



Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

SWEDEN



National VET policy developments 2023-24

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1. Introduction

This VET policy brief ⁽¹⁾ produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training policy developments in Sweden between 2020 and the end of 2024 ⁽²⁾. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics, as well as the national priorities until 2030 identified in Sweden's national implementation plan. This snapshot informs Cedefop monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the [VET Recommendation](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#) and contributes to shaping new EU priorities in VET as of 2026 and informing the mid-term evaluation of the Council Recommendation on VET.

2. National VET context and challenges

2.1 National VET context

The Swedish government oversees the education system, setting policy frameworks for all levels. While national goals are centrally defined, their execution is decentralised. Vocational education and training (VET) is overseen by both the government and parliament. The [Education Act](#) of 2010 (Sveriges Riksdag, 2010), passed by parliament, guarantees learners' right to education and encompasses all education forms. The National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)) manages the public school system, while the [Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#) ensures higher VET programmes meet labour market demands. Social partners are actively involved in education, ensuring a close connection to the labour market. The [Swedish Schools Inspectorate](#) ensures equitable education, focusing on quality and safety, and monitors compliance with education law.

The [Swedish VET system](#) includes programmes at upper secondary-, post-secondary and higher levels. Upper secondary programmes lasting three years are offered in the form of apprenticeship or as school-based programmes. They focus on different occupational fields and are designed to meet the skills demand from the labour market. Work-based learning is compulsory in school-based VET programmes. Upper secondary apprenticeship requires tripartite individual education contracts between the learner, the employer and the school. Graduates receive an upper secondary diploma giving them the possibility to access higher education. Municipal adult education at upper secondary level aims at providing adults with knowledge and skills at a level corresponding to that provided within upper secondary education, thereby assuring the availability of relevant competences at regional and national level. The participation rate of people aged 25 to 64 in lifelong learning, in the last four weeks before the survey, was in 2020 with 28.6% the highest rate among the EU-27 countries and far above the EU target of 15% for 2020 (Cedefop, 2023).

⁽¹⁾ See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Sweden](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

⁽²⁾ For some developments, the information available until mid-2025 has been included.

Since the early 21 century, many asylum seekers have come to Sweden, with a peak in 2016 ⁽³⁾. Targeted policy measures had been taken to facilitate their integration into the Swedish labour market, such as fast-track labour market training for newly arrived immigrants. In 2022, 20% of the Swedish population were born outside Sweden ⁽⁴⁾.

Sweden's aspirations for carbon neutrality has consistently ranked as the top-performing EU Member State since 2017 (European Commission, 2022a) and by 2045, Sweden's [climate policy framework from 2017](#) envisages net zero greenhouse gas emissions. The country continues to lead in digital innovation, as highlighted by the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (European Commission, 2022a). The [Swedish digitalisation strategy of 2017](#) guides the country's work to meet its goals and to become one of the world's leaders in the digital transformation. This strategy is complemented by others, such the [National approach to AI](#) (2019) and the data strategy (2021) (Cedefop, 2023).

2.2 Challenges

The main challenges Sweden has faced between 2020 and 2024 are linked to skills mismatch and labour shortages, educational disparities and teacher shortages.

Municipalities and private education providers decide themselves which programmes they want to offer. While labour market needs are somewhat taken into account, the availability of education is primarily based on learner's demand. Efforts have been made to better align educational offerings with future skill requirements. Although many reforms have been approved, the decentralised nature of the Swedish education system means that, the main responsibility for carrying out these changes rests with local authorities. (Cedefop, 2023).

Labour shortages existed, mainly in sectors such as education, healthcare, social work, industry and construction, as well as information and communication technology (ICT) (European Commission, 2022a). Despite Sweden having one of the EU's highest percentages of employed ICT specialists, the country continued to face significant shortages in this field (European Commission, 2022b). Crucially, in 2022 labour shortage were identified in 16 occupations requiring specific skills essential for the green transition (European Commission, 2023a).

Significant disparities existed between socio-economic groups in both educational outcomes and employment opportunities. Educational disparities existed e.g. between learners born in Sweden and in the EU and those born outside the EU, as well as between those born in cities and rural areas (European Commission, 2023). The unemployment rate of foreign-born individuals was more than four times higher than that of the native-born individuals (Statistics Sweden, 2021; European Commission, 2024a).

