually adapted learning opportunities, combined learning forms and demarcated competence development.

⁷² [European social fund’s website](#).

⁷³ Swedish EFS council (2014)

⁷⁴ Ramböll (2013)

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

An in-depth study on adult education set out the following six key success factors for adult education: improve adults' disposition to learning; increase employers' investment in learning; improve equality of access for all; deliver learning that meets the needs of employers and learners; deliver high quality adult learning; and co-ordinate an effective lifelong learning policy.⁷⁵ An assessment is provided below on the link between these aims and the new reforms, proposed reforms and investments discussed in previous chapters.

5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning

The new courses discussed in the previous chapter to teach asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants Swedish and knowledge about the society will help to promote their "disposition to learning". The study motivating courses delivered at folk high schools also support the above aim. The new study motivating activities and visiting work for female immigrants that is proposed for 2018 involves attempts to develop learner interest in studies.

Those who have got their real competences validated do not have to take courses in subjects they already know, something that might be motivating.

To strengthen (1) the efforts to get more teachers in vocational subjects to obtain their teacher certificate, (2) the collaboration between schools and the workplaces, (3) the workplace learning and (4) the skills of the guidance counsellors, are all measures explicitly aimed to motivate the students and develop their interest in learning.⁷⁶

5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning

The Government subsidies to different forms of employments for the unemployed has included combinations of education and work. But the subsidies have not been used to the expected extent which has been the case for several years. The author could not find any other suggestions of how to increase the employers' own financial investments in education than the hope that the easier rules around the new "introduction jobs" will increase the employer will and interest.

5.3 Improve equity of access for all

It is expected that the legal right to study at upper secondary level will improve "equality of access for all adults"; this initiative therefore supports the above aim. A legal right to

⁷⁵ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all EU languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

⁷⁶ Eurydice Sweden, September 2017.

study on compulsory level has existed in Sweden for a long time, as well as the right to complete a vocational programme to become qualified for higher education; however, this new legal right is a step further to improving access to formal education at both upper secondary and higher levels.

The “knowledge boost” initiative which offers specialised learning activities for the unemployed is also in line with the above aim, and with the conclusions of the in-depth report cited above by emphasising the need for additional investment to support under-represented groups in adult learning⁷⁷. The educational contracts such as those provided at folk high school courses are also in line with the ambition to provide “introductory learning experiences” to the unemployed.⁷⁸ These contracts are individually planned and include “basic skills” and study techniques to develop these skills further.

The new Swedish “start studying support” discussed above also improves equality of access for all. It is expected that the study start allowance will also improve adults’ disposition to learning.

The overhaul of the admission processes to universities and university colleges proposed by the Government is also likely to widen the recruitment to higher education thus improving “equality of access for all”.

5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant

The extra places to upper secondary and higher vocational education in the “knowledge boost” aims to deliver “learning that meets the needs of employers”.

The measures taken in order to recognise prior learning and validate graduations from other countries is a way to deliver competence that meets the needs of employers without further learning activities for those concerned.

The National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language is pleased with the decision that state subsidies will be possible for vocational upper secondary education combined with education in Swedish as a second language. “That the Government sees support via mother tongue as a resource for effective studies is very good news” (the author’s translation).⁷⁹

Several evaluations show that the funding of non-formal study circles and courses meet the needs of its participants, not least for those who have ended their working life and are retired.⁸⁰ Many of the study circles are arranged on demand from potential participants or are organised by the participants themselves with support from the study associations. The later ones are called “comrade circles”.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 79

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 88

⁷⁹ <http://www.andrasprak.su.se>

⁸⁰ Andersson, and others. (2014).

5.5 Deliver learning that is of high quality

To use the formal education system in initiatives like the “knowledge boost” is a route to guaranteeing “high quality adult learning”. In addition to improving the competence of the teachers in teaching Swedish for immigrants, it also aims to ensure that the adult education delivered is of “high quality”.

