

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Sweden

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Introduction

The educational and vocational guidance system in Sweden is highly linked to the national educational and employment systems, as the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Employment are the main actors involved. This link is highlighted not only by the practices described below, but also by the institutional and legislative framework in terms of implementation, quality assurance, funding, monitoring, and assessment. Furthermore, the Swedish guidance system is grounded on coordination and collaboration among various bodies and organisations, something that also reflects the Swedish Law referring to access to guidance. Guidance is mainly provided by public actors (schools, PES, universities), while practitioners either receive basic academic education, or in-service training. Additionally, national associations and networks, such as the Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors, the National Union of Teachers and the Swedish Research Network for Career Development and Guidance (KAV), support practitioners' professionalisation and training.

Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

In Sweden, the mission to offer guidance services for schools, higher education institutions and the public employment service is regulated by law (see section [Access to guidance](#)). In general, guidance is part of broader education and employment initiatives and usually not treated as a political area of its own. The two ministries involved are the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Employment.

The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), is the administrative authority for the Swedish public-school system that functions independently but must operate according to the guidelines that the Ministry of Education and Research issues. Due to Sweden's decentralised system, the local municipalities are responsible for providing guidance services throughout the educational system, in accordance with the national goals that have been set (Euroguidance Sweden, 2015). To ensure consistent implementation of relevant school legislation and to effectively support each municipality in designing its own guidance and counselling services, Skolverket has established general guidelines on career education and guidance (*Skolverkets allmänna råd Arbete med studie- och yrkesvägledning*, 2013) (see also section on Quality assurance).

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*), conducts regular supervision of all municipal and independent schools, from pre-school to adult education, also in the area of guidance. Their role is to monitor and scrutinize and provide advice as to what a school needs to ratify on the basis of the requirements of legislation.

Higher education institutions (HEI) have independent decision-making authority within the framework of the regulations and parameters laid down by the Government. The HEI themselves decide how to plan their operations, utilise their resources and organise their activities in guidance and counselling. Two main national agencies are relevant in this area; the Swedish Council for Higher Education (*Universitets- och högskolerådet*, UHR), is tasked with stimulating interest in higher education and promoting widening participation and internationalisation. The agency is also contracted to manage admissions to higher education in Sweden. As a result, guidance counsellors are an important target group for the agency. The second agency is the Swedish Higher Education Authority (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*), which reviews the quality of higher education and monitors how efficiently the higher education institutions operate. In principle, they also have the authority to review guidance services at university level.

Career guidance services for jobseekers are mainly designed at the Swedish Public Employment Service local offices (*Arbetsförmedlingen*), in accordance with the guidelines from their head office. The local PES-office decides on appropriate services/activities for each individual. The Swedish PES has made a strategic choice to engage in more collaboration with actors in education and work with 'job matching through education' (*Arbetsförmedlingens strategi för matchning till jobb genom utbildning*, Af-2016/0030 8007). This is needed because of the low education level among many of the unemployed. The job matching through education initiative includes four strategic areas. The first two include:

- more cooperation at local and regional levels and more cooperation with actors in education;
- more focus on guidance, which is required to provide the right kind of education for the individual.

A forum for national cooperation on educational and vocational guidance (*Forumnätverket för studie- och yrkesvägledning*) was established in 2012 by main actors in the field (public employment service, National Agency for Education and Euroguidance Sweden). It was established as an arena for discussion between Swedish stakeholders in lifelong guidance. Forum members are representatives from national agencies working within education and employment as well as representatives from the national career guidance education, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

(Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL) and The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet). The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) acts as chair of the network. The network deals with common issues, such as:

- a. collecting knowledge and understanding of what is done in the field;
- b. creating a common description of the Swedish guidance system;
- c. acting as a reference group and a recipient of different EU initiatives in lifelong guidance;
- d. discussing and finding concrete solutions for improving the interaction between different education levels and between education and the labour market;
- e. finding forms for quality assurance and evaluation within the guidance field.

At regional level, regional development managers (regionalt utvecklingsansvariga) have been appointed as means of strengthening cooperation between national agencies, private companies and education providers, to strengthen and secure the supply of skills in the region. The regions created skills platforms between 2010-12. During 2013-17 about 40 projects were run to strengthen and further develop the work on skills development. The regions are at different stages in their work, and – in full accordance with the mission – there are different approaches to the platforms, depending on identified needs and challenges in the regions. Some work with developing methods and work practices, for example in relation to arranging work practice for pupils in schools, and some work strategically, for example with developing lifelong guidance.

Many municipal providers of guidance within the schools collaborate with local employment offices and with social partners to provide pupils better guidance about the labour market. Municipalities may also cooperate with universities in regions having universities.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL), SALAR, has since 2012 led an ESF-funded project called "Plug In". It was Sweden's largest collaborative project in order to prevent early school leaving. The project has included eight regions and 70 municipalities. Target groups have been those who have already left school (NEETs), and those who are "at risk" to do so. Tools in this area are to be found on the website www.plugininnovation.se.

Plug in 2.0 ended in autumn 2017 and now SALAR has established a "Mission school completion" project in order to take the next step after Plug in:

There has also been other big ESF projects in this area, where regions have cooperated to prevent drop-out in schools. One example is the project *School for all* that aimed at reducing school dropout for young people in the Västra Götaland region. Through cooperation within the municipal so-called activity responsibility, school, health care, those who organise leisure time activities, pedagogical teams and mentoring and health promotion activities cooperated. This gave an overall view of the young people's needs and conditions, which created opportunities to prevent future school dropout and help young people to return to studies.

Euroguidance Sweden supports international cooperation and collaboration in the guidance field by providing international exchange opportunities for Swedish guidance practitioners. This gives them the chance to cooperate with colleagues in other countries and puts them in a better position to support nationwide efforts in learning mobility. Euroguidance Sweden is hosted by the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

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Access to guidance

Sweden has a long tradition in providing public guidance services, which are grounded upon the principles of universal entitlement and access and that services should be free of charge. Guidance provision in the private sector is rather limited, with the exception of some job agencies and companies specialised in career guidance and coaching.