The Swedish education system suffered from teacher shortages, which were particularly high in VET. This shortage is expected to worsen in the near future and it was estimated that, by 2033, approximately 12 500 full-time VET teachers will be required. To

⁽³⁾ Eurostat. [TPS00176](#).

⁽⁴⁾ Statista. [Population in Sweden from 2010 to 2023, by birthplace](#).

meet this demand, enrolment in VET teacher programmes should double in the next decade (European Commission, 2024a).

3. National VET policy priorities

Sweden's national implementation plan (NIP) was prepared in response to the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration. Developments in the priorities indicated in this NIP are financially supported by the Sweden's recovery and resilience plan (2022), which encompasses investments in education to facilitate upskilling and reskilling, with a particular emphasis on advancing the green and digital transition. Sweden's NIP focuses on four target areas:

- (a) strengthen quality and attractiveness of VET: to attract more learners to VET, Sweden plans to develop VET pathways and increase awareness of career opportunities, especially those linked to the green transition. The quality of VET will be enhanced through highly skilled teachers, expanded work-based learning opportunities, and rigorous quality inspections;
- (b) enhance alignment of VET to labour market needs: to address labour market mismatches and improve skills provision, customised training and strong partnerships with employers are needed. Meeting the demand for secondary VET graduates is vital, alongside with providing continuous professional development (CPD) to adapt to labour market changes. Comprehensive skills intelligence and close collaboration between VET institutions and industry stakeholders are crucial for aligning skills with labour market demands;
- (c) develop additional educational pathways to improve labour market integration: this includes strategies such as vocational packages for youth and vocational orientations in higher education preparatory programmes. Improving vocational education for adults and integrating Swedish language training to enhance immigrants' access to the job market are also important;
- (d) increase accessibility and flexibility for VET: to meet present and future skills demands better in the labour market, favourable conditions need to be ensured as well as financial support for individuals to pursue lifelong learning. Flexible learning options, guidance, validation opportunities, and supplementary education should also be available to support continuous skills development.

4. Main policy developments and progress 2020-24

4.1 Strengthen quality and attractiveness of VET

Several measures have been introduced since 2020 to strengthen the quality and attractiveness of VET.

The upper secondary VET networks was launched as a trial initiative in Norrbotten in November 2022 and gradually expanded to 10 regions in 2024. Its purpose is to facilitate discussions among stakeholders of upper secondary VET across all types of schools,

focussing on regional achievements, challenges and solutions in VET, and reaching consensus on VET related issues. Over time, these networks aim to enhance the quality, equity and overall attractiveness of VET (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2023).

Since 2023, all [VET programmes automatically incorporate 'optional' courses](#) ⁽⁵⁾ in Swedish and English which, after completion, enable individuals to access higher education. In order to uphold the standard of vocational preparation, VET programmes have been expanded in terms of both credits and teaching time. Learners, however, still have the possibility to opt out of these additional courses. This change was implemented through an amendment to the Education Act by the Swedish Parliament in April 2022 (ReferNet Sweden, & Cedefop, 2022a).

The National Agency for Education was commissioned in 2020 to develop [digital tools for study and career guidance](#), aiming to strengthen guidance in the school system and enable more learners to make informed choices. In 2024, the agency introduced twelve digital tools for study and career guidance, available on the [Utbildningsguiden](#) website. These tools are targeting learners choosing primary or secondary schools, guardians searching for preschools or schools for their children, adults seeking education or career opportunities, and study and career counsellors.

The professional development of VET teachers and principals was addressed in [bill 2022/23:54 on National professional programme for principals, teachers and preschool teachers](#), which was approved in May 2023 by the parliament and contains proposals to the amendment to the [Education Act](#). It suggests that the national professional development programme should consist of national standards for professional development for principals, teachers and preschool teachers, and of a national qualification system for certified teachers and certified preschool teachers. The aim is to enhance teaching quality, strengthen the professions and increase their attractiveness. The National Agency for Education will be responsible for the professional programme, which is supposed to enter into force on 1 September 2025 (Regeringskansliet, 2025).

4.2 Strengthen alignment of VET to the labour market needs

Since 2020, Sweden has taken several measures to strengthen the alignment of VET to rapid changes in labour market needs.

