Further information


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Ministry of Education and Research
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Swedish Council for Higher Education
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Education and training in figures

Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes: % of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

Lifelong learning: % of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015

Early leavers from education and training: % of early leavers from education and training, 2015

Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification, and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (%), 2014

This Spotlight is based on input from National Agency for Education (ReferNet Sweden 2016).

NB: 47.4% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2014 based on available country data (27 countries).
Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 22.4.2016.

NB: Low reliability in HR; definition for national target differs in DE, DK, SK and ES.
Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 16.5.2016.

NB: VET: respondents of the survey described their highest qualification as vocational; WBL: studies involved some learning at a workplace (such as apprenticeships, internships, other forms of work-based learning).

Results may differ from those reported in national statistics and international surveys, as the online data collection method used does not always lead to fully representative findings.
Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014.

Spotlight on VET

SWEDEN
VET in Sweden

Swedish vocational education and training (VET) includes programmes and study pathways within upper secondary education and non-academic and academic tertiary education. After compulsory school, students have the right to proceed to upper secondary school to either of the vocational programmes or one of the higher education preparatory programmes. Learners without enough pass grades can follow individualised introductory programmes which give access to upper secondary programmes or the labour market. All upper secondary VET programmes may be offered as school-based or workplace-based apprenticeship pathways. Independent of the specific combination of school-based and apprenticeship learning, successful completion of these VET programmes leads to a vocational diploma. Learners can also acquire an upper secondary vocational diploma in municipal adult education. Non-academic VET mainly consists of one- or two-year higher VET programmes leading to a diploma or advanced diploma in higher vocational education.

An upper secondary diploma is required to access higher vocational education and higher education. Students must also have pass grades in particular modules, such as Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English and mathematics, to meet general entry requirements for higher education. All students attending an upper secondary school vocational programme have the right within its scope, or through programme extensions, to study these required modules. Specific entry requirements may apply to some higher vocational education or higher education programmes.

The starting point for adult education is always an individual's specific needs and situation. Individual pathways are the most common way to gain a qualification in a new field or study the courses required to access higher secondary education or higher education. Workplace-based training (APL) is compulsory in upper secondary school vocational programmes and accounts for at least 15% of the programme. In upper secondary apprenticeship pathways, more than half the learning takes place at a workplace. Non-academic higher vocational programmes combine school-based learning with training at the workplace (LIA) to obtain an advanced diploma in higher vocational education, for example, at least a quarter of the programme must be carried out as LIA.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for vocational education; this includes upper secondary schools, adult education, and higher vocational education for VET. Steering documents regulating upper secondary school programmes and municipal adult education are drawn up by the government and by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Upper secondary schools may be run by municipalities, county councils and the State. Private actors may also be approved as education providers and run independent upper secondary schools. There are no private providers in municipal adult education but municipalities can outsource tasks such as training. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education approves providers and government grants for higher vocational programmes. Providers draft an education plan and programmes should be developed and delivered in cooperation with the world of work. Many other actors provide both initial and continuing VET. Courses and programmes are financed through fees or by companies and organisations, but public grants are also provided. This includes non-formal education offered by private companies and labour market partners, supplementary education, and programmes offered by folk high schools. Several active labour market policy programmes geared to the labour market. The initiatives may include, for example, Swedish language training specific to the vocational field, quicker validation of skills and competences, assessment of foreign qualifications, and supplementary training.

The Swedish year of VET (2016), increasing attractiveness and quality of VET

The proportion of enrolments in VET programmes in upper secondary school has decreased from 25% to 27% in recent years. The government has invested in an information campaign targeting pupils, parents, teachers and study and vocational counselors in compulsory school. Aiming at increasing VET quality and attractiveness, the government together with employer and employee organisations has declared 2016 as the Swedish year of VET.

VET in the Swedish education and training system

Distinctive features of VET

Modularised structure of upper secondary education

Modularisation allows students in upper secondary school to transfer one or more courses to another programme, for example when changing study routes. Municipal adult education at upper secondary level provides the same courses as secondary school, with a few exceptions, allowing students to build on their earlier studies and, for example, gain higher education access.

Validation in adult education

Validation is possible in all municipal adult education courses at upper secondary level. A student who has validated part of a course does not have to attend classes in that part of the course. Validation in adult education, knowledge, skills and competences acquired through training, job experience or otherwise may be validated and recognised for part of a programme. Education providers are responsible for the process.