Guidance in compulsory school, secondary school and adult education

On access to guidance for the compulsory school, secondary school and municipal adult education, the Swedish Education Act (2010: 800), Chapter 2, para. 29, states: '*Pupils in all school types except in preschool and preschool class are to have access to staff with such expertise that their need for guidance before making choices of future educational and professional activities can be satisfied.*' (translated by Euroguidance Sweden).

The main way of introducing career education and guidance in schools, is through the teaching process as well as through various kinds of general and guidance-related information (i.e. information on society, working life, work experience) either individually or in groups. School staff collectively implement career guidance and education, which involves supporting students in exploring, identifying and specifying their interests, so that they can make well informed decisions about different educational and vocational alternatives. Even though there are no obligatory courses in career education, counsellors arrange informative sessions in primary and secondary education, focusing mainly on students' decision-making in selecting different education pathways at transition points (i.e. students in year nine discuss their future plans in the context of selecting an upper secondary school and programme).

According to statistics, each guidance practitioner in the school system has a great number of pupils to support. In school years 7 to 9 in compulsory school there were 498 pupils for each guidance practitioner in 2017/18. In upper secondary school the corresponding figure was 470 pupils. (*Framtidsval – karriärvägledning för individ och samhälle*, SOU 2019: 4)

Academic guidance services at universities and university colleges

According to the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993: 100), students must have access to study counsellors and career guidance. Higher education institutions must ensure that prospective students are able to obtain the information they need about the institution. Information on admission, rules for application, eligibility and selection must be available.

The Swedish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) organise their services' provision either through a central and comprehensive centre or a local departmental service, which is usually connected with a small central office. Smaller universities, however, have only a central guidance unit.

The central guidance services are usually the primary contact point for prospective students who need support in relation to: their educational options, updating on developments in relevant disciplines, available mobility programmes; and in choosing specialisations in the context of labour market needs. There is normally both a drop-in service and a meeting booking system. In addition, local departmental services may employ a counsellor who offers support and information in specific disciplines (usually that of the Department). For instance, information can include job vacancies, summer jobs, internships and companies interested in supporting students to complete their degree projects. Furthermore, to facilitate and ease graduates' transition into the labour market, some Universities have a career centre that can assist individuals in making career choices and/or preparing job applications (Euroguidance Sweden, 2015).

Guidance in non-formal adult education

Folk high schools (*folkhögskola*) provide popular adult education with a variety of course offerings at different levels, and some provide boarding facilities. In terms of school owners or operators, over 100 out of 151 folk high schools are managed by popular movements, NGOs or non-profit bodies, around 40 by country councils and regions, and one of them by a municipality. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*) is a non-profit association responsible for both the governmental funds' allocation to folk high schools and their evaluation. The Information Service of the Swedish Folk High Schools (*Folkhögskolornas serviceorganisation*, FSO) provides general information about these schools and contributes to the development of a common framework for their guidance and counselling services (Euroguidance Sweden, 2015).

Career guidance within the Swedish public employment service

Guidance, included in the core mission of PES (*arbetsförmedlingen*), is regulated in several ordinances:

- regulation on the labour market policy actions (*Förordning, 2000: 628*) om den arbetsmarknadspolitiska verksamheten, para. 8), which states that guidance is one of the ways in which the services should be offered;
- regulation on labour market policy programmes (*Förordning, 2000: 634*) om arbetsmarknadspolitiska program), where guidance is seen as part of preparatory interventions, which refer to individually adapted labour market policy interventions for those who need to prepare specifically for another labour market policy program, education or work;
- regulation on the job guarantee for young people (*Förordning, 2007: 813*) om jobbgarantin för ungdomar), which stipulates that young people should be offered guidance and counselling.

The Swedish PES provide guidance for those seeking a job via three main channels: the PES [website](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se), the customer service, reached both via phone and chat and the local PES offices. The website contains information on different occupations, study and career options, while questions regarding this information can be submitted via customer service. The local PES offices may decide on and suggest the most appropriate service/activity for those interested. However, it must be noted that some services are available only for registered jobseekers.

Additionally, PES staff, namely career counsellors, must review current beneficiary needs and proceed in making well-informed decisions involving complex issues. The input provided by the tailored guidance conversation, which is based on the beneficiary's own resources, is translated into educational and vocational options. Throughout the counselling process, whether provided individually or in groups, motivating individual beneficiaries is a priority. Individual jobseekers also need to become competent at using internet-based tools that are introduced during the process (Euroguidance Sweden, 2015).

The Swedish PES has developed a national strategy for career guidance (*Arbetsförmedlingens nationella strategi för karriärvägledning – vägar till karriärkompetens*, Af-2018/0017 8563), which is an internal guiding document for all employment offices throughout Sweden. In a report, Measures to strengthen the Agency's career guidance (*Åtgärder för att stärka myndighetens karriärvägledning*, AF 2018/0017 7972), the Swedish Employment Service reports on the measures taken by the authority to allow more people to take part in training through the career guidance that is offered by or on behalf of the Agency (further information can be found [here](#)).

Guidance at local municipal guidance centres for adults

In some municipalities, there are local guidance and information centres (*vägledningscentrum*) which are under the responsibility of that particular municipality. Guidance at the local centres is offered through different channels (Euroguidance Sweden, 2015); namely:

- career guidance based on specific individual needs and wishes, to identify possibilities, alternatives, obstacles and how to overcome them;
- general information on educational programmes, application forms, requirements, study allowances;
- self-service, ICT-based resources for career information searches or for interest tests.

