



## **Youth Wiki national description**

# Youth policies in Sweden

# 2020

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>



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# Sweden

## OVERVIEW

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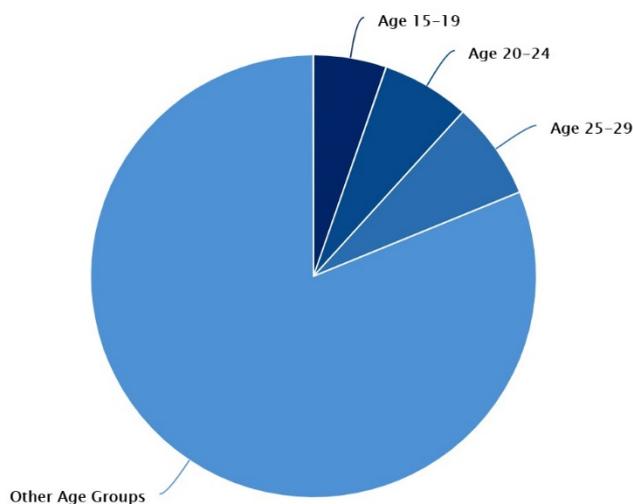
### Youth Policy in Sweden

In Sweden, national youth policy has existed since 1994 (see Revisions/Updates in section [1.3](#)). The main focus since 2015 has been on improving opportunities for young people to get established in work and society.

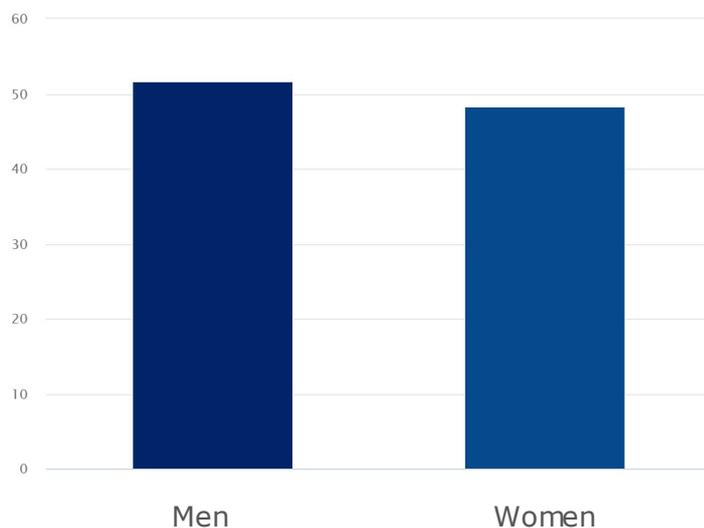
The government guidelines for youth policy are not limited to government decisions and actions, but should be taken into account in all public activities involving young people. They are though not mandatory for municipalities and regions/county councils, due to the extensive municipal autonomy in Sweden.

Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January

#### Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



#### Ratio of men and women in the youth population



## Statistic references

### References:

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_010 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_070 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

# 1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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## Scope of Swedish youth policy

The national youth policy objective concerns all government decisions and actions concerning youth:

'All young people should have access to good living conditions, power to shape their own lives and influence over the development of the society.'

The Parliament approved in 2014 the objective and the scope – that youth policy should be cross-sectorial and address issues such as education, employment, private economy, housing, health, power, culture and leisure.

What more, all government decisions and actions that affect young people between 13 and 25 years of age ought to have a youth perspective. A youth perspective is based on the human rights and states that young people are to be seen and treated as a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds and different conditions. It also states that young people's independency is to be supported and that all youth should have the possibility of influence and participation.

It is important to note that in Sweden, municipalities have considerable autonomy on how youth policy is implemented. The national youth policy is compulsory for ministries and central government agencies, but only advisory at the local level.

## Main themes

The priorities in the Swedish youth policy according to the [Government Communication](#) in March 2021 are the following:

- increasing young people's mental health
- giving access to meaningful leisure time activities for all young people
- involving all young people in societal issues
- young people's social inclusion and entry into the labour market.

## 1.1 Target population of youth policy

The target group for Swedish youth policy is young people between 13 and 25 years of age, according to the Government's youth policy bill 'With youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence' (*Med fokus på unga - en politik för goda levnadsvillkor*).

In relation to youth unemployment, there is another age-specific target group:

- 16–24 years of age, for local agreements and training contracts, according to Ordinance 'On cooperation to reduce youth unemployment' ([Om samverkan för att minska ungdomsarbetslösheten](#)).

In relation to government's subsidies to childrens and youth organisations, the general rule is that a grant may be provided to organisations that have at least 1 000 members between the ages of 6–25.

In other legislation, the definition of the youth population varies depending on the subject area.

## 1.2 National youth law

### Existence of a National Youth Law

Currently there is no national youth law in Sweden. There are though pieces of legislation which address the needs and rights of young. Relevant legislation includes:

- Act concerning support and service for persons with certain functional impairments (Lagen om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade, LSS)
- Aliens act (Utlänningslagen)
- Care of young persons act (Lag med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga)
- Education act (Skollagen)
- Higher education act (Högskolelag)
- Parents code (Föräldrabalken)
- Social services act (Socialtjänstlagen)

### Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Parliament decided in 2010 that all legislation concerning children and youth up to 18 years of age is to be formulated in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2017, the Swedish Government decided to submit a proposal to the Council on Legislation to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into Swedish law. The law entered into force on January 1, 2020.

### Scope and contents

Not applicable, as Sweden currently does not have a specific youth law.

### Revisions/updates

Not applicable.

## 1.3 National youth strategy

### Existence of a National Youth Strategy

The current governing document for Swedish youth policy is the [government's bill](#) 'With youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence' (Med fokus på unga – en politik för goda levnadsvillkor, makt och inflytande). Key parts of the bill were decided by the Parliament in 2014.

### Scope and contents

The youth policy bill from 2014, 'With youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence' consists of following main elements:

- an overview of the current needs of young people between 13 and 25 years of age
- new objective for all government decisions and actions concerning young people
- descriptions on the scope, implementation and monitoring of youth policy
- an action programme for the years 2014–2017
- a chapter on young people who lack secondary education
- an impact analysis of the proposals.

### Current action programme for 2021-2024

In March 2021, a renewed action programme for 2021-2024 was presented in the [Government Communication 2020/21:105](#). The action programme includes 100

government initiatives within the four priorities that the communication has defined. The priorities are young people's mental well-being, social and labour market inclusion of young people, meaningful leisure activities for all young people and young people's participation in society.

### **Key political objectives**

The national youth policy objective in Sweden is:

'All young people should have access to good living conditions, power to shape their own lives and influence over the development of the society'.

This goal concerns all government decisions and actions concerning youth. The Parliament has approved this objective and the scope – that youth policy should be cross-sectorial and address issues such as education, employment, private economy, housing, health, power, culture and leisure.

### **Youth perspective based on human rights**

What more, according to the bill, all government decisions and actions that affect young people between 13 and 25 years of age ought to have a youth perspective. A youth perspective is based on the human rights and states that young people are to be seen and treated as a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds and different conditions. It also states that young people's independency is to be supported and that all youth should have the possibility of influence and participation.

It is important to note that in Sweden municipalities have considerable autonomy on how youth policy is implemented. The national youth policy is compulsory for ministries and central government agencies, but only advisory at the local level.

## **Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy**

### **The Government and the Ministry of Culture**

The Government has the overall responsibility for the youth policy to be implemented and evaluated.

The [Ministry of Culture](#) is in charge of youth policy. The ministry is responsible for preparing the parts of the central government budget concerning youth policy.

The [Division for Civil Society and National Minorities](#) is placed under the Ministry of Culture. One of the tasks for the division is to coordinate and develop youth policy issues, including the cross-sectorial youth policy objectives and follow-up of youth policy. The division is also responsible for the Swedish Agency for youth and civil Society, [MUCE](#)).

### **The Swedish Agency for youth and civil society**

The Swedish Agency for youth and civil society (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällsfrågor, [MUCE](#)) shall ensure that the objectives of youth policy are achieved by:

- presenting, gathering and disseminating knowledge,
- contributing to the coordination of government efforts concerning youth policy,
- cooperating with government authorities, municipalities, regions and civil society organisations, and
- distributing state grants to civil society organisations.

The Government has given the agency specific tasks concerning the implementation of youth policy:

- to contribute to the establishment of young people in working life and society, and
- to ensure that young people have meaningful and developing leisure activities.

## Other government agencies

Various government agencies share the responsibility over the actions in the Youth policy action programme.

## Revisions/updates

The Swedish youth policy has since 1950s evolved from mainly supporting youth organisations to take a holistic approach to young people's living conditions, power and influence.

- The first youth policy bill, 'Youth policy' ([Ungdomspolitik](#)) was submitted to the Parliament in 1994.
- The second youth policy bill, 'On youth issues – Youth Policy for democracy, justice, and confidence in the future' ([På ungdomars villkor – Ungdomspolitik för demokrati, rättvisa och framtidstro](#)) was submitted to the Parliament in 1999.
- The third youth policy bill 'Power to Decide – the Right to Welfare' ([Makt att bestämma – rätt till välfärd](#)) was presented to the Parliament in 2004.
- In addition to the third youth policy bill, the Government presented a [strategy for youth policy](#) in 2009.

The fourth and current youth policy bill, 'Focus on young people – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence' ([Med fokus på unga – en politik för goda levnadsvillkor, makt och inflytande](#)) was presented to the Parliament in 2014.

Changes in the youth policy content will be summarised below, starting with a description of the 2004 youth policy bill, continuing with comments on changes in the 2009 youth policy strategy and ending with comments on changes in the 2014 youth policy bill.

### 2004 'Power to decide - the Right to Welfare'

The most prominent feature of the year 2004 youth policy bill is that it stated that youth policies shall be integrated into the activities of all policy sectors relevant to young people's living conditions. According to the bill, the national youth policy should also aim at highlighting and reducing existing differences in young people's living conditions. The bill proposed two new overall objectives for the national youth policy:

- young people should have real access to welfare
- young people should have real access to power.

These two overarching objectives formed the basis for the actions and for the monitoring of young people's living conditions. The bill aimed at strengthening the coordination between policy areas so that the actions of those would better contribute to the objectives of the national youth policy.

The Government proposed five main areas for the coordination and for a more effective cross-sectoral monitoring of youth policy:

- learning and personal development
- health and vulnerability
- influence and representation
- self-support
- culture and leisure.

The policies within these areas were building on each policy sector's own objectives, in order to integrate youth policy in other relevant policy areas. The bill thereby clarified the responsibility of each policy sector for the implementation and for the follow-up of the youth policy objectives, in the context of the sector's regular activities.

The bill also provided that the Government would annually in the budget prioritise one or more issues where the need for action is particularly important in order to improve young people's living conditions.

The bill even included the Government's ambitions for the development of youth policy in the municipalities and in international cooperation. Furthermore, the bill contained a government's proposal for an addition in the [Education Act](#) by introducing an explicit municipal responsibility to stay informed about the situation of young people aged 16–20 years who are not in education and have not completed secondary school or equivalent education.

The bill entered into force in 2005, by a parliament's decision.

### **2009 'A Strategy for Youth Policy'**

According to the Government, the [strategy](#) should be seen as a part of the follow-up of the year 2004 youth policy bill. The strategy included slightly revised starting points for the youth policy. Besides that, strategic challenges identified as keys for achieving the youth policy overall objectives and a new action program for youth policy were presented. The overall objectives of the national youth policy remained almost intact. The word 'power' in the second objective (young people should have real access to power) was though substituted by 'influence':

- all young people should have real access to welfare
- all young people should have real access to influence.

The explanation for substituting 'power' with 'influence' was that power brings with it responsibilities, and that minors under 18 years may not have formal responsibilities in relation to power.

The five main areas in order to facilitate monitoring and analysis of young people's living conditions were also slightly revised into:

- education and learning
- work and livelihood
- health and vulnerability
- influence and representation
- culture and leisure

### **Strategic challenges**

The 2009 strategy identified general challenges within three areas; the demographic trend, the on-going economic crisis and changing attitudes and values among youth.

The demographic trend challenge was that of the baby boomers, born around 1990s and their transition from school to work. At the time, Sweden was in the worst economic crisis since the early 1990s.

Value differences between younger and elder citizens was identified as a risk that might lead to a decrease in respect for representative democracy.

Besides these general challenges, the Government also identified the following:

- The Swedish school system. The key challenge was that students' results needed to be improved in both primary and secondary schools.
- A need for facilitating young people's transition from school to work.
- A need for promoting mental well-being, as especially girls and young women were suffering of mental health issues in higher grade than before.
- A need for increasing youth participation, so that young people will gain equal opportunities with citizens of age for active participation in democratic processes.

- A need for creating better conditions for cultural and leisure activities by, with and for young people.

The Government presented subsequently a number of actions to meet the challenges described.

### **2014 'With youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence'**

The starting point for the 2014 youth policy bill was that the system for control and monitoring of the youth policy had in many ways worked well. But, according to a [review](#) by the Swedish Agency for Public Management ([Statskontoret](#)), the system had been criticized for failing to supply enough knowledge, and not adequately reaching out to local governments.

What more, studies had shown that young people's living conditions in many respects still remained problematic and, in some cases, had worsened since the previous bill was presented in 2004. For example, the proportion of young people suffering of mental health issues had not decreased during the period. School results still showed great challenges as pupils' results had continued to fall. Unemployment rates among young people still remained high. Young people were underrepresented in decision making bodies and were not granted the opportunity to influence locally in any significant way.

Therefore, according to the 2014 youth policy bill, there was a need for revisions. The monitoring system needed to be simplified and strengthened, in order to bring about a more long-term and strategic work. The revisions should also aim for raising the quality and efficiency of government actions, directed both at young people and at local authorities.

Against this background, the bill presented a proposal for a new overall youth policy objective and a revised system of governance, implementation and monitoring of youth policy. The bill also presented a youth policy action programme for the years 2014–2017. Finally, the bill presented proposals for actions in order to develop work with young people who neither work nor study.

## **1.4 Youth policy decision-making**

### **Structure of Decision-making**

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy, which means that all public power proceeds from the people. At the national level, the people are represented by the [Riksdag](#) (Swedish parliament) which has legislative power. The Government implements the Riksdag's decisions and draws up proposals for new laws or law amendments.

All government decisions are made jointly by the [Government](#). The Prime Minister has the ultimate responsibility for Government policy coordination.

Since 2019, the [Ministry of Culture](#) is in charge of youth policy. The responsible minister is Ms. [Amanda Lind](#), Minister for Culture and Democracy. The duration of the mandate is January 2019–September 2022.

### **Division for Civil Society and National Minorities in the Ministry of Culture**

The [Division for Civil Society and National Minorities](#) is placed under the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for preparing the parts of the central government budget concerning issues relating to culture, media, democracy, human rights at national level, the national minorities, sports and youth policy.

The task for the Division for Civil Society and National Minorities is to coordinate and develop youth policy issues, including the cross-sectoral youth policy objectives and follow-up of youth policy. The division is also responsible for the conditions and

development of youth organisations. In addition, it is responsible for international cooperation on youth policy issues. The division is also responsible for the Swedish Agency for youth and civil society, [MUCE](#).

## Main Themes

The Swedish youth policy is multidisciplinary and deals with issues in areas such as education, employment, private economy, housing, health, participation, culture and leisure. The scope of the Swedish youth policy is more or less unchanged since 2004.

The main themes for the Swedish youth policy according to the [Government Communication 2021](#) are:

- increasing young people's mental health
- giving access to meaningful leisure time activities for all young people
- involving all young people in societal issues
- young people's social inclusion and entry into the labour market.

Besides the four priorities where a multisectoral approach is necessary, the Government Communication includes an action programme with 100 efforts within the priority areas that deserve a particular attention.

These efforts target human rights, including gender equality, counteracting honour-related violence and oppression, the rights of young LGBTI-people and efforts to reduce the number of young people who neither work nor study, just to give a few examples. Here the Government has identified a need for sector-specific actions that even need to be directed to both young people themselves and to civil society organisations.

The government guidelines for youth policy are not limited to government decisions and actions, but should be taken into account in all public activities involving young people. They are though not mandatory for municipalities and regions/county councils, due to the extensive municipal autonomy in Sweden.

According to the [youth policy bill from 2014](#), all public activities involving or addressing young people should:

- have a youth perspective
- be based on knowledge of young people's conditions and needs
- have access to knowledge of such initiatives and methods that can improve young people's living conditions
- be coordinated between relevant sectors.

## Specific target groups

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a priority group within the Government's youth policy initiatives. Among the initiatives, efforts to prevent early school leaving and the 90-day guarantee for young people (which limits the period of unemployment to 90 days before efforts that lead to a job or an education are to be introduced) can be mentioned.

Other groups that are specifically targeted are young newly arrived, young people with immigrant background, young people in national minorities, young LGBTI people and young people with disabilities.

Initiatives focusing on better knowledge and addressing social inclusion in terms of participation, employment, mental health, discrimination, violence prevention and better access to leisure activities often target the above mentioned groups.

## The National Agency for Youth

### A brief history

- 1959: The National Youth Council (Statens ungdomsråd) was established, with the main task of distributing government grants to youth organisations.
- 1976: The National Youth Council was transformed into a government agency, with a new mission of developing and disseminating knowledge on young people's leisure time added to the previous task.
- 1994: The council's name was changed to Swedish National Youth Board (Ungdomsstyrelsen). A new responsibility of implementing government's youth policy, together with developing and disseminating knowledge of young people's living conditions was added to the previous tasks.
- 2014: The board's name was changed to Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor, MUCF), due to new responsibilities concerning civil society policies.
- 2019: the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society was relocated from Stockholm to Växjö.

### Role and responsibilities for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society

The [Swedish Agency for youth and civil society](#) is a government agency for matters relating to youth policy and civil society. The agency has approximately 90 employees.

The Government decides on the preconditions for the agency's operations. This is implemented by annual appropriation directives and an ordinance. The appropriation directives set out, among other things, how much money the agency has at its disposal and how the money is to be distributed between the different activities. The ordinance contains general administrative provisions concerning how the agency is to carry out its work.

The agency shall, according to its [ordinance](#), work to ensure that the objectives of youth policy and of civil society policy will be achieved by:

presenting, gathering and disseminating knowledge,

contributing to the coordination of government efforts concerning youth policy,

- cooperating with government authorities, municipalities, county councils and civil society organisations, and
- distributing state grants to civil society organisations.

The more specific duties of the agency are:

- contributing to young people's transition from school to work and their integration into society
- ensuring that young people have meaningful and developing leisure activities
- promoting the integration of the youth perspective into government agencies
- supporting knowledge-based youth policy in municipalities and regions
- following up and analyzing young people's living conditions, attitudes and values
- being national agency for EU programmes in the field of youth and national correspondent for the EU Youth Wiki tool.

In its activities, the agency shall promote equal rights and opportunities for young people irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The agency shall promote gender mainstreaming and counteract discrimination on the grounds of gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

In addition to the ordinance, annual appropriations directives contain special missions to the agency.

### **Budget for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society**

Of the year 2021 total budget for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, 5.3 million euros (53 million Swedish kronor) was ear-marked for [youth policy](#) and 1.5 million euros (15.3 million Swedish kronor) for [civil society policy](#). Above that, 28.4 million euros (284 million Swedish kronor) was targeted to [national and international youth activities](#). See section [1.7 Funding youth policy](#) for more information.

### **Policy monitoring and evaluation**

The current youth policy monitoring system is mainly based on the model presented in the 2004 Youth Policy Bill, with only minor changes in the 2014 Youth Policy Bill. The system is based on indicators of young people's living conditions, on annual thematic in-depth analyzes on young people's living conditions and on periodic studies on young people's attitudes and values. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) is responsible for conducting the studies that are included in the youth policy follow-up.

The 2014 Youth Policy Bill also pointed out that young people and youth organisations shall be empowered in the process of monitoring youth policies. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has presented a [plan for 2015–2017](#), where different forms for consultations with young people and youth organisations are planned for the annual reports that are a part of the monitoring system.

When monitoring young people's living conditions, statistics should be presented, commented and analysed by sex and age unless there are special reasons for this. Moreover, policy proposals targeting young people should include a consequence analysis, where young people's age and sex are taken into account.

### **Evaluations**

The national youth policy monitoring system is evaluated regularly, before a revision takes place. The latest evaluation is from 2010, when the Swedish Agency for public management ([Statskontoret](#)) got the government task to evaluate the monitoring system of the national youth policy. According to [the final report](#) 'A more effective monitoring system for the national youth policy' (Ett effektivare uppföljningssystem för den nationella ungdomspolitiken), the monitoring system did not supply enough relevant knowledge and analysis, and did not reach out to local governments in an adequate manner. The 2014 revised youth policy bill proposed changes aimed for addressing these problems.

In 2021, the Agency for public management got a new [assignment to evaluate the monitoring system](#) of the national youth policy. The assignment must be reported to the government (Ministry of Culture) no later than March 2022.

## **1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries**

### **Mechanisms and actors**

The Swedish youth policy has a cross-sectoral approach. The [Ministry of Culture](#) is responsible for preparing the parts of the central government budget concerning youth policy.

Within the Ministry of Culture, the Division for Civil Society and National Minorities has the task of coordinating and developing youth policy issues, including cross-sectoral youth policy objectives and follow-up of youth policy.

All government decisions are taken jointly. Besides that, an institutionalised mechanism, *Gemensam beredning* (the joint preparation procedure) is a common process for all ministries.

The joint preparation procedure implies that government affairs that fall within the activity of several ministries should be prepared in consultation with other ministers concerned. This also applies within a ministry, when a case involves more than one minister.

The joint preparation procedure takes place relatively often with youth policy, because of its cross-sectorial character.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

Collecting, analysing and disseminating knowledge of young people's living conditions is fundamental to Swedish youth policy. Today's system started with the [2004 Youth Policy Bill](#). The bill stated that young people's living conditions should be followed up regularly, using indicators within all relevant policy areas.

The current monitoring system is based on youth policy indicators, an annual report on young people's living conditions and periodic studies on young people's attitudes and values. These elements form the main sources for Swedish evidence-based youth policy. This model was presented in 2004, with only minor changes in the 2014 Youth Policy Bill.

### Cooperation between policy-making and research

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) is responsible for conducting the studies included in the monitoring system. The studies are to be based on official statistics, youth surveys, dialogue with young people and youth organisations, qualitative studies and current research.

### Policy themes informed by research

The research community is active within all relevant policy themes, such as education, labour market entry, health, culture, youth work, leisure, participation and so forth. One example of how research informs policy priorities is that the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences ([Kunliga Vetenskapsakademien](#)) presented in 2010 [a review](#) of the current state of knowledge concerning children's and young people's mental health. The results showed that there were basically no studies describing preschool children's psychological well-being and no explanations as to why girls in their teens more often report that they suffer of mental health issues compared to boys. Therefore, the government decided to allocate, during the period 2012–2017, about 30 million euros (300 million Swedish kronor) for research on children's and young people's mental health.

In 2018, the Swedish Research Council ([Vetenskapsrådet](#)) [decided on grants](#) to be awarded six research environments within child and adolescent mental health. The total grant amount for 2018–2023 was 137.4 million SEK.

Also in 2018, three research councils, [Forte](#), the [Swedish Research Council](#) and [Vinnova](#) issued a [joint call for research](#) focusing on mental health in newly arrived children and adolescents, and in children and adolescents with disabilities. Grants were awarded to research environments for up to six years.

Youth research 2008–2017, main findings

The Swedish Research Council for Health, Working life and Welfare ([Forte](#)), responsible for coordinating research on children and young people, had during 2016–2017 a government task of mapping Swedish youth research conducted since 2008.

The [final report](#) concludes that the majority of adolescents and young adults in Sweden have good living conditions when growing up. Prosperity and economic conditions have improved over the past two decades. However, during this period the poorest in society have increased in numbers and have not been able to benefit from the general improvements. It is evident that a low economic standard has a negative impact on the

general living conditions for adolescents and young adults, representing an increased risk of physical and mental illness, inadequate relationships with friends and family, criminality, vulnerability to crime and insecurity, overcrowded housing, poor grades, unemployment, reliance on allowances and the intervention of social child welfare. Those adolescents who suffer most from the consequences are those who live with single parents (usually the mother), have foreign-born parents and/or live in households with a low socioeconomic status.

Schooling is of major importance for adolescents' health, welfare and future opportunities for education and employment. Irrespective of family life, passing grades and good relationships with classmates and teachers are important in terms of minimising the risk of illness. Girls perform better than boys at school but demonstrate a higher degree of stress-related psychosomatic problems and take longer to establish themselves on the labour market. Boys with a foreign background struggle most at school, and around 50 per cent have no qualifications for upper secondary education after finishing compulsory education.

Adolescents and young adults growing up in families depending on social security support, who have had a contact person in the social services and/or who have been placed in housing outside their homes are particularly vulnerable. They run a major risk of failing at school, physical and mental illness, criminality and premature death.

The report also highlights areas in need of more research. More knowledge is needed of the living conditions of young people with different types of disabilities. The same applies to honour-related violence and oppression, suffered by many girls and women. In general, more knowledge is required on how adolescents and young adults themselves understand and perceive their situation. Of special interest is how they act and the strategies they adopt to influence their lives and their futures. Research relating to adolescents in their early teens (13–14) and young adults (20–25) is not as common as research relating to older teens (15–19). Among those areas to receive special focus in the report, more knowledge is required on leisure activities, participation and influence and criminality and vulnerability to crime, all according to the [report](#).

### **Evidence-based evaluation of youth policies**

In 2021, the Agency for public management ([Statskontoret](#)) got an [assignment to evaluate the monitoring system](#) of the national youth policy. The assignment must be reported to the government (Ministry of Culture) no later than March 2022.

Also in 2010, the government commissioned in 2010 the Swedish Agency for Public Management to evaluate the national youth policy monitoring system. According to the [final report](#), the Swedish Agency for Public Management found certain needs to develop the system, as it was not supplying enough relevant knowledge and analysis, especially not to meet the needs of local governments. The government has since addressed the issues identified by the year 2010 evaluation.

### **National Statistics and available data sources**

Collecting and disseminating national statistical data on youth is a part of the Swedish youth policy.

### **Youth policy indicators 2006-2013**

During 2006–2013, youth policy indicators were annually compiled by a number of government agencies. Generally, most of the about 80 indicators were based on existing data sources and hence not tailored to fit the overarching objectives. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (Ungdomsstyrelsen) was coordinating the presentations and submitted an annual analysis – the report 'Young today' (Ung idag) – to the Government. The indicators were used as a basis for a follow-up of the overall objectives of youth policy.

In 2014, the [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (formerly National Board for Youth Affairs) was commissioned by the Government to develop a web portal for showing statistics on young people's living conditions, on both national and local level. The web portal should, according to the government task, build on and develop the indicator system of that time.

### **Youth policy indicators 2015 -**

In 2015, the web portal for youth policy indicators, [ungidag.se](#) was developed and made public. Its purpose is to make youth statistics more accessible and frequently updated, through a simple and user-friendly tool designed for computers, tablets and mobile phones.