National programme councils with strong social partner involvement

To strengthen cooperation between education and the world of work, national programme councils include social partners for each of the national vocational programmes in upper secondary schools. Representatives from the public employment service and social partners are members of the Labour Market Council, a body linked to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The councils are a permanent platform for dialogue on qualifications, employment, including vocational training and the labour market. The initiatives may include, for example, the Swedish language training specific to the vocational field, quicker validation of skills and competences, assessment of foreign qualifications, and supplementary training.

Challenges and policy responses

Sweden must strengthen efforts to ease the transition from secondary school to higher education. It is particularly important to provide support for those leaving school in lower quality schools. The government has focused on strengthening the link between education and the world of work, both in upper secondary and tertiary VET. An apprenticeship centre has been established to promote and increase provision of apprenticeships. The government has also adopted regulations on a professional introductory period of employment, including vocational training and the possibility of having an apprenticeship contract when in upper secondary school. Education contracts, agreements between young people, the employment services and the home municipality, were introduced in 2016. These encourage unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 to start or return to studies to acquire an upper secondary qualification. Studies within the contract can be combined with work or practical work experience.

Investments for quicker introduction of newly arrived immigrants

Many newly arrived immigrants have training and experience in occupations in which there is a shortage of trained and experienced labour in Sweden. To ease the time from arrival to first job entry, the government has started consultations with the social partners, the Swedish public employment service and other relevant government agencies on measures for creating fast tracks into the labour market. The initiatives may include, for example, Swedish language training specific to the vocational field, quicker validation of skills and competences, assessment of foreign qualifications, and supplementary training.

The Swedish year of VET (2016), increasing attractiveness and quality of VET

The proportion of enrolments in VET programmes in upper secondary school has decreased from 35% to 2007 to 27% in recent years. The government has invested in an information campaign targeting pupils, parents, teachers and study and vocational counselors in compulsory school. Aiming at increasing VET quality and attractiveness, the government together with employer and employee organisations has declared 2016 as the Swedish year of VET.
Swedish vocational education and training (VET) includes programmes and study pathways within upper secondary education and non-academic and academic tertiary education. After compulsory school, students have the right to proceed to upper secondary school to either of the vocational programmes or one of the higher education preparatory programmes. Learners without enough pass grades can follow individualised introductory programmes which give access to upper secondary programmes or the labour market. All upper secondary VET programmes may be offered as school-based or as apprenticeship pathways. Independent of the specific combination of school-based and apprenticeship learning, successful completion of these VET programmes leads to a vocational diploma. Learners can also acquire an upper secondary vocational diploma in municipal adult education. Non-academic tertiary VET mainly consists of one- or two-year higher VET programmes leading to a diploma or advanced diploma in higher vocational education.

An upper secondary diploma is required to access higher vocational education and higher education. Students must also have pass grades in particular modules, such as Swedish/Swedish diploma in higher vocational education. This includes non-formal education arranged by organisations, but public grants are also provided. VET in Sweden VET in the Swedish education and training system Distinctive features of VET

- **TERTIARY LEVEL**
  - Bachelor programs, 3 years
  - Licentiate programmes, 2 years
  - Doctoral education

- **ADULT LEARNING/CONTINUING TRAINING**
  - Apprenticeship learning, either at the workplace or a VET institution
  - Work-based training, either at the workplace or a VET institution

**Modularised structure of upper secondary education**

Modularised programmes allow students in upper secondary school to transfer one or more courses to another programme, for example, when changing study routes. Municipal adult education at upper secondary level provides the same courses as secondary school, with a few exceptions, allowing students to build on their earlier studies and, for example, gain higher education access.

**Validation in adult education**

Validation is possible in all municipal adult education courses at upper secondary level. A student who has validated part of a course does not have to attend classes in that part of the course. Validation is based on formal and informal education, knowledge, skills and competences acquired through training, job experience or otherwise may be validated and recognised for part of a programme. Education providers are responsible for the process.

**National programmes with strong social partner involvement**

To strengthen cooperation between education and the world of work, national programmes include social partners for each of the national vocational programmes in upper secondary schools. Representatives from the public employment service and social partners are members of the Labour Market Council, a body linked to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The council acts as a platform for dialogue on quality assurance and regulation on a professional introductory period of employment, including vocational training and the possibility of having an apprenticeship contract when in upper secondary education. Education contracts, agreements between young people, the employment services and the home municipality, were introduced in 2015. These encourage unemployed young people aged 20 to 24 to start or return to studies to acquire an upper secondary qualification. Studies within the contract can be combined with work or practical work experience.