On-line services

There are several publicly funded websites (see section [ICT in lifelong guidance](#)) that offer information about education and working life in Sweden. These online services mainly provide information and advice, rather than e-guidance; yet, online career guidance tools are also available, such as the [Choose and plan tool](#) (*Välj och planera*) offered by the national Agency for Education at their [website](#) or the [Interest-guide](#) (*Intresseguide*) offered through the PES [website](#) (see section [ICT in lifelong guidance](#)).

Career fairs

Career fairs are frequently organised by local employers and upper secondary schools, usually aimed at pupils in year nine. Two well-known national career fairs are the [SACO](#) and [Nolia](#) fairs, organised on an annual basis. The aim of these fairs is to provide students with information related to their opportunities upon completion of their studies (Euroguidance Sweden, 2015).

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Quality assurance

Quality assurance in guidance services is included in the overall systems for quality assurance in the education and employment sectors of Sweden.

Schools and adult education

To meet the demand for guidance for students in all school forms, as stated in the Education Act (*Skollag 2010: 800*), the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) issues General guidelines for educational and vocational guidance in schools. The guidelines provide recommendations related to the implementation of educational and vocational guidance in schools, in order to ensure the uniform application of the national legislation. They intend to assure high-quality study and career guidance, and to provide inspiration to those who work with guidance. These guidelines need to be applied in practice, unless the school organiser and the municipality provide evidence that the stipulated demands can be met in another way. The guidelines are accompanied by comments based on verified practice as well as contemporary research in career guidance and assessment, in order to provide clarifications for the advice provided. They also aim to form a basis for planning, organising, implementing and assessing career education in compulsory school, upper secondary school, upper secondary vocational education and adult education (*Skolverkets allmänna råd Arbete med studie- och yrkesvägledning*, 2013).

In addition to providing a definition of what is study and career guidance is, the guidelines are divided into five main sections focusing on: steering and leading guidance work (school owners and school heads); assuring the quality of guidance personnel and the competence needed; teaching and cooperation among schools, in education and working life (school heads, teachers, guidance professionals); impartial and balanced information for students needed for choosing among school programmes and occupations (local municipal authorities, school heads, guidance professionals); and, planning and carrying out the guidance dialogue (school heads and guidance professionals). A key component of the dialogue is that the student's context, background and needs are at the centre and that the student's own individual development plan is used throughout general and vocational upper secondary school and in adult education, as relevant.

The development of support material is part of the National Agency for Education's work to strengthen study and vocational guidance in the schools. The publications *Studie- och yrkesvägledning i Undervisningen* (Study- and career guidance in the teaching process) is one example. It is primarily aimed at teachers in upper secondary school, but also principals, guidance counsellors and other staff in the school.

The National Agency for Education also offers an education package on school-working life, arranged in collaboration with the public employment service and various HEIs. The purpose is to show the benefits of integrating guidance in teaching and see it as a responsibility of the whole school.

The Swedish School Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) may evaluate guidance services provided with a focus on access and quality. Their assessment states in which areas a school is failing to meet national requirements and areas of improvement are discussed at a seminar with those responsible from the municipality and school. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate may make use of penalties and apply pressure so that a principal organiser rectifies its activities. If the principal organiser does not take action or seriously disregards its obligations, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate may decide to impose a conditional fine. In the case of an independent school, its license to operate may be revoked.

Higher education

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*) evaluates the results of courses and programmes in HEIs. In this context, 'results' refer to how well the specific courses and programmes comply with the requirements laid down in the Higher Education Act and the qualification descriptors in the ordinances that are linked to it. The authority will assess to what extent students' achieved learning outcomes correspond to those intended. For instance, the three-year full-time university programme leading to a bachelor's degree in career counselling, offered by Malmö University, Stockholm University and Umeå University, is evaluated in this way.

According to the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), quality work in relation to actions at HEIs should be a common concern of both the university's employees and the students. This means that guidance services offered at HEIs are the subject of the universities' own quality assurance work, though there is no available collected information on if and how this is carried out.

The Higher Education Authority (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*) conducts thematic evaluations covering all universities (for further information please see [here](#)). Themes may include, for example, broadening participation, internationalisation, sustainable development, gender equality, the usefulness of education and preparation for working life. Guidance services have not yet been a theme.

Public employment service (Arbetsförmedlingen)

Quality and follow up of guidance services is included in the PES National strategy for career guidance, (*Arbetsförmedlingens nationella strategi för karriärvägledning – vägar till karriärkompetens*, Af-2018/0017 8563). The strategy states that the authority should have 'a long-term plan for how competence initiatives and method support should be developed and quality assured, as well as clear criteria for the skills required to work with career guidance' (Translation by Euroguidance Sweden).

More information is to be found under section Access to guidance.

The PES head office also promotes professional development of officers with a counselling role, by developing in-service education modules. Guidance methods in focus for quality assurance include the guidance interview and group counselling.

Ethics

The [Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors](#) (Sveriges Vägledarförening, SAGC), a non-profit association "that works to reinforce and develop career guidance as a field of activity and as a profession" (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 2018), has approximately 1,200 guidance practitioners as members working across various sectors (i.e. schools, adult education, higher education and employment offices. SAGC has developed a Declaration of Ethical Principles, which aims to "act as a source of support for those who work with guidance, and those who come into contact with guidance", including in handling ethical dilemmas (ibid.). For instance, according to the Declaration, guidance may be provided in occasions where conflicts between the interests of the individual and those of the society/organisation may emerge, as well as where various needs and obligations require careful consideration.

The Association's professional ethics "are founded on values that can be traced back to the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Resolution on Guidance 9286/04" and the 2007 OECD publication, *Career Guidance – a Handbook for Policy Makers* (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 2018). SAGC has also appointed a [Council of Ethics](#) (Etiska rådet) the main aim of which is to develop and monitor any relevant ethical issues that may arise, as well as to provide support when dilemmas and decisions are especially complicated (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 2020). SAGH is a member organisation of the IAEVG (International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance).