5.6 Ensure coherent policy

As mentioned above, the Government has commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to prepare propositions on how to stimulate cooperation between the upper secondary school for the youth and municipal adult education in order to be able to offer coherent vocational education.⁸¹

One aim when Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) became part of municipal adult education was to make it easier to combine Sfi-courses with other courses in municipal adult education.⁸²

The basic year at some universities can be seen as one way to make the transition from upper secondary level to higher education easier for the students.

⁸¹ Government Commission (U2016/0419/GV)

⁸² Government Proposition (2014/15:85).

6.0 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

6.1 Strengths

Key strengths of the Swedish adult education system are that it has a long tradition and a wide range of learning opportunities available to adults.

Another strength is the level of state grants provided, not least for non-formal learning activities for 'popular' adult education which is substantive. The large number of non-formal study circles and folk high school courses make studies accessible for most people with the explicit aim to strengthen democracy and peoples' life conditions. They can thus be seen as an equity to promote equality. Since a large proportion of the participants in the non-formal circles and courses are above 65 years of age, these give possibilities for lifelong learning that is in fact lifelong.

Large adult education initiatives have been launched to address high unemployment rates in Sweden. One such initiative was the "Adult education initiative" which was delivered from 1997-2002 and provided 100,000 extra study places per year. To use the adult education during periods of high unemployment is important to stay stronger when the labour market turns. In 2015, the new "knowledge boost" was launch. Even though the number of places are less than in the "Adult education initiative" it is still a large investment.

OECD refers to Sweden's high scores in PIAAC in the Skills Outlook 2017. Literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, ICT-tasks, self-organisation, management and communication skills are mentioned here.⁸³ This may be a result of Sweden's investments in measures to raise the level in the population of general knowledge over several decades.

6.2 Weaknesses

The balance between focusing on programmes and courses in general subjects and/or vocational subjects within formal municipal adult education has shifted during the years. During the seventies, eighties and nineties general programs were focused with the argument that general skills were needed in all occupations in the knowledge society. A high general education was stressed to make people free to choose how they would live their lives and what occupations they later on would educate themselves for. This could be seen as a way to promote skills for equality and skills for economic growth at the same time. Since then there has been a shift in favour of more narrowly vocational skills to rapidly adapt the work-force to the needs of the present labour market. When the labour market changes, the work-force have to retrain often on their own expenses taking study loans, sometimes with support from the employment office. The author argues that the retraining will take longer time and hence be more expensive, also for the society, if the workers have bad general knowledge from the beginning. The author is therefore hesitant

⁸³ OECD ([2017](#))

to the Swedish prime minister's speech of the launch of High-Level Global Commission on the Future of Work in which lifelong learning is mentioned only in the context of "opportunities for retraining – often more than once – in order to take the jobs that are available on a constantly evolving labour market".⁸⁴ In the light of the massive investment in vocational courses in the 2018 state budget, it sounds as if he favours such courses. In line with other short-term education initiatives in the last 15 years, most of the extra places in the knowledge lift are directed directly to the needs of the labour market. They are still other examples of a shift in the beginning of the century from adult education for the individuals' development of general knowledge to the "work first principal" focusing education for short term labour market needs.⁸⁵ Swedish for immigrants might however be seen as "little of both". However, the number of folk high school places is also increased in the budget and hopefully some of those will be used to extend the general programme.

Another weakness is inherent in the adult education system the way it is now organised in many municipalities. The "Adult education initiative" in 1997-2002, implied that municipalities could choose whether to organise the education themselves or purchase provision from different providers (private educational enterprises as well as providers within the popular adult education). The motive behind letting suppliers other than municipalities compete in a tendering process for the provision of adult learning is that it provides opportunities for different providers to offer education using different methods that suit different groups of students. Having a competitive tendering process is designed to improve the quality of the provision offered in the most economical way. However, this has its disadvantages. One such disadvantage is that the employment conditions for the teachers (and to some extent also for the students) tend to become less secure. Since these tenders are linked to three years contracts, there is no long-term security in the system. This approach is also likely to impact on teachers' work environments, due to the likely shifts in the number of places funded over the years, such as the provision of extra places for different initiatives (e.g. vocational places, places for the unemployed etc.). Some providers are therefore reluctant to provide teachers with permanent positions.