The web portal [ungidag.se](#) presents up-to-date official statistics on young people's conditions. Today, 12 government agencies and the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) are responsible for providing statistics. The indicators (around 60) are grouped under six themes:

1. Education and Learning
2. Physical and mental health
3. Economic and social vulnerability
4. Influence and representation
5. Work and housing
6. Culture and leisure.

Still, most of the indicators are based on existing data sources and therefore not tailored to fit the overarching objective. The indicators show trends over time and users can compare groups of youth by:

- gender
- Swedish/foreign background
- age group
- place of residence (municipality/region), in case local level statistics are available (at the moment 23 indicators provide local level data).

The results can be displayed by line charts, bar charts, tables, rankings and maps, and contain a short analysis.

Given the government's ambition to mainstream youth interventions across the policy areas of relevance to youth, the indicators are, wherever possible, directly linked to the objectives of relevant government agencies.

### **National youth reports**

Besides the youth policy indicators, thematic studies are regularly undertaken, together with periodic attitude and value surveys.

- Young Today ([Ung idag](#)). Based on the youth policy indicators that are presented at the web portal [ungidag.se](#), the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society delivers a yearly report to the government, where development over time and significant changes for the youth group as a whole, as well as for specific categories of young people are described.
- Thematic in-depth studies (Fokus). The government annually gives the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society a task of analysing young people's conditions within a priority area such as health, employment, participation, disadvantaged youth, etc. [Fokus 20](#) describes young people's experiences of sexual harassment in educational settings. [Fokus 19](#) examines young people's opportunities for participation at the local

level and the initiatives taken in Swedish municipalities for creating better conditions for young people's participation. [Fokus 18](#) describes social inclusion of young people,

- Attitude and values studies (Young people with attitudes). The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) carries out comprehensive attitude and value studies on regular basis. The study focuses on youth and young adults aged 16–29, but includes even the age group 30–64. The [latest study](#) was published in three parts in 2019 (previous studies were undertaken in 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2013).

### **Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field**

The main principle is that research on young people is conducted by using general research funds. The Swedish Research Council for Health, Working life and Welfare ([Forte](#)), has annually been allocated 50 000 euros (500 000 Swedish kronor) from the government to coordinate research on young people.

## **1.7 Funding youth policy**

### **How Youth policy is funded**

National youth policy is funded within the central government budget.

Local youth policy is funded by respective municipality. Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. The municipalities have a considerable degree of autonomy and finance largely their own activities, due to independent powers of taxation. The municipalities are responsible (partly in some policy areas) for youth policy issues such as schools, employment and training, health care, social care and services, culture and leisure.

It is important to note that in Sweden municipalities have considerable autonomy on how different policies, including youth policy, is implemented. The national youth policy is compulsory for ministries and central government agencies, but only advisory at the local level.

### **What is funded**

Of the year 2021 central [government budget](#) for the youth policy area, 28.4 million euros (284 million Swedish kronor) were targeted to national and international youth activities. Of the totally 28.4 million euros, about 400 000 euros were deposited to international youth activities including the National Agency for Erasmus+, and 28 million euros were deposited as a state grant to youth organisations.

Above that, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) got for its disposal 5.34 million euros (53 million Swedish kronor, of which 1 million Swedish kronor are for special contributions within the youth policy field and 52 million Swedish kronor are for administrative expenditures and duties according to the ordinance.

Besides that, the situation of young people is affected by a wide range of policy areas in the government's budget, such as education, employment, culture, health, social care and services etc.

### **Financial accountability**

The activities and results of all government agencies are annually followed up and evaluated. Each agency submits an annual report to the Government containing information about, inter alia, expenses, revenue and results. On the basis of the reports the Government can follow up and evaluate agencies' operations, for instance in the youth policy field. The annual reports together with budget data submitted by agencies are also the basis for work on next year's national budget and appropriation directives.

## Use of EU Funds

The [Swedish ESF Council](#) finances projects focusing on skills development, employment measures and integration initiatives. Of the totally three programme areas, both programme area 2 and 3 are targeting young people.

**Program area 2 - Increased transitions to work** The target groups are young people (15-24 years), long-term unemployed (more than 12 months), those who are or have been on sick leave and need support for returning to work, and new arrivals, mainly women. In 2020, the highest support for the program area was granted during the entire program period for a total of 92 projects. The program area is affected by the economy and the uncertainty in the labor market. In 2020, unemployment continued to rise, largely as an effect of the pandemic. In general, most of the new calls have focused on the effects of the pandemic, which has captured the need for various initiatives to mitigate its effects on the labor market ([ESF Council's Annual Report 2020](#)).

### Programme area 3 - Employment for young people

Programme area 3 is a special initiative of the Commission targeting regions in Europe with the highest unemployment among young people (15-24 years). In Sweden, funding within programme area 3 is limited to Central Norrland, Northern Central Sweden and Southern Sweden. In 2020, just as in 2019, no new support was granted. Only one project is ongoing ([ESF Council's Annual Report 2020](#)).

## 1.8 Cross-border cooperation

### Cooperation with European countries

The main part of the Swedish Government's cooperation in the youth field is within the framework of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport ([EYCS](#)) Council and the [EU - Council of Europe youth partnership](#).

Sweden has recently been represented in some of the Commission's expert groups, the Expert group on EU indicators in the youth field and the Expert group on Mobility of young volunteers and cross-border solidarity. Earlier, Sweden was represented in the Expert group on youth work for active citizenship, preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation and the Expert group on quality of youth work.

### Bilateral and ad hoc cooperation

The [Division for Civil Society and National Minorities](#) within the [Ministry for Culture](#) takes part in bilateral/ad hoc activities with other European actors, such as multilateral peer-learning activities, policy conferences, youth policy networks, etc. Currently several initiatives regarding youth policy and migration/refugees/unaccompanied minors are under way or have special attention within bilateral or other ad hoc frameworks. Structured cooperation with Germany notably is taking place in this area of policy action and exchange of best practices.

### Nordic cooperation

Within the [Nordic council of Ministers](#), the Committee on Children and Youth ([NORDBUK](#)) is the main player in the youth policy field. NORDBUK runs on a co-management principle with representatives from the Nordic ministries and from the national youth councils.

Among other things, NORDBUK monitors the implementation of the [children and youth strategy](#) (Strategi for børn og unge i Norden) adopted in April 2016 by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Three main priority areas have been identified in the strategy:

- increased support and inclusion of children and young people at risk
- continuous cooperation and support to civil society

- increased sharing of knowledge and capacity building activities within different sectors that affect living conditions of children and youth.

NORDBUK also gives support/grants to youth organisations/civil society working in the Nordic countries with different projects. Practically this is carried out by the Nordic Culture Point ([Nordisk Kulturkontakt](#)) which is the agency dealing with the funding scheme.

## International cooperation

Sweden is currently participating in youth cooperation within the [Council of Europe](#) and within the [Barents Euro-Arctic Council](#).

Within the framework agreement between the European Union and Council of Europe, Sweden takes part of [EKCYF](#) (European Knowledge Center for Young People), by providing updated information in the EKCYF portal.

Youth policy cooperation within Barents Euro-Arctic Council is mainly taking place through [Joint working group on Youth](#) with national representatives from Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia, as well as regional representatives from the Barents area. Activities include sharing of experiences, support to youth work and youth initiatives, as well as providing information to facilitate people-to-people contacts in the Barents region in the youth field, especially promoting dialogue and contacts between Russia and the Nordic countries.

## 1.9 Current debates and reforms

### A renewed youth policy action programme

The government presented a [youth policy communication](#) with an action programme for the period 2021–2024 in March 2021, including over 100 initiatives to strengthen mental health, improve equality in school and investment in jobs for young people. The initiatives are aimed at creating conditions for achieving the national youth policy goal, that all young people should have good living conditions, the power to shape their lives and influence over the development of society. The four priorities are presented below:

#### **Mental health among young people must increase**

The mental health of young people is an important issue that requires broad efforts in several policy areas. Good mental health is a prerequisite for good living and growing up conditions. This prioritisation is intended to concretize the previous prioritisation that concerned the well-being of young people. The prioritisation primarily refers to the efforts made in public health and health and medical care policy, but efforts are also required in e.g. the areas of LGBTQI people's rights and measures against segregation.

#### **Young people's social inclusion and establishment in the labor market must increase**

The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences have particularly affected young people's school situation and situation in the labour market. The areas that are covered within the prioritisation are e.g. investments in labour market policy, young people's entrepreneurship and young people who neither work nor study. The establishment of young people has also previously been a priority, but the priority is expanded to include social inclusion.

#### **All young people should have a meaningful leisure time**

Having a developing and meaningful leisure time is an important part of growing up. Leisure time has a major role to play for young people as it can provide space for community that is open to everyone, and where everyone is given the opportunity to freely develop their abilities and to participate in society. Young people's leisure time has also previously been a priority area. Several policy areas are covered in this

prioritisation. This includes investments in leisure activities, culture, sports and association participation.

### **All young people must be involved in the shaping of society**

The influence and participation of young people has been a central part of youth policy since its inception. The same applies to young people's conditions for organisation. A prioritisation that all young people should be involved in the shaping of society becomes a clarification of the goal. The prioritisation will also be more forward-looking in the area. Initiatives in this area refer to initiatives to promote young people's organisation and participation in democracy as well as preventive initiatives to counter hate speech and threats.

## **2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES**

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In Sweden, volunteering generally takes place in a civil society organisation. Volunteering is thus not necessarily associated with voluntary social work. Voluntary activities have traditionally been – and still are – to a great deal directed at the internal, democratic and political life of the civil society, or have at least been performed within the framework of an organisation. Sports associations collect by far the largest share of youth voluntary workers within the Swedish civil society.

### **2.1 General context**

#### **Historical developments**

Sweden has a long tradition of [volunteering](#) and active citizenship among its population. In the 19th century, popular mass movements began to appear, inspired by those in other countries.

The general pattern of volunteering is characterised by a focus on membership in a civil society organisation. Volunteering is thus not necessarily associated with voluntary social work. Voluntary activities have traditionally been – and still are – to a great deal directed at the internal, democratic and political life of the civil society, or have at least been performed within the framework of an organisation.

During the last 20 years, a targeted volunteering infrastructure with volunteer agencies and centres has emerged. Today, there are both public volunteer centres and centres managed by civil society organisations. Their aim is to match individuals interested in volunteering with volunteering opportunities, without the need of becoming a member of any organisation. This means that young people today can choose between different options for getting involved in voluntary activities.

It has been suggested that the Nordic welfare model, that offers a comprehensive provision of social services funded by the state, could imply that volunteering has less of a role to play in Swedish society. However, [studies](#) have affirmed that this is not the case. Voluntary activities are considered to be an important driver in active citizenship and integration.

#### **Main concepts**

There is no official definition of the [concept 'volunteer'](#) in Sweden. Traditionally, the concept has often been associated with non-profit development aid work. Nowadays however, different actors may use the term in different ways.

In pace with contemporary societal changes and the establishment of the European voluntary Service first, and then the European Solidarity Corps, the meaning of the concept has broadened. This means 'volunteer' may be used to [refer](#) to those working on a voluntary basis covering periods ranging from one or more occasions per month to full-

time involvement over several months. Most common is that voluntary work is unpaid. At some occasions though, there may be a symbolic compensation for the voluntary effort.

Furthermore, there is no official definition of the voluntary sector as a whole. In Sweden, it is generally accepted to divide the society into four different sectors; the public sector, business sector, the third/non-profit sector and the household sector. The third/non-profit is nowadays usually called civil society, which is considered to be the context where most voluntary activities are carried out.

There is a clear [distinction](#) between informal work and voluntary work. Informal work is closely linked with the household sector and characterized by being unorganised, unpaid help or support that is performed on a regular basis. Voluntary work on the other hand is characterized by being performed under the auspices of an organisation or otherwise structured.

## 2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

### Governance

The Swedish Government encourages and supports youth volunteering mainly through providing financial support to the civil society. Promoting [voluntary activities](#) of young people is considered important in order to support young people's democratic commitment and active citizenship.

The most important income source for organisations in general is [membership fees](#). Besides that, grants from the national or the local governments are important sources for funding. The Government or the Parliament agrees on directives for government grants. The directives identify those goals and results organisations should work towards if they are to apply for and receive funding. Local governments have the right of creating local regulatory tools for supporting local organisations.

### Governance approach

Autonomy and independence are important principles in the government's policy for civil society. This means that civil society organisations should be able to carry out their activities according to their own values based on independent decisions. The principle states that organisations should be able to act without compromising their relationships with the public sector or its public financial support. Unwarranted interference or control from the government or agencies should not occur.

Most volunteering activities that engage young people in Sweden are provided by civil society organisations, mostly in connection with member activities. The government provides extensive support, in form of government grants, to civil society organisations, and especially to national youth organisations. All youth organisations on a national level, irrespective of the focus of their activities, are eligible for government grants, if the organisation is built on democratic principles, independent from a mother organisation and if at least 60 per cent of the members are young people. The size of the grant is based on the number of members and the scope of its activities.

### Main actors

The Division for Civil Society and National Minorities within the [Ministry for Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is responsible for the coordination of the Government's youth policy and issues affecting youth organisations and youth volunteering.

The [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor, MUCF) is the government agency for matters relating to youth policy and civil society.

The agency is responsible for the European Solidarity Corps programme, and has since the start of the earlier European Voluntary Service programme built up a broad competence concerning volunteer exchanges. The agency is also responsible for

distributing government grants to youth organisations. All organisations receiving funds are carrying out different kinds of voluntary work. A number of these youth organisations are also providing some form of exchange activity with other countries.

### **Main non-public actors**

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, [LSU](#), is a coordinating body for about 100 Swedish youth organisations. The members consist of all kinds of organisations, from political youth leagues, student movements and faith organisations to leisure and hobby oriented organisations. LSU operates as a platform on issues concerning youth, both international and national, and provides a network for national as well as international organisations dealing with youth issues.

[Forum](#) (the National Forum for Voluntary Organisations) is an umbrella organisation for voluntary social work in Sweden and has about 30 member organisations. Forum provides a platform for exchange of experiences and competence development among their members, and also works with EU-coordination for Swedish civil society organisations. Forum is also running an EU-network as well as [Volontärbyrå](#) (Volunteer agency). Volontärbyrå coordinates and matches voluntary tasks with volunteers.

Riksidrottsförbundet (the [Swedish Sports Confederation](#)) is the umbrella organisation of the Swedish sports movement. The main task for the Confederation is to provide support for their member organisations and to represent the sports movement. The Swedish Sports Confederation is also distributing government's grants to the sports and athletics associations. The sport movement is by far the largest domain for young people and in the Swedish civil society, and young people stand for a large share of voluntary work that take place during training, matches, competitions and other member activities.

[Forum Syd](#) consists of about 200 civil society organisations in the field of international development cooperation. The organisation provides training, information and exchange of experiences to their members, of which many also operate at the national level with voluntary activities in the field of social work. Forum Syd has been commissioned by [Sida](#) (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) to distribute financial support for Swedish organisations working with development cooperation.

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

In Sweden, there are at the moment no specific mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation between ministries, departments or agencies involved in defining policies and measures on youth volunteering.

## **2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering**

### **Existence of a National Strategy**

In Sweden, there is no national strategy for youth volunteering.

### **Scope and contents**

Not applicable.

### **Responsible authority**

Not applicable.

### **Revisions**

Not applicable.

## 2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

### National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is no national programme for youth volunteering in Sweden.

### Funding

As there is not a national programme for youth volunteering in Sweden, no funding exist.

### Characteristics of youth volunteering

Voluntary work has a long tradition in Sweden, especially within leisure and sports associations. [Sports associations](#) collect by far the largest share of youth voluntary workers within the Swedish civil society.

### Official statistics

Official statistics on youth volunteering does not exist in Sweden, but a national representative survey is conducted by [Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College](#) (Ersta Sköndal Bräcke högskola) on a regular basis. The general picture is that the total extent of engagement in voluntary activities in Sweden is stable, and that the main part of activities take place within civil society organisations. According to the latest [survey](#) (2019) carried out by Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College, 54 per cent of young people between 16 and 24 have been involved in some form of voluntary activity. The share has been quite stable since 1992.

The most common voluntary activity carried out by young people is by far leading activities for others. That can be explained by the fact that many leaders of sports clubs are young people engaged on a [voluntary basis](#).

When it comes to the extent of participation in voluntary activities, there are no differences between men and women. However, there are differences in terms of age; the youngest between 16 and 29 years of age are overrepresented among those who only have one voluntary [commitment](#). The relationship between age and the extent of participation in voluntary activities is closely associated with the assumption that voluntary work is included in the cumulative citizenship. The better one is integrated in society through education, work and family, the more engaged will one be in civil society.

### Support to young volunteers

There are no support schemes or incentives to support young volunteers. However, as described in section [5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations](#), the government provides significant financial support to youth organisations. By supporting youth organisations with general grants, young volunteers are indirectly promoted.

In addition, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has an on-going dialogue with youth organisations about the design and the effects of the government's grants, in order to keep the system up-to-date with the developments in the civil society.

### Quality Assurance (QA)

There is no national quality assurance system available for evaluation of the activities for young people. When it comes to collecting young volunteers' feedback on their [experiences](#) in the framework of QA, organisations describe that they use different practices. Some do not require any feedback at all, and some ask the volunteer to report more or less extensively.

### Target groups

Not applicable, as there are no youth volunteering initiatives at national level.

## 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

### EU programmes

When it comes to programmes for young people who wish to participate in volunteering in a foreign country, the main option in Sweden is the European Solidarity Corps. The authority in charge of organizing and monitoring the programme at the national level is [the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCF). The agency monitors young people's participation in the European Solidarity Corps in accordance with the Commission's guidelines.

The European Solidarity Corps programme was launched in Sweden in September 2018, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and some forty actors already running voluntary projects granted under the Erasmus + Youth in Action programmes. By December 2018, about 900 young adults between the ages of 17 and 30 had reported interest in participating in the European Solidarity Corps in Sweden. In 2020, 59 project applications were received, of which 46 received a grant, according to the [Annual Report](#) of the agency. There is a relatively large interest among organisations and municipalities to implement volunteer projects. Further however, efforts are needed to increase interest in solidarity projects and projects within the Solidarity Corps' professional part.

### Other Programmes

There are no other cross-border mobility programmes for volunteering that are funded by the government.

### Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

Volunteers coming to Sweden on a full-time basis are subject to the general [Aliens Act](#). A distinction is made between volunteers coming from Scandinavian countries, EU countries and third countries.

Being an EU citizen allows the volunteers to stay three months in Sweden without residence permit. After that period a volunteer must apply for right of residence at the Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket) or a residence permit at the [Swedish Migration Agency](#) (Migrationsverket). If the volunteer is a national of any of the other Nordic countries (Finland, Denmark, Norway or Iceland) residence permits are not necessary for any period of time.

Volunteer nationals of a third country may settle three months with no permit. If they want to remain longer, it is necessary to submit either an application for a visa extension or an application for a visitors' [residence permit](#).

The Swedish Government demands nationals of several countries to obtain a visa in order to enter Sweden. There is no specific visa for volunteers. This means that every case is treated according to the circumstances of the volunteer and the volunteer project in which he or she is involved. In effect, volunteers often receive a tourist or a student visa.

## 2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

### Information providers

There are no specific contact points or a national website providing information on volunteering for young people. There are no state-funded or regional volunteer centres either, having the responsibility to assist with young volunteers' placement and to promote volunteering opportunities in Sweden.

Instead, several government agencies within different sectors are responsible for the distribution of grants, information and advice, and for the implementation of policies

concerning voluntary organisations. For example [the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCF), [the National Board for Health and Welfare](#) (Socialstyrelsen), and [the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth](#) (Tillväxtverket).

Even local authorities give support to different types of voluntary organisations. The municipalities have the major responsibility for providing information to young people at the local level. Information regarding voluntary activities may be spread through many actors, for example employment offices, schools and study counsellors.

Autonomy for the municipalities in Sweden is a fundamental principal that is regulated in the [Local Government Act](#). The local authorities develop their own policies and programmes within the general frameworks set up by the Parliament and the Government. As a result, different approaches to promote volunteering can be found across the country.

Independent umbrella organisations in various fields of the civil society also promote volunteering. In fact, the civil society organisations carry out most of the promotion activities in Sweden. They rely on volunteers and therefore strive to engage more people in their work. The National Forum for Voluntary Organisations ([Forum](#)) is an umbrella organisation for civil society organisations working within the social sphere in Sweden. Their aim is to improve the opportunities for voluntary social work within Sweden through influencing public opinion, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and introducing new methods of work.

### Key initiatives

One of Forum's activities is to intermediate for volunteer engagement through [Volontärbyrå](#) (the volunteer agency), an on-line matching tool for volunteering opportunities. Volontärbyrå works actively to inspire more young people to engage in voluntary work. Although many non-profit organisations are continually seeking more volunteers, and many young people want to make a difference, it is not always easy to find each other. Among other activities, a [campaign film](#) was produced in 2018.

## 2.7 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

At the moment, no national regulation exists with respect to validation of non-formal and informal learning in Sweden. No national system to recognize volunteer's skills and competences is in place either. As volunteering largely takes place within civil society organisations, the role of volunteering is not specifically recognized in national education and training policies.

However, work is proceeding on finding methods for recognising non-formal and informal learning in a number of areas; skills and competences acquired through voluntary activities included. In 2015, the government established a special authority, the Swedish Commission on Validation ([Valideringsdelegationen](#)) to carry out development and dissemination measures aiming for better quality, cooperation between partners in the area and increasing equivalence concerning validation of skills and competences acquired outside the formal education system.

In the final report, [Validation – for skills supply and lifelong learning](#), the Delegation submitted its proposals for measures for a coherent, national and permanent system for validation, so that more people can have their knowledge and skills identified, assessed and recognised. Among other things, the Delegation proposed the following:

- The definition of validation in the Education Act be changed. Validation should be defined as a structured process for in-depth identification, assessment and recognition of knowledge and skills that a person has, regardless of how they were acquired.
- A government grant to develop validation of vocational skills should be established.

## Existing arrangements

[Youthpass](#), the European Commission's instrument for validation of non-formal learning within the European Youth in Action Programme, is used by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society as an integrated part of the EVS programme in Sweden. Every organisation receiving support from the agency gets information about the Youthpass and its purpose.

The Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (does not exist anymore) has developed a method for recognition of informal learning. The method developed is entitled [ELD \(Experience, Learning, Description\)](#) and recognizes learning acquired by young people through international experience. ELD is a dialogue and documentation process for identifying valuable skills, talents and character traits shown through real experiences. The process results in a 'Letter of Skills' – a summary of specific experiences accompanied by key words that describe areas of competence.

There are no possibilities at the moment in Sweden to gain European Credit Transfer and accumulation System (ECTS) or European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) for young people who have carried out voluntary work. Neither are there any quality assurance mechanisms in place to monitor the system of skills recognition.

## 2.8 Current debates and reforms

### Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

Sweden has recently amended the regulations in the Aliens law, in accordance with the [Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council](#). The aim is to offer a coherent legal framework for different categories of third-country nationals coming to the Union. Third-country nationals who have entered into an agreement with an organisation in Sweden to participate in a volunteer programme within the framework of European Voluntary Service, are now granted a residence permit for volunteering for stays of up to one year.

These constitutional amendments entered into force on 1 January 2020.

## 3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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An important part of the Swedish government's work agenda is active labour market policy. To achieve better labour market matching and by that reduce time spent in unemployment among young people has been among the government priorities.

A number of measures have been undertaken in recent years to increase youth employment. Reforms have been made in the areas of education, labour market and tax policy (for more information see Section 3.6 [Integration of Young People in the labour market](#)). The overall aim of the measures for youth is to support their entry into the labour market or to find a way for them to pursue and complete education.

Sweden has one of the lowest NEET rates in the EU, 7.2% in 2020, according to [Eurostat](#). The government's approach to labour market policy is however that measures should target those whose need is the greatest. Young people in NEET situations are therefore a specific target group.

## 3.1 General context

### Labour market situation in the country

Sweden is one of the most comprehensive welfare states in the world, characterised by universal coverage, high levels of social protection and a large public sector. The labour market is mainly regulated through collective agreements between social partners without any interference from the government.

The main agreement regulating the relationship between social partners was set up in 1938 and is called Saltsjöbadsavtalet. The agreement gives trade unions and employers the right to negotiate working conditions and wages in collective agreements.

The relationship between employers and workers and their organisations is governed by several laws, granting basic protection for employees. However, the social partners can deviate from legislation by collective agreements.

According to a [report](#) (2019) from the Swedish National Mediation office (Medlingsinstitutet), about 70% of workers in Sweden are organised into unions, and nearly 90% of all employees are affiliated to an employers' organisation. The high percentage of members gives legitimacy to collective agreements. Also worth mentioning is that a collective agreement bound employer must apply the agreement equally to employees who are not members of the contracting employees.

### Acts and ordinances relating to working life in Sweden

The employment protection Act ([Lagen om anställningsskydd](#)) regulates the relationship between employees and employers in the public and private sector.

The Codetermination Act ([Lagen om medbestämmande i arbetslivet](#)) regulates collective agreements, employees' right of trade union representation and the right to join a trade union or employers' organisation.

The Work Time Act ([Arbetstidslagen](#)) regulates working hours.

The Work Environment Act ([Arbetsmiljölagen](#)) regulates obligations of employers on the prevention of illness and accidents at work.

Discrimination Act ([Diskrimineringslagen](#)) is intended to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

The Annual Leave Act ([Semesterlagen](#)) regulates benefits with regard to annual leave, holiday pay and vacation pay.

The Parental Leave Act ([Föräldraledighetslagen](#)) regulates the right of a parent to be on leave from their employment.

The Rental Workers Act ([Lag om uthyrning av arbetstagare](#)) regulates the conditions for workers who are employed by temporary work agencies. A fundamental rule of the law is the principle of equality – that wages and working conditions should be the same regardless of whether a person is directly employed by the company or working for a temporary work agency. The law can in some parts be replaced by collective agreements.

Ordinance on the Job guarantee for young people ([Förordning om jobbgaranti för ungdomar](#)) contains provisions on the labour market policy programme Job guarantee for young people.

### Labour market trends from the 1990s until today

During the early years in the 1990s an economic crisis occurred in Sweden, which led to greatly increased unemployment. To curb youth unemployment, upper secondary level vocational programmes were extended from two to three years. The intention was to broaden the general theoretical elements in vocational education in order to give all pupils the possibility to continue with post-secondary studies. Accordingly, the number of

student places in higher education also increased, which meant more people went on to secondary and higher education levels ([Olofsson & Wadensjö, 2015](#)).

Since the 1990s crisis, the development of the labour market has undergone dramatic changes. Both the social functioning and its composition in respect to different expertise and training requirements have changed drastically. The Swedish workforce has today a considerably higher formal education level of attainment compared to the early 1990s. Within industry, the demand for workers with specialized skills is higher compared to a few decades ago.

### **Harder labour market requirements**

Conditions in working life are crucially different compared to a few decades previously, when the transition phase to the labour market was more well-defined and time-delimited. A [study \(Eklund, Karlsson & Pettersson, 2015\)](#) indicated that the labour market functions less effectively. An issue that has attracted much attention recently concerns matching the labour market's development with the demand of skills in various companies and different employees.