The [National Union of Teachers](#) in Sweden (*Lärarnas Riksförbund*), the trade union and professional association of qualified teachers, as well as study advisors and vocational guidance counsellors (approximately 2,000 out of 92,000 members in total). In addition to serving the needs of teachers, the Union works towards improving the employment conditions for those working in career guidance. It provides a collection of ethical guidelines in order to support guidance professionals. It refers to ethics and values in international instruments such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 28), ILO Convention No.142 on Vocational Guidance, as well as national legislation establishing principles for the public sector, the provisions of the Secrecy Act and official documents for guidance activities (*Lärarnas Riksförbund*, 2019).

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Career management skills

The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) have worked together to formulate the way that career management skills can be used in a Nordic context and to formulate concepts and together analyse how the countries have managed to implement CMS. Based on the work of the group, professor Rie Thomsen of Aarhus University has written the report *A Nordic perspective on career competences and guidance - Career choices and career learning* (2014). The report is a result of a project carried out by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELPGN) in collaboration with the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL).

The report shows that Sweden, through efforts of the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), within the government mission to strengthen study and vocational guidance and through the general guidelines for study and career guidance, has taken steps in developing guidance towards being a structured part of lifelong learning. The report proposes, among other things, continued Nordic cooperation aimed at creating a framework for career competences. Support is provided to share knowledge about how to organise guidance and how to develop CMS in schools.

The concept of career competences is defined in the National Agency's general guidelines for career guidance in schools, as

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follows:

'In order to handle situations where choices occur, the pupils need to develop a number of skills that show structured ways of gathering, analysing, and organising themselves, the educational and vocational information as well as having skills to make and implement decisions and manage transitions and changes in life. In other words, the pupils should be given the opportunity to develop skills to manage choices.'

Various national initiatives for the development of CMS have been taken and CMS has been actively discussed at national level: The National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) has arranged workshops and conferences with a focus on career skills. In 2017, The Swedish Research Network for Career Development and Guidance (*Forskarnätverket Karriärutveckling och vägledning, KAV*) organised an international conference entitled 'Transitions, career learning and career management skills - Multidisciplinary and critical perspectives'. The aim was to discuss how career choices and career development affect the establishment and mobility of individuals on the labour market and how increased career management skills can prevent social marginalisation and exclusion.

In addition, the NVL organised the conference 'Career management skills (CMS) – as a cross-cutting tool for career development from the viewpoint of lifelong guidance and career guidance' in 2017. The conference offered lectures and workshops introducing practical cases on how CMS have been implemented within guidance services for adults, such as in employment services, municipal guidance centres for adults (*väglidningscenter*) and adult education.

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Evidence, monitoring and assessment

In 2018, several initiatives at national level in Sweden are focusing on the effectiveness of guidance services.

A survey (*Vägledning en förutsättning för att lyckas i skolan och livet*, 2017) conducted by the National Union of Teachers (*Lärarnas Riksförbund*), asked 1,500 pupils about the career guidance they received in elementary school. The survey showed that:

- the element of compensatory guidance is very limited in the guidance conversations with school pupils. Guidance should serve a compensatory role in evening out unequal pupil backgrounds and enhancing equal opportunities;
- pupils with foreign-born parents are more dissatisfied with the individual guidance they received than pupils of parents born in Sweden.

A governmental study appointed by the Ministry for Education and Research in 2017, was given the task to improve guidance services in Swedish schools. The rationale was to suggest possible measures to reduce the bias related to gender, social background and disabilities when making educational and vocational choices, analyse how the role of guidance can be strengthened in schools and how digital guidance services can be developed. The proposal *Choices for the future - career guidance for the individual and society (Framtidsval -karrärvägledning för individ och samhälle*, SOU 2019: 4) points out the following needs:

- clarification of what guidance is, that it can be both individual and general, and should be called 'career guidance' (*karriärvägledning*);
- clarification of pupils' access to individual career guidance;
- clear requirements for individual career guidance to be offered on certain occasions;
- strengthening of the general career guidance perspective in various subjects in compulsory school;
- a new compulsory element with allocated time, referred to as *Future choice*, should be introduced in compulsory school, primary school and special school (Translation by Nina Ahlroos, Euroguidance Sweden).

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) conducted a [member survey Mid-life guidance](#) to shed light on areas for improving conditions for career development among adult employees. The survey showed that:

- 25% of the employees surveyed are in need of guidance;
- less than half can access guidance through their employer;
- among those who accessed guidance, 26% of the men and 21% of the women considered it insufficient.

The TCO concluded that universities need to improve marketing their guidance services and work more pro-actively.

Another government investigation instigated by the Ministry of Employment, *Guidance for the future labour market (Vägledning för framtidens arbetsmarknad*, SOU 2017: 82), proposed that the public employment service should:

- explore how a digital platform for lifelong guidance can be set up and operated jointly by several national agencies. The platform should meet individuals' need for information and guidance as well as provide information on funding for studies and validation;
- develop an implementation plan for how the PES guidance services can be strengthened, including information on how PES intends to organise its guidance services and work with quality assurance and follow-up.

The national strategy for career guidance (see section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#)) was partly an

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answer to these demands. In addition, PES conducted a study on a digital platform for lifelong guidance (*Digital platform för livslång vägledning*, Af-2018/0019 2596). The study offered proposals for how a digital platform for lifelong guidance could be set up and operated jointly by several national agencies. The Employment Service coordinated the study and reported it to the Government in December 2018. It was a feasibility study that included a concept proposal for the platform and proposals on how the service should be managed and communicated. The proposal also included calculations on the costs of operation, maintenance and development.

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Career information, ICT in guidance

There are many publicly funded websites offering career information for the Swedish public. These online services mainly provide information on education and work, and minimal professional e-guidance, but there are also some online guidance tools on offer.