**Investments for quicker introduction of newly arrived immigrants**

Many newly arrived immigrants have training and experience in occupations in which there is a shortage of trained and experienced labour in Sweden. To this end, in 2007, the government set up a committee to find new interest areas with existing skill bases or with potential for skill development. In 2010, a new national vocational programme for students aged 15-24 was introduced for immigrants with work or practical work experience.

**Policy priorities**

- **Equity of access**
  - Education and training for all young people and employees, regardless of background, to support integration and social cohesion
  - Strengthening the attractiveness of VET programmes for students, including those with special educational needs
  - Encouraging a greater number of young people and adults to pursue a career in VET
  - Strengthening the attractiveness and quality of VET

**Challenges and policy responses**

Sweden must strengthen efforts to ease the transition from education to the labour market. It is particularly important to provide support for those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The government has focused on strengthening the link between education and the world of work, both in upper secondary and tertiary VET. An apprenticeship centre has been established to promote and increase provision of apprenticeships. The government has also adopted regulations on a professional introductory period of employment, including vocational training and the possibility of having an apprenticeship contract when in upper secondary education. Education contracts, agreements between young people, the employment services and the home municipality, were introduced in 2015. These encourage unemployed young people aged 20 to 24 to start or return to studies to acquire an upper secondary qualification. Studies within the contract can be combined with work or practical work experience.
The starting point for adult education is always the workplace (LIA); to obtain an advanced diploma in higher vocational education, for example, at least a quarter of the programme must be carried out as LIA. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for most education; this includes upper secondary schools, adult education, and vocational education for VET. Sweden has a strong tradition of lifelong learning and a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for participation in education. The education system is based on a tiered structure with a clear focus on the needs of the learner. The system is designed to ensure that all learners have access to quality education and training, and that they are supported to achieve their full potential. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (VET) is responsible for setting national standards and ensuring that the quality of education and training is maintained. The government and by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational education approves providers and government grants for higher vocational programmes. Providers draft an education plan and programmes should be developed and delivered in cooperation with the world of work.

Many other providers also offer both initial and continuing VET. Courses and programmes are financed through fees or by companies and organisations, but public grants are also provided. This includes non-formal education offered by private companies and labour market partners, supplementary education, and programmes offered by folk high schools. Several active labour market policy programmes are geared to the Swedish National vocational programmes in upper secondary schooling. Representatives from the public employment service and social partners are members of the Labour Market Council, a body linked to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The council is responsible for the process. National programme councils with strong social partner involvement

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Many newly arrived immigrants have training and experience in occupations in which there is a shortage of trained and experienced labour. The government has started consultations with the social partners, the Swedish public employment service and other relevant government agencies on measures for creating ‘fast tracks’ into the labour market. The initiatives include, for example, Swedish language training specifically for the vocational field, quicker validation of skills and competences, assessment of foreign qualifications, and supplementary training.

The Swedish year of VET (2016), increasing attractiveness and quality of VET

The proportion of entrants to VET programmes in upper secondary school has decreased from 35% in 2007 to 28% in 2015. The government has invested in an information campaign targeting pupils, parents, teachers and study and vocational counselors in compulsory education. Among increasing VET quality and attractiveness, the government together with employers and employees has declared 2016 as the Swedish year of VET.

Sweden must strengthen efforts to ease the transition from education to employment. It is particularly important to provide support for those who leave school before the age of 18. The government has focused on strengthening the link between education and the world of work, within both upper secondary and tertiary VET. An apprenticeship centre has been established to promote and increase provision of apprenticeships. The government has also adopted regulations on a professional introductory period of employment, including vocational training and the possibility of having an apprenticeship contract when in upper secondary school. Education contracts, agreements between young people, the employment services and the home municipality, were introduced in 2015; these encourage unemployed young people aged 20 to 24 to start or return to studies to acquire an upper secondary qualification. Studies within the contract can be combined with work or practical work experience.

Investments for quicker introduction of newly arrived immigrants

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The Swedish year of VET (2016), increasing attractiveness and quality of VET
SWEDEN

Education and training in figures

Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

Life-long learning
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015

Early leavers from education and training
% of early leavers from education and training, 2015

Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification, and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (% 2014)

Further information


This Spotlight is based on input from National Agency for Education (ReferNet Sweden 2016).

**Education and training in figures**

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**Lifelong learning**

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**Early leavers from education and training**

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**Share of employees**

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Source: National Agency for Education (ReferNet Sweden 2016).
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