Previously, professional skills development was largely ruled by a company's needs. The opportunities for young people (including those with relatively weak levels of basic education) to get a permanent job with extensive skill and wage development, were then quite common. This has however changed; today the labour market is characterised by much greater flexibility in employment conditions and higher demands on constant individual development. Companies are also less likely to invest in young people's career and skill development ([Olofsson, 2014](#)).

Therefore, today young people have a much more protracted and tortuous path towards finding a job. This is illustrated by the fact that the age at which young people become established on the labour market is higher. It is therefore not unusual for young people to be engaged in short-term and temporary employments, and to commute between working and studying.

Many young people are also referred into entry-levels jobs or work conditions similar to internships. Young people therefore tend to be caught in unsafe or relatively unskilled jobs for longer periods of time compared to the population in general (Olofsson, 2014).

In the light of the labour market development described above, and in the context of obstacles when entering the labour market, a study by Olofsson and Wadensjö ([2012](#)) showed that:

- An incomplete upper secondary school education today creates major problems in the transition from school to work
- Swedish work legislation favours those with permanent jobs. Young people are therefore in a weaker position as they more commonly have temporary jobs. Usually they are last in and therefore the first to go
- Young people are, compared to middle-age workers, at a disadvantage because they have less experience and are therefore expected to have lower productivity levels.

### **Labour market situation today**

According to statistics from the [Statistics Sweden's labour force survey \(LFS\)](#), youth unemployment level in 2018, 17.4% in the age group 15-24, was at its lowest level since 2003. Since then, the unemployment rate has been rising, and was 24.0% in 2020. Over the years, the proportion has been slightly higher among young men compared to young women. In 2020, the share was 25.1% among young men and 22.8% among young women.

There are groups of young people who have particular difficulties entering the labour market. Among young people born in Sweden, 20.3% were unemployed in 2020, compared to 36.6 % among young people born abroad.

## Main concepts

### Unemployment measures

The official unemployment rate is measured by Statistics Sweden's labour force survey (LFS). LFS describes the current employment conditions for the population aged between 15 and 74 years of age and gives information on the development of the labour market. The survey is conducted regularly every month during the whole year. The results are presented as monthly, quarterly and annually statistics, with focus on both the number and the percentage of employed and unemployed persons.

The definition of unemployment and employment is in accordance with the guidelines given by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and follows the ordinances available in the EU.

In regard to young people, the labour market measurement alone does not tell the whole picture for the youth population in general. In order to be able to discuss young people's integration into the labour market, several measurements are needed simultaneously.

This is because young people are a group of individuals who switch between studying and part-time jobs. They are on the path from full-time education to a permanent job, or between their studies and facing exclusion. They are also a group wherein a large proportion of the unemployed are short-term unemployed. This means that young people within the labour force survey is a very changable group, and that they can be more or less employed at different times of the year.

Statistical Sweden has therefore worked to present additional statistics on youth unemployment, presenting quarterly LFS reports which include a section reporting on the unemployment rate taking into account, among other things, the number of unemployed young people who are full-time students and the number of occupying a NEET status.

## 3.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The overall goal for Swedish labour market policy is to reach the lowest level of unemployment in the EU by 2020. An important part of the government's work agenda is an active labour market policy. Prioritized areas are thus to achieve better labour market matching, and to reduce time spent in unemployment among young people.

The importance of collaboration across a range of sectors at all societal levels – national, regional and local – is stressed both by labour market actors and the entrepreneurship policies.

### General distribution between central and local authorities

Sweden has local self-government. This means that municipalities run local and regional affairs, acting on their own responsibility and in a local population's interest. The basic division of responsibilities between central and local labour market policy has been established for many years. Labour market policy is a government responsibility, but local authorities have since the financial crisis years of the early 1990s become increasingly important players in terms of labour market policy initiatives at [local level](#).

The Ordinance on Cooperation to reduce Youth Unemployment ([Förordningen om samverkan för att minska ungdomsarbetslösheten](#)) from 2015 regulates cooperation between local Public Employment Service offices and municipalities. It is stated in the ordinance that cooperation can take the form of local agreements and training contracts and shall apply to unemployed young people between 16 and 24 years of age. Furthermore, government support may be provided to a municipality for both the promotion of local agreements and the organisation of work or training under a training contract.

The Government has appointed the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants ([Dua](#)) to promote cooperation between municipalities the Swedish Public Employment Service. Dua's mandate includes conducting dialogue with and encouraging dialogue between individual municipalities, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), the labour market partners in the local government sphere (municipality and county council level), other central labour market partners, agencies, regional actors and others on how labour market policy initiatives to benefit young people and newly arrived migrants can be developed and made more effective at local level.

## Main actors

The [Ministry of Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is in charge of youth policy. The ministry is responsible for preparing the elements of central government budget concerning youth.

The Division for Youth Policy is placed under the Ministry of Culture. The main task for the Division for Youth Policy is to coordinate and develop youth policy issues, including cross-sectoral youth policy objectives and the follow-up of youth policy. The Division for Youth Policy is also responsible for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF).

The [Ministry of Employment](#) (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) is in charge of issues that concern the well-functioning of the labour market. This includes measures to get young people into work, matching, labour-market policy programmes and unemployment insurance, as well as issues on labour law and work environment so that everyone has the opportunity to take part in working life with good working conditions.

The Division for Labour Market Policy is responsible for issues and matters concerning employment services, labour market policy programmes, the entry of new immigrants into the labour market, unemployment insurance, activity support and development allowance.

The Division is also responsible for vocational rehabilitation and other labour market policy issues concerning people with impairments who have a diminished work capacity. Included in the Division's areas of responsibility are administrative and development issues concerning the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) and the Council for the European Social Fund in Sweden (Swedish ESF Council).

The [Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation](#) (Näringsdepartementet) is responsible for matters relating to housing and urban development, state-owned enterprises, information technology, enterprise and industrial policy, rural affairs, regional growth, postal service issues and infrastructure. Included in the Ministry's areas of responsibility are administrative and development issues concerning the Swedish Innovation Agency (Vinnova) and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

The [Public Employment Service](#) (Arbetsförmedlingen) is in charge of managing youth employment measures in Sweden. The Public Employment Service is a single authority which means that all PES offices in Sweden are governed by the same rules and regulations. This ensures that the service offered is the same all over the country. However, factors such as local differences in labour demand can affect the range of education/training opportunities available, but in general all measures are offered on a national level.

The [Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants](#) (Dua) is to promote cooperation between municipalities and the Swedish Public Employment Service and the development of new forms of collaboration. The aim is to help to reduce youth unemployment and enable newly arrived migrants to become more effectively established in work. Within its overarching mandate, Dua's tasks include encouraging municipalities and Arbetsförmedlingen to enter into collaborative agreements at local level and put them into practice. Dua is also to allocate government grants to municipalities linked to these local agreements.

The [Swedish National Agency for Education](#) (Skolverket) is the central administrative authority for the public school system, publicly organised pre-schooling, school-age childcare and for adult education. The Agency has the specific task of supporting initiatives and actors working to promote entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurial skills in schools. The Agency has also been instructed to identify, analyse and disseminate experiences on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning in primary and upper secondary schools.

The [Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth](#) (Tillväxtverket) has a government mandate to promote sustainable industrial development, regional growth and administering structural funds and work to strengthen the competitiveness by facilitating entrepreneurship and creating attractive environments for companies in the regions.

A specific task is to allocate funds to be used for services or organisations that promote entrepreneurship in higher education.

The [Swedish Innovation Agency](#) (Vinnova) has the government task of promoting sustainable growth by improving the conditions for innovation, as well as funding needs-driven research.

In 2016, Vinnova was, together with The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, tasked to develop a three-year programme for young innovators aged between 18 and 30 years old. The programme consists of three sub-programmes which include stimulation of ideas, development of ideas and commercialization of ideas.

The [Swedish ESF Council](#) (Svenska ESF-rådet) has the government task of managing the Social Fund (Socialfonden) and Fead (Fonden för de som har det sämst ställt) in Sweden.

The overall goal for the Social fund is to contribute to a well-functioning labour market and a durably higher level of employment in the long term. Young people are a prioritized group, especially young people who have not completed secondary education.

### **Main non-public actors**

The [Swedish Trade Union Confederation](#) (Landsorganisationen i Sverige, LO) is the central organisation for 14 affiliates which organise workers within both the private and the public sectors. LO is primarily an organisation for co-ordination, research, signing labour market insurance schemes and creating public opinion at central and regional levels.

[LO Ung](#) is a sub-division catering to members that are under the age of 30. LO Ung arranges conferences and campaigns, and provides information and support of particular interest to young employees.

The [Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees](#) (TCO) is comprised of 14 affiliated trade unions. TCO promotes its members by trying to influence politics and society for the good conditions of work.

TCO have, in order to support young people making the transition from school to work, developed educational materials for labour market issues, primarily for upper secondary schools.

The [Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations](#) (Sveriges akademiker, Saco) is a politically independent central organisation for 23 different unions. Altogether, they have 670 000 members. Saco promotes its members' interests and supports its unions through analyses, debates and shaping opinion. The confederation conducts studies and publishes reports, arranges seminars and activities, and participates in many different contexts in order to influence political decision-making.

[Saco Student Council](#) is Sweden's largest trade union student organisation. They represent over 100 000 students, which in turn are grouped into 19 different unions. The council work to influence education and facilitate the step between education and working life.

The [Confederation of Swedish Enterprise](#) (Svenskt Näringsliv) is the largest business federation in Sweden. Their mission is to increase the understanding of business realities and ensure that all companies in Sweden have the best conditions in which to operate and grow. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise represents almost 60 000 small, medium and large businesses. These are organised into 50 trade and employer associations. The unions represent the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise's members. They work with advocacy and dissemination of knowledge, developing new ideas and concrete proposals to create a better climate for entrepreneurs.

The [Swedish Agency for Government Employers](#), SAGE, (Arbetsgivarverket) is a membership organisation for Government agencies. The Employers' Council determines employer policy and sets membership fees. It also appoints 15 members to the Board. The SAGE Board, which plays a central part in pay negotiations with the trade unions, is the supreme sovereign body between Council meetings.

The [Employer Alliance](#) (Arbestgivaralliansen) is an independent employers' organisation for civil society organisations. They provide professional employer expertise in all matters concerning the relationship between employers and workers, such as labour law, working, leadership and wages. The basis for the Employers' Alliance is to promote both employment law specialist knowledge with unique skills, and knowledge of the terms and conditions in civil society.

The [Swedish Federation of Business Owners](#) (Företagarna) is the largest business organisation in Sweden, representing the interests of around 70 000 business owners. It is an independent, non-partisan organisation owned by its members. Its aim is to promote entrepreneurship, improve conditions for business owners and to influence policy makers to simplify regulation and red tape to make it easier to start and run a business and create growth.

Business Owners provides a discounted membership for young entrepreneurs under the age of 30.

[Young Enterprise Sweden](#) (Ung företagsamhet) is a politically independent, non-profit educational organisation and is part of the worldwide organisation [Junior Achievement](#). Young Enterprise gives children and young people the opportunity to practice and develop their creativity and entrepreneurship ability. Among other things, Young Enterprise provides teachers and school leaders with training opportunities, assessment support and seminars.

[Future-Seeds](#) (Framtidsfrön) is a non-profit organisation aimed at promoting attitudes towards entrepreneurship and to develop the entrepreneurial approach in schools. Since 2002, they are working to support schools in its mission to recognize and develop young people's intrinsic motivation, curiosity and creativity, while at the same time helping schools to a close interaction with the outside world.

[Finnup](#) is a non-profit organisation with the purpose of encouraging young people's innovation interest and increase entrepreneurial learning, with the aim of contributing to a new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs for the future labour market. Finnup also works to strengthen young people's confidence and ability to think about their own ideas.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

All Government decisions are taken jointly. Besides this, an institutionalised mechanism, *Gemensam beredning* ('the *Joint preparation procedure*') is a common process for all ministries in Government Offices. The Joint preparation procedure implies that government affairs that fall within the activity of several ministries should be prepared in consultation with the other ministers concerned. This also applies within a ministry when a case involves more than one minister. Related to youth policy, the joint preparation procedure takes place relatively often because of the cross-sectoral character of youth policy.

## 3.3 Skills forecasting

### Forecasting system(s)

[Statistics Sweden](#) (Statistiska centralbyrån) has the government task to make long-term forecasts and analysis. The agency is also tasked to make analysis of trends in the interaction between education and labour.

The Forecasting Institute (Prognosinstitutet) within SCB makes analyses and forecasts in the long term with regard to labour market and in education. The forecast analyses are financed by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

The long-term forecasts for education and labour are done every three years. The next report is to be published by the end of 2020.

- Statistics Sweden ([Report 2020](#))

The [Ministry of Finance](#) (Finansdepartementet) is responsible for issues concerning central government finances, including coordination of the central government budget, forecasts and analyses, tax issues and the management and administration of central government activities.

About every four years, the Ministry produces the report *Long-Term Survey of the Swedish economy* (Långtidsutredningen). The purpose of the report is to provide a basis for economic policy and to generate policy discussions. An other purpose is to provide a coherent picture of long-term economic development in Sweden. The most recent [Long-Term Survey](#) was conducted in 2019.

The [Public Employment Service](#) conducts twice annual forecasts on the development of the Swedish labour market in the near future. The forecasts are based on interviews with private and public employers and the results are presented in reports for both the whole country and by county.

The forecast work forms the basis for the development of the future labour market policy, including the web site the Occupation compass ([Yrkeskompassen](#)). The web application Yrkeskompassen is conducted annually and presents job opportunities in the coming year for nearly 200 occupations. Together, these cover up to around 80% of the labour market.

The regionally composed reports '[Var finns jobben](#)' are also published every year, presenting the Public Employment Service's professional forecasts per profession.

### Skills development

#### *Higher education*

The Swedish Higher Education Authority got in 2017 a government task to map how universities collaborate with external parties on issues of dimensioning education. The purpose of the assignment was to find ways for increasing cooperation between higher education institutions, working life and other relevant parties. In the [report from 2018](#), the Higher Education Authority concludes that all universities cooperate with external parties when it comes to dimensioning of education. The higher education institutions also cooperate with each other in matters relating to the dimensioning of education. The prerequisites for collaboration are better for institutions that have a strong professional profiling, such as schools of applied sciences, technical universities and business schools.

#### *Vocational Education and training (VET)*

The number of study places in vocational programmes is decided by the industry's demand. Above all, it is the region's economic structure and the jobs available in a particular region that is considered when planning and deciding the number of study places and vocational training needed.

[The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#) (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) has the government task to evaluate and monitor the quality of the VET programs.

### **Initiatives of raising awareness**

[Utbildningsguiden](#) is a website maintained by the [Swedish National Agency for Education](#), with extensive information on higher and vocational education and labour market applicability in Sweden. The website caters for upper secondary level educated young people and provides an overview of both occupational profiles and forecasts of how the labour market for professions will look like in the future. The forecasts used are from the Public Employment Service.

[Studera.nu](#) is a website hosted by The Swedish Council for Higher Education, with extensive information about university studies in Sweden and forecasts of the labour market situation for different programmes and occupations. The website caters for people living in Sweden who are interested in higher education and Ph.D. studies.

## **3.4 Career guidance and counselling**

### **Career guidance and counselling services**

In Sweden, career guidance is a part of a broader education and employment initiative and not treated as a political issue of its own. The two ministries involved are the [Ministry for Education and Research](#) and the [Ministry of Employment](#).

Public sector education and employment authorities and education providers, normally municipalities, are the main actors responsible for guidance and counselling services. Education and training institutions have the main responsibility for guidance and counselling of learners and students.

Vocational guidance and career planning and educational and vocational information services, available at employment offices, are primarily intended for those outside education and training. All guidance and counselling services of employment offices, however, are also available to students.

The right to counselling without cost is an individual right in Sweden. This comprehensive approach is normally combined with a more targeted approach. This means that specific investments are made on different groups with special needs, such as:

- Neet, young people not in education, employment or training
- Long-term unemployed young people
- newly arrived in Sweden
- young people with special needs.

### **Access to guidance**

Individual access to career and counselling guidance is offered in different ways.

For pupils and students in the education system:

- Guidance and counselling is offered in primary schools, secondary schools, adult education, colleges and universities.

For adults and young adults outside the education system:

- Guidance and counselling is offered at career centres and/or counselling centres.

For job seekers outside the education system:

- Guidance is offered at Public Employment offices, career centres and/or counselling centres.

### **Additional access to guidance and the link to the national Youth Guarantee**

Sweden has since 2006 had a strategic policy for youth unemployment in line with the Councils Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. The main reform of the strategy was the establishing of the Job Guarantee for Youth ([Jobbgaranti för ungdomar](#)) in 2007.

The Job Guarantee for Youth is directed towards young people (aged 16–24) who have been unemployed and registered at the Public Employment Service for at least three months over a four-month period.

During the first three months in the programme, the focus is generally on additional access to guidance and career counselling activities, which is comprised of:

- an individual in-depth survey
- career guidance and counselling
- jobseeker activities with coaching.

### **Guidance in non-formal adult education**

There are around 150 folk high schools in Sweden and each of them is independent, which means they are free to decide how to organise career and counselling guidance for students. The schools have given the Information service of the Swedish Folk High Schools (Folkhögskolornas informationstjänst, FIN) the task of handling central counselling and to inform the public about the folk high schools and their courses. The counsellors at the schools have their own network with an annual conference.

### **Digital guidance and information services**

Guidance services through public web services play an important role, and work as a complement to the more general guidance services in Sweden.

Some examples of web services are:

- [Utbildningsinfo.se](#) is a website for students, parents and professionals in the field of education
- [Studera.nu](#) is a website where people can read and learn more about higher education
- [Studyinsweden.se](#) is a website with comprehensive information on higher education for prospective and current international students
- [The Public Employment Service](#) provides about 450 descriptions of different professions including interviews, films, etc., on their web site.

### **Example of guidance offered by a trade union**

[Saco](#) provides annually a number of publications on the subject of study choices and studies. The main target audience is students who soon will complete their secondary education. The factbook about university occupations, '*Choose a profession*' ([Välja Yrke](#)), with information about job content, training paths and salary levels, is published each autumn.

The web site and report '*Future outlook*' ([Framtidsutsikter](#)) provides employment forecasts for a selection of university occupations in the next five years, and is also updated annually. '*The art of choosing education*' ([Konsten att välja utbildning](#)) provides tips and study and inspiration.

### **Acts, regulations and general guidelines for career and counselling services**

The Education Act ([Skollagen](#)) regulates the right to career and counselling guidance for pupils in:

- elementary school
- elementary school for students with special needs

- sami school
- upper secondary school
- upper secondary school for students with special needs
- municipal adult education
- special education for adults.

The National Agency for Education has developed a guide for career guidance ([Arbete med studie- och yrkesvägledning](#)) with general guidelines and comments on career and counselling guidance. The guide is intended to provide a basis for school providers when planning, organizing and implementing career and counselling services for students in different schools.

The Higher Education Ordinance ([Högskoleförordningen](#)) regulates the right to career and counselling guidance for students in universities and colleges.

The Ordinance with instructions for the Public Employment Service ([Förordningen med instruktion för Arbetsförmedlingen](#)), regulates the activities for the Public Employment Service.

### **Cooperation between government agencies**

The National Agency for Education has, since 2014, in cooperation with the Public Employment Service offered a process-education on the topic 'from school to working life' ([utbildningspaketet skola-arbetsliv](#)) and how career and guidance counselling may be integrated into the regular curriculum – and thus become a responsibility for the whole school.

The education primarily targets professionals in upper secondary and adult education. The education takes place in close cooperation with regions, counties or municipalities, with universities responsible for the process support.

The education process last from three to six months, depending on the pace desired. Participants are given process support from a university or college on three occasions. Based on the curricula and the work already done at the school, the aim is to develop an educational approach with the theme, school-working life, or to develop a long-term strategy for the schools' systematic work with career and counselling guidance.

Since its inception in 2014, the education package has been held throughout the country for more than 40 training sessions. Interest has been high and both new and follow-up actions are offered and tailored to different regions' specific needs.

Some of the participants' presentations are also posted at the National Agency for Education's web portal [lararspindel.n.se](#).

### **Cooperation between private and public actors**

[Skolsamverkan](#) (School-collaboration) is a private operator who offers help to regions, municipalities and schools to develop the quality of their career and counselling guidance, and to increase their interaction with the working life. School-collaboration helps operators on the labour market to gain understanding, knowledge and interaction with schools. School-collaboration works on assignments, and initiates and operates projects.

School-collaboration is also responsible for the website [Syv.nu](#), which gathers industries, organisations, official and corporate materials and initiatives aimed at the school's educational and vocational guidance. Syv.nu provides information, inspiration and ideas aimed at guidance counsellors, teachers, other school staff and students.

### **Funding**

The funding of career guidance activities within the education system is part of the municipality's remit. School funding is shared between state and municipalities, but a municipality's main source of income is municipal tax revenues.

A municipality usually has its own local board of education, or similar, which decides on the allocation of funds between different schools in the municipality. This local body also decides on funds to be allocated to grant-aided independent schools in the municipality. There are no national regulations on how resources should be allocated between schools; each municipality develops its own allocation system, although the systems are quite similar. Often a basic amount is determined for each pupil and on top of that additional resources are added for pupils with special needs, etc.

The government agencies and universities in Sweden are mainly financed through appropriation of the state budget on an annually basis. The funding of guidance activities is part of the total funding.

Universities receive allocations from the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

The Public Employment Service receives allocations from the [Ministry of Employment](#).

In addition, the Public Employment Service also has the right to distribute financial support to municipalities offering coaching, career and guiding activities according to the [ordinance](#) on job guarantee for youths.

## Quality assurance

Quality assurance of career guidance in Sweden mainly takes place within the educational system. Private actors and municipalities offering career and counselling guidance are free to decide how to evaluate their services.

### *Upper secondary and adult education*

In Sweden, the school providers have the main responsibility for the quality assurance of the education – including career and counselling services. This includes continuously planning, monitoring and developing its educational services.

The state has the overall responsibility for supervision, follow-up and evaluation of the education system.

[The Swedish Schools Inspectorates](#) (Skolinspektionen) conducts regular quality assurance of all municipal and independent schools, from pre-school to adult education.

The starting point and the criteria for evaluations is based on the requirements contained in the [Education Act](#). One of the Act's criterion is that all students should be able to be aware and make informed choices when deciding about continued education and vocational orientation.

In recent years, the career and counselling services provided in schools has been subject to criticism. In 2019, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate [reviewed](#) the career and counselling services at upper secondary schools' vocational programmes. The study covered 28 schools throughout the country. The main results showed that:

- The career and counselling services are not sufficiently adapted to the constantly on-going changes in labor market.
- The special characteristics among students in vocational programmes are not given enough attention. For example, the upper secondary school's vocational programmes generally have a high share of students whose parents do not have post-secondary education.
- Teachers teach about occupations and the labor market, but often do not see it as study and career guidance.

All in all, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate states that there is a risk that students will not receive the extensive vocational guidance that they need and are entitled to, in many of the schools they examined. The principals therefore need to take a greater responsibility in developing the career guidance. Special emphasis needs to be placed on the vocational guidance, so it can be integrated into the regular teaching.

## Higher Education

The [Swedish Council for Higher Education](#) (Universitetskanslerämbetet) has the government task of evaluating higher education in Sweden. The council evaluates programmes offered by higher education institutions and monitors their quality. Furthermore, the council monitors and reviews how higher education institutions apply the laws and statutes in order to ensure that student's rights are respected.

Even though it is mandated in the Higher Education Ordinance that students have the right to career counselling and guidance, there is no system in place to monitor and quality assure the services.

### *The Public Employment Service*

The Public Employment Service lacks an effective system to monitor the quality and the results of their guidance and career counselling activities. There are hence, in all probability, local and regional differences within the authority. The differences may relate to resources, priorities, skills and collaboration with the municipality.

At the moment there is no clear basic package that all offices have the ability to offer. Within the authority it has been expressed that guiding efforts are insufficient throughout the country, especially regarding young people and newly arrived in Sweden.

Due to these deficiencies, there is now an on-going mapping process, wherein career and counselling services are reviewed in order to improve parts of guidance services. There is increased focus on identifying soft skills, improving guidance towards studies and the use of digital tools.

## 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

### Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Sweden has historically chosen to organize apprenticeship training within the framework of secondary schools, unlike many other European countries, such as Germany and Austria, where apprenticeship has been a main track. This means that most apprenticeships take place within the Swedish education system.

According to the upper secondary school ordinance ([Gymnasieförordningen](#)), all pupils in Sweden in upper secondary schools vocational programmes and within special needs upper secondary schools national programmes shall accomplish part of their training at a workplace. This is called workplace-based learning (arbetsplatsförlagt lärande, APL) and can also occur within adult education and in college preparatory programmes.

Education providers are responsible for obtaining APL-places, and ensuring that the requirements stated in the curriculum are met. In apprenticeship education, the principal decides over the APL, and if students shall accomplish all or part of their course as workplace-based learning.

Before a student begins an APL placement, an education contract must be drawn up between the student and the workplace. This must be signed by the student, the school principal and the legal or actual person providing the APL-place. The education provider is responsible for establishing the training contract.

### Guaranteed workplace-based learning, APL

#### *Upper secondary school*

At all upper secondary school national vocational programmes, APL shall occupy at least 15 weeks. In upper secondary apprenticeship education, at least half of the training shall be at a workplace. Each week with APL is equivalent to 23 hours of guaranteed teaching in a secondary school.

*Special needs upper secondary school*

Pupils at secondary special school national programmes are entitled to at least 22 weeks workplace-based learning. Each APL week is equivalent to 25 hours of guaranteed teaching in upper secondary school.

*Adult education*

APL can occur within adult education, but the time of APL is not regulated. Courses or parts of courses may be attributed to one or more workstations.

*Higher education*

In vocational programmes such as nursing, medicine and teaching, APL is an integrated and mandatory part of the education. The structure of the APL and the regulated time at a workplace may however differ between universities and colleges.

In more general programmes, such as social sciences, humanities and science, internships often happen as optional courses.

*Traineeship within Public Employment programmes*

Young people aged between 16 and 24 years of age, who are participating in the job guarantee for youth, can be offered a traineeship for up to three months. There are no obligations to have a formal agreement between Public Employment and the traineeship provider. Neither is there an obligation to have a job description before an individual enters a workplace, but it is encouraged from the agency. However, the provider always engages in some form of planning, although the participants do not always get a job description. In general, it is up to the provider and the participant to jointly agree on appropriate tasks.

**Social security coverage applying to participants to traineeships and apprenticeships**

Sweden has a universal welfare and health provision system. Participants in labour market programmes, traineeship included, count as workers and are therefore covered by the same social security arrangements as regular workers.

Apprentices during APL-periods are defined as workers, and as pupils when in training at school. This means social security coverage is equally applicable as to students and regular workers.