Two major government initiatives, (see section [Evidence, monitoring and assessment](#)) were asked how to develop digital guidance services. This resulted in a PES study on a digital platform for lifelong guidance (*Digital platform för livslång vägledning*, Af-2018/0019 2596) that offers proposals for how a digital platform for lifelong guidance can be set up and operated jointly by several national agencies; and, a Government report (*Framtidsval – karriärvägledning för individ och samhälle*, SOU 2019: 4), which concludes that impartial, comprehensive and interactive support for guidance issues should be provided through a national publicly funded web service.

The following are guidance-related public digital services in education and employment.

Swedish National Agency for Education

Through the public website utbildningsinfo.se, users may find information on different kinds of education forms, learning opportunities and learning institutions at all levels. Users may also find the career guidance tool *Choose and plan*, a tool for self-knowledge and development of an action plan; they must first register at *My pages*, before gaining access to the following services:

- CV; help to create a resume;
- planning; plan activities and receive reminders;
- contacts; detail one's network of contacts;
- save search results and exercises performed in the *Choose and plan* tool.

The website also offers a public digital tool on eligibility for further studies; the individual can see which higher education programmes they will become eligible for, by following different preparatory upper secondary programmes. The user may also choose a profession and see which upper secondary education programmes give admission to the university education, and eventually lead to that specific profession. The tool is also used by guidance professionals in schools. Labour market forecasts obtained from the Swedish public employment service are linked to the information on education opportunities and the website also offers information on different professions.

Information on the Swedish education system and upper secondary school programmes is offered in 14 different languages on the website [Swedish school for new arrivals](#). The information is intended for newly arrived students and parents (see section [Guidance for immigrants](#)).

Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet)

On www.studera.nu young people in Sweden who are interested in pursuing higher education, can find inspiration though searching for information on courses and institutions. The site is open for everyone and does not require any registration. Information is available in 12 languages.

The section *Search and compare education choices* allows students to compare university courses and programmes and gain an idea about the labour market possibilities for each learning opportunity (labour market information is obtained from the Swedish PES). The website also provides information for students about studying abroad.

Additionally, there is a link to information on obtaining complementary education in Sweden, targeting international students with a foreign university degree. This information includes learning opportunities for expanding their knowledge of Swedish society or employment information. Another focus area is in broadening participation and how to design the information so that it motivates those from homes with no previous academic tradition to consider higher education studies.

Students can apply for programmes and courses online via www.antagning.se, the central national site for applications to higher education institutions, where applicants will find everything they need to know about the admission process. Applicants may submit their applications online and follow the process until receiving their admissions decision. There is a corresponding site for foreign applicants on Universityadmissions.se.

To make its different expert areas available to guidance professionals, the council has set up a special website, www.uhr.se/syv, for guidance professionals. Namely, information and guidance related to admission regulations, evaluation of foreign qualifications, mobility guidance and studies abroad are provided. These areas are also subject to further training events for Swedish guidance professionals, provided both online and through conferences and presentations. An example is the distance course for guidance counsellors provided by the Swedish Euroguidance Centre (further information can be found [here](#)).

Swedish public employment service (Arbetsförmedlingen)

Information on labour market vacancies is provided through the Swedish public employment service [website](http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se). They offer a tool called "career guidance on your own" (*Karriärvägledning på egen hand*). There, users can map their competences, find out about which jobs that would suit them, take an interest test and access information on possible occupations in different areas. The tool also offers a possibility to plan the next steps within education or work.

The Professional compass (*Yrkeskompassen*), provides information on opportunities in different sectors and provides one, five and ten-year labour market forecasts for different professions. The forecasts are connected to regional and local circumstances and a map function is integrated into the tool through Google maps. Prospects for the future can be found for about 200 different professions.

The PES also provides occupation films on YouTube, which offer insight into different professions and interviews with professionals to inform and inspire in the process of choosing an occupation. By offering VR glasses to young people, they can now, with the help of their own mobile phone, take a virtual reality tour in different professions (further information can be found [here](#)).

Due to a big reorganisation of the Swedish PES in 2019, many of their services, including career guidance, are now being digitalised. *Jobtech* is the arena where the Swedish Employment Service is currently building a common digital structure for the labour market. Within Jobtech, public organizations and private actors such as LinkedIn and Blocket jobb are invited to collaborate for effective matching in the labour market.

Joint national digital service for newly arrived

Informationsverige.se is the county administrative board's common portal for society information for new arrivals. Several Swedish agencies have contributed to bring all the relevant information together in one place. It is offered in several different languages. Referrals are made to all the different information providers and the tools on offer.

Local and regional guidance services

Guidance services in some municipalities offer their clients online guidance through a chat function, as a complement to face-to-face meetings, e-mail and/or phone conversations. Examples of existing regional platforms include:

- VGR: an online platform for career guidance counsellors in Västra Götaland region.
- Municipality of Skåne: <https://www.skane.se> a platform supporting the choice of upper secondary school in Skåne and western Blekinge, where clients can get on-line guidance via chat.
- Malmö city guidance centre provides a possibility to communicate with a guidance counsellor through chat (further information can be found [here](#)).

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Training and qualifications

Training for guidance practitioners in Sweden is offered as undergraduate academic education, in-service training and in the form of various further training opportunities, as outlined below.

Academic education

Three universities - Malmö University, Stockholm University, and Umeå University, offer a bachelor's degree (Bachelor of Arts) in career guidance (180 ECTS) that start each autumn and are delivered both online (distance education) and on campus. The bachelor's degree focuses not only on the theory but also on the practice of career counselling and includes: social sciences; knowledge of society, working life and education; behavioural sciences; knowledge of psychology, education and sociology, as well as three placement periods in schools and other settings. On the postgraduate level, Stockholm University provides a programme in Career Development and Career Counselling (120 ECTS), adopting a more in-depth approach. This involves career construction from an individual and societal perspective and the ability to autonomously manage career-related issues (Euroguidance, 2018).