Since teachers in the formal adult education system are employed by different employers, they are offered different opportunities for their in-service training. A Nordic study has shown that many teachers lack qualifications in "adult learning and didactics" even though they have teaching qualification⁸⁶. Further training on topics specific to adult education, such as "language developing teacher methods", would also be required. Above that, adult education teachers do not always get the same in-service education offering as those who teach in schools. One example is an on-going large initiative called "the reading lift" designed to raise teachers' competence in how to use language teaching strategies in all subjects. Adult education teachers are not included in this programme even though they could benefit from these strategies, particularly in the light of the large numbers of newly arrived migrants to Sweden.

⁸⁴ <http://www.government.se/speeches/2017/08/launch-of-high-level-global-commission-on-the-future-of-work/>

⁸⁵ Andersson & Wärvik, 2012.

⁸⁶ Marguard & Sørensen, 2011

The administration of the tendering process can also be quite costly. Providers have to put in a lot of effort into their applications. Statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education⁸⁷ suggest that these administration costs currently constitute a large proportion of their overall total budget.

Some providers, not least the folk high schools and study associations often find that there is a conflict of interest between how they organise education, and the way that municipalities would prefer them to, if they want to compete for municipally run adult education places. The municipalities often ask for very specific requirements from the providers. For example, the provider may have to be able to provide both campus and distance programmes. Providers are becoming more and more similar, which defeats the original ambition of diversifying the educational offer.

A weakness in municipal adult education is the lack of regulations in the Education Act on health care and psychological support for the students.⁸⁸ The number of nurses and medical doctors per 100 students ought to be followed-up, in the same way as the number of teachers and study and vocational counsellors.

In order to lower employment office's costs for unemployment activities, vocational training has been used much more scarcely than before (a decline that started around 1990), in favour of less costly activities. On the other hand, this can also be seen as a strength since part of the state grants to short vocational courses were transferred to the formal adult education.

Prior to 2011, it was possible to study courses already taken in upper secondary school, at the adult education run by municipalities in order to increase your qualification credits. This opportunity was taken away by the former Government. As a result, opportunities for those that finish upper secondary school with poor school-leaving certificates to carry on to university studies are constrained.

Since municipalities finance adult education from their own budget (and there is no minimum number of places), it is not possible to be certain whether these extra places granted by the state within the "knowledge boost" will in turn become extra places in reality. There is a risk that municipalities can decrease the number of places paid for in their own budget, in favour of those "extra" places paid for by the state. A step to prevent this risk is the new rule that the municipalities have to match their request for funding by funding an equal number of places to the ones they are applying for. But, this means that the Government seems to be satisfied to pay half of the budget for municipal adult education. If the state budget proposition for 2018 goes through the parliament the number of extra places will increase quite a lot. But will the number of places in the municipal adult education expand in the same extent?

It is a problem to look this up in the official statistics since the statistics does not account for the number of places, only the number of "students" in municipal adult education,

⁸⁷ www.skolverket.se

⁸⁸ Henning Loeb & Lumsden Wass, 2014.

“students studying full time” and “course participants”. So far, if comparing the numbers of students in municipal adult education in 2014 (before the knowledge boost started) and in 2016, the number has gone up with 5,371 pupils (however it went down between 2014 and 2015 and up again in 2016). At the same time the number of full time students went down with 1,871 students from 2014 to 2016 as well as the number of course participants. The number of students in the education for adults with an intellectual impairment went down with 365 pupils during the same period. The number of students in Swedish for immigrants has however gone up heavily with 25,392 participants between 2014-2016. As the author interprets the statistics, most of the 19,200 extra places in 2016 were used for Swedish for immigrants. This has to be followed up closely.