**The link with the Youth Guarantee scheme**

Sweden has, in line with the European employment strategy Youth Guarantee, worked on facilitating the transition from school to work. This includes widening the use of apprenticeships and work-based learning. Since 2014, the government has, for example:

- allocated extra funds to strengthen cooperation between authorities and industry associations in order to develop the quality of work-based learning
- made it possible for apprentices to seek apprenticeship allowance for meals and traveling costs in order to ensure that no student has to opt out apprenticeship education for economic reasons.

Furthermore, an apprenticeship reform has been implemented since 2015. The reform means that pupils within upper secondary vocational programmes can now be employed in a new form of employment called secondary apprenticeship employment (Gymnasial lärlingsanställning).

The secondary apprenticeship employment is temporary and means, in brief:

- the employment may relate to all or part of the workplace practice
- the employment ceases as a rule when the work-based learning under the education-contract terminates

- the Employment Protection Act does not apply to this form of employment.

## Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

### *The Government internship programme*

The Government has a special traineeship programme aimed at newly arrived job seekers and people with disabilities that impair their capacity to work. The aim is to give those people experience in a government agency and thereby improve their job prospects. It is however unclear to what degree newly arrived young people and young people with disabilities that impair their capacity to work are participating in the internship programme.

### **European Alliance of apprenticeship**

Sweden is a member of the European Alliance of Apprenticeship and has taken a number of measures and initiatives to increase quality, supply and attractiveness of apprenticeship education. [For example:](#)

- financial support to municipalities to further engage in apprenticeship training
- National information campaigns on VET
- Incentive scheme with financial support to providers of apprenticeship training (school and workplace).

### *Technology-Leap (Tekniksprånget)*

Since 2012, the internship programme [Tekniksprånget](#) is run by the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA) at the request of the Swedish Government. Through Tekniksprånget, Swedish employers and the Government are together investing in preserving Sweden's engineering tradition. Tekniksprånget allows upper secondary school graduates to get practical experience. The goal is to demonstrate the possibilities of an engineering degree for a young target group.

Today, more than 200 employers offer internship positions through Tekniksprånget.

### **Raising awareness**

Representatives from the Government offices continuously participate in different career days, fairs and other occasions in order to meet students and inform them about traineeship possibilities within government offices. In addition, the government also provides information on its website about traineeships possibilities in different offices.

### *Information about Vocational Education and Training (VET)*

The last decade or so, it has generally been difficult to attract young people into vocational education and training in Sweden. The Government therefore declared 2016 to be a VET year. Extra resources were allocated in order to lift attractiveness and to meet the labour demand. The Swedish Education Agency has among other things:

- directed information campaigns towards students in upper secondary education and their parents
- on the occasion of the VET year, organized a number of conferences on VET
- in addition, the event '*Swedish occupational skills*' (yrkesutbildningsmässan) is held every two years. It is the largest effort in Sweden aimed at increasing interest in recruitment into VET in several areas such as construction, design, industry, IT, health care and technology. Schools and general public are invited to visit the event.

## **Recognition of learning outcomes**

### **Support of learning outcomes in upper secondary education**

The Swedish National Agency for Education has developed different forms of valuation support in order to recognize learning outcomes for the national vocational programmes.

For instance, they have made an introductory film, a brochure about the valuation of learning outcomes and a film with valuation examples and discussion questions.

The subject syllabus forms the basis for the evaluation of the learning outcomes. Its starting point is the knowledge requirement stated in the syllabus. From the subject syllabus it is shown, for example:

- which objectives the pupil shall achieve
- what should be assessed
- how the quality of the performed work should be valued.

After the completion of an apprenticeship or a traineeship period, the student receives a grade or a certificate, which is based on an overall assessment from both the school-based and workplace parts.

### **Higher education**

Every university that offers internship courses and/or vocational programmes has its own way of validating the knowledge, skills and competences acquired. It is commonly stated in the curriculum what kind of skills and competences a student shall receive after completion of an internship course. It is also common for the internship provider to write a certificate which states the completed work tasks and gives a general description of how the student has been perceived.

All internship courses offered at Swedish universities give ECTS credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), that in most of cases can be included as part of progress towards a bachelor's or a master's degree.

The same rules apply to students who have undergone a traineeship within a higher vocational education programme. The difference is that they gain ECVET credits (European Accumulation and Transfer Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) instead of ECTS.

### **The Public Employment Service**

In general, there is a lack of formal valuation mechanisms to recognise the skills and competences achieved by participants who have undergone a traineeship within a labour market programme.

It is only when a professional assessment (yrkeskompetensbedömning) is made that there is a formal valuation of the participant's skills and competences. A professional assessment is a form of traineeship which gives an employer the possibility to try a new worker while assessing whether the job applicant's education and skills are usable in the labour market. A professional work assessment usually takes between one and three weeks. After the assessment is done, the employer writes a certificate, and will hopefully also act as reference person when the participant continues to look for a job.

### **Internships and apprenticeships outside formal education and labour market programmes**

It is harder to validate the knowledge, skills and competences acquired for those who have participated in traineeships or in apprenticeships outside the Swedish labour market or outside of formal education programmes. This means that it is harder for these young people to obtain a partial or full qualification within the system of formal education.

A [government report](#) has shown that Sweden in general has lacked a clear structure at national level to effectively validate different skills and competences regardless of whether or not it has applied internships/apprenticeships, or foreign education.

In order to make the validation system more effective, long-term and transparent, the government [appointed](#) in 2015 a National Validation Delegation ([Valideringsdelegationen](#)). The Delegation is tasked with accompanying, supporting and

driving the coordinated development within the validation area at the national and regional level.

## Funding

Each apprenticeship position is funded by a government grant from the state budget. Government subsidies can be given for apprenticeship education at upper secondary school, municipal adult education and special education for adults. The grant is divided into three parts:

- implementation of apprenticeship
- compensation to the workplace
- training of supervisors at the workplace.

The maximum amount of support is 50 000 Swedish kronor (4 800 euro) per apprentice per year. The grant is distributed by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

Information on the general amount of funding as a percentage of the overall budget is not available.

## Quality assurance

School providers have the main responsibility in monitoring and ensuring the quality of traineeships and apprenticeships. It is also a school's responsibility to make sure the workplace is a good working environment and fulfils the current working requirements. The same working requirements also apply to students on APL. Before an APL starts, the school providers and the employer shall, according to the regulations from the Swedish Work Environment Authority (Arbetsmiljöverket), make a risk assessment of the workplace.

The National Agency for Education has also developed general [guidelines](#), as support for schools when ensuring if an APL-place is of good quality.

Important factors for an APL-place of good quality are that the:

- activities at the workplace have sufficient width and depth within the current education area
- workplace appoints a supervisor who is prepared and suitable for the task
- workplace is a good working environment.

According to the [Education Act](#), systematic quality work is aimed at attaining the national goals for education. This requirement means that principals for pre-school units and school units systematically are to continually monitor their activities and analyse results in relation to the national goals. Based on this analysis, education is to be planned, developed and adjusted.

## The Public Employment Service

Extensive inspection of an employer has to take place before an individual is sent to a traineeship. At first, there is a consultation with the local union division. After the first contact, the union has five days for leaving recommendations as to whether the workplace is suitable or not. Thereafter, it is up to the Public Employment Service to decide if the recommendations should be followed or not. In addition to the consultation, the agency must also ensure that the employer does not have:

- a trading prohibition
- tax debt passed to the Swedish Enforcement Authority (Kronofogden) or significant payment notes.

## 3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

### Youth employment measures

Sweden has introduced major reforms in several areas to improve the resilience of its economy, addressing both structural and cyclical challenges.

A number of measures have been undertaken in recent years to increase youth employment: reforms have been made in the areas of education, the labour market and tax policy (for more information see previous National Reform Programmes ([2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#))). The overall aim of the measures for youth is to support their entry into the labour market or to find a way for them to pursue and complete education.

In the [Swedish response](#) (2014) to the Council's Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, it is stated that Sweden has had a strategic policy for promoting youth employment in line with the Council's Recommendation since 2006. The main reform of the new strategy was the establishing of a Job Guarantee for Youth.

Below is a list of examples from the Swedish response document of implemented and improved employment measures in line with the Youth Guarantee:

- 2007 launch of the Job Guarantee for Youth
- 2008 launch of New Start Jobs (NSJ)
- 2009 individualised coaching for the unemployed aimed at supporting a high level of job search activity
- 2010 launch of study motivation courses within the Job Guarantee for Youth
- 2011 launch of the higher study grant for unemployed youth
- 2011 study motivation courses available from day one of unemployment
- 2012 launch of profiling tool
- 2012 launch of activation measures from day one of unemployment
- 2013 strengthening of PES possibilities to support youth from day one of unemployment
- 2013 strengthening of NSJ for long-term unemployed youth
- 2013 launch of the activity report
- 2014 clarifications in the legislation to ensure that young people receive the support and assistance they need to return to education
- 2014 launch of the support for vocational introduction jobs.

In the [Budget bill for 2015](#), the then newly elected government explained that addressing high youth unemployment was one of its top priority labour market policy challenges. The government therefore formulated a target of a 90-day guarantee. The guarantee aims to limit the time for how long a young person can be unemployed before he or she is offered a job, or an effort that leads to a job or an education.

In order to enable the 90-day guarantee, the government has undertaken a series of measures: among other things, introducing training-contracts and trainee-jobs. Both of these labour policies are based on close collaboration between the Public Employment Service and municipalities. Furthermore, the availability of higher contributions within the student financial aid programme for young people between 20 and 24 years of age who resume upper secondary education have been expanded, and the option to take study-motivating courses at folk high schools has been extended.

### *The objective of the 90-day guarantee has been reached*

Ever since the 90-day guarantee was introduced in 2015, the number of young people who have been openly unemployed without having been offered a job, education or training has gradually decreased, according to a [study](#) of the Public Employment Service. At the end of November 2017, the number of young people who did not receive such an offer was just around 400. What more, by the beginning of 2015, it took in average 80 days until a young person was in work, study or training. In October 2017, the period had decreased to 53 days.

Therefore, the Public Employment Service assesses the objective of the 90-day guarantee to be reached. However, there is still space for improvements. The most common reason why a young person did not get an offer within 90 days was that the person did not show up to a planned visit, or that efforts to contact the person had failed. Other common reasons of not getting an offer was that the the person had planned (or ongoing) studies, alternatively was about to start working.

### **Youth Employment Delegation and the European Social Fund**

An important step in the 90-day guarantee was that the Government established the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants ([Delegationen för unga och nyanlända till arbete](#)). The remit the delegation is to ensure that labour market policy initiatives for youth unemployment have greater impact at the local level, facilitate central and local government cooperation and develop new forms of partnership. Since February 2017, enabling newly arrived migrants to become more effectively established in work is also a part of the delegation's task.

Local agreements between municipalities and the Public Employment Service on initiatives to reduce unemployment among young people and newly arrived migrants is a central part of the task. As of October 2017, [287 out of the 290 municipalities](#) in Sweden have drafted agreements with the local public employment service office. The agreements contain measurable goals, action plans for attaining the goals and identifying young people in NEET situations in the municipality.

In addition to national youth employment measures, the European Social Fund (ESF) has an important role in promoting employment for youth through the financing of ESF projects with a special focus on early intervention and activation measures for those in NEET situations.

### **Specific target groups**

There are groups of young people who have it harder than others to get a job. Young people with disabilities generally have a more vulnerable position in the labour market than those without disabilities. The same goes for those lacking upper secondary education or being born outside of Europe. Therefore, the Public Employment Service emphasises the importance of targeted efforts that are adapted to the individual's needs. The key is to prioritize cooperation and early individual and qualitative support. Here, the 90-day guarantee for young people is an important tool for keeping unemployed young people active ([Arbetsförmedlingen 2017](#)).

Sweden has one of the lowest NEET rates in the EU. In the age group 15 to 24, the share was 6.5 % in 2016, compared to the average for all EU countries of 11.6 %. The government's approach to labour market policy is however that measures should target those whose need is the greatest. Young people in NEET situations are therefore a specific target group, and in November 2015, the government presented a strategy for young people who neither work nor study: Ways Forward – A Strategy for Young People who neither Work nor Study ([Vägar framåt – strategi för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar](#)). See section [4.3](#), Strategy for the social inclusion of young people, for more information.

## **Flexicurity measures focusing on young people**

The Swedish [National Reform Programme 2016](#), aimed at improving the conditions for full employment and inclusive sustainable growth up to 2020, states that a number of agreements have been established to boost youth employment in recent years. Some agreements involve the government while others are between the social partners. In these cases the government supports its partners through different support structures.

Examples of agreements include:

### ***Vocational introduction agreements***

The common target group for different agreements is young people with no relevant job experience. The construction of the agreements varies between industries, but common to all of them is that idea that work is to be combined with education (the education component is restricted to a maximum of 25% of working hours).

The education component can be either at the workplace or supplied by an external provider. The education period does not result in any wage entitlement. The agreement is signed independently between the social partners and is based on collective agreements.

The government supports the parties' signing of vocational introduction agreements through following support structures for the agreements:

- wage subsidy equivalent to an ordinary employer's contribution (31.42%)
- supervisor support equivalent to SEK 2 500 (about 255 euros) per month and employee
- financial support for special information campaigns on vocational introduction jobs and student employee jobs.

### ***Student employee jobs***

In 2014, a collective agreement on student employees was signed in the private, municipal and central government sectors. The private sector agreement refers to the property industry. The agreements vary but target students at universities, other higher education level institutions or those in post-secondary education, and refer to qualified work with a clear link to ongoing studies.

These jobs are temporary positions of varying durations, ranging from employment for a single term (Swedish Associations of Local Authorities and regions) to a maximum of four terms (central government), with the maximum weekly working hours of 10 to 15 hours per week on average.

For employees, the agreement provides an opportunity to work with qualified tasks and facilitates the transition from studies to working life. Employers gain the opportunity to utilise the competence of students from tertiary education, while at the same time, have the chance to show-off their business in order to attract a competent workforce.

### ***Security provisions for young unemployed***

Unemployed young people are, like any other workers, entitled to compensation from unemployment insurance. However, in order to receive benefits, two conditions must be met. First, the individual must have been employed for at least six month during a period of 13 months. Second, the individual must have been/be a member of an unemployment fund.

However, because of the changes on the labour market, combined with extended training periods and less stable employment conditions, young people often have difficulties to qualify for unemployment benefits. Many young people are therefore dependent on additional financial aid support.

The age group 18–24 represents almost a quarter of the recipients with social security benefits. The proportion of young people having unemployment as their main reason for

social security benefits is significantly higher compared to middle-aged and elderly people.

What divides the conditions for young people seeking financial assistance from other age groups is the fact that social services have a stated right to condition the support with participation in internship or competence-raising efforts.

- Supervisor support equivalent to 2 500 Swedish kronor (255 euros) per month and employee.
- Financial support for special information campaigns on vocational introduction jobs and student employee jobs.

### **Reconciliation of private and working life for young people**

There are no youth specific policy measures or initiatives supporting the balance between work and family and responsibilities.

### **Funding of existing schemes/initiatives**

Funding of youth employment measures is mainly through the state budget, expenditure area labour market and working life. Various budget lines exist which finance different schemes within the budget area. Costs for labour market programmes and interventions, in which many youth is participating, are for example presented in the [Budget bill for 2017](#).

The Ministry of Employment administers the labour market budget and allocates appropriations to the Public Employment Service and the Swedish ESF Council.

According to the Budget bill of 2017, the amount of funding earmarked for the EU funds was 1 181 070 Swedish kronor (123 000 euros).

### **Quality assurance**

All youth employment schemes and measures are monitored and quality assured on a continual basis in order to ensure effectiveness and improvements are made.

The Public Employment Service conducts their own evaluations and presents regularly on its website the results of their monitoring and statistics from Statistics Sweden. Universities play an important role in labour market policy research. Social partners, different interest organisations and government agencies also contribute to changes and progress in labour market policy.

Presented below are two public authorities with a quality assurance function (see section [3.3](#), Skills Forecasting, for information on other actors).

[The Swedish National audit Office](#) (Riksrevisionen) is part of the central control power of the Swedish Parliament. Their task is to contribute to the efficient use of resources and efficient management of the state through an independent audit of all government operations.

[The Swedish Agency for Public Management](#) (Statskontoret) has the government task of analysing and evaluating state-funded activities. The agency has conducted a large number of studies among others about the Public Employment Service's work and the labour market programmes.

## 3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

### Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

#### *Eures*

[Eures](#) is a cooperation network between the EU/EAA countries and Switzerland. The aim is to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EEA.

[The Public Employment Service](#) has national coordination responsibility for the Eures offices in Sweden. The Public Employment Service is administrator of the EU project '[Your first EURES job](#) – Targeted Mobility Scheme', with a current duration of until the end of January 2021. The project is open to young people aged 18–35 and employers from all EU countries, Norway and Iceland.

#### *Eurodesk*

Eurodesk is responsible for the European Youth Portal aimed directly at young people seeking working, study or volunteer possibilities in another European country.

The Government has appointed the [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCF) to be the national partner in issues concerning Eurodesk. There are as well several local contact points for Eurodesk in Sweden.

#### *Erasmus for young entrepreneurs*

The [European entrepreneurs programme](#) provides young new entrepreneurs the possibility to exchange knowledge and business ideas with a more experienced entrepreneur in another country. The goal is to strengthen the skills needed to develop a business.

The programme last between one to six months and is managed locally by a network of intermediary organisations such as Chambers of Commerce, incubators and other organizations that support companies and already work to promote entrepreneurship at European, national or local level.

#### *Nordjob.org*

[Nordjobb.org](#) is a Nordic cross-border mobility programme. The core activities consists of a summer programme, where young people are given work, access to housing and the opportunity to participate in organized cultural activities in another Nordic country.

The jobs on offer are mainly traditional summer jobs including farming, hotel or youth hostel works, cleaning services, factory and/or warehouse work, as well as jobs in nursing homes and within transport and the haulage industry.

All young people of an EU-country or a Nordic country can apply.

Nordjobb is a non-profit project and is always free of charge for both contractors and participants.

### Legal framework

Most of the legal framework for the cross-border mobility of workers, trainees/apprentices and professionals targets the population in general.

The only existing legal framework specifically targeting young people are [special signed agreements](#) with Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand and South Korea. The agreements with different countries gives incoming and outgoing young people aged between 18 and 30 years of age the right to stay and work in these respective countries for up to a year. In Sweden, commonly a job offer is needed before a non-EU citizen can apply for and be granted a work permit, but in this case, a person can come to Sweden and look for a job.

## 3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

### Policy Framework

Sweden's current national strategy for the development of entrepreneurship competence and an entrepreneurial mind-set among young people, '*Strategy for Entrepreneurship in Education and Training*' ([Strategi för entreprenörskap inom utbildningsområdet](#)), was adopted in 2009.

The definition used in the strategy on what entrepreneurship may involve is described as follows:

'Entrepreneurship is about developing new ideas and to translate these ideas into something that creates value. The value can be created in companies, public organizations and associations'.

According to the strategy, when it comes to education, entrepreneurship may involve specific skills required to start and run a business, such as business administration and business planning. Entrepreneurship education can also include more general skills that are useful even outside the business world, such as project management and risk management. Educating entrepreneurs also means inspiring to creativity and willingness to take responsibility for reaching a goal.

In upper secondary and post-secondary education, it is reasonable to have an increased emphasis on the specific knowledge and skills needed to start and run a business. At university level, entrepreneurship education may involve both theoretical and practical studies of the whole process: from assessing the commercial viability of an idea to establishing a company in the market. Higher education in entrepreneurship may also, more generally, prepare students for work with change processes in large and small organisations; in the private, as well as the public sector.

#### Actions taken by the Government:

- The Swedish Agency for Education (Skolverket) has been tasked to support primary and upper secondary schools to stimulate work on entrepreneurship
- The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) has been tasked to support colleges and universities to stimulate work on entrepreneurship
- The importance of stimulating entrepreneurship skills has been incorporated and emphasized in policy documents for secondary education
- The secondary vocational education has been linked more closely to work life and businesses
- Apprenticeship education has been introduced and students participating in training are given better insights into business conditions
- A mapping of the on-going work in upper secondary, vocational and higher education in entrepreneurship has been conducted.

The main target groups for the above actions are pupils and students, teaching staff and leaders of educational institutions.

In 2018, the Government has taken [initiatives for pupils and students](#) in compulsory and upper secondary education and in university colleges and universities for increasing their interest in entrepreneurship. A total of SEK 20 million ( about 1,9 million euros) is invested. New assignments go to the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) and to fund a pilot initiative at the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA).

The National Agency for Education gets SEK 10 million for strengthening entrepreneurship in compulsory and upper secondary schools. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth will receive SEK 7 million for developing a digital

education aimed at young entrepreneurs. IVA has been tasked to form a pilot initiative where pupils in grades 8 and 9 of compulsory school may try out to run business during one day.

## Formal learning

### Incorporation of entrepreneurship competence in the curricula

In 2011, the government launched central parts of a new reform programme targeting the education system. A new Education Act came into force, accompanied by a new School Ordinance and a revised Curriculum. Through the changes made in the Curriculum, entrepreneurship was embedded across all levels and in all types of education, and is today part of a cross-curricular objective.

The importance of entrepreneurship in schools and education in Sweden was incorporated into the political agenda two decades ago. Since the mid-1990s there has been a political consensus that globalization, coupled with technological developments, makes the mobilisation of entrepreneurship skills within the educational system inevitable ([Johannisson, Madsén & Hjorth, 1997](#)). Increasing young people's propensity to start their own businesses after graduation has been and is considered to have a good effect on the country's labour market and economy.

However, despite the long consensus, it is not until recently that Sweden has taken a comprehensive approach to incorporate entrepreneurship into the school curricula.

### Upper secondary education

One of the goals of entrepreneurship education in secondary education is to provide students with an entrepreneurial spirit and a different outlook on working life. Another goal for entrepreneurship education is to prepare people to work as entrepreneurs and to start a new business. This goal can often be achieved by facilitating students to experiment with an idea and by trying entrepreneurship in a controlled environment. When it comes to seeing how the goals vary depending on education level can be found that for grades 6–9 and upper secondary schools as well as colleges and universities, the purpose of entrepreneurship is to improve the attitude towards entrepreneurship and thus in the long term increase the number of start-ups (Skolverket 2015).

Since 1980, Junior Achievement Sweden ([Ung Företagsamhet](#)) has trained upper secondary level students in entrepreneurship processes through education. The idea is to give students experience in all stages of the enterprising life cycle. As support to the concept, there are teaching materials for students, a teacher's guide and local and regional support through regional offices.

Junior Achievement Sweden's most recognizable educational programme is called the Company Programme (UF-företagande. According to a [report](#) from 2012, half of the enterprises are found in vocational preparatory programmes and the other half in study preparatory programmes.

### Vocational Education Training

It is difficult to analyse how entrepreneurship is treated in vocational education training programmes. VET is constructed via low level regulation and with a considerable influence from working life. Also, the VET programmes constitute a very heterogeneous group, where almost every training is unique and conducted under unique conditions. Entrepreneurship in VET is therefore associated with many different terms. For example, sense of initiative, enterprise, project management and value creation, often with a focus on innovation, improvement and enterprise.

A [mapping](#) made by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Yrkeshögskolan) in 2010 of on-going work with entrepreneurship in VET showed that entrepreneurship was not a new phenomenon in VET. Within the different VET programmes, it was common to find that theoretical knowledge translated into practical elements both in the school-based parts and during LIA-periods (Learning at work). The

general conclusion was that VET had good prerequisites for successfully working with entrepreneurship.

Since the mapping was conducted several years ago, it is likely that further development with entrepreneurship also has taken place.

### Higher education

Education in entrepreneurship at Swedish higher education institutions is comprised of a broad scale of study options, from strictly theoretical training to very specialized programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs.

A [study](#) on entrepreneurship in higher education (2016) shows that 37 out of 51 universities and university colleges offer some sort of training in innovation and entrepreneurship. Fifteen universities provide both programmes and courses. Nineteen universities provide only courses in entrepreneurship. Some courses and programmes involve different forms of traineeship, while others mainly take an academic, intellectual approach to entrepreneurship.

Two of the master level training programmes included elements enabling to students to start a business as part of their compulsory thesis. Those programmes represent the most complex and resource intensive alignment on entrepreneurship education.

### Non-formal and informal learning

#### Emax Sweden

[Emax Sweden](#) is an event organized annually since 2002 which brings together the foremost young entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 20 years old. The event takes place over the course of four days and is a combination of mixed lectures, social activities, networking exercises, teambuilding, workshops, recreational activities, and an Internet-based business simulation, wherein participants can try to run a company.

#### BE the Future

The project [BE the Future](#), aimed at young females from Sweden, Estonia and Latvia, is running between 2020 and 2022. The project is aiming at raising awareness of self-employment as a career option, creating a positive attitude towards entrepreneurial activity and encouraging the target group to test their ideas and see entrepreneurship as a potential career option.

The three-year project will promote entrepreneurial mindsets through peer networking, sharing of best experiences and resources as well as engaging a ring of mentors for inspiration and guidance. The project aims to prepare, coach and support 225 young future female entrepreneurs from the three countries in the planning and development of student companies. By the end of the project, at least 50 student companies will have been created, which will be able to translate entrepreneurial intention into practice.

### Educators support in entrepreneurship education

[The Swedish National Agency for Education](#) (Skolverket) has the government task of stimulating work with entrepreneurship in schools.

As part of the task, the agency has initiated and developed a knowledge overview, [Skapa och våga](#), which gives an overall picture of experiences, concepts and research on entrepreneurship in school. The overview works as a guide for those active in school and for those interested in the on-going entrepreneurial work at schools. The overview is revised continuously.

On its [website](#), the agency compiles good examples on how different actors have worked with entrepreneurship.

In addition, the agency is distributing government grants to school providers for activities in order to stimulate the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning within the school system. The agency has entrusted universities and colleges around the

country to organize courses in entrepreneurial learning for staff at pre-school, primary and upper secondary school levels.

The Nordic Council of Ministries ([Nordiska ministerrådet](#)) is the official inter-governmental body for co-operation in the Nordic region. The Council publishes a magazine, which works as inspiration for schools who actively want to work with entrepreneurship.

### 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

#### Access to information

The [Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth](#) (Tillväxtverket) is a central actor for providing both general and youth-tailored information, with the following services:

- a telephone service with free of charge information and guidance, the 'Starting Line' (Startlinjen)
- a podcast specifically targeting young people in order to reach out with information about entrepreneurship in new ways
- a number of different web services with information regarding start-up of new businesses and information about the EU-support in Sweden.

Another actor providing both general and youth-targeted information is the [Swedish Tax Agency](#) (Skatteverket). The Agency offers advice on their [website](#) for young entrepreneurs. The Tax Agency even provides information linking to Junior Achievement Sweden and their educational programme the Company Programme (UF-företagande), which targets pupils at upper secondary schools (see section [3.8](#) for more information on Junior Achievement Sweden)

It is also common that universities provide information services through innovation and advisory centres. In these centres, researchers and students can receive information and support on how to commercialise their ideas and knowledge, either by starting new companies or incorporating them into existing operations.