At the end of 2023, the Swedish government approved a [substantial budget increase for regional initial VET for adults and for higher vocational education](#) for 2024 (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2024a). The proposed 2024 budget allocates approximately EUR 119.34 million to strengthen regional vocational adult education, representing a 47% increase from the 2023 budget. Around EUR 33.73 million has been designated for higher vocational education, marking a 6% increase from 2023. These funds will create approximately 16 500 new full-year places for regional initial VET for adults, a 25% increase from 2023, and an estimated 3 000 new full-year places for higher vocational training in 2024 (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2024b). The related data for 2024, were not available at the time when writing this report.

⁽⁵⁾ 'Optional', meaning that learners who do not want to follow these courses can opt out.

In March 2022, the Government adopted the bill on [Dimensioning of upper secondary education for better skills supply](#) (2021/22:159). The bill states, that the needs of the [labour market](#) must be considered when public and independent education providers determine the programme offer and number of study places. Moreover, municipalities are required to collaborate and reach agreement with at least two other municipalities regarding the offer of upper secondary education and municipal adult education programmes they will provide to their citizens. The necessary amendments to the [Education Act](#) were done in 2023 and are supposed to enter into force on 1 July 2025 as indicated in the Act (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2024c; ReferNet Sweden, & Cedefop, 2025).

The Swedish government has launched a pilot project for a [new vocational education model at upper secondary level](#), designed to strengthen adult education's alignment with labour market needs. This initiative, called National Vocational Training, is modelled after higher vocational education and targets adults seeking to enhance their skills or change careers. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has approved 38 training programmes with a strong emphasis on workplace-based learning. These programmes provide 840 study places, focussing on high-demand sectors such as construction, energy, transport, industrial technology, and agriculture (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2024b). The pilot phase, running from autumn 2024-26, was extended until 2028 (MYh, 2025).

The Swedish government is exploring ways to [share data digitally between education and labour market stakeholders](#) to improve lifelong learning in line with labour market demands. This initiative prioritises secure data sharing while respecting privacy laws. Central State agencies have been tasked with developing an unified data infrastructure for lifelong learning and skill provision (National implementation plan: Sweden, 2023). A final [report on the mission to develop a coherent data infrastructure for skills provision and lifelong learning](#) was published in January 2024.

A new draft bill, set to come into effect in March 2026, aims to [enhance the exchange of information about job-seekers in need of training between the Public Employment Service and municipalities](#) that provide adult education. Improved coordination could facilitate the reintegration of unemployed individuals into the labour market, particularly for vulnerable groups such as people born outside the EU. Additionally, establishing single contact points to guide job-seekers and oversee their progress could further streamline the process (European Commission, 2025). In 2023, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education prioritised programmes in areas such as digitalisation, green transition, energy efficiency, and healthcare sectors. A notable development in 2023 was the emergence of courses focusing on artificial intelligence (AI), which accounted for around 10% of the approved higher vocational education programmes (Kjelsson, Nilsson & Quas, 2024). Moreover, AI is being introduced as a new subject in upper-secondary schools and municipal adult education since the academic year 2024/25 and since autumn 2024 onwards AI is available as an add-on for learners in other programmes (Skolverket, 2025a).

Micro and small businesses in rural areas received extra support to better understand their needs and digitisation challenges. Between 2022-24, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth granted EUR 1.9 million for funding 21 projects aimed at helping micro and small businesses in rural areas to better understand their digitisation challenges. Furthermore, around 1 300 micro companies located in rural areas could participate in coaching and advising to further develop their higher digital maturity (European Commission, 2024c).

In February 2025, the Swedish government officially launched its [national STEM \(Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics\) strategy](#), which spans the entire education system from preschool to postgraduate research. Key developments include the establishment of a STEM delegation, concrete enrolment targets for STEM programmes, reforms to higher education credit transfers, and initiatives to bridge gender gaps in technical fields (Government Offices of Sweden, 2025). The strategy responds to Sweden's need for more people with solid knowledge in STEM to solve the skills shortage that exists in several areas and to continue working to ensure that Sweden continues to be an innovative technology nation at the forefront.

4.3 Additional educational pathways to improve labour market integration

Since 2020, several measures have been taken to provide additional pathways in the education system, offering increased opportunities to individuals to establish themselves on the labour market.