A risk with the new study start allowance is that the students that benefit from that allowance might drop-out after the first year since they then have to take up study loans. Another risk is that those students that are not unemployed might be less willing to start studying when the possibility to write off the debts is abolished. These risks have to be thoroughly followed up.

The future policies are so far only propositions and intentions from the Government in office. The next election is in September 2018. Not until then do we know which of the initiatives and suggestions that will become a reality.

In OECD’s Skills Outlook 2017, Sweden’s low increase in social outcomes are pointed to with the comment that “income inequalities increased more than the OECD average and the quality of the working environment decreased more than the OECD average over the last decade.⁸⁹ One explanation, according to the author, is that the former conservative alliance Government that were in office between 2006-2014 withdrew the tax reduction for the fee to the unions. This resulted in a massive announce of member resignation from the unions which in turn became weakened. The present social democratic alliance Government has suggested to reintroduce the tax reduction for union fees if they win the next election. Another explanation is that the political parties in the conservative alliance explicitly wanted (and still want) to create employment that is low paid. The author’s opinion is that such changes will have a large impact whatever the outcomes from the adult education system are.

⁸⁹ OECD ([2017](#))

7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

One challenge for the adult learning sector in Sweden is on how to make teachers employment conditions more stable, both for the employees (teachers and other staff) and employers. There are a number of examples of teachers that have had to move around from one education provider to another, as a result of the tendering process discussed in the previous chapter.

Teachers in adult education should have the same opportunities to in-service training as those who teach in schools. Many of the large in-service initiatives in recent years have been directed towards collaborative learning amongst groups of teachers in schools, with the aim of improving their didactical strategies. Teachers in adult education would very much benefit from these initiatives too. Regular teacher training should contain more courses on adult education in the curriculum because many of these teachers will teach adults throughout their careers. Since adult education teachers often are employed by private enterprises, it is these employers who have to ensure that their teachers receive in-service training. However, the state can also offer alternatives.

One of the suggestions in the in-depth report discussed in the previous chapter is the need to develop outreach activities to hard-to-engage groups, which has shown to be effective (European Commission, 2015c, p. 89). The adult learning initiative in 1997-2002 included such activities which were delivered by the unions and study associations. The state budget 2018 includes such activities for newly arrived women but could be used also for other individuals that are hard to reach.

Since students can no longer study courses in adult education that they have already taken in upper secondary school, there is a risk that students will drop out of the adult education courses as well as out of upper secondary school education if they risk getting poor experiences.

In addition, the “knowledge boost” initiative discussed in the previous chapter should be monitored and evaluated in order to assess its impact.

Statistics of the number of nurses, medical doctors and psychological support per student should be easy available and measures might have to be taken to improve this support.

8.0 SUMMARY

Sweden had an employment rate of 81.2% in 2016, and has thereby already reached the EU2020 target of 75% employment. The rate of employment among the low qualified was the same as in 2015. Men tend to have a higher employment rate than women.

The rate of participation in education and training activities in 2016 was 29.6 percentage points; this is by far above the EU target of 15%. The participation rate for women was higher than men in all education and training activities.

The main reforms and measures that have been adopted in Sweden from 2016 onwards are the:

- Legal right to study for an exam at upper secondary level;
- "Knowledge boost" initiative which has provided approximately 42,000 extra study places for different forms of education and training for adults in 2016 and 47,000 extra places for 2017. The proposed number of extra places for 2018 implies a severe increase. 78,780 places are than planned;
- Regional vocational education;
- New start studying support for the unemployed;
- New possibilities for the recognition of prior learning and matching competences with what is needed in the labour market in order to support the integration of immigrants;
- Extra funding to improve teacher competence in Swedish for immigrants;
- Subsidies to employers that offer trainee places and other forms of subsidised employment will be replaced by a new subsidised employment form, introduction jobs;
- Fast tracks and other measures to ease the way into the labour market for newly arrivals.