See for example:

- [Liu Innovation](#) – University of Linköping
- [KTH Innovation](#) – Royal Institute of Technology
- [SU Inkubator](#) – University of Stockholm.

There are also different public web services with directed information about entrepreneurship.

Some examples of these services are:

- [Verksamt.se](#) provides aggregated information from the Swedish Tax Agency, the Swedish Companies Registration Office and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth on funding opportunities, how to start, develop or shut down a business.
- [Eufonder.se](#) provides information on the EU Structural and Investments Funds and the existing possibilities to gain grants. The website has been developed in collaboration between the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Swedish ESF Council and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

#### Access to capital

Most of the public start-up funding in Sweden is available for the population in general. However, there is some public funding specifically tailored for young people.

Below is a list comprising both general funding and targeted public start-up funding for youth.

The Public Employment Service provides:

- In some cases, financial support to young people participating in the Job Guarantee and who are considered to have good prospects to start a business. Support can be given for up to six months and is either provided through activity support or development allowance.
- In some cases, special start-up funding support for people with disabilities that impair capacity to work.

[The Swedish Board of Agriculture](#) (Jordbruksverket) provides:

- Agricultural start-up support for people up to 40 years old who have started a farm for the first time.
- Compensatory support for farmers in areas where farming conditions are unfavourable.

[Almi Enterprise Partner](#) (Almi företagspartner) provides:

- Preliminary-study support to verify innovative ideas in the project phase.
- Innovation loans focused on innovation projects in the development phase.
- Microloans for entrepreneurs who want to start a new business.
- Microloans with EIF guarantee aimed at those who want to start and develop a micro-enterprise. The loan is offered in cooperation with the European Investment Fund.

## 3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

### Special events and activities

#### Youth business fairs

##### *Innovation camps*

[Junior Achievement Sweden](#) (Ung Företagsamhet) is a non-profit organisation providing educational programmes in entrepreneurship for compulsory and upper secondary schools. The aim is to ensure the progression of entrepreneurship education within the Swedish school system. As a part of that, Junior Achievement Sweden provides regional [Innovation Camps](#) in collaboration with municipalities, businesses and schools. An Innovation Camp is a team competition that works for all ages. The aim is enable a young enterprise, together with the cooperation partner, comes up with an innovative and viable solution to a real problem.

##### *The Swedish corporate competition*

Junior Achievement Sweden also arranges an annual [Swedish corporate competition](#) for young entrepreneurs. The government has payed regard to the competition. In 2016, the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven visited the competition and [held a speech](#) where he stressed that young entrepreneurs' creativity, courage and business ideas are necessary for Sweden's future employment rate and growth.

##### *Non-formal and informal learning of entrepreneurial skills*

Two examples on non-formal and informal learning of entrepreneurial skills are provided in chapter [3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence](#).

#### **Public relations campaign for introducing entrepreneurship to young people**

There is no current public relations campaign for introducing entrepreneurship to young people. Usually, information about entrepreneurship is disseminated through [Junior Achievement Sweden](#) or through teachers in schools.

## Networks and partnerships

Networks and structures at regional and national levels involved in promoting entrepreneurship culture are offered by Junior Achievement Sweden.

### Initiatives bringing together public, private and civil society

*Start a new business information*

[Almi](#), together with the Swedish Public Employment Service and Nyföretagarcentrum (Center for start-up companies) support less experienced young entrepreneurs in developing a business, by giving information and advice, and by offering mentors.

## 3.11 Current debates and reforms

### School holiday jobs 2021

To improve young people's entry into the labour market, the Government has set aside SEK 180 million in 2021 to strengthen the municipalities' opportunities to create [school holiday jobs for young people](#). The target group is young people who have completed primary education, young people in upper secondary education and young people who are covered by the municipal activity responsibility. Young people living in socio-economically disadvantaged households are a priority group.

The Government intends to give the Public Employment Service (arbetsförmedlingen) the task of distributing up to SEK 180 million (about 18 million euros) to Sweden's municipalities to strengthen their opportunities to create summer jobs for young people.

The Government has previously presented a number of measures that strengthen the conditions for meeting increased unemployment. The Government's previous measure [Jobs for young people in 2021](#) together with this investment in summer jobs means that the Swedish Public Employment Service can distribute a total of SEK 380 million for job creation for young people through the municipalities during the current year. This is estimated to be able to contribute about 20,000 jobs for young people in the municipalities' activities.

### Jobs for young people 2021

To improve young people's entry into the labour market, the [Government has commissioned the Swedish Public Employment Service](#) (Arbetsförmedlingen) to distribute up to SEK 200 million (about 20 million euros) to the municipalities to strengthen their opportunities to create jobs for young people.

The target group for the initiative is young people who in 2020 have completed, or in 2021 will complete, their upper secondary education and young people who are covered by the municipal activity responsibility. The Employment service should strive to distribute half of the money according to the number of young people in the municipalities living in households with low socio-economic status. Socio-economically low status refers to households where earned income is less than 60 per cent of the median in the country. The grant may be paid for jobs during 2021 and may last for a maximum of 4 months.

The Public employment service must submit a final report in May 2022. The final report must also state how many young people, divided by gender and age, have found work and how the grant has been distributed based on the number of young people living in households with low socio-economic status.

### SEK 1 billion to enable more jobseekers to access job-matching services in 2021

The Government proposes that funds are allocated to gradually increase the number of participants in procured job-matching services. Increasing the extent of procured matching services can contribute to shorter periods of unemployment and a lighter burden on Arbetsförmedlingen. It can also contribute to gradually increasing the

suppliers' capacity to offer matching services for jobseekers ahead of a future reformed system.

In the Budget Bill for 2021, the Government proposes that SEK 1 billion be allocated to gradually increase the number of participants in procured matching services as part of Arbetsförmedlingen's reform process. This will be followed by an estimated SEK 1.5 billion in 2022 and SEK 2 billion in 2023. It is estimated that in 2023, SEK 500 million will be added to appropriation 1:2 'Grant to unemployment benefit and activity support'.

## 4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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This chapter presents current initiatives taken by the Swedish Government for promoting social inclusion of young people. Among the initiatives, the following two are of special interest.

The Government has since 2015 a strategy for young people who neither work nor study. The strategy (see chapter [4.3](#) for more details) presents measures the government has taken, or will take, in the years 2015–2018. The strategy concerns young people between 15 and 25 years of age, focusing on those who are facing the greatest difficulties in terms of social inclusion. Groups specifically targeted are young people with disabilities, those who have not completed upper secondary school and young immigrants.

Government's strategy to counter violent extremism was presented in June 2016. The strategy (see chapter [4.5](#) for more details) presents actions for boosting the development of social skills, critical thinking and awareness of democratic rights and obligations among young people. The prevention dimension of the strategy focuses on groups and individuals receptive to recruitment to violent extremism. The preemption dimension focuses on measures geared towards individuals in violent extremist environments and their relatives.

### 4.1 General context

#### Main challenges to social inclusion

The transition from school to work is the main challenge to social inclusion of young people. Even though unemployment rates are decreasing among young Swedes, there are groups of young people who face major difficulties in getting established in the labour market.

Young immigrants, those with immigrant background, the disabled or those who have been in institutional care are over-represented among young people who have not completed secondary education. They are therefore at the greatest risk of encountering problems in getting established in the society and in the labour market.

Swedish upper secondary schools provide education free of charge to all pupils who have completed compulsory schooling. One of the main contemporary challenges is the increasing number of students who do not complete compulsory school, and are therefore not eligible for a national upper secondary school programme. The proportion rose from 14.4% in 2015 to 16.9% in 2016 and 17.5% in [2017](#). [In 2020](#), the share went back to 14.4%.

Young people not eligible for a national upper secondary school programme are offered places on introductory programmes. Therefore almost every young person (about 98%) starts upper secondary education, although many drop out or take a break in their studies. Of the students who started upper secondary school in 2014 only 72% had obtained a high school diploma or a study certificate within [three years](#). Within four years, the proportion is around 78%.

Developments during the past years have been marked by increasing differentiation within the educational system. Today there is a real socio-economic, ethnic and performance based segregation in schools, at both primary and secondary levels. Students who live in socially deprived areas have a worse starting point in their transition from school to work compared with students in more affluent areas, according to a study by the Swedish National Agency for Education in 2018 ([Rapport 467:2018](#)).

### **Asylum seekers and newly arrived**

In 2015, Sweden was the largest recipient of asylum seekers per capita in the EU – 16,5 per 1 000 inhabitants. According to the Swedish Migration Board's statistics, 40% of the 162 877 asylum seekers who arrived in Sweden in 2015 were children and young people of school age.

Up to the age of 18, young asylum seekers have the right to education, either in pre-school, compulsory school or an introductory programme in upper secondary school. The [number of unaccompanied minors](#) rose sharply from 7 000 in 2014 to 35 369 in 2015, but has since then dropped to 500 in 2020.

### **Main concepts**

The Swedish Government has initiated a number of comprehensive programmes and actions, where the target group consists of young people in a more vulnerable position, such as NEET, young people at risk for violence and radicalisation, young people with a migrant or ethnic minority background, young LGBTI-persons, young disabled and [newly arrived](#) young people.

## **4.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Swedish youth policy – that includes guidelines and actions for social inclusion of all young people - is based on the fundamental human rights, in accordance with Swedish legislation and with those international conventions that the Swedish Government has ratified.

The government guidelines for youth policy are not limited to government decisions and actions, but should be taken into account in all public activities involving young people. They are, though, not mandatory for municipalities and regions/county councils, due to the extensive municipal autonomy in Sweden.

Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. Local authorities have a considerable degree of autonomy and independent powers of taxation. Many decisions that concern young people are taken at municipal level. The municipalities are responsible (partly in some policy areas) for youth policy issues such as schools, employment and training, health care, social care and services, youth work, culture and leisure.

### **Top-level authority responsible for social inclusion of young people**

The [Ministry of Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is in charge of youth policy. The [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCF) works to ensure that the objectives of youth policy will be achieved. Various government agencies share the responsibility for social inclusion of young people, each within their sectorial responsibilities. More information can be found in section [1.4, Youth policy decision-making](#).

### **Main actors**

#### **Health and Social care**

The [Ministry of Health and Social Affairs](#) (Socialdepartementet) is in charge of healthcare and care for people with social difficulties, including the disabled and the elderly. The

ministry's work includes human rights, especially rights of the child, rights for people with disabilities and gender equality.

The [National Board of Health and Welfare](#) (Socialstyrelsen) is a government agency under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, with a wide range of activities and duties within the fields of social services, health and medical services, patient safety and epidemiology. The board works to ensure that people's need for health and social care is met throughout their lives. Where resources are limited, they should be used for those who need them most.

The [Swedish Social Insurance Agency](#) (Försäkringskassan) is a government agency under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, responsible for benefits, compensation and allowances for families with children, as well as people with disabilities or illnesses, including benefits for early retirement of young adults aged between 19 and 29 years of age ([aktivitetsersättning](#)).

### **Employment and labour market**

The [Ministry of Employment](#) (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) is responsible for the labour market. Labour market policy includes measures to get young people into work, to improve the matching of jobseekers with job vacancies, labour market policy programmes, unemployment insurance and the European Social Fund. The ministry is also responsible for coordinating the introduction of [newly arrived](#) immigrants.

The [Swedish Public Employment Service](#) (Arbetsförmedlingen) is a government agency under the Ministry of Employment, responsible for matching between jobseekers and employers, with special priority given to jobseekers that experience extra challenges in being able to find employment. The Public Employment Service's tasks also include vocational rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). This aims to help individuals with a limited work capacity due to disability or illness to be able to start to work again.

The Public Employment Service has a coordinating responsibility for labour market integration for certain newly arrived immigrants, mainly for adults that are 20 years of age or older. The task is to give these newly arrived immigrants the support they need in order to learn Swedish, find work and become self-sufficient as quickly as possible.

### **Democracy and human rights**

The [Ministry of Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is responsible for issues relating to culture, media, democracy, youth, sports, human rights at national level, national minorities and the language and culture of the Sami people. The ministry is also responsible for anti-discrimination work and issues concerning civil society and faith communities.

The [Ombudsman for Children](#) (Barnombudsmannen) is a government agency under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, tasked with representing children regarding their rights and interests. The Ombudsman for Children monitors how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is complied with in society and pushes for its implementation in Sweden's municipalities, county councils/regions and government agencies.

The Ombudsman for Children shall, by law, provide information and build opinion on issues relevant to children's rights and interests. Therefore, the Ombudsman holds regular dialogues with children up to 18 years of age, particularly with those in vulnerable situations, to obtain knowledge of their conditions and their opinions on relevant issues. Panels of experts, including children, are tied to the Ombudsman for Children for varying amounts of time. The Ombudsman for Children has legal powers to request information and to summon parties to talks, but has no regulatory powers. The Ombudsman for Children may not interfere in individual cases, but does have a duty of notification.

The [Living History Forum](#) (Forum för levande historia) is a government agency under the Ministry of Culture, tasked with serving as a national forum for promoting democracy, tolerance and human rights using the Holocaust as its starting point. It has a particularly

responsibility to inform about the Holocaust and communism's crimes against humanity. The goal is to teach about historic patterns and through continuous contacts with teachers and other experts within education, the forum develops methods and tools for reaching the key target group, young people.

The [Equality Ombudsman](#) (DO) is a government agency under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for works to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

The Equality Ombudsman examines complaints concerning discrimination and harassment, and assesses how employers, higher education institutions and schools work to prevent discrimination. The Ombudsman shall also work in other respects to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

The [Delegation against Segregation](#) (Delegationen mot segregation) is a government agency mandated to help reduce and combat segregation. It is responsible for ensuring that the government's long-term reform programme to reduce segregation is implemented in collaboration with municipalities, regions, agencies, civil society, researchers and others. The Delegation's work aims to improve the situation in socio-economically disadvantaged areas and counter the structural causes of segregation.

### **Main non-public actors taking part in the implementation of social inclusion of young people**

The National Federation of Youth Centres and Settlements ([Fritidsforum](#)) is a civil society organisation formed in 1937 in Sweden. Fritidsforum member organisations run non-profit venues, community centers (hemgårdar) for all ages and youth centres. Every third public youth centre in Sweden is associated to Fritidsforum. Fritidsforum works to develop the quality of open recreational activities by building networks and providing training for its members and for the actors involved in the area.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

All government decisions are taken jointly. Additionally, an institutionalised mechanism, the Joint preparation procedure (Gemensam beredning) is a common process for all government ministries.

The Joint preparation procedure implies that government affairs that fall within the remit of several ministries should be prepared in consultation with other ministers concerned. This also applies within a ministry when a case involves more than one minister.

Related to youth policy, the Joint preparation procedure takes place relatively often because of the cross-sectorial character of youth policy.

### **National coordinators**

A [national coordinator](#) is a person appointed by the government who operates outside ordinary government structures in order to coordinate and implement government policy. The coordination may take place between national government agencies and also between actors at national and local level.

Where governance is based on agreements and other initiatives of a negotiative nature, national coordinators are becoming increasingly common. To appoint a national coordinator is a non-traditional form of central government steering.

### **National coordinator for young people who neither work nor study**

A national coordinator for young people who neither work nor study (Samordnare för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar) was appointed for the period 2015-2018. The coordinator for young people who neither work nor study had the task of promoting cooperation between authorities, municipalities, county councils and organisations at national, regional and local level.

The coordinator's mission has been cross-sectoral. Several social sectors and policy areas are important for young people's conditions and opportunities. During the assignment, the coordinator has had close cooperation with selected municipalities, met with most other municipalities, collaborated and conducted dialogue with authorities, national organisations, government investigations, and besides that, a number of companies and actors in civil society and in public education.

The coordinator submitted its final report (SOU 2018:11 [Vårt gemensamma ansvar – för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar](#)) to the Government in February 2018.

### **Financial Coordination of Rehabilitation Measures**

The Act on Financial Coordination of Rehabilitation Measures (Lag [2003:1210](#) om finansiell samordning av rehabiliteringsinsatser) entered into force in 2004. The law allows the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), the Swedish Social Insurance Office (Försäkringskassan), municipalities and regions to form Coordination agencies ([Samordningsförbund](#)) and to allocate their resources at the local level in order to finance activities to support individuals in need of coordinated services from two or more of the organisations involved. See [4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people](#) for more information.

## **4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people**

### **Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion**

The current Swedish youth strategy has a clear focus on social inclusion. A specific target group in the youth strategy is young people between 16 and 20 years of age, who are not in education and have not completed secondary or equivalent education. The goal of the youth policy, presented in chapter [1.3 National Youth strategy](#), is:

All young people should have access to good living conditions, power to shape their own lives and influence over the development of the society.

The strategy includes an action programme for the period 2014-2017 (a renewed action programme will be presented in March 2021). The previous [action programme](#) focused on efforts for improving the situation for young people whose social, participatory, educational och health related conditions were more severe compared to other young people.

Also with a clear focus on social inclusion, the Swedish Government presented in 2015 a strategy for young people who neither work nor study, [Vägar framåt - strategi för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar](#) (Ways forward - a strategy for young people who neither work nor study). The strategy presented measures the government has taken 2015-2018.

The overall aim of the strategy was to improve opportunities for young people who neither work nor study, so they can get a job and be included in society. The strategy was focused on young people between 15 and 25 years of age, with special attention to those who are facing the greatest difficulties in terms of social inclusion. Groups specifically targeted were young people with disabilities, those who have not completed upper secondary school and young immigrants.

### **Scope and contents**

The main elements in the strategy for young people who neither work nor study were:

- young people who neither work nor study – description of the current situation
- ongoing actions targeting all young people, to begin and complete an upper secondary education
- ongoing initiatives targeting unemployed youth

- ongoing initiatives targeting young people who neither work nor study
- description of the need for action for increased collaboration, knowledge and interventions focused directly at the target audience.

### Responsible authority

The government offices and more specifically, the Ministries for Education and Labour market, were responsible for actions taken within their respective domains. For each action of the strategy, the Government has commissioned a responsible actor.

### Evaluation of the strategy

The [Swedish Agency for Public Management](#) (Statskontoret) has been commissioned by the government to evaluate the implementation of measures in the government's strategy for young people who neither work nor study (NEET). The mission also included reporting the impact of the measures and analyzing the possible need for further action in the context of youth policy.

Main findings in the Swedish Agency for Public Management's [final report](#) are the following:

The government's strategy has covered a wide area and has involved many actors of various kinds. It sweeps over many societal problems affecting young people: that LGBTQ people face particular difficulties, that newly arrived migrants may find it difficult to integrate into society, that people with disabilities or mental illness do not always meet a society that can understand and adapt to them.

The agency's overall picture of the strategy is that the government's ambition has been to tackle the problems from different directions, but that there is no clear idea of how the different parts should be interconnected and complement each other. What more, the agency does not find the strategy as coherent.

The activities that the Agency for Public Management has looked at have often had the ambition to reach all young people who neither work nor study (NEET). But it can be difficult to find one method to fit all types of challenges these young people have. Most of the projects that have been carried out with the help of government grants have been of small scale. It is also generally the case for the strategy that most of the efforts have only received limited resources.

Not only many actors have been involved in the strategy. It also includes a variety of work methods and targets a group that is not homogeneous. The only traits everyone in the target group shares is that they are young individuals who neither work nor study.

The fact that the involved actors have presented similar observations and conclusions in their final reports may strengthen their legitimacy, but the overall assessment is that the breadth of the strategy has not contributed to an efficient use of resources allocated to them.

### First evaluation of the strategy

The [first evaluation](#), from October 2017, is an interim report of the assignment that is to be finalized by June 2019. The interim report focuses on the three actions in the strategy that were directed directly to the target group. These are:

- An assignment to the Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) to allocate state grants to municipalities and coordination associations that start new or develop "one way in" activities and outreach activities for young people who neither work nor study.
- An assignment to the Swedish National Council of Adult Education to allocate state grants to folk high schools and study associations to match education with the individual's prerogatives and employers' need for skills.
- An assignment to the National Agency for Education to carry out efforts to prevent early leaving from upper secondary education.

Main findings in the interim report are the following:

*The measures had a slow start* It has taken time to get started with the actions in the strategy. A contributing factor is that the preparatory work of the national actors has taken time, inter alia because they have had difficulty in interpreting and concluding the government's mission. This applies in particular to the Swedish National Agency for Education, whose efforts to prevent early leaving from upper secondary education have not started until autumn 2017.

*The measures seem to make a difference* Local initiatives funded under the strategy are still at an initial stage. Therefore, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about their effects. But those who run the various projects are on the whole optimistic. There are also several examples of concrete results of the activity, where individuals have been helped to start studying or working. The report points to a number of success factors for the actions. Some are geographical proximity, personal commitment and focus on the individual's needs and wishes. Among positive factors are also environments and activities of a more informal character, outside of official steering processes. Folk high schools, which are often run by civil society and are outside of municipal steering, have an advantage in this regard.

*The measures do not benefit all young people in NEET situation* In total, almost 50 different projects have been awarded government funding. However, the interest in applying for government funding for carrying out NEET activities has been much greater than the availability of funds. Many project applications have therefore been rejected. Municipalities and country counties with relatively higher shares of NEET are somewhat underrepresented among the projects that have been supported. This is due, in part, to the fact that fewer applications have been received from those parts of the country with the highest amounts of NEET. However, it is also because applications from municipalities with high shares of NEET have been granted to a lesser extent. It is the quality of the applications that are considered in the process, not the applicants' need for contributions.

*The projects are not designed for evaluations and dissemination of knowledge* The projects have limited funds for a limited period of time. Projects financed under the strategy therefore can be seen as pilot studies. However, there is a risk that the knowledge from these pilot studies will not be taken care of, as the projects are not evaluated to any larger extent. This is partly related to the limited resources.

*The future of the measures is uncertain* The project owners testify in several cases that government funding has been very important. A state contribution means that local administrations do not need to carry the financial responsibility for the activities, which has made it easier to get started. It is also often quicker to apply for government grants than to obtain funds through the usual municipal processes. However, it is unclear what will happen to the operations when government funding disappears. This is especially true of public education projects. Those who run the projects hope to show such good results that their school principal wants to integrate the efforts into the regular activity, but there is not always a plan for how this will be done.

*Preventive work important for future action* If the government wishes to further develop the measures, the Swedish Agency for Public Management recommends the government to review the extent to which the actions are designed to achieve the purposes and how the government can improve the long-term conditions for the work. In the long run, to prevent young people from dropping out of school is the most important measure. Primary school has a key role here.

## Revisions/Updates

There are yet no updates for the strategy. A renewed action programme is planned to be presented in March 2021.

## 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

### Programmes for vulnerable young people

#### Knowledge centre on unaccompanied young refugees

In 2017, the government [tasked](#) the [National Board of Health and Welfare](#) to establish a knowledge centre for unaccompanied children and young people. In early 2021, the centre was closed down. During the years that the Knowledge Centre has existed, the situation has changed for unaccompanied children and young people and for society as a whole. The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in 2015 was just over 35,000 but has since then decreased every year. In 2020 the number was 500.

During the period 2017-2020, the centre provided those who work in the social services and in the health care sector with up-to-date information concerning unaccompanied children and young people. Young people's needs, their mental health promotion and suicide prevention were highlighted in the centre's work. Efforts for developed cooperation between municipalities and regions were also a part of the work of the Knowledge Centre.

In the [final report](#) from 2021, the authors state that the current reception of unaccompanied children is significantly better than in 2015. That is partly due to the reduced number of asylum-seeking unaccompanied children, but also because of increased knowledge among the professionals within the social services, health care and other services who are in contact with young asylum-seekers. Any need for knowledge support concerning the reception of unaccompanied children and young people will again be handled in the National Board of Health and Welfare's regular organisation.

#### Delegation young people and newly arrived migrants to work

In December 2014, the government decided on a delegation for combating youth unemployment at the local level, the Delegation for the Employment of Young People ([Delegationen för unga till arbete](#), Dua), for the period 2015–2017. The mandate has since then been extended to December 2021. The delegation is tasked with promoting constructive and flexible collaboration between the Swedish Public Employment Service and municipalities in order to reduce youth unemployment. The overall aim is to to accelerate the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

The delegation received, in January 2017, an [expanded mandate](#) to promote collaboration between stakeholders who are important for labour market entry relating to newly arrived migrants, and in particular, young newly arrived. The name of the delegation was then changed to *Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants*.

The Delegation has, during 2015–2016, completed local agreements between the Public Employment Service and all 290 municipalities. During 2019 and 2020, the delegation has [renewed these local agreements](#).

#### Evaluation

In 2020, [Oxford Research evaluated](#) how the Delegation has contributed to collaboration between municipalities and the Public Employment Service. The evaluation indicates that the delegation has contributed to moving collaboration from a latent phase to an emerging phase. The forms of collaboration between municipalities and the Public Employment Service have therefore been strengthened around young people and new arrivals. However, collaboration has not reached the final phase of the process. This is because the actors' collaboration is dependent on continued external support for further development.

According to the evaluation, the collaboration between municipalities and the Public Employment Service, to which the Delegation has contributed, risks weakening in the future. The reasons are due to the uncertainty surrounding the role of the Public

Employment Service in connection with the authority's reduced organisation and ambiguity about what happens when the Delegation's assignment ends.

### **Coordination Agencies**

Since 2014, financial coordination takes place between the Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan), The Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), municipalities and regions through [Coordination Agencies](#). The target group is individuals in working age 16–64 years, having physical, mental, social and/or work-related needs, and who need coordinated support from two or more of the collaborating parties. The goal is to become self-sufficient.

At the end of 2020 there were 78 Coordination Agencies, involving 271 of Sweden's 290 municipalities. Half of the financing is provided by the state, the rest is divided between municipalities and regions. Interventions targeting individuals get 80% of the total resources, and interventions targeting local collaboration 20%.

In 2020, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Public Employment Service, as in previous years, had a special task to work to ensure that the co-ordinating unions prioritize funding for initiatives for the long-term sick, young people with disabilities and young people with activity compensation. At the end of the year, a total of 417 initiatives had been implemented, addressing these groups. The main part of the efforts, approximately 92%, were individual-oriented (of totally 1,087 different initiatives of which 56% were individual-oriented and 44% structure-wide) ([Försäkringskassan 2020](#)). A more detailed description of the result will be presented in a separate report in May 2021.

### **Funding**

The Coordination Agencies were in 2020 allocated 33 million euros ([339 million Swedish kronor](#)) by the government, combined with an equal amount from municipalities and regions.

### **Funding of inclusive programmes within the ESF**

It is common among the Coordination Agencies to participate in projects financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). ESF has target groups consistent with the Coordination Agencies within several programme areas. During the entire programme period 2014–2020, the Coordination Agencies have owned, co-financed or collaborated in a total of 86 unique ESF projects. In 2020, the Agencies had budgeted for approximately SEK 68 million in ESF funds.