Education for [adults with learning disabilities became integrated in municipal adult education from July 2020](#) (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025). In the same year, the Government tasked the National Agency for Education to design [vocational training packages tailored for adults with learning disabilities](#), aimed at facilitating their entry into the workforce. Developed in collaboration with industry partners, these packages consist of modular courses that can be gradually accumulated to achieve full qualifications. To boost flexibility, a range of general courses were introduced in these packages, adaptable to the specific needs of students or employers. Nine vocational packages covering fields such as gardening and dog care were presented to the government in November 2021 (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2022c). [Amendments to the Education Act and Adult Education Ordinance in 2022](#) gave the National Agency for Education the responsibility to oversee the implementation of these packages nationwide, [starting from July 2025](#) (Skolverket, 2025b). Moreover, starting from autumn 2025, new curricula and programme structures will come into force for learners with learning disabilities. The curricula will be more closely aligned with the mainstream upper secondary school curricula, and the subjects have been updated to better match labour market needs; more elective options will be available to increase employability. New subjects include cleaning, service and hospitality, recycling and reuse, and practical marketing and sales (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2025).

In 2021, the Government initiated a national inquiry to recommend measures aimed at increasing the number of [young people achieving their upper secondary education](#)

objectives, whether in upper secondary school or municipal adult education (National implementation plan: Sweden, 2023). In June 2022, the inquiry presented its [proposal to relevant authorities for consultation](#), however no significant further development was reported on this since then. In November 2024, another inquiry was launched asking to submit proposals that help to secure the supply of skills and that more pupils acquire the knowledge they need to be able to support themselves.

The 2021 memorandum proposed to grant the possibility to [pilot vocational orientations within higher education preparatory programmes](#) (general upper secondary programmes). The aim of this measure is to increase the attractiveness of vocational training and to offer general education learners seeking immediate employment after graduation the skills and knowledge demanded by employers. The memorandum has been in a referral round and the proposals are still under evaluation (National implementation plan: Sweden, 2023). No further developments were reported on this until 2024.

In spring 2021, the Government commissioned the county administrative boards to allocate funds to projects which provide [training and education for newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers with experience of working in health care or foreign healthcare education](#). In February 2022, the Swedish Parliament approved the bill [Compulsory and coherent education for newly arrived immigrants](#) (prop. 2021/22:51). Effective from August 2022, municipalities are obliged to offer newly arrived immigrants with limited prior education access to a comprehensive educational programme within Municipal Adult Education, known as the [establishment programme](#) ⁽⁶⁾. Learners should not be employed during their participation in the programme; moreover, they must engage in Swedish language learning if they do not have basic Swedish language skills, as well as in civic orientation, and basic or upper secondary education. The aim is to integrate participants in the labour market and if needed to do further studies, with a minimum of 23 hours per week, following a curriculum set by the municipality (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2024, the Swedish government tasked the National Agency for Education with developing proposals for [vocational courses at lower secondary level](#) (EQF 2) and for Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) within municipal adult education. These courses are intended to provide essential vocational skills to learners who have limited proficiency in Swedish and lack the qualifications or prior knowledge required for upper secondary studies. The courses will offer partial qualifications that can contribute towards a full lower secondary qualification, thereby facilitating access to upper secondary programmes (EQF level 4). They are designed to address the skill needs of various industries and to prepare learners for employment in sectors such as health and social care, service, and horticulture. The National Agency for Education submitted its initial course proposals to the government in November 2024, with the final report due by 15 December 2025 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

⁽⁶⁾ This is the name as used in the national implementation plan. However, on the related website provided in Swedish, it is referred to as 'introduction programme'.

4.4 VET accessibility and flexibility for labour market skill demands

Since 2020, several measures have been launched to increase accessibility and flexibility to support individuals in pursuing learning and continuous skills development.

As a pathway to a qualification, validation should have the same high level of legitimacy as formal education. In response to this, the government bill [Validation: for skills supply and lifelong learning \(2021/22:123\)](#) presents proposals aimed at ensuring that validation in municipal adult education meets labour market needs better. In June 2022, the [Parliament approved the relevant Government proposal](#) for amendments to laws concerning schools and lifelong learning; the related [validation ordinance \(2022:1549\)](#) was published at the end of 2022. The [legislative amendments concerning the national strategy for validation](#) entered into force in January 2023. Municipalities are now required to provide [individuals with the opportunity to have their skills assessed or tested](#) before enrolling in municipal adult education. This initiative aims to improve opportunities for learners to pursue complementary education and to ensure that significantly more individuals can have their knowledge and skills validated throughout the country at all levels of the education system.