Umeå University also offers a shorter programme to individuals who already have at least 90 ECTS of relevance to guidance practitioners (Umeå University, n.d.). The programme, 90 ECTS, starts every spring and comprises a 30 ECTS package including Introduction to Study and Career Guidance, Theories and Methods and Social Sciences. After successfully completing the first semester, the students may continue to semesters 5 and 6 of the three-year Study and Career Guidance degree programme through distance education. The University Department of Applied Educational Science also offers a 30-credit first-cycle course in Special Education for Career guidance counsellors, developed in 2007.

In-service training provided by the employer

In-service training may include training for:

- study counsellors at universities: employees with a general academic degree, working as study counsellors participate in training in guidance theory and practice;
- employment officers working with guidance at the public employment offices: employees participate in modules in guidance methods and practices (Euroguidance, 2018).

Further training aimed at guidance practitioners

Further training opportunities may include:

- training provided by the employer: further training and information days for guidance practitioners in municipalities on current topics and developments of relevance to the guidance community;
- competence development provided by national agencies: training, on-line courses, seminars, conferences organised for guidance practitioners about the expert areas of the different stakeholders, and in connection to special missions and projects;
- competence development provided by interest organisations, such as the [National Union of Teachers](#) and the [Swedish Association for Guidance Counsellors](#) (Euroguidance, 2018).

Most guidance professionals working in the public-school system possess a degree in Career counselling (see section [Access to guidance](#), for more information on students' right to career guidance). Guidance staff working at universities do not always have this degree. For the study counsellors working in individual departments, a major in the subject area concerned is considered beneficial. University counsellors often participate in in-service training about theories and methods in study and career counselling. At the employment offices, some officers working with guidance hold a degree in Career counselling, but most have gone through the public employment service's own in-service training.

[Euroguidance Sweden](#) offers further training on the European dimension in guidance for Swedish guidance practitioners, through online courses and presentations at municipality further training events as well as by offering lectures at the HEI undergraduate career guidance education.

Research

Research in the area of career guidance is being carried out by the three Universities mentioned above. The Swedish [Research Network for Career Development and Guidance](#) (KAV), is a national network funded by the Swedish Research Council, *Forte* and the three universities responsible for career guidance education (see section [Training and qualifications](#)). The Network's goal is to promote the exchange of interdisciplinary research in the field, including career development, school to work transitions, and career guidance from primary school to working life. To accomplish this goal, the Network relies on approximately 25 senior and junior researchers from various disciplines, affiliated with different universities. Some of the Network's research areas include:

- career development among young immigrants;
- international counselling;
- interpersonal behaviour in counselling;
- methods and theories in guidance counselling;
- the evaluation and development of guidance and counselling;
- modern technology as a tool in the delivery of counselling services; and
- the counselling interview (Euroguidance, 2018).

KAV participates in a new Nordic network that was created in October 2019, [NoRNet](#), which is designated as a network of "active researchers in the Nordic region". NoRNet declares that its core objectives are to:

- strengthen research collaboration among research environments in the Nordic countries;
- support international collaboration on topics important to the Nordic countries through a biennial international conference and network seminars; and
- disseminate research results, inspire international research development and increase international awareness of Nordic research on transitions, career and guidance.

The network meets annually, either in conjunction with the biennial international research conference organised by NoRNet, which is open to all scholars, or in the context of the research seminar for NoRNet members in alternate years.

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Funding career guidance

Most Swedish guidance services are public and therefore publicly financed; the underlying principle has always been that everyone is entitled to guidance, which should be free of charge. Guidance provision in the private sector is quite limited, but there are private job agencies and companies that specialise in career guidance and coaching. The public funding of guidance services in Sweden is part of the total funding for the education and employment sectors. Usually no budget is specifically designated for guidance-related actions, unless in connection to special initiatives or investments.

A recent example of special investment could be seen in the Swedish Budget bill 2013 (the [Government's proposal](#) for central government budget revenue and expenditure for the fiscal year 2013, Area 16, Education and Research), where it was said that rapid reform of the education system created a need for special competence development activities to improve the quality of guidance. Therefore, the Swedish Government proposed an allocation of SEK 10 million in 2013 (approximately EUR 1.1 million), mainly for training guidance counsellors, and indicated the same amount in 2014 and 2015. This special funding resulted in several different education initiatives aimed at study and career counsellors, teachers and school leaders in both municipal and independent schools. These activities are planned until the end of 2019.

The Government is increasing resources for adult education in the [budget bill for 2020](#). Among other things, the investment in socially important education and skills development for teachers is being strengthened. The investment in Swedish from day one for asylum seekers is extended and the higher vocational education receives funding for a larger selection of individual courses. The investments are part of the budget bill, but although this will surely affect the work of guidance counsellors, nothing in particular is said about guidance in relation to investments in adult education. Although it is tentative, and the details are not elaborated, in relation to the 2020 budget bill, the Government proposes that funds be allocated to review and develop existing digital tools for study and vocational guidance.

When it comes to national web services in education and employment, national funding is provided for system development, maintenance, service delivery, and continuous development. The funding is given to national agencies, depending on tasks and assignments. The agencies set their own priorities on how to use the funding, within the framework of the appropriation documents (government documents that frame the work of the agencies).

Guidance is not always explicitly mentioned in these documents; if it is, it is usually as part of broader initiatives and assignments. Guidance is, therefore, not always the first priority, but usually considered an important part of information delivery in education and employment, in order to provide orientation for users and help individuals in reaching well-informed choices.

The basic idea is that publicly funded digital services are on the user's side: neutral, updated, trustworthy, objective and free from commercials.

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Career guidance for school pupils

See section [Access to guidance](#); namely subsections Guidance in compulsory school, secondary school and adult education and Career fairs.

Guidance for VET participants

See section [Access to guidance](#).

Please see the description of VET system in Sweden [here](#).