### **Quality assurance**

#### **Coordination Agencies**

The [Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate](#) (Inspektionen för socialförsäkringen) has been commissioned by the government to evaluate the activities that the Coordination Agencies finance. The main question was whether the Coordination Agencies' financing of initiatives leads to different development among municipalities that are members compared with municipalities that are not members of a union. The analysis of young people between the ages of 19 and 24 who are neither working nor studying (NEET) shows that the Coordination Agencies have significant effects on virtually all six follow-up years 2014–2020. This means that municipalities that are members of a Coordination Agency have a higher proportion of younger people who neither work nor study compared with municipalities that are not a part of the coordination. The evaluation finds that a sign of a more successful outreach to young people in a NEET-situation, who otherwise are seen as difficult to get in touch with.

## 4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

### Intercultural awareness

The [Living History Forum](#) (Forum för levande historia) is a Swedish public authority, with the mission of being a national forum that promotes work on democracy, tolerance and human rights based on the Holocaust. The authority has the specific task of:

- informing about the Holocaust and communist regimes' crimes against humanity
- striving to strengthen people's will to actively work for the equal value of all people

The starting point for the activities that are aimed at young people is that it is possible to prevent intolerance by learning from history. Living History's ambition is to create tools that help teachers in their work on democracy and human rights. The purpose is to inspire students to learn and to reflect on their own responsibility and actions.

To reach the whole of Sweden, Living History collaborates with several local, regional and national actors. The authority is also active in the international arena. There is always an ongoing exhibition in their premises in Stockholm where skilled teachers guide and supervise the numerous school classes visiting the centre each day. When exhibitions leave the premises they generally go on tour all over the country.

In 2021, a [national educational material](#) has been produced as a part of the national initiative to increase knowledge about the Holocaust and antisemitism. The material is about the Holocaust, antisemitism, antigypsyism and democracy and has been produced by The Living History Forum. With this initiative the Swedish Government aims to reach students with different needs and in school forms that might not have been reached by the educational materials of The Living History Forum earlier.

In 2015, the Swedish Government commissioned the Living History Forum to embark on a [three-year project dealing with racism and intolerance](#). The project aim is to contribute to the building and maintenance of a society characterized by respect for every person's equal value, but also to promote democratic values in general. The project is carried out in collaboration with the Swedish National Agency for Education. The project results are disseminated in ways that primarily benefit students in elementary and upper secondary schools. The goal is to reach out to all pupils in compulsory and upper secondary schools in Sweden. The project started in 2015 and is still on-going in 2021. [Films that raise questions of racism](#) are available with English subtitles.

[Mission: Democracy](#) consists of workshops covering democracy, tolerance, and human rights. Using historic events and personal accounts as their starting point, students are encouraged to discuss and reflect on current social issues. Workshop material for classroom use is also [available in English](#).

[Break the norm!](#) consist of methods for studying and working with norms in general and the heteronorm in particular. The method material is also [available in English](#).

### The campaign No Hate Speech Movement

On behalf of the government, [Swedish Media Council](#) (Statens medieråd) has run the [No Hate Speech Movement](#) between 2013 and 2020. It is a campaign for raising awareness of racism and similar forms of hostility on the Internet among children and young people. No Hate Speech Movement began as an international venture within the Council of Europe. The [final report](#) was submitted to the government in November 2020.

The No Hate Speech Movement aimed to raise children's and young people's knowledge of racism and similar forms of hostility on the internet, as well as strengthening their ability to use their freedom of expression and respect human rights and gender equality.

The campaign included the task of reaching children and young people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities. The implementation also aimed for stimulating critical thinking

when using media. The campaign work was carried out within the framework of the Government's [National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime](#).

## Young people's rights

### A Human rights strategy

In 2016, the government presented a strategy for the national work on human rights ([Regeringens strategi för det nationella arbetet med mänskliga rättigheter](#)). Among the actions in the strategy, the following three are aimed at young people:

#### 1. The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child

The Swedish Parliament voted in 2018 in favour for the Convention to be incorporated into Swedish domestic law. The legislation entered into force on 1 January 2020.

#### 2. Human rights consideration in higher education

The [Swedish Higher Education Authority](#) (Universitetskanslersämbetet) was commissioned to identify how human rights issues are taken into account in higher education study programmes. The Higher Education Authority [studied five study programmes](#) in health and care: doctors, nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists and sociologists. The results show that all the five programmes have human rights formulated as part of their degree objectives. Virtually all programmes identified included human rights education in a broad perspective. About 85% of them state that they have instruction on how to deal with violence against women and domestic violence as well as violence against children.

#### 3. Children's and young people's rights

The Government's work with the practical application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in form of an initiative for increasing awareness about children's rights ([Regeringens kunskapslyft för barnets rättigheter](#)) has been going on since 2017. The aim is to increase public actors' knowledge and strengthen their competences on children's rights.

During the period 2017–2020, 17 government agencies participated in the initiative. The government has decided that another eight government agencies will participate in the work in 2021. The new agencies will be tasked with strengthening their work to develop the practical application of children's rights. Authorities that have participated in previous years have, for example, prepared action plans and strategies for how child rights work is to be conducted. They have also implemented competence development initiatives for both managers and employees.

The Ombudsman for Children (Barnombudsmannen) is tasked to continue with [supporting government agencies](#) in 2021 and 2022 in ensuring the practical application of children's rights.

### Equal rights for young LGBTI people

Efforts in Sweden to secure equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression has been and is being carried out through a number of initiatives in various sectors of society. In 2020, the government presented [information material](#) on its work for the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTI people.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons are still affected by discrimination and other violations in Swedish society. The government has therefore in 2014 presented a [strategy](#) for equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. A [renewed action programme](#) was introduced in 2021.

Along with ten other government agencies, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCE](#)) has been appointed by the Government to support LGBTI people's rights.

## Actions to support young LGBTQI people's rights

The government has, since 2014, commissioned the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) to, in cooperation with the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), promote young LGBT people's rights in schools. The work is still ongoing in 2021.

The agencies have produced training material – *Open School!* ([Öppna skolan](#)) – for professionals working in schools. The training material highlights the situation and the rights of young LGBTQ people. The goal is to make every school a safe place for all students regardless of their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. The main targets groups are grade 7–9 schools and upper secondary schools. The training material is also free for downloading at the Agency's website. Based on 'Open school!', the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society provides training for staff working in schools to increase their skills to create safe schools for all, in collaboration with the Swedish Youth Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights ([RFSL Ung](#)).

MUCF is also tasked with strengthening the conditions for meeting places for young LGBTQ people. MUCF has identified that there is a continuing need for support for this type of targeted activities to create safe leisure environments for young LGBTQ people.

## Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

The Swedish Government defines violent extremism as ideologies that accept and legitimise violence as a means by which to realise extreme ideological opinions and ideas. The activities and ideologies of violent extremist groups cause problems that touch on many areas.

The government implements measures to safeguard democracy against violent extremism (åtgärder för att göra samhället mer motståndskraftigt mot våldsbejakande extremism). The goal of the [government's measures](#) is to make society more resilient against violent extremism.

The aim of these measures is to improve our knowledge of violent extremism and develop preventive initiatives and methods. These measures will enable authorities, municipalities and civil society organisations, including faith communities, to contribute in a more coordinated and effective manner to safeguarding democracy against violent extremism. The government's prevention of violent extremism is divided into five areas:

1. the National Coordinator's work against violent extremism
2. preventive measures addressing young people and radicalisation
3. improving the support provided to persons at risk of radicalisation
4. measures to encourage individuals to leave violent extremist movements
5. intensified Nordic and international sharing of knowledge and experience.

## National Coordinator to safeguard democracy against violent extremism

The National Coordinator to safeguard democracy against violent extremism was the most far-reaching initiative in the government's efforts to safeguard democracy against violent extremism. The National Coordinator was [commissioned](#) by the government in 2014.

The task was to develop and reinforce the work taking place at local level and ensure that there is collaboration between government authorities, municipalities and organisations, including faith communities. Besides this, there was a remit to educate people who come into contact with young people about violent extremism and how it can be prevented. In a [supplementary directive](#) of June 2016 the task was prolonged until January 2018.

In January 2018, the [Swedish Center for Preventing Violent Extremism](#) (Center mot våldsbejakande extremism) was established. The primary aim of the center is to prevent ideologically motivated criminality and terrorism in Sweden. The center is placed under the auspices of [Brå](#), the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

The center has four main tasks:

- Promote the development of preventive work on national, regional, and local levels.
- Work to attain a higher degree of coordination and effectiveness in respect of the preventive measures.
- Provide support tailored to the needs of municipalities, agencies, and other actors whose work includes addressing issues involved in preventing violent extremism.
- Collect and disseminate knowledge, based on research and proven experience, regarding prevention of violent extremism, and work towards knowledge-based practices.

### **A national strategy to counter violent extremism**

Developing a national strategy to counter violent extremism has been a core part of the role of the National Coordinator. The [strategy](#) was presented in June 2016 (Nationell strategi mot våldsbejakande extremism). The strategy has three dimensions – promotion, prevention and preemption. Some of the actions in the strategy addressing young people are presented below:

#### **Preventive measures and improved support addressing young people and radicalization**

The government's measures in this area mainly address professionals active in schools and education, in social work, the police force and in faith communities. In order to be able to prevent a young person from being radicalized it is important that professionals who come into contact with young people can identify signs pointing to attitudes, values and behaviours that may lead to violent extremism.

Measures that are particularly important for young people are shortly presented here, more complete information is presented at the Government's [website](#) and in Government Communication *Actions to Make Society More Resilient to Violent Extremism*.

#### **Training material – Handbook for violence prevention**

The government has tasked the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCE](#)) with supplementing the already existing handbook for violence prevention among young people ([Inget att vänta på](#)) with additional information about violent extremism. In 2017, *Crack the code* ([Knäck koden](#)) was presented to municipalities and others who in their efforts to prevent violence can use the handbook.

#### **Assignment to the Ombudsman for Children to raise awareness about children's experiences of violent extremism and terrorism**

The government has, in October 2016, commissioned the [Ombudsman for Children](#) (Barnombudsmannen) to contribute to better knowledge of children's experiences of being affected of travelling from Sweden to conflict zones for terrorist purposes. The aim is to improve knowledge on how to better protect children from harmful experiences of terrorism, based on children's perceptions and experiences. The Ombudsman for Children has since then published the report [Children and young people involved in violent extremism](#).

#### **Support for social service's work**

Social services meet children and young people who have been linked to violent extremism, for instance, when reported by worried parents. Their ability to prevent violent extremism can be enhanced by providing better guidance. On behalf of the government, the [National Board of Health and Welfare](#) (Socialstyrelsen) has therefore

prepared [educational material for the social services' work](#) with children and young adults who are at risk of becoming involved or are already involved in violent extremism.

## **Methods and practices that aim to prevent violent extremism in the special residential homes for young people**

In 2016, the government commissioned the [National Board of Institutional Care](#) (Statens institutionsstyrelse) to implement efforts to strengthen the preventive work against violent extremism in the special residential homes for young people (särskilda ungdomshem). Special residential homes give compulsory care for young people with psychosocial problems, substance abuse and criminal behaviour.

The [final report](#) of the government assignment focused on initiatives on five areas of need, better knowledge of violent extremism, work on democracy and human rights in school activities, review of the forms of collaboration with religious representatives and support for staff in their conversations with young people about violent extremism. Among the initiatives described in the report is an online training programme on violent extremism, aimed at staff in the special residential homes. The training is mandatory for all staff close to the clients.

### **Better knowledge on preventive methods**

The government has commissioned the University of Gothenburg to develop knowledge on methods of how to prevent people from being recruited into violent ideologies and movements, and into racist organisations. [Segerstedt Institute](#) was therefore established at the University of Gothenburg in 2015. The function of the institute is to contribute to the development of knowledge on how to prevent racist organisations and violent ideologies and structures.

The institute has published many reports. Among those, the [Review of educational initiatives in counter-extremism internationally: What works?](#) is of high relevance here.

### **Government grants to services preventing violent extremism**

In 2020, the government tasked the Swedish [National Council for Crime Prevention](#) (Brottsförebyggande rådet) and the Swedish [Center for Preventing Violent Extremism](#) to allocate the government grant to services that prevent violent extremism. The purpose of [the grant](#) is to strengthen and develop the preventive work against violent extremism from a criminal policy perspective among non-profit associations, foundations, municipalities and regions. Before 2020, the grant was allocated by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF).

## **4.6 Access to quality services**

### **Housing**

There are no national housing policies designated specifically for young people. Sweden does not have social housing programmes either. Young disabled people with special needs have the right to apply for access to housing with special services. When it comes to students, accommodation in Sweden is nearly always managed by organisations or companies separate from the university itself.

### **Social services**

The Social Services Act ([SoL](#)) is the law which controls how social services work in Sweden. Social services have responsibility for many different areas of the community, including children and young people. Their work based on what is best for the young person, following the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child.

Social services work to ensure that young people who are in a difficult position get the help and support they need. In order to be able to carry out this responsibility, social services must be informed if a child or teenager is in need of help. Those who are

employed within the public sector, i.e., at a school or within health care, are obliged to make a report to social services in such cases.

The law also requires all adults to inform social services if they believe that a child or an adolescent is in trouble. The law states that a report should be made and that this type of report can be made anonymously. The duty to make a report is there to protect the young.

Sometimes it is best for a young person to be moved out of their home and away from their guardians. There can be various reasons for this; the child may have been badly treated at home, i.e., abused, or maybe the parents are addicts, or it could even be that the parents cannot manage the child because she or he has an addiction or injures him/herself.

Social services usually look into whether or not the child can live with somebody close to the family instead, a relative, for example. This is not always suitable, i.e., if the reason for why the child cannot live at home is honour-related, in which case it is better that the child lives with someone who is not closely related with their family.

[LVU](#) is the Swedish Care of Young Persons Act. It is with the support of this act that children can be placed somewhere against their parents'/guardians' wishes. In the first place, all care of children falls within the framework of the Social Services Act. If parents and/or the child oppose the care, it may be imposed under the terms of the LVU. A person under the age of eighteen can be taken into care without their consent for two reasons:

- if there is a lack of care or poor living conditions in their home, i.e., oppression, threats or violence, or
- if the young person causes harm to themselves in some way, i.e., through substance abuse, criminal or other subversive behaviour.

## Health care

All schools, from pre-school to upper secondary schools, are obliged to offer student health care (elevhälsa), according to the [Education Act](#). Health services in schools include medical, psychological and psychosocial care and advice, and also the right to special education.

The Education Act regulates these services. Every school must provide access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and social worker for medical, psychological and psychosocial interventions.

According to the Education Act, all students shall be offered health visits that include general health checks. Between health visits, students should be offered vision and hearing screenings, and other limited health checks. Health visits also offer an opportunity for students to discuss their general health situation with the school nurse.

Student health has an important role in identifying eventual needs of special support. According to the preparatory works to the Education Act, the purpose of overall student health is, among other things, to result in decisions on special needs education for students who need it.

## Youth Guidance Centres

Youth Guidance Centres (ungdomsmottagningar) are targeted at young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age. The guidance centres can be found in most of municipalities in Sweden, and offer different services for sexual and reproductive health and rights, for instance, prescriptions for birth control pills, free or low-cost condoms and tests for chlamydia and other infectious diseases. Many centres also provide mental health services.

To visit a Youth Guidance Centre is free of charge. Normally, an appointment is needed before a visit. But many centres have drop-in times too.

The different centres have various kinds of staff working, but all have midwives and counsellors. Most centres have a doctor. The staff helps the visitors with further services, if needed, for example the psychiatry clinic for children and young people (BUP).

Youth guidance centres offer also broad information services at the Internet, both in [Swedish](#) and in [other languages](#), including English, Tigrinja, Somali, Dari and Arabic.

### **Psychiatry clinics for children and young people**

Psychiatry clinics for children and young people ([BUP](#)) are open for children and adolescents under 18 years of age. Once aged 18, adult psychiatry clinics are attended.

A young persons or a parent can make the first contact by calling a clinic for advice. Many clinics have special times when a new client can speak directly with a therapist. To start with, it is important to decide whether the problem is something child and adolescent psychiatry can help with, or if somewhere else offers better support, such as school healthcare, social services, family counselling or a youth guidance centre.

For many, a few counselling sessions are sufficient to find a solution to the problem. If additional treatment is required, there are many alternatives. To mention some examples, different forms of family therapy forms are offered as well as different forms of group therapy.

The clinics also work individually with children and teenagers, and even offer pharmacological therapy. All visits are free of charge.

### **Financial services**

The Social Services Act ([Socialtjänstlagen](#)) states what is included in income support, and that there should be a national norm for some of the costs. The national standards covering costs for food, clothing and telephone are equal for all. The support covers reasonable costs for accommodation, electricity and home insurance.

Young people under the age of 18 years old are normally the responsibility of their parents, as are young people under the age of 21 who still are in upper secondary education. They do not have the right to claim individual income support.

Financial assistance can be applied for by contacting the social services in the municipality.

### **Financial aid for studies**

Financial aid (studiestöd) is money young people can receive during their active student years.

There are various kinds of [financial aid for studies](#):

- when attending upper secondary school, a young person may be eligible for a study allowance (studiehjälp), including a student grant
- when attending a folk high school, adult secondary education programme (Komvux), national adult education programme, or another compulsory or upper secondary school, a young person may apply for student aid (studiemedel) starting in the autumn of the year that a person turns 20
- when attending a college or university, a young person may also apply for student aid (studiemedel).

### **Quality assurance**

#### **The Health and Social Care Inspectorate**

The [Health and Social Care Inspectorate](#) (IVO) is a government agency responsible for supervising health care, social services and activities under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS).

IVO's supervision remit covers the processing of complaints concerning, for example, the reporting of irregularities in health care and social care and the municipal obligation to report non-enforced decisions.

### **Evaluation of financial coordination of rehabilitation measures**

The Act on Financial Coordination of Rehabilitation Measures (Finsam) entered into force in 2004. The monitoring has focused on describing and analysing activities undertaken within the framework of Finsam.

The [Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate](#) (ISF) has been commissioned by the government to evaluate the organisation and activities of Finsam. The assignment is reported in three parts. The purpose is to provide an overview of the coordination agencies and to evaluate the effects of their activities at municipal and individual level.

Reporting of the assignment is divided into three parts:

- [Samordningsförbundens verksamhet och organisering](#) (Coordination Agencies' activities and organization, published in February 2019)
- [Utvärdering av de samlade/totala effekterna på kommunnivå - Gör samordningsförbund någon skillnad?](#) (Evaluation of the total effects at municipal level – Do the Coordination Agencies make any difference?, published in March 2019)
- Effektutvärdering av samordningsförbundens individuella insatser (Impact evaluation of the Coordination Agencies' individual efforts. planned publication December 2022)

### **Other central actors**

The [Swedish National Audit Office](#) (Riksrevisionen) is part of the central control power of the Swedish Parliament. Their task is to contribute to the efficient use of resources and efficient management of the state through an independent audit of all government's operations. The agency audits both government agencies accounting and the effectiveness in the state's commitments.

The [Swedish Agency for Public Management](#) (Statskontoret) has the governmental task of analysing and evaluating state-funded activities. The agency has conducted a large number of studies, among others, about the Public Employment Service's work and labour market programmes.

## **4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion**

### **Policy/legal framework**

In Sweden, there is no national level policy framework for youth work aimed at fostering social inclusion.

### **Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups**

Generally speaking, youth work in Sweden takes an inclusive position, aiming for to reach all young people, from a positive standing point were they are seen as carriers of resources and possibilities rather than of problems. At the local level, most efforts are made to reach to a diverse youth group from socially more deprived neighbourhoods. This is done because of existing economic restrictions, but also based on requests from and the needs of young people.

Youth work is a municipal responsibility, both when it comes to outreach activities and to youth centres and youth clubs. The work may be carried out and/or governed by different entities though, such as municipalities, CSOs, faith communities or schools. Youth work takes place in different localities, such as youth centres and clubs, sport facilities, schools, churches, etc.

The Swedish Government has also initiated a number of comprehensive programmes and actions, where the target group consists of young people in a more vulnerable position,

such as NEET, young people at risk for violence and radicalisation, young people with a migrant or ethnic minority background, young LGBTI-persons, young disabled, and latterly, newly arrived young migrants. See section [4.4](#), Inclusive Programmes for Young People, for more information.

These government actions usually target professionals working in health care or in schools, in social work, in the police force and in organised leisure, including both youth centres and sports. Even volunteers active in CSOs and in faith communities are targeted.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) has since 2017 a government assignment to function as support for young people's [open leisure activities](#) and to offer training for local level actors. The support is to be based on the needs and demands of young people.

### **Young people who neither work or study - NEET**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) has since 2019 the government's mandate to support municipalities and regions in their work with young people who neither work nor study (NEET). The purpose is to provide help to young people in an effective and coordinated manner. An [interim report](#) from 2020 drew attention to following obstacles and practical problems in municipalities and regions:

- Lack of focus on preventive measures.
- Lack of a holistic perspective when the responsibility is divided between a number of actors.
- Insufficient welfare resources.
- Problematic gaps at young people's transitions, for example from compulsory to upper secondary education.
- No actor is responsible for promoting young people's health within the [municipal responsibility](#) for young people under the age of 20 who have not completed upper secondary education.

### **Earlier initiatives**

During the period 2009-2017, the [Theme Group Youth in Working life](#) was funded by the European Social Fund to collect and disseminate information on the methods and the results of youth projects financed by the ESF in Sweden. The aim was to affect social structures by finding joint solutions to help young people enter the labour market, and thereby contributing to social inclusion of youth. Theme Group Youth comprised a cooperation project between the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), Communicare (CSO), the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan), the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och landsting, SKR).

### **Violence prevention**

In November 2016, the Government launched a [National strategy](#) to prevent and combat men's violence against women. The strategy has a clear focus on violence prevention and addresses professionals in schools, youth care, institutional care and social and health care, as well as the research community and government agencies responsible for improving the knowledge base.

In 2021, the government has issued [assignments to several government agencies](#). Several of the assignments will focus on stopping honour-related violence and oppression, including child and forced marriages, and genital mutilation. Two assignments affect the situation of young people directly:

- The National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)) was allocated SEK 11 million to strengthen systematic efforts to combat honour-related violence and oppression within the school system.
- The National Board of Institutional Care ([Institutionsstyrelsen](#)) was allocated SEK 3 million to develop and disseminate internal knowledge about honour-related violence and oppression, violence-prevention work with boys, young men and young people's partner relationships, including knowledge about destructive masculinity norms.

### **Youth work addressing young LGBTQI-persons**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has since 2014 a task of implementing measures for an [open and inclusive environment in schools for young LGBTQ people](#) in consultation with the National Agency for Education (Skolverket). MUCF offers the training material "[Open school!](#)" to professionals who work within the upper primary or secondary education. The material focuses on norms concerning sexuality, gender identity and gender expression. In 2021, MUCF is developing digital training tools for reaching out to schools throughout the country. Previously, MUCF has conducted training on LGBTQ issues in a small number of schools.

In 2019, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) was tasked with improving the conditions for safe meeting places for young LGBTQ people. The [interim report](#) (2021) discusses the significant role of safe spaces, both in form of physical meeting places and digital channels, for young LGBTQ people. The report presents results from a survey that has identified 66 meeting places for young LGBTQ people in 2020. The meeting places were situated in 16 of Sweden's 21 counties and in 43 of Sweden's 290 municipalities. The number has slightly increased compared to the 2019 year's survey that identified 50 meeting places. The survey has shown continued shortcomings in geographical accessibility, as a large part of Sweden's municipalities and counties still lack meeting places for young LGBTQ people. A majority of the identified meeting places are in the metropolitan areas. In this survey, MUCF has not succeeded in identifying any meeting place in a rural municipality.

The Government has an on-going dialogue with the Swedish Sports Confederation ([Riksidrottsförbundet](#)) about the situation of transgender people in sport. The aim of discussing how sport can combat discrimination and what the conditions are for a more deliberately norm-critical approach that identifies, problematises and challenges conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The Swedish Sports Confederation has also begun work to remove systemic faults and barriers to binary and nonbinary transgender people engaging in sport.

### **Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people**

Youth work is a municipal responsibility in Sweden, both when it comes to outreach and to youth centres and youth clubs. The work may however be carried out and/or governed by different entities, such as municipalities, CSOs, faith communities or schools, and take place in different localities, such as youth centres and clubs, sport facilities, schools, churches, etc.

### **Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes**

Training for youth work is mainly provided by Swedish folk high schools (folkhögskolor). The folk high schools provide a two-year study programme ([fritidsledarutbildning](#)), leading to a diploma in youth work. There is a [common training plan/curriculum](#) that all folk high schools follow. Information on the study programme is made available at the youth work [website](#).

## Youth work network KEKS

Quality and expertise in cooperation, KEKS (Kvalitet och kompetens i samverkan, [KEKS](#)) is a network for youth work. The network exists since 2005 and is built on common goals and a common system of quality assurance. The network has about forty members, municipal administrations in charge of youth centres, youth houses, and youth projects.

## Financial support

### Swedish Inheritance Fund

If a deceased person has no spouse or close relatives and has not left a will, his/her property goes to the Swedish Inheritance Fund ([Arvsfonden](#)). The Fund supports non-profit organisations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas for developing activities for children, young people and the disabled.

Applications that may be supported come in most cases from non-profit organisations engaged in voluntary work, but even municipalities may be granted the right to implement a project. In such case, the project should be innovative and conducted in close cooperation with a non-profit organisation. A project can be granted funding from the Inheritance Fund for three years.

In [2019](#), about 750 million Swedish kronor (75 million euros) were distributed in project grants. About 177 million Swedish kronor (17 million euros) for projects with target group children and about 418 million (42 million euros) for projects targeting youth. Projects targeting persons with disabilities were allocated about 163 million Swedish kronor (16 million euros). Projects aimed at persons with disabilities refer to projects where the main focus is on persons over 25 years of age or projects not focusing on a specific age group ([Annual Report 2019](#)).

### Government grants

The [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCF) is the government agency for matters relating to youth policy and civil society. The agency shall, according to its [ordinance](#), work to ensure that the objectives of youth policy and of civil society policy will be achieved by:

- presenting, gathering and disseminating knowledge;
- contributing to the coordination of government efforts concerning youth policy;
- cooperating with government authorities, municipalities, county councils and civil society organisations;
- distributing state grants to civil society organisations.

In 2020, 23 million euros (230 million Swedish kronor) were deposited as a state grant to youth organisations. See section [1.7](#) Funding youth policy for more information.

## Quality assurance

There are no national level evaluations on local youth work in Sweden. There are no national registers on youth work providers either.

In general, all government tasks result in a final report to the government, where the main actions, management of the actions and practical examples of the local work are described. Evaluations in the form of effect studies are more seldom. In case a comprehensive evaluation takes place, the work is commonly done by a research institution specifically appointed for the task.

The [Swedish National Audit Office](#) (Riksrevisionen) is part of the central control power of the Swedish Parliament. Their task is to contribute to the efficient use of resources and efficient management of the state through an independent audit of all government operations. The agency audits both government agencies accounting, as the effectiveness in the state's commitments.

The [Swedish Agency for Public Management](#) (Statskontoret) has the government's task of analysing and evaluating state-funded activities. The agency has conducted a large number of studies, for example on the Public Employment Service's work and the labour market programmes.

But there are interesting local initiatives for [quality tools](#) taken within the KEKS-network, and for providing a better knowledge base for youth work within the Research and Development Centre for Youth Work.