In March 2022, the Government unveiled the [Flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market](#) bill, encompassing reforms to labour laws and the introduction of a support system for reskilling and upskilling. In addition, a new funding scheme for re- and upskilling was introduced in October 2022, under which employees can [pursue studies for up to one year while receiving at least 80% of their salary](#). Financial support is also available for self-employed individuals, with a maximum of 44 weeks of full-time study; longer if they study part-time. Applicants must have been employed for at least 8 years and worked for at least 12 months during the last 2 years to qualify. The chosen study programme must improve the individual's job market prospects, in line with the prevailing labour market demands. The funding to this reform has increased with approximately 8% from 2023 to 2024 (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025; Kjelsson, Nilsson & Quas, 2024).

In 2020, the [HVE-flex pilot project](#) was launched, with the goal of speeding up the acquisition of higher vocational education (HVE) qualifications at EQF levels 5 and 6 for individuals with substantial professional experience in a specific vocational field. Through validation, the individual's previous learning is recognised, requiring them only to complete additional studies to obtain the full qualification. On average, participants were exempted from 60% of the programme's learning outcomes due to validation. In autumn 2022, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education [institutionalised these HVE-flex programmes](#) as a permanent feature of programmes offered at the university of applied science and undertook efforts to digitalise and integrate them into the system (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025).

In 2020, a new initiative called [HVE-courses](#) was introduced. These courses, which are shorter than HVE programmes, are offered in flexible delivery methods (on-campus, or remotely) and study schedules (full-time or part-time). Their objective is to reskill and upskill professionals without granting full qualifications, while also improving job prospects for groups such as migrants and refugees. Targeting primarily professionals seeking skill renewal, advancement, or career changes, these adaptable courses evolve according to

labour market demands, with a focus on fields like digitalisation, automation, and green technology. A [2022 survey](#) revealed high learner satisfaction with this innovative learning model (ReferNet Sweden & Cedefop, 2022b).

The national inquiry 'Higher VET of the Future – Stable, Efficient and Sustainable' was launched to strengthen Sweden's higher vocational education system. Its goals were to propose how higher VET can support green transition skills and enable greater progression through more advanced programmes (National implementation plan: Sweden, 2023). The inquiry reported its proposals in June 2023 and it is still with the government.

5. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

Overall Sweden is performing very well concerning the set EU targets and mostly exceeds the EU-27 average performance. The country is a frontrunner in lifelong learning; in 2022 about 66.5% of adults (25-64 years old) had a learning experience in the last 12 months, which was the highest participation rate among the EU-27 member states and even already above the EU target of 60% for 2030. The labour market prospects of IVET learners are very good. In 2024, 84.9% of recent IVET graduates (aged 20-34) were employed, which was above the EU average of 80.0%. The majority (64.6%) of recent IVET graduates aged 20-34 had work experience during their VET programme in 2023, which was slightly below the EU-27 average. Adults (16 to 74-year-olds) with at least basic digital skills, accounted in 2023 for 66.4%, which was much higher than the EU-27 average of 55.6% but still below the EU target of 70% for 2025 (Skills Agenda). The share of early leavers remained in 2024 with 7.2% below the EU-27 average of 9.3% and surpassed already the EU target of 9% for 2030. Same applied for the NEET rate of 15 to 29-year-olds, which was in 2024 with 6.3% below the EU-27 average of 11.0% and already below the EU target for 2030 of 9%.

Table 1. **European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Sweden**

Type of indicator ⁽⁷⁾	Indicator	Last available year	SE	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
VET for developing a lifelong learning culture						
Progress	Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) [*]	2022	66.5	39.5	Skills Agenda Council Resolution on EEA ESPR Action Plan	50% (2025) 47% (2025) 60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) ^(*)	2022	47.1	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	47.4	15.3	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	2024	81.9	75.8	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2024	7.2	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15-29 year-olds (%)	2024	6.3	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence						
Progress	Adults (16-74 year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2023	66.4	55.6	Skills Agenda ESPR Action Plan	70% (2025) 80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%)	2024	84.9	80.0	Council Rec on VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2024	64.6	65.3	Council Rec on VET Council Resolution on EEA	60% (2025)
Context	25-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2024	54.4	44.2	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2024	4	10.0	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2024	1843	93 333	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2024	450.7	10273.6 ^e	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
VET for the European Education Area						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%) ^{**}	2021	0.5	2.1 ^{dv}	Council Rec on VET Skills Agenda Council Rec Europe on the Move	8% (2025) 12% (2030)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2023	1 ^d	1.2 ^d		

Available flags: b – break in time series, d – definition differs, e – estimated, V – Cedefop estimate.