It is important to follow up the number of places/students in municipal adult education to be sure that the extra places really become extra places. Likewise, the start studying support has to be followed up thoroughly.

It is important that teachers in the formal adult education have stable working environments, with adequate in-service training in order to deliver high quality teaching. The current tendering system used in many municipalities is likely to be counter-productive.

Finally, measures should be taken to ensure that teachers (and employers) in adult education have stable employment conditions so that they can focus on developing the quality of their work. There is also the need for better opportunities for in-service training for adult education teachers in subjects such as "adult learning and didactics", and "language developing teacher methods".

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
Education Act (2010:800)	1 July 2011	Basic regulations for all formal education levels up to upper secondary level. It regulates the rights and duties of the students and their parents/custodians. It also stipulates the education providers' responsibilities.
Ordinance of Adult Education (2011:1108)	3 November 2011	Regulations about eligibility and selection of students, grading scale and upper secondary examination. Regulations about which institutions have the right to grade.
Law (Law 2015:482)	25 June 2015	People with low qualifications will be prioritised in municipal adult education.
Ordinance (2011:326)	1 July 2011	Regulations about eligibility and registration of teachers and preschool teachers (so far not for vocational teachers).
Curriculum for Adult Education programme	1 January 2013 Revised 2017	General goals and guidelines for municipal adult education, adult education for students' with intellectual disabilities and Swedish for immigrants.
Higher Education Act (1992:1434)	17 December 1992	Provisions about the higher education institutions that are accountable to the Government, local authorities or county councils.
Qualifications Ordinance (1993:100)	1993	An appendix to the Higher Education Act that stipulates the degrees that may be awarded in higher education and their requirements.
Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100)	4 February 1993	A supplement to the Higher Education Act.
Higher Vocational Education Act (2009:128)	15 April 2009	Basic regulations for the higher vocational education.
Higher Vocational Education Ordinance (2009:130)	15 April 2009	Supplement to the Higher Vocational Education Act.
Ordinance on Labour Market Training Programmes (2000:634)	1 August 2000	Regulations about the labour market training programmes provided by the Employment Offices.
Act (2016:145) on recognition of	3 March 2016	Regulations about recognition of vocational qualifications for temporary vocational work

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vocational qualifications			for those who are to work in a regulated vocation in Sweden
Ordinance on recognition of vocational qualifications (2016:157)	on of	3 March 2016	Proceedings in errands about recognition of vocational qualifications and authorities' responsibilities and cooperation.
Ordinance on state subsidies to popular adult education (2015:218)	on state popular adult education	16 April 2015	The aims of the state subsidies.

Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions

.	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Swedish strategy for lifelong learning	U2007/3110/SAM					√	√	√	√	The right of everyone to a good education, quality, accessibility-equivalence-coordination are catchwords in the strategy
National strategy for digitalisation of upper secondary school and municipal adult education	Dnr U2015/04666/S						√			The strategy intends to clarify the commission to give the students adequate digital competence. Headmasters and teachers shall have competence to choose and use appropriate digital tools and have sufficient digital tools to use.

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National strategy for validation	SOU (2017:18)			(√)		√				The aim is that significantly more individuals shall have their real competence validated. Validation shall be possible all over the country, in all levels in the education system and directed to wider qualifications in working life
Government Proposition on experimental work with branch schools	Prop. (2016/17:161).				(√)		√			The municipalities can make an agreement with a branch school implying that the school can execute teaching in vocational subjects.
Commission on national strategy for internationalisation of universities and university colleges.	Dir (2017:19)					√				The commission shall suggest goals for a national strategy on how more students can get an international perspective in their studies and how Sweden can be more attractive for foreign students.
State budget proposition 2017	Prop (2016/17:1)			√	(√)	√	√	√	√	Analyses of results from earlier years and suggestions of educational forms that will be state subsidised.
State budget proposition 2018	Prop. (2017/18:1)			√	(√)	√	√	√	√	Analyses of results from earlier years and suggestions of educational forms that will be state subsidised.

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