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Guidance for higher education students

See section [Access to guidance](#); namely subsection Academic guidance services at universities and university colleges.

Guidance for adult learners

See section [Access to guidance](#); namely subsections Guidance in compulsory school, secondary school and adult education, Guidance in non-formal adult education and Guidance at local municipal guidance centres for adults.

Guidance for the employed

See section [Evidence, monitoring and assessment](#).

Guidance for unemployed adults

See section [Access to guidance](#); namely subsection Career guidance within the Swedish public employment service.

Guidance for early leavers

See section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#).

Guidance for NEET

See section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#).

Guidance for young people at risk

See section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#).

Guidance for immigrants

There have been numerous policy developments in guidance, support and other services for new immigrants. Every sixth person of the current Swedish population was born in another country. What happens after immigration remains a debate

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around the country ([Sweden.se](https://www.sweden.se), official site of Sweden administered by the Swedish Institute).

The Swedish population grew by more than 100,000 in 2014. This was the result of record high immigration (127,000). There were over 80,000 asylum seekers, with the three largest groups being Syrians, Eritreans and people with no state or country (stateless). Only Germany received more asylum seekers than Sweden in 2014, followed by Italy and France. The general decline in asylum applications after 2015 has been partly due to changes in Swedish migration laws. Of the 66,000 asylum seekers who received a decision from the [Swedish Migration Agency](https://www.migrationsverket.se) in 2017, 41% – or around 27,000 – were granted asylum, compared with 67,000 in 2016. A particular challenge in 2015, when immigration peaked, was that 35,000 asylum seekers were ‘unaccompanied minors’, children who arrived in Sweden without parents or other legal guardians. The Swedish Migration Agency granted 6,853 unaccompanied minors asylum in 2016, and 5,429 in 2017 ([Sweden.se](https://www.sweden.se)).

The Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*) is the central administrative authority on asylum, which handles applications from people who want to take up permanent residence in Sweden, visit, seek protection from persecution or get Swedish citizenship. The agency's mission includes providing housing and money for food to asylum seekers, while they wait for a decision in their asylum case. The agency also assigns unaccompanied children to a municipality, which then becomes the child's home for the duration of the asylum process. When a refugee is granted a residence permit in Sweden, the agency gives compensation from the state to the municipalities and county councils. According to the Migration Agency Board, since 2016, the agency has assigned people with residence permits to the municipalities.

Several authorities and organisations are involved in the migration chain, one of the most important being the public employment service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*), which has overall responsibility to coordinate various measures to support newly arrived immigrants' introduction to working life in Sweden and to draw up an 'establishment plan' tailored to each participant. The establishment role has undergone many changes since 2010 when key legislation was passed. In 2018, obligatory education was introduced for certain participants who lack upper secondary education (requiring coordination with folk high schools and municipal adult education), along with greater emphasis on ICT tools and on improved validation services and, through accompanying benefits, access to more categories of education institutions than previously (technical colleges and higher VET institutions) (*Rapport Förbättra genomförandet av etableringsuppdraget, Arbetsförmedlingen*, 2018). Gender equality is emphasised in the approach to services for immigrants and financial support is available.

Some categories of newly arrived adult immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers can apply to participate in an [establishment or introduction programme](#), which can last up to 24 months, and also take into consideration full and part-time participation, special needs, parental leave and other conditions. The aim of the programme, which involves individual establishment plans created together with the PES service provider, is for newly arrived immigrants between the ages of 20 and 64, to learn Swedish, find a job, and become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. It targets immigrants who are actively seeking work or who will study.

The beneficiary and the employment officer together plan what activities suit the applicant best, to be able to learn Swedish and find a job as quickly as possible. Activities include: language training for those without basic skills in Swedish, at [Swedish for Immigrants](#) (SFI); social orientation course; courses at different education levels, to develop or build on existing skills; work-experience placement support when looking for work; and help and guidance for those considering starting their own business.

Employment officers request information from the beneficiaries in order to create a tailored programme and plan; this includes the participant's work experience, educational background, interests and ambitions, in addition to health or social situation and special needs that might affect participation in activities and employment. The officer tries to adapt the activities in the programme so that they are suitable for people with particular needs; this plan is then available on the beneficiaries' smartphone. The PES officer is then responsible for the following up progress and communication, as well as for providing relevant support.

Validation practices, which involve career guidance and are also part of the establishment programme services, are an important tool for immigrants in their pathway to integration. [Branschvalidering](#) for example, is a national-level sectoral validation practice that was initiated by the social partners in the framework of the so-called sectoral committees (bipartite organisations) to address skills shortcomings in several sectors and trades experiencing difficulties. The main purpose of the practice is to ensure that Swedish enterprises have access to a competent workforce with knowledge, skills and competences that meet the needs of the labour market. It aims to provide evidence of the skills that immigrants and refugees from non-European countries have acquired in a non-formal or informal context, to facilitate their access to employment or to further complementary training that will improve their employability. The PES and employers, as well as validation providers and training centres involved provide career guidance and mentoring activities as part of Branschvalidering. The validation procedures are carried out by validation providers, such as vocational schools, training centres or private enterprises (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan, n.d.) (also see the recently published [final report of the National Delegation for Validation 2015-2019](#)).

Newly arrived refugee students in Sweden receive career guidance on the same terms as other students. The quantity and the quality of the services are dependent on local routines, regulations, and career guidance counsellors' recognition of newly arrived migrant students' knowledge and education strategies regarding allocation of resources. Career guidance in lower secondary education is primarily engaged with the task of choosing upper secondary education. For newly arrived students, several alternatives are at hand in the Swedish education system. There is the option to choose so-called national programmes, i.e. regular programmes at upper secondary schools. These are either preparatory or vocationally-oriented programmes. Young refugees who do not meet the standards of eligibility are generally recommended to apply for the language introduction programme (Hertzberg, 2017).