### **Quality tools for youth work, provided by KEKS network**

The [KEKS network](#) has developed a quality system that is used by all members in order to develop youth work. This is done both by benchmarking, peer learning, exchange of best practices and other forms of cooperation within KEKS. The [quality system](#) consists of five different tools centred on the core principles of participation and non-formal learning:

1. a digital logbook where all youth work is systematically documented through both statistics and written comments
2. an annual survey of young people visiting the youth centres. The survey consists of two parts; one with questions about the respondent (age/sex/background, etc.), and one with questions about safety, participation, accessibility, etc. (in 2014 over 7 300 young persons answered the survey)
3. a group survey answered by young people who take part in creating activities for themselves and/or others, answering questions about how and to what extent they have participated,
4. [ELD](#) (Experience, Learning, Description) – a method for documenting and making visible non-formal learning
5. statistics regarding the number of visitors, number of activity hours, costs, etc.

The logbook for Continuous Documentation of Youth Work is a web-based system for documentation of youth work within youth centres, youth projects and informal groups. Through it, statistics are compiled on:

- number of visitors and gender balance
- opening and activity hours
- hours and participants in spontaneous activities, planned open activities and group activities
- type of activities carried out (culture, sports, etc.)
- extent of young people's participation.

Statistics from the logbook are annually put together with results from KEKS annual meeting-place survey of young people, KEKS on-going group activity survey of young people and economic information in order to give a complete picture of how well they reach their aims. This in turn is the basis for the developmental support (competence, methods, organisation) that KEKS provide to its members.

### **Survey for follow-up of youth centres**

The survey is annual and web-based survey, directed towards young people visiting youth centres, youth houses, etc. All questions relate to common aims regarding the target group, youth participation, etc. All answers are stored and made searchable in a database.

The aim is to study how well youth centres and municipal administrations meet central indicators on youth work quality, in order to be able to take adequate measures for quality improvement. The main indicators are the following:

- target group

- safe environment
- attractiveness,
- inclusiveness
- youth participation, influence and responsibility.

The survey instruments are directly linked to the over-all aims of inclusiveness, safety, participation, influence and attractiveness. The results from the survey are combined with results from continuous group surveys and quantitative figures from the logbook and other statistics into an annual results presentation for each youth centre and local department within KEKS.

### **Group-survey for follow-up of group activities**

The group survey for follow-up of group activities is a web-based survey directed towards young people taking part in group activities (e.g. international youth exchanges, creating cultural events, etc.). The survey focuses on ways of participating and how young people have perceived their participation.

Results are handed out continuously as soon as the group members have completed the survey as a basis for reflection and evaluation in the group. All answers are stored and made searchable in a database. The results are compiled for groups, units and municipal administrations and disseminated centrally, by KEKS. General trends are presented to all staff, heads of municipal administrations and politicians.

### **Research and development centre**

[Research and development centre](#), R & D (Kunskapscentrum för Fritidsledarskap) is for youth work in youth centres in the capital area (Stockholm and surrounding municipalities). The Research and development centre develops and evaluates methods and leadership for youth work at youth clubs and recreation centres. The focus is on a promotion approach and empowerment and not on social work.

The aim is to seize and restructure both youth leaders' skills, and existing research in the area, and to produce efficient systems for the development, documentation and evaluation of activities. R & D strives for to connect research to youth work. The Centre also networks in order to contribute to the development of open leisure and recreation leader profession.

The R & D is based on regional collaboration between [Skarpnäck Folk High School](#), youth work education (fritidsledarutbildningar) and a number of municipalities around Stockholm.

## **4.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **New measures against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime**

In March 2021, the Government adopted several [measures against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime](#). Several of the measures are being carried out within the context of the national plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, which the Government adopted in 2016. The plan takes an integrated approach and comprises strategies and measures to prevent and combat racism and hate crime through improved coordination and monitoring, more education and research, increased support to and deepened dialogue with civil society, strengthened preventive measures online and a more active justice system.

Below are examples of measures:

- The Living History Forum (Forum för levande historia) is responsible for coordination and follow-up of the work on the plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime and for presenting a comprehensive report to the Government annually.
- The Government has instructed the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden (Barnombudsmannen) to produce and compile knowledge about children's and young people's vulnerability to racism, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Stockholm County Administrative Board (Stockholms länsstyrelse) has been tasked with increasing knowledge about how Roma children and young people are subjected to antigypsyism in the present day.
- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has been tasked with implementing measures for an open and inclusive environment in schools for young LGBTIQ people.

### **Assignment on social initiatives in socially vulnerable areas**

In December 2020, The Government instructed the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) to distribute [funds for social initiatives](#) for children and young people in socially vulnerable areas. The funds are intended to go to initiatives that aim to reduce the risk of children and young people being drawn into or otherwise affected by crime. These may be initiatives that complement and strengthen activities that the municipalities already carry out within the framework of crime prevention (eg investing in more field workers in the evenings and weekends, including increased accessibility in social services' activities), as well as various forms of structured collaboration between school, social services and the police. In total, the investment amounts to SEK 250 000 000 ( about 25 000 000 euro) for 2021 and the government estimates SEK 250 000 000 annually for 2022–2023.

The effort is part of the government's broader [work to reduce and counteract socio-economic segregation](#). The conditions for children and young people to grow up in areas with socio-economic challenges must therefore be improved, such as the right of children and young people to grow up in a safe and stable environment. In order to achieve a positive development in vulnerable areas, measures need to be taken to develop and structure collaboration between actors in the local community, such as social services, the police and schools. Other relevant actors are, for example, civil society, health care and municipal housing companies. Parents and other close relatives are also important to include in the collaboration. Part of the stimulus funds is therefore intended to promote a structured collaboration between social services, schools and the police at the individual level around children and young people who have ended up in or are at risk of ending up in a criminal lifestyle. Social intervention groups are one such form of local collaboration, as are school-social services-police-leisure and school social teams.

## **5. PARTICIPATION**

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Young people's participation in society and in representative democracy has been a high priority in Sweden since decades.

At local level, youth councils and other representation bodies for youth are open for those young people who wish to form youth projects or get in contact with local politicians. Student unions and school student unions are, to a significant part, financed by government grants, as government grants to non-profit youth organisations are well-established in Swedish youth policy.

Although the voter turnout among young people has been rising, from the bottomline of 70% in 2002 to 85% in 2018 years parliamentary elections, actions to raise political

awareness among young people are a priority in the government's democracy policies (see [5.5 National strategy](#) to increase youth participation).

## 5.1 General context

### Main concepts

The youth policy [goal](#) for all government decisions and actions affecting young people between 13 and 25 is:

'All young people should have good living conditions, the power to shape their lives and influence over society.'

The third part of the objective, i.e. influence over the development of society, is an explicit goal stating that young people are to be included in society and that they have an explicit right to exert influence. This means that young people should have the opportunity to participate in political decision-making, influencing issues of importance to society at large, and not only have a say in matters that immediately concern them.

Because the group of young people is comprised of both minors and adult persons, the degree of influence changes over time. The Swedish youth policy is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that links rights for participation to age and maturity.

When it comes to the formal decision-making processes, the stated policy is that it is important for young people to be represented in the elected assemblies and thereby become involved in political decisions.

### Institutions of representative democracy

#### Sweden's constitutional structure and main representative institutions

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy, which means that all public power proceeds from the people.

At *national level*, the people are represented by the Riksdag (Swedish parliament) which has legislative power. The Government implements the Riksdag's decisions and draws up proposals for new laws or law amendments.

At *regional level*, Sweden is divided into 21 regions. The regions are responsible for overseeing tasks that cannot be handled at the local level by municipalities but which rather require coordination across a larger region, most notably health care. The regions are entitled to levy income taxes to cover their costs. At regional level, there are also county administrative boards (*länsstyrelser*) that are government bodies for the counties.

At *local level*, Sweden is divided into 290 municipalities, each with an elected assembly or council. Municipalities are responsible for a broad range of facilities and services including housing, roads, schools, public welfare, elderly care and childcare. Municipalities are entitled to levy income taxes on individuals. They also charge for various services. As a result, municipalities have significant latitude in deciding what services they should offer. They are however legally obliged to provide certain basic services.

#### National elections

General elections are held in Sweden every four years. Voting is not compulsory. Voters may cast a ballot for a constituency party list, or for a specific candidate. On the same occasion, elections are held at national, regional and local levels to the Riksdag (Swedish parliament), region assemblies and municipal councils respectively.

## 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Source: SCB, Statistical database On this page

### Young people as voters

All Swedish citizens who have reached the age of 18 years, on or before election day, and who are currently or were previously resident in the country, may vote in general elections, referendums and the European Parliament elections.

All citizens of EU member states who are registered as residents in Sweden may vote in European Parliament elections. Citizens of EU member states and from the Nordic countries who are registered as resident in Sweden and who have reached the age of 18 are eligible to vote in municipal and county council elections.

Non-Swedish citizens from other countries must have been registered as resident in Sweden for more than three consecutive years before the election date in order to be eligible to vote in municipal and region assembly (county council until 2019) elections.

National referendums may be held in connection with parliamentary elections. Those who are entitled to vote in parliamentary elections are also eligible to vote in national referenda.

A municipality or a region may decide to have a municipal referendum. The initiative for a referendum can also be taken by people living in the municipality. Those who are eligible to vote in municipal election are even eligible to vote in municipal referenda.

There are no special provisions for young people in the Elections Act ([Vallagen](#)).

### **Voter turnout in National Parliament (Riksdag), regional and municipal elections 2018, European Parliament elections 2019**

	18-24 years	Total 18+ years
National Parliament (Riksdag)	84.9	87.2
County council	80.4	83.7
Municipal	80.6	84.1
European parliament (2019)	45.1	55.0

Source: Statistics Sweden ([SCB](#)), Statistical database

National Parliament voter turnout in the 2018 election for young people between 18 and 24 years of age was 84.9%. The turnout level has been rising since the 2002 parliamentary election, when it was 69.9% in this age group.

Voter turnout in municipal and regional/county council elections has always been lower compared to national parliament elections.

In the 2019 European Parliament election, voter turnout for young people between 18 and 24 years of age was 45%, the same level as in the 2014 EP elections. The turnout level has otherwise been rising since the 2004 election, when turnout was 25.9%.

## Young people as political representatives

### Young people's membership in political parties

Among young people between 16 and 24 years of age, the share of members of a political party was 4.7% in 2018. The share has been about 4% between 2008 and 2018, according to Statistics Sweden, [SCB](#).

The share party members in total population over 16 years in 2018 was 5.5%. The level has been consistent at around 5% between 2008 and 2018.

### Young people candidating in elections

In Sweden, young people who have reached the age of 18 and are eligible to vote may also run as candidates in general elections. No quota of seats reserved for young people exists.

No provisions aiming at facilitating young people to stand as political candidates exist. Some trials have, however, been initiated by the government in recent years, in order to facilitate the conditions for young elected representatives at the local level. There are no specific functions within the Swedish representative assemblies that are reserved for young people.

### The share of young people aged 18–24 among the nominees and the elected in National Parliament (Riksdag), county council and municipal elections in 2018

	Nominated	Elected
National Parliament (Riksdag)	5.0	1.4
Region (county council)	3.9	2.4
Municipal council	4.0	2.7

Source: [ungidag.se](http://ungidag.se), Statistical database on youth.

Among the nominees in the European Parliament elections 2019, the share of young people between 18 and 29 years of age was 16.5%, but no one in that age group was elected. In 2014, the the share of young nominees was 17%, but none was elected at that time either.

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

### Youth parliament

There is no national level youth parliament in Sweden operating under the auspices of public authorities. There are however initiatives taken, either by youth civil society organisations or local authorities, to arrange youth parliaments on a more or less regular basis. There is however no information available on roles and responsibilities, or the funding, of these initiatives.

### Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

The Swedish model is to not force young people's involvement and participation to follow some specific forms of organisation. Instead, national and local governments encourage young people to, out of their own preferences, develop suitable forms for participation. Therefore there are no national guidelines, laws or regulations concerning youth councils or other youth advisory boards in Sweden.

The municipalities (290 in total) are responsible for a broad range of policy areas concerning young people. Structures for young people's participation and influence, such as youth councils, youth forums, youth delegations or youth parliaments exist in many of the municipalities. These structures are settings for dialogue between young people and municipal decision makers, but how they are organized and which themes they focus on varies from municipality to municipality.

Some youth councils promote their own questions, others have an advisory function to politicians and civil servants, some act as a formal referral body and some might have all or several of these functions.

A survey from 2019 revealed that less than a half, 47%, of the Swedish municipalities have a youth council ([MUCF 2019](#)). The number has been declining, as an earlier study from 2010 showed that 63% of the municipalities had some sort of platform for youth participation ([Unqdomsstyrelsen 2010](#)).

Most youth councils and other youth advisory boards work independently at local or regional level, and are thus not members of any national organisation.

Some – about 50 local youth councils – are members of the Swedish Association of Youth Councils ([Sveriges ungdomsråd](#)). The Association of Youth Councils is a civil society organisation of network character that gathers together youth councils and other advisory groups for young people from all over the country. The Swedish Association of Youth Councils was formed in 2003, by young people, in order to develop better opportunities for cooperation between local youth councils. Cooperation and networking are the main functions for the association.

The Swedish Association of Youth Councils is politically and religiously independent and welcomes all young people that are interested to get involved. In [2016](#), the number of young people between 6 and 25 years of age, active in the local youth councils, was about 1 100. Of the member youth councils, some work in close connection with local politicians, but this is not a requirement. Most youth councils run their own projects, including organising social and cultural events and activities.

The Swedish Association of Youth Councils received a government grant of SEK 1.2 million (115 000 euros) in [2019](#).

## Higher education student union(s)

Students in Sweden have the right to be represented when decisions of importance to their education, or to students' situation are taken. Both teachers and students have the right to be represented and to appoint members to the university board, according to the Higher Education Act ([Högskolelagen](#)).

A student body that wants to have the status of a student union can apply to the university/university collage according to the student union ordinance ([Studentkårsförordning](#)). The university/university collage shall examine if the student body meets the statutory requirements for student unions, in accordance with the Higher Education Act. There may be several student unions in one university.

### Composition

The Swedish National Union of Students (Sveriges förenade studentkårer, [SFS](#)) organises 47 student unions at universities and university colleges throughout Sweden. These unions have their own statutes, within the frame of existing laws. Together they represent approximately 275 000 undergraduate students and Phd students.

SFSs main task is to represent and promote their members' interests in education, research and student welfare issues at national level. Through its participation in the European Students' Union, [ESU](#), SFS also represents its members and Swedish students in the international arena.

## Role and responsibilities

A student union is an association of students at a particular university or university college, and may not cover more than one university or university college. A student union must have as its principal objective monitoring and participating in the development of education and the general conditions for studies at the university.

A student union must be democratically structured and able to represent all students, regardless of whether they are members of the union or not. Membership in a student union is not mandatory for students, but all students in the university or collage should have the right to be members of the union, if they meet the requirements for membership, according to the Higher Education Act.

Student unions monitor and participate in the planning of the education given at each institution, usually divided into education issues (such as quality of education, orientation, pedagogy, content, coordination, etc.) and social issues (such as housing, health, library and computer resources, work environment, etc.).

Other common responsibilities concern labour market issues, internationalisation and issues related to equal rights and diversity. Organising social activities and sports activities for students, working with student media and organising reception activities for freshers are areas of high priority. Today, the universities have the overall responsibility for student health care, but in some cases student unions still provide student health care.

## Funding

Student unions are funded by government grants, combined with membership fees and other grants from, for instance, the local business sector, local government or the university. Funding arrangements vary between unions.

## School student union(s)

The Education Act and the curricula both state that democratic values should be as important as knowledge in education. The Education Act's wording on participation in schools is in turn based on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In accordance with both the Education Act and the Work Environment Act, students are entitled to formal democratic influence through student councils and student safety representatives. Class councils and student councils are examples of ways to organise the rights of participation that are stipulated by the [Education Act](#).

## Forms for student influence in schools

There are two main ways for students in primary and secondary school level to [organise their interests](#). One is through each class choosing a representative for a student council. Another is having all interested students become members of the school's student body (elevkår), where they elect a chairman and a board, in accordance with ordinary civil society tradition.

Student bodies are based on a voluntary membership, and all activities are initiated by the members, independent of the school management. This can be compared to student councils, where the initiatives usually come from school management. The principal leads meetings and student representatives are appointed from each class.

## Composition, role and responsibilities

Sweden's student council – SVEA (Sveriges elevråd [SVEA](#)) – organises student councils at secondary and upper secondary school levels. SVEA's role is based on five areas: pupils' rights, student council development, education, influence and national meetings. They offer training for local school student unions in order to increase students' knowledge of their rights. They represent students' voice in school policy debates.

Sweden's Student council ([Sveriges elevråd](#)) organises local student councils at upper elementary school level. Both the local councils and Sweden's Student Council are governed by its members through democratic processes.

The Swedish Association for School Student Union's ([Sveriges Elevkårer](#)) organises school student councils at secondary and upper secondary school levels, the difference is that they organise individual students instead of local student councils.

### Funding

School student unions can, each year, apply for a government grant that the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) distributes to youth organisations. The grant can go towards ongoing activities, such as costs for an office, administration or employees, but also activities at local level. Each organisation shall annually report to MUCF how they have used the grant by submitting a financial report and an annual report.

In 2019, Sweden's student council – SVEA received a grant of SEK 1.8 million (173 000 euros), Sweden's student council SEK 1.92 million (184 000 euros) and Swedish Association for School Student Unions SEK 10.2 million (978 000 euros), according to [MUCFs Annual report 2019](#).

### Other bodies

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, [LSU](#) (Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationer), is a coordinating body for 83 independent Swedish youth organisations. It aims at constituting a forum for matters of common interest in youth organisations and providing a network for national as well as international organisations dealing with youth cooperation.

LSU is funded by an [annual government grant](#) (SEK 5.8 million for 2021, about 580 000 euros), combined with membership fees and other grants for different projects.

In Sweden, before the Government takes up a position on the recommendations of a commission of inquiry, its report is referred for consideration to relevant bodies. These referral bodies may be central government agencies, special interest groups, local government authorities or other bodies whose activities may be affected by the proposals. LSU is customarily appointed as a referral body for proposals affecting young people. As the proposals are public documents, anyone can make comments, whether or not they have formally been designated as a referral body. If a number of referral bodies respond unfavourably to the recommendations, the Government may try to find an alternative solution.

LSU appoints youth representatives to international high-level meetings and committees, primarily within the UN and the EU. In order to become a youth representative, one must be between 18-25 years and be nominated by one of the LSU's member organisations and then appointed by the LSU board. A large part of the assignment is about communication and to make the political processes more transparent and easily accessible for those who want to know more. At present, LSU has representatives in:

- The Nordic Committee for Children and Young People
- The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)
- European Economic and Social Committee
- The EU Commission's structured dialogue
- The Swedish National Commission for UNESCO
- UN Climate Change summit, COP
- UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
- UN General Assembly.

## 5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

### Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

Swedish democracy has traditionally been based on a mutual relationship between policy-makers and various forms of interest groups, civic associations and social movement organisations. That interest groups can engage in dialogue with policy-makers between elections holds a high priority.

Young people's opportunities to participate in political decision-making between elections at the national level consist primarily of working in or to being represented by political parties, interest organisations or other civil society associations. In Sweden, CSOs have in general better opportunities to inform politicians compared to individual citizens.

At municipal level, existing youth councils and other advisory boards that engage with young people also provide opportunities for consultations. There is no national youth council in Sweden.

In Sweden, citizens do not have the right of initiative at the national parliament, while the right exists at local level, in municipal or county council. The main way to engage in dialogue with Parliament is thus through direct contact with MPs.

### Referral system

When it comes to influencing government decisions, citizens and organisations have the opportunity to be heard through the referral system. The referral system is the only formal opportunity for individuals and organisations to participate in Government affairs. Each year, the Swedish Government sets out about 200 legislative proposals, normally in the form of a government bill, before the Swedish parliament (Riksdag). Some bills contain proposals for new legislation while others consist of proposals for policy guidelines or major or minor amendments to existing laws.

Before the Government takes up a position on the recommendations of a commission of inquiry, its report is referred for consideration to relevant bodies. These referral bodies may be central government agencies, special interest groups, local government authorities or other bodies whose activities may be affected by the proposals.

The umbrella organisation for Swedish youth organisations, [LSU](#) (the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations), is customarily appointed as a referral body for proposals affecting young people. As the proposals are public documents, anyone can make comments, whether or not they have formally been designated as a referral body. If a number of referral bodies respond unfavourably to the recommendations, the Government may try to find an alternative solution.

### Consultations and hearings

The Government also maintains dialogue with different actors through specific consultations and hearings in topic issues. When it comes to youth issues, the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU), including relevant member organisations, is routinely invited to such consultations and hearings.

The [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society](#) (MUCF) was given the government task, in 2014, of finding ways to empower young people and youth organisations in monitoring youth policies. The [final report](#) presents a plan for 2015–2017, where different forms for consultations are planned for the annual reports that are a part of the monitoring system. The planned consultations follows the guidelines in the [Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision-making process](#). Results from the consultations with young people and youth organisations are a part of the annual thematic in-depth analyses (Fokus-reports) since 2015.

The [Ombudsman for Children](#) (Barnombudsmannen) shall, by law, provide information and build opinion on issues relevant to children's rights and interests. Therefore, the Ombudsman holds regular dialogues with children up to 18 years of age, particularly with

those in vulnerable situations, to obtain knowledge about their conditions and their opinions on relevant issues. Panels of experts, including children, are tied to the Ombudsman for Children for varying amounts of time.

### **Youth Surveys**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society (MUCF) has developed a national youth policy follow-up survey that brings in opinions and preferences of young people, as well as information on their living conditions and experiences in the youth policy monitoring system.

The national youth survey has been conducted every three years since 2004. Most of the instruments are repeated and the results can be presented in the form of time series.

The national youth survey gives also comparative figures on the local follow-up of youth policy, LUPP, as many of the instruments are available in both surveys.

### **Consultations at the local level**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society has developed a survey called [LUPP \(local follow-up of youth policy\)](#) that enables municipalities, urban districts or regions to gather opinions from young people in their area, as well as information on their living conditions and experiences. The survey was first introduced in 2003.

The survey has become the core means of following up and developing a knowledge-based municipal youth policy, wherein young people's opinions and experiences are taken into account from the start. A total of 175 municipalities, or 60% of the country's 290 municipalities, have now implemented LUPP at least on one occasion, according to the [Annual report 2019](#) of the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society.

In order to evaluate the effects of local youth policy, the survey can be repeated after a few years. About 150 municipalities have implemented LUPP more than once. The survey is mainly intended to be conducted electronically in school.

## **Actors**

### **Youth policy council**

Since 2008, the minister in charge of youth policy has convened a youth policy council several times a year. The Council serves as a forum for discussion and consultation on current national and international issues in youth policy.

The youth policy council consists of representatives of youth organisations that are based on interests, politics, religion, ethnicity, sexuality or functionality, as well as experts working with young people. In addition, representatives of government authorities and the research community are involved in the Council. See section [5.3](#), Youth representation bodies, for more information.

### **Information on the extent of youth participation**

In Sweden, public authorities do not collect metadata on young people's participation in the consultation processes. One exception is ad-hoc data collection in order to map local youth councils and youth parliaments.

### **Outcomes**

There is no data available on the outcomes of young people's participation in the consultation processes.

### **Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people**

There has not been any national initiative taken for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people.

## 5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

### Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

There is no specific strategy for increasing young people's participation in Sweden. Instead, youth participation is an important component of the Swedish [youth policy objective](#), approved by Parliament in 2014:

'All young people should have access to good living conditions, power to shape their own lives and influence over the development of the society'.

What more, initiatives to foster young people's political participation are streamlined in the national democracy policy. The communication, 'Policy for a living democracy' ([En politik för en levande demokrati](#)), presented measures to increase young people's political participation. These are presented in 'Scope and contents' below.

#### Scope and contents

The communication 'Policy for a living democracy' from 2013 has five points of departure:

##### 1. A high and more equal voter turnout

According to the communication, voter turnout is an expression of the rootedness of democracy in society. What more, a higher turnout also means a more equal turnout, so election results more accurately reflect the diverse interests and views expressed in society.

##### 2. Broader and equal participation in elected assemblies

The main argument was that it is crucial to the vitality of democracy that there is widespread interest in holding elected office and participating in elected assemblies. According to the Communication, it is also important for decision-making political assemblies to reflect the composition of the population, above all with respect to sex, age and country of birth.

##### 3. Strengthened opportunities for influence, transparency and participation between elections

A point was made on the importance of all individuals being able to make their voices heard in ways other than voting in the general elections. A continuous dialogue between decision-makers and voters is a significant factor in the rootedness of democracy in society. Furthermore, the Communication argued that it is particularly important to create opportunities for influence among those who otherwise participate to a lesser extent.

##### 4. Increased democratic awareness

Awareness of the fundamental principles of democracy and knowledge of the rules of democracy are a prerequisite for a functioning democratic form of government.

##### 5. Safeguarding democracy against violence-promoting extremism

According to the Communication, ideological violence directed at society's institutions, its representatives or at private citizens is a challenge for democracy and social cohesion in society. Furthermore, a society that does not clearly distance itself from violence promoting extremism and ideologically motivated violence risks becoming polarised.

### Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The Government, specifically the [Ministry for Culture](#) (since October 2014) and Justice (before October 2014), is responsible for actions taken within their respective domains. For each action of the strategy, the Government has commissioned a responsible actor,

as explained above. In general, a final report is presented for the Government after the task has been implemented.

## Revisions/Updates

In 2018, the Government highlighted the challenges facing democracy and set priorities for democracy policy for the years 2018-2021, in a renewed strategy and action programme ([Strategi för en stark demokrati – främja, förankra, försvara](#)). The strategy draws attention to the fact that in 2021 it is 100 years since democracy had its breakthrough in Sweden. Universal and equal suffrage was then introduced for both women and men.

The strategy contains three priority areas:

- Promote - more people should be involved in democracy
- Anchor - more people should have knowledge of democracy
- Defend - more people must stand up for democracy

The strategy does not contain any major innovations or tasks targeting young people.

## 5.6 Supporting youth organisations

### Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

There is a long tradition of awarding government grants to non-profit youth organisations in Sweden. In 1954, the Swedish Parliament decided on a policy of general grants to youth organisations. At that time, a grant was based on the number of members between 12 and 25 years of age.

About 40 years later, in 1997, the number of youth organisations eligible for government grants was 62, and the total number of members was 592 000 persons between 7 and 25 years of age ([National Board for Youth Affairs, 1998](#)).

In 2018, 112 youth organisations, with totally 675 000 members between 6 and 25 years of age received a government grant, according to MUCFs [Annual report 2018](#).

#### Main principles and goals

According to the [Ordinance](#) on State Grants for Child and Youth Organisations, the purpose of the grant is to support children's and young people's independent organisation and influence in the society.