^{*} Eurostat data (Adult Education Survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training)

^{**} Provisional estimates affected by the Covid19 pandemic

Source: Cedefop. [European VET policy dashboard](#)

(7) Definitions on the type of indicators is available at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard/methodology>

6. Conclusion

Since 2020, Sweden has made notable progress in implementing its national VET policy priorities, as outlined in the national implementation plan (NIP). The country has introduced a range of measures to strengthen the quality and attractiveness of VET, improve alignment with labour market needs, expand educational pathways for labour market integration, and increase accessibility and flexibility in VET provision. However, several key reforms and initiatives identified in the NIP are still in early stages or have experienced delays, and some measures have yet to be fully implemented.

Several advancements have been made since 2020 to enhance VET quality and attractiveness. Sweden has expanded upper secondary VET networks, introduced digital tools for study and career guidance, and launched new professional development programmes for VET teachers and principals. The inclusion of optional Swedish and English courses in all VET programmes has improved access to higher education for VET graduates. Despite these advances, the persistent shortage of qualified VET teachers remains a significant challenge. The national professional development programme for teachers and principals, although legislated, is not yet fully operational and will only enter into force in September 2025. Intensifying efforts to tackle persistent teacher shortages through expanded recruitment and retention initiatives could prove beneficial. Systematic quality reviews of municipal adult education have started, but comprehensive improvements in quality assurance, especially for outsourced providers, are still pending.

Sweden has taken several steps since 2020 to better align VET with evolving labour market needs. Substantial increases in funding for regional initial VET for adults and higher vocational education have created thousands of new study places. Legislative reforms now require education providers to consider labour market needs when determining programme offerings, with these changes set to take effect from July 2025. The pilot for National Vocational Training for adults has been extended, and the prioritisation of programmes in digitalisation, green transition, and AI reflects a strong response to evolving skills demands. The national STEM strategy, launched in 2025, aims to address shortages in technical fields. However, the development of a unified data infrastructure for lifelong learning, as mandated in the NIP, is still ongoing, and the new draft bill to enhance information exchange between the Public Employment Service and municipalities is not yet in force. Overall, further efforts are needed to align VET better with labour market needs, as Sweden still faces shortages in specific sectors, which limits its ability to fully leverage human capital, foster innovation, and further boost competitiveness (European Commission, 2025)

Since 2020, some progress has been made on the priority of setting up additional pathways in the education system to improve labour market integration. Vocational training packages for adults with learning disabilities are scheduled for nationwide implementation from July 2025, and new curricula for these learners will be introduced in autumn 2025. The establishment programme for newly arrived immigrants, compulsory since 2022, supports integration in the labour market or further studies through language learning and civic orientation. The memorandum on piloting of vocational orientations in higher education preparatory programmes remains under evaluation, with no significant progress

reported. The national inquiry submitted a proposal in 2022 aimed at increasing the number of young people achieving their upper secondary education objectives, however no significant developments were reported since then. Overall, some improvements were done for this priority, however more targeted measures would be useful to support socio-economic disadvantaged groups and migrants in enhancing their educational outcomes, support the development of their skills and their integration into the labour market are needed (Council of the European Union, 2024; European Commission, 2024c).

Sweden has taken also several measures to improve VET accessibility and flexibility since 2020. The national strategy for validation is now in force, requiring municipalities to offer skills assessment before enrolment in municipal adult education. Flexible HVE-courses and the institutionalisation of HVE-flex programmes support reskilling and upskilling, particularly for professionals and migrants. New funding schemes allow employees and self-employed individuals to pursue studies while maintaining income security. However, the full impact of these measures is yet to be realised, and the expansion of learning centres and the adaptation of VET for adults needing to reskill are still in progress. Sweden is already quite advanced in integrating sustainability into education (Unesco, 2025; Just4All, 2024), however certain planned measures, such as the proposal on 'Higher VET of the Future' aiming to strengthen vocational education by supporting green transition skills and advanced programmes' remain since mid-2023 under government review.

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EQF	European Qualification Framework
EU	European Union
HVE	Higher vocational education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MYh	Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (<i>Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan</i>)
NIP	National Implementation Plan
ReferNet	Cedefop's European network of expertise on VET
SFI	Swedish for Immigrants
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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