Upper secondary school students are in the majority among children and young people newly arrived in Sweden. According to Sundelin (2015), making informed choices about the future is much more difficult and more complex for those who lack a Swedish education background. In this way, guidance conversations are the students' primary meaningful resource for planning a future in a new context and career guidance is central to the success of the newly arrived, from education to working life.

In the [Swedish Government bill 2020](#), under the heading *Efforts to strengthen the quality of education for newly arrived children and pupils and if necessary for children and students with a mother tongue other than Swedish*, one can read that the National Agency for Education implements efforts to strengthen the principal's ability to offer newly arrived children and students an education of high and equivalent quality. Among others, these efforts include study and vocational guidance of newly arrived.

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Coronavirus Update

All comprehensive schools in Sweden have remained open during the crisis, so here, pupils may have contact with their guidance counsellors. Institutions providing upper secondary, municipal adult education, vocational colleges, higher education were closed and forced to offer careers services remotely. However, the Public health authority's recommendation for distance education are removed on June 15, and students in the upper secondary school will then be able to return to the school premises during the summer and autumn. For municipal adult education, vocational and higher education, some education may still need to be given in part at a distance to reduce the spread of infection. There is a lack of detailed knowledge about how the work situation of guidance counsellors in Swedish schools is affected by the crisis. [Lärarnas Riksförbund](#) (The National Union of Teachers) run a survey to get a better picture, aiming to provide the government with a guidance perspective on how the corona crisis is being handled and what measures may be needed in the long term. All in all, 195 guidance practitioners were contacted and the response rate was almost 70 percent. The survey was conducted from April 21 to May 6, 2020.

The results of this survey have been published in a report called “[Coronaepidemin och studie- och yrkesvägledningen](#)” (The Corona pandemic and study- and career guidance). In short, the findings are the following:

1. during the pandemic, more than half of the guidance services were carried out completely or in part on distance. The guidance practitioners have used various digital tools to guide the pupils;
2. nearly one out of three of the guidance practitioners think that it has not been possible to offer guidance services digitally based on the ordinary planning of these services;
3. more than 70 percent of the guidance practitioners believe that the pupils' prerequisites, when it comes to choice of continuing studies and occupation, have been weakened due to the corona pandemic;
4. the pupils most affected are those who have special needs, students who are newly arrived and those who do not have Swedish as their mother tongue;
5. around 40% of the guidance practitioners say that the corona pandemic has increased their workload;
6. 35% of them feel that they need to work on things that are beyond their usual duties due to the crisis;
7. one in four thinks that their employers have handled the crisis poorly in some parts. For example, there have been no clear directives on how to implement practical training in the work place (prao) for the pupils and they think that the employers have acted incorrectly in relation to the recommendations of the Public Health Authority.

To mitigate the corona virus's impact on work and the economy in Sweden, the government wanted to increase the number of places at universities and colleges. On March 30, among other things, more permanent educational places were announced and the opportunity for more students to read summer courses. There was an increase of 45 percent to this year's summer courses at universities and colleges

There are still many courses open for late registration for the autumn semester. Already on the last application day April 15, an increase of 13 percent could be seen. The number of applicants is increasing at all ages, but the largest percentage increase is seen among those who are 19 years and younger.

Guidance practitioners around the country have been informed about the possibilities to hand in late applications for studies during the autumn through the UHR website and newsletter, to be able to help and inform their clients.

The Swedish Agency for Education offers [support for on-line teaching](#) to the schools. For guidance counsellors in schools they offer guidance on [how to integrate a working life perspective in education](#) when practical training in a work place cannot be arranged.

Many people have become, or are at risk of becoming, unemployed. To alleviate the impact on the labour market, a [crisis package for jobs and transition](#) has been presented.

Both in the education and employment sectors, investments have been made in on-line guidance services. Namely:

1. the [National Agency for Education](#) has recently presented a new website for study guidance and school choices. The number of pupils, the proportion of qualified teachers and the results of national exams are some of the parameters one can use to compare schools on the new [Education Guide](#) website. There is also information about the school system in six different languages. The Education guide is made for parents and students from preschool class to adult education, and for career guidance counsellors and others who work to guide students to the right education and profession.
2. the [Swedish PES](#) has recently relaunched a digital self-service package for career guidance and is now expanding it to be used by external parties (municipalities, trade unions, social security organizations, regions, authorities etc) The package includes digital career guidance services that can be of use for those who are unsure about which profession to choose, those who want to know more about the current labour market, and those who want to start studying or want to move on and take a new step in their career.

Access for all groups of young learners is tied to improvements in practitioner training so that all students can benefit. Guidance counsellor David Spak, who runs a [blog](#) in the paper of the National Union for Teachers, argues that Swedish guidance practitioners lack knowledge on the right tools to reach their clients in the current crisis. Some students have an advantage, for example pupils who have high confidence and parents who have the capacity to help; these students are more likely to receive the guidance needed. Students who are already socially disadvantaged at school will have an even tougher time during the crisis with distance guidance. Spak encourages the many talented guidance practitioners in Sweden to support their colleagues who are less able: guidance counsellors must show a high level of solidarity. Collegial exchange can be facilitated.

The National Agency for Education tries to resolve this lack of knowledge by offering webinars on distance guidance in collaboration with the University West. The webinars were recorded and are available on the [web pages for guidance counsellors](#) at the web site of the National Agency for Education. In addition, other national agencies in Sweden also offer general online resources and training for guidance counsellors. Some of these courses existed prior to the crisis but are seeing registration in courses increase. For example, Euroguidance Sweden at UHR is providing a second online course in 'mobility guidance' for study counsellors at higher education institutions who want to learn more about how to provide support in international mobility. The interest for the course is very high; it appears that guidance professionals are making use of these exceptional times to engage in [further training](#). Euroguidance in Sweden is planning to use this format to offer training also in other areas.

Additional info can be found [here](#).

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