The ordinance defines the formal requirements and conditions that organisations must meet. A grant may be submitted only to youth organisations that are non-profit with voluntary membership, independent and democratic, in their operations respect the ideals of democracy, including equality and non-discrimination, and have been operating in Sweden for at least two years.

#### Public financial support

Of the year 2021 central government budget for the youth policy area, about 28 million euros (280 million Swedish kronor) were deposited as a state grant to youth organisations, according to the Swedish Agency for youth and Civil Society's [2021 appropriation directive](#). Organisational grants may be provided to non-profit child and youth organisations that have at least 1 000 members between 6 and 25 years of age, and that have member associations in at least five country counties.

Organisation grants may also be provided to:

- non-profit child and youth organisations representing national minorities in Sweden that have at least 200 members between 6 and 25 years of age and conduct

community-based activities, with an adequate geographical distribution of member associations based on the organisations members

- non-profit child and youth organisations representing disabled young people that have at least have 200 members between 6 and 25 years of age, and that have member associations in at least three country counties (län).

The grant may be used to cover costs for both ordinary activities and for other items. Among costs for ordinary activities, the following may be included:

- grants to local member organisations
- costs for membership activities and board meetings
- cost for administration, rents and inventory
- cost for salaries and fees.

Costs for items other than ordinary activities may be costs for specific projects, for instance outreach activities.

### **Project grants to youth organisations, local level**

Of the total sum of 280 million Swedish kronor deposited for grants to youth organisations in 2021, the Government earmarked 18.4 million Swedish kronor (1.8 million euros) in grants to local youth projects. Only non-profit child and youth organisations can apply for these grants. The planned project may last for a maximum period of 12 months. There is a possibility for support for an extended period if the application is renewed, for a maximum period of three years. The applying organisations must be democratically structured and follow the ideals of democracy. The grant may not be used for regular activities or administrative costs of the organisation. 30 organisations were awarded grants in 2019 compared to 36 in 2018 and 39 in 2017 ([MUCFs Annual Report 2019](#)).

### **Swedish Inheritance Fund**

The property of a deceased person goes to the Swedish Inheritance Fund ([Allmänna arvsfonden](#)), if he/she has no spouse or close relatives and has not left a will. The Fund supports non-profit organisations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas for developing activities for children, young people and the disabled.

Applications that may be supported come in most cases from non-profit organisations engaged in voluntary work, but even municipalities may be receive grants to implement a project. In such cases the project should be innovative and be conducted in close cooperation with a non-profit organisation. A project can be grant funded from the Inheritance Fund for up to three years.

In 2019, about 750 million Swedish kronor (75 million euros) were distributed in project grants. About 177 million Swedish kronor (17 million euros) for projects with target group children and about 418 million (42 million euros) for projects targeting youth. Projects targeting persons with disabilities were allocated about 163 million Swedish kronor (16 million euros). Projects aimed at persons with disabilities refer to projects where the main focus is on persons over 25 years of age or projects not focusing on a specific age group ([Annual Report 2019](#)).

### **Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants**

The Government has commissioned the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (now the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, MUCF), during four years starting 2010, to distribute specific grants for outreach activities ([engagemangsguider](#)). The target group was both youth organisations and other civil society organisations, and the aim was to reach groups with low participation levels, especially young people and women in poor neighbourhoods.

A total of 65 projects received grants between 2010 and 2013, summing up to 40 million Swedish kronor (4,2 million euros). Both local clubs and national organisations have been active. Sports activity was the most popular theme for the outreach activities. Towards the end of that period, the projects were more tightly focused on newly arrived immigrants and unaccompanied youth as a target group.

## 5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

### Policy Framework

The fundamental democratic values held by Swedish schools are described in the governing documents for schools: the Education Act (Skollagen) and the Curricula (läroplan). These values include the sanctity of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equity and solidarity between people.

The *Education Act* contains general provisions for all school years and the basic provisions for the different school forms. What specifically relates to upper secondary education is set out in Chapters 15–17. The Swedish Riksdag (Parliament) decides on the Education Act.

The *upper secondary school ordinance* contains regulations on upper secondary education and makes the provisions of the Education Act more specific. The Government decides on the upper secondary school ordinance.

The *curriculum* for upper secondary school forms describes the fundamental values, tasks, as well as goals and guidelines of the school. The government decides on the curriculum.

Each programme has its *diploma goals*. These goals provide the foundation for planning education and teaching from the student’s first day in the programme. They should steer the education and the organisation of upper secondary work and its contents, setting out the goals and the orientations in the programme, as well as the goals of the diploma project.

Each subject has a *syllabus* that describes the courses included in the subject. The Government decides on subject syllabuses for the foundation subjects in upper secondary schools on the basis of proposals from the National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)). The National Agency for Education decides on the subject syllabuses for the other subjects.

### Fundamental values

According to the Swedish Education Act, all education should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values and human rights, covering the inviolability of people, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all people, gender equality and solidarity between people. A school should actively and consciously influence and stimulate its students in embracing the shared values of the society and encourage their expression in practical daily action.

### Learning to participate

Student participation and influence is a common thread throughout the chain of governance that provides guidelines and conditions for how learning to participate should be organised in schools. The core of these directives is the Education Act. For the Education Act, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has served as guidance.

The [curriculum for the upper secondary education](#) (Lgr11) emphasises the importance of student participation and influence as follows (p.11):

'As laid down in the Education Act, students should be able to exercise influence over their education. They should be continuously encouraged to take an active part in the work of further developing their education and be kept informed of issues that concern them. Students should always have the opportunity of taking the initiative on issues that should be treated within the framework of their influence over their education.

The goals of the school are that all students individually:

- take personal responsibility for their studies and their working environment
- actively exercise influence over their education and the internal work of the school
- on the basis of knowledge of democratic principles further develop their ability to work in democratic ways
- develop their willingness to actively contribute to a deeper democracy in working and societal life
- strengthen confidence in their own ability to individually and together with others take initiatives, take responsibility and influence their own conditions.'

The quote above illustrates that high expectations are imposed on Swedish schools in terms of student participation that should cover all students. The challenge is realising the intentions of the governing chain through concrete work on participation in schools.

## Formal learning

[Citizenship education](#) in Sweden is imbedded in the subject of social studies. All students at upper secondary school have social studies as an obligatory foundation subject, both those following higher education preparatory and vocational study programmes. The scope varies though between vocational programmes and higher education preparatory programmes.

### Social studies

The subject of [social studies](#) is by its nature interdisciplinary. It has its roots in political science, sociology and economics, but also includes other disciplines from the social sciences and humanities. Using concepts, theories, models and methods from all these disciplines, complex social issues can be understood and explained. The subject also has a historical perspective.

Teaching in the subject of social studies aims at helping students broaden, deepen and develop knowledge of people's living conditions based on different social issues. Teaching should give students the opportunity to develop knowledge of issues relating to power, democracy and gender equality. Human rights, including the rights of children and young people in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child is naturally an important part of social studies.

Students should also be given the opportunity to develop an understanding of issues concerning working life, resources and sustainable development. Students should also be able to develop a scientific approach to social issues and an understanding of scientific work on social issues. In addition, teaching should contribute to creating conditions for active participation in the life of society.

## Non-formal and informal learning

### Student participation

According to the Education Act ch. 4, § 9, students have the right to influence in schools. They shall continually be encouraged to take an active part in efforts to develop education and remain informed on issues that concern them. Students should always be encouraged to take the initiative to discuss which issues are to be addressed during lessons, in the context of their influence over education.

## Forum for consultation

According to the Education Act ch. 4, §13, in every school unit, there shall be one or more forums for consultation with students and guardians. Such questions that are important for a school's activities and that may be significant for students and guardians should be brought up at the forum. In the forum, the headmaster has the duty to inform on draft decisions and give students and guardians a chance to comment before decisions are made.

## Student councils and student bodies

Different forms of student councils and student bodies are described in section [5.3 Youth representation bodies](#).

## Student safety

In grades 7–9 and in upper secondary school, a student safety committee must be in place. The committee provides the opportunity to discuss the school's work environment with the school principal. This could relate to issues such as deficiencies in sanitation facilities, indoor air quality or overstretched timetables. Student safety representatives (elevskyddsombud) are entitled to training in their role and free time to do their job. They should be invited into work environment management under largely the same conditions as the staff safety representatives, represent the pupils and work for a good work environment at the school. In the Work Environment Act ([Arbetsmiljölagen](#)), there are special regulations about student safety representatives and their participation in the safety committee.

## Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences - School elections

School elections have been held in Sweden in many compulsory and upper secondary schools since the 1960's, but were first compiled nationally in 1998.

Ahead of the 2018 elections for the National Parliament and the 2019 elections for the European Parliament, the Government has instructed the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) to carry out school election projects for students in years 7–9 of compulsory school and in upper secondary schools. The aim is to promote young people's interest in democracy and participation in political processes, and to stimulate political discussions in schools.

During the 2018 school election, 1 528 schools reported results, with totally 391 045 students voting. The [voter turnout was 79.8%](#). The authority is responsible for the web site [Skolval 2018](#) where the results are presented.

The Government considers that there is still a need to stimulate higher voter participation among young people. School elections give a concrete experience of the voting process, as school elections are arranged in the same way as regular elections, with ballot papers, voting lists and polling stations. The arrangement also gives an opportunity for schools to discuss democratic governance and the principles of democracy.

School elections 2018 and 2019 build on previous experience, and special emphasis is given on making school elections available for schools in socio-economically weaker areas.

## Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There is no specific system of quality assurance for non-formal learning initiatives in Sweden. The general rule is that the responsible authorities report their main results to the Government when a task is completed.

## Educators' support

The National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)) ensures that Swedish education maintains a good standard of quality. The agency achieves this with the help of national

schools development programmes and in-service training of the staff. The agency distributes grants and arranges head-teacher training programmes. Democracy and fundamental values are included in this responsibility.

## 5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

### Information providers / counselling structures

#### Ombudsman for Children in Sweden

In Sweden, young people under the age of 18 years have their own ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children ([Barnombudsmannen](#)). The main duty of the Ombudsman for Children is to promote the rights and interests of children and young people as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

#### The Living History Forum

The Living History Forum ([Forum för levande historia](#)) is a Swedish public authority commissioned to work with issues related to tolerance, democracy and human rights, using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point. The Forum has young people in school contexts as their key target group.

#### Human rights

The Government gives comprehensive information on human rights on a dedicated [website](#). The website targets all citizens, and is therefore not specifically for young people.

#### Democracy 100 years anniversary

In 2021, Sweden celebrates [100 years of democracy](#). Part of the celebration is the [project Democracy 100](#), which is coordinated by the [National Library](#) (KB) and the foundation [Riksbankens Jubileums fond](#) (RJ). Linked to the project is also a network of representatives of archives, museums and libraries as well as individual researchers. The overall purpose of the project Democracy100 is to increase knowledge about the emergence of universal and equal suffrage in Sweden 1918–1921, and the historical process around it.

### Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

#### Democracy 100 years anniversary

Schools and teachers an important target group for the Democracy 100 years anniversary. Teachers are offered free classroom material from both [Demokrati 100](#), the Riksdag's website [firademokratin.se](#) and at [levandehistoria.se](#), in order to be able to hold a workshop on the right to vote, for example.

The Government has made a number of decisions on democracy-promoting measures and initiatives during 2020 and 2021. The following are targeting young people, with the goal of strengthening children's and young people's knowledge and developing their abilities and skills when it comes to exercising their democratic rights:

- *A website promoting children's and young people's rights*

The Government has [commissioned](#) the Ombudsman for Children ([Barnombudsmannen](#)) to strengthen and develop the democracy perspective on the [Mina Rättigheter \(My Rights\) website](#). According to government assignment, the website must be supplemented with knowledge and guidance on how children and young people themselves can exercise their democratic rights. The new content on the website must be actively disseminated and the Ombudsman must also offer methodological support for school staff, student unions, children and young people.

- *Models for developing young people's democratic knowledge, skills and competences*

The Government has [commissioned](#) the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society Affairs ([MUCE](#)) to develop and disseminate models for how municipalities can work strategically, cross-sectorally and in the long term, to strengthen young people's knowledge of local democracy, develop young people's democratic skills and competences and to promote young people's participation.

In 2020, the focus of the assignment was to map existing knowledge in the field and to prepare training materials and dissemination activities. With this as a starting point, MUCF will in 2021 work to reach out to municipalities and support their work in promoting young people's opportunities to participate in democracy.

- *Strengthen the conditions for young people in youth care to participate in democracy*

The [National Board of Institutional Care](#) (SiS) has been [commissioned](#) by the government to carry out special initiatives in its school activities for students and teachers with the aim of promoting students' development of the knowledge and abilities required to actively participate in democracy.

- *Strengthen upper secondary level students' knowledge of the possibilities and challenges of democracy*

[Stockholm University](#) has been [commissioned](#) by the government to strengthen upper secondary level students' knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of democracy, and to contribute to an increased interest in democracy issues, especially among students with non-academic background. The task to Stockholm University includes organising democracy fairs for upper secondary school students.

- *Strengthen the work for increased media and information literacy*

The Government has [commissioned](#) the [Swedish Media Council](#) to strengthen the work for increased media and information literacy by continuing to develop the agency's activities and collaboration in the area.

### **Earlier initiatives**

#### *Actions to increase the voter turn-out in national and European Parliament Elections 2018 and 2019*

The Government commissioned the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCE](#)) to distribute grants to civil society organisations and municipalities that run activities aimed at increasing voter turnout in national parliament elections 2018 and in European parliament elections 2019.

The government finds high and more equal voter turnout as very important. In Sweden, the last three national parliament elections have shown increasing voter turnout rates, as well as the last two elections to European parliament. At the same time, there are still great differences in voter turnout between different population groups and between different districts. In the electoral district with the lowest voter turnout in the 2014 national parliament elections, only 48% voted, while 95% voted in the electoral district with the highest voter turnout.

There is a certain correlation between a district's voter turnout and its population. Electoral districts with low turnout are characterised by low average income, low levels of education and a high share of foreign-born among the eligible voters. Therefore, according to the Government, there is a need to stimulate higher voter participation especially among population groups such as young people, foreign-born and disabled, and in socio-economically weaker areas where voter turnout previously has been low.

### **Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people**

The Swedish Government has not taken any major initiatives to promote intercultural dialogue among young people with different backgrounds in Sweden.

What may be relevant here is that government grants to youth projects during the past years have focused on issues such as encouraging more young people to join organisations, participate in politics and to become involved in EU-issues.

### **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

There are no policy frameworks or guidelines on transparent public communication targeting young people in Sweden. National or large-scale programmes or initiatives on providing training for policy-makers at various levels on suitable and youth-tailored communication do not exist either.

## **5.9 E-participation**

There are no legal frameworks or key policy programmes, projects or initiatives enabling or encouraging young people to participate in political processes electronically in Sweden.

The youth-targeted campaigning aiming for increasing the use of popular initiative, presented here, is an exception to the above.

### **Popular initiative**

An enhanced popular initiative (medborgarförslag) was introduced in early 2011. An advisory local government referendum should be held if requested by 10% of eligible voters. Any person, regardless of age, may submit a popular initiative. A qualified majority of the assembly members may reject a popular initiative. It is the assembly that decides on the design of ballot papers, and the referendum is always advisory.

The Government has initiated campaigning to introduce a popular initiative to young people. The main campaign tool is the website [medborgarforslag.nu](http://medborgarforslag.nu), developed by the Swedish Association of Youth Councils ([Sveriges ungdomsråd](http://Sveriges ungdomsråd)) and launched in December 2015. The website contains information on:

- the popular initiative – how does it work and why it is an important tool for influence
- in which municipalities the popular initiative is introduced
- inspiring examples of how municipalities can work with popular initiatives submitted by young people
- alternative ways to influence – what other ways are there for young people to influence their community?
- an overview of young people's democratic rights.
- 5.10 Current debates and reforms
- Actions to promote young people's participation
- Young people's influence and participation has been a central part of Swedish youth policy since it was introduced in the early 1990s. The [Government's youth policy action programme](#) for the years 2021-2024 includes efforts for promoting young people's participation in democracy. Some examples of the actions are presented here:
- Local level models for promoting youth participation
- The government has commissioned the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCE](#)) to promote young people's opportunities to participate in democracy. MUCE will work strategically, cross-sectorally and in the long term to strengthen young people's knowledge of local democracy, develop young people's democratic skills and competencies and to promote their participation in democracy. The assignment must be reported no later than March 2022.
- Democracy fairs

- [Stockholm University](#) has been commissioned to organise democracy fairs at several university locations, in order to strengthen upper secondary level students' knowledge on the challenges and opportunities of democracy. The assignment aims in particular to contribute to an increased interest in democracy issues among students. At the fairs, a wide range of research on politics and democracy will be made available. The fairs are planned to take place in autumn 2021.
- An award to school classes
- A large part of democracy takes place at the municipal and regional level. The Government has therefore, together with Sweden's Municipalities and Regions ([SKR](#)), entered into an agreement to work for a sustainable democracy with strengthened conditions for people to participate. Within the framework of the agreement, SKR will announce an award to school classes both in grades 7-9 in compulsory school and in upper secondary school to prepare creative proposals on how democracy can be strengthened and developed for the future. An award ceremony and dissemination of good examples will take place during the second half of 2021.

## 6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Upper secondary school (gymnasium), years 10–12 is optional in Sweden. There are eighteen regular national programmes of three years to choose from, six of which are preparatory for higher education such as university, and twelve of which are vocational. The [Education Act](#) prescribes that access to upper secondary education in Sweden is to be free of charge, irrespective of geographic residence and social and economic conditions. Students are to have access to books and study materials at no cost.

Participation in upper secondary education is therefore very high, as almost every young person starts upper secondary education. Education in schools is to be equivalent. The main task is to provide all students with sufficient knowledge in order to manage future studies and working life. For students with intellectual disabilities and who find it difficult to participate in ordinary teaching, upper secondary schools for people with intellectual disabilities are available.

According to the [Curriculum for upper secondary school](#), the main tasks of the upper secondary school are to impart knowledge and to create the preconditions for students to acquire and develop their knowledge. Education should support the development of students into responsible persons who actively participate in and contribute to professional and societal life. Further on, the school should impart the more unvarying forms of knowledge that constitute the common frame of reference in society that is based on fundamental democratic values and the human rights we all share. Students should also be able to orient themselves in a complex reality and a rapidly changing world.

Preventing early leaving from education has been a priority for the Government the last years, and a number of initiatives have taken place, presented in the section [6.3](#).

### 6.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

All young people in Sweden have right to upper secondary studies, after completing either compulsory school or compulsory school for learning disabilities. Therefore, the participation rate for upper secondary education is very high, although it is not compulsory.

The proportion of those never entered upper secondary school corresponded to about one percent of the entire young population. The proportion of those who never entered upper secondary school is highest among newly arrived migrant youths, according to a [study from 2017](#) completed by Statistics Sweden (SCB).

The percentage of compulsory school pupils, who fail to qualify for a national programme at upper secondary level, has though been increasing for several years now. The share of pupils without eligibility for upper secondary education was 17%, or 17 800 students, at the end of spring term 2016. The share of boys who lacked eligibility for upper secondary education was significantly higher than that of girls. The share of boys was 21%, while the corresponding figure for girls was 12%. All above figures come from a government [investigation of absenteeism in school](#).

Students who are not eligible for a national programme are directed to introductory upper secondary school programmes. The introductory programmes should give these students an individually adapted education. The high numbers of students without eligibility for upper secondary education bring more challenges to introductory programmes.

The majority of students participate in education and training for at least three years. But, although almost all young people start upper secondary education, not everyone succeeds in completing their studies. Of all students starting upper secondary level education, about 2% leave education already during the first year. The difference is great between national programmes and introductory programmes. For students starting at an introductory programme a larger share, 24%, stay only one or two years, and leave without gaining qualifications necessary for further educational levels. Overall, it is estimated that about 5% of all students do not attend secondary school for all three years, but [leave education and training](#) earlier.

What more, a large percentage of students do not manage to get an upper secondary school diploma in time. The share of students, who started upper secondary education in 2012 and did not get a degree within three years, [was about 35%](#). Students who have not reached the objectives after three years are not always offered continued education, though they may be entitled to it. After four years, the proportion of students who have not received an upper secondary school diploma only dropped to [about 30%](#).

The extensive migration during the recent years has partly changed the conditions for upper secondary schools. Young persons in the age group 16–20 years, who have newly migrated to Sweden and are in the asylum seeking process, may begin upper secondary studies, primarily in the introductory programme for language introduction. The group of newly arrived students is heterogeneous, which means that students have different educational backgrounds and their ability to succeed in Swedish school therefore varies.

The group of newly arrived young people increased especially in 2015. At present, however, the number of young asylum seekers is declining. Therefore it is not possible to predict how the development will look like in the long term, according to Government's Official Report [2016:77](#).

Statistics Sweden ([Statistiska centralbyrån](#)) has studied young Swede's mobility for learning purposes in Europe ([SCB 2017](#)). Among those between 18 and 34 years of age in 2014, about 17% had been abroad for at least three months within the framework of their post-secondary studies. The share having been abroad within the framework of their post-secondary education is close to the European benchmark of 20%. About 10% among people between 18 and 34 years of age, with completed initial vocational education and training, had been abroad for at least two weeks within the framework of their upper secondary education. The share in Sweden is higher than the benchmark of 6% set up by the European Union.

## Organisation of the education and training system

The Swedish education system (see [Euridice](#) for more detailed information) is decentralised and the education is governed by:

- the Education Act ([Skollagen](#)) decided by the Riksdag (parliament)
- the national goals for education – set in the [Curriculum for the upper secondary school](#)
- the programme goals, specific for each programme
- by each subject's syllabus.

Within this framework set by the Riksdag and the government, the municipalities implement the steering documents in order to facilitate for the learners to reach the goals and learning outcomes set for a certain school stage. According to the Education Act, each municipality shall establish a local school plan (skolplan) describing the financing, organisation, development and assessment of the activities within each school. This local school plan should indicate how the municipality intends to fulfill the national goals for the school.

In the ninth year of compulsory school ([grundskola](#)), pupils choose which programme they wish to follow at the upper secondary school ([gymnasieskola](#)). The municipalities provide a broad range of education and match the number of places in different programmes to pupils' choices as far as possible. If the number of applicants is higher than the number of places available, selection is made on the basis of the pupil's final marks/grades from the courses finished during compulsory school.

Pupils wishing to study a national programme not offered by their home municipality are entitled to be accepted onto this programme in another municipality that does offer it. These candidates have the same priority as applicants from that municipality.

Vocational and general upper secondary education is provided within the same institutions run by municipalities, county councils or independent organisers in grant-aided independent schools (*friskolor*). Municipal upper secondary schools in Sweden are free of charge and pupils have free access to books, tools and other equipment. Independent schools at upper secondary level are generally grant-aided and are not allowed to charge fees. There is no end-of-school exam.

### Organisation of formal education by age group

Compulsory school (*grundskola*) begins at the age of seven and ends at the age of 16. Under the Education Act, nine years of compulsory schooling is obligatory for all children aged 7 to 16, i.e. school attendance is compulsory. The Education Act also states that children and young people have a right to receive education in the national school system. Learners in compulsory school from the age of 13 are allocated to [ISCED](#)-level 2.

Upper secondary school (*gymnasieskola*) consists of 18 national programmes and five introductory programmes (introduktionsprogram) for learners who are not eligible for a national programme. Among the national programmes there are 12 vocational programmes (yrkesprogram) and six higher education preparatory programmes (högskoleförberedande program). Learners usually start upper secondary school at the age of 16 and complete their upper secondary studies at the age of 19. Learners in upper secondary school are allocated to ISCED-level 3.

Students having not completed upper secondary education are able to attend municipal adult education (kommunal vuxenutbildning, [Komvux](#)) or folk high schools (folkhögskola). Education within municipal [adult education](#) and in folk high schools are either allocated to ISCED-level 3 (for completing upper secondary studies) or to ISCED-level 4 (for post-secondary non-tertiary studies).

Students that have completed upper secondary school are, depending on their choice of upper secondary national programme and courses within the framework of individual options, also able to apply for universities (universitet), university colleges ([högskola](#))

and/or higher vocational education (yrkeshögskola). Education in [universities](#) is allocated to ISCED-levels 6 and 7, in university colleges to ISCED-level 5, and to ISCED-levels 4 and 5 in higher vocation education.

### Learning disabilities

Upper secondary school for individuals with learning disabilities ([USSILD](#), [Gymnasiesärskola](#)) is a free, voluntary type of school that young people with developmental disorders or acquired brain injuries can choose to attend once they have completed compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities. USSILD consists of a national programme, individual programmes and programmes that diverge from the national programme structure.

There are a total of nine national upper secondary school programmes. Each programme spans four years and consists of USSILD foundation subjects, programme-specific subjects, more in-depth programme-specific courses and assessed coursework.

More information on Sweden's education system is provided in [Eurydice web portal](#).

## Main concepts

### Early leavers from education and training

There is a lack of a common definition of early leavers from education and training in Sweden. The Education Act regulates the responsibility of the municipalities for young people under the age of 20 years who have completed their compulsory schooling but do not carry out or have not completed education and training in a national programme of upper secondary or equivalent education. The Swedish National Agency for Education defines that completed education and training refers to students who qualify for upper secondary diploma (gymnasieexamen).

[Early leavers](#) from upper secondary school can therefore be defined as:

- Students who interrupt their studies in a national programme or equivalent, thereby leaving education.
- Students undergoing full training in a national programme or equivalent without obtaining upper secondary diploma (gymnasieexamen).
- Students who interrupt their studies in an introductory programme without completing their education according to their individual study plan or without switching to a national programme or equivalent.

## 6.2 Administration and governance

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Swedish government's standpoint is that cooperation between education and working life must increase. Good cooperation is a prerequisite for upper secondary vocational education to prepare students for working life and help employers to get properly trained labour. Within several areas of the labour market, the parties have signed vocational education and training agreements in order to facilitate the transition of young people from school to working life. These agreements are usually based on the principle that persons who lack relevant experience in the profession receive guidance and training during a part of their working hours.

A [national delegation for workplace based training](#) (YA-delegationen) has got the government task to promote long-term sustainable structures for structured learning at the workplace, and developing the conditions for such learning. The assignment is to be finalised by 1 November 2018.

## Governance

### Main actors

The [Ministry of Education and Research](#) (Utbildningsdepartementet) is in charge of education and training. The following agencies and organisations, amongst others, come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research.

The [Swedish National Agency for Education](#) (Skolverket) is responsible for preschool activities (förskoleverksamhet), school-age childcare (skolbarnsomsorg), compulsory school (grundskola), upper secondary school (gymnasieskola) and the municipal adult education (kommunernas vuxenutbildning). The agency puts forward proposals and monitors education. One of the main tasks of the Swedish National Agency for Education is to examine the quality and outcome of education in municipalities and grant-aided independent schools, as well as to supervise their activities.

The [Swedish Schools Inspectorate](#) (Skolinspektionen) ensures that local authorities and independent schools follow existing laws and regulations. The Schools Inspectorate conducts regular supervision of all schools. The Schools Inspectorate is also responsible for granting licenses to new independent schools. Furthermore, it decides on applications for entitlement to subsidies and monitors national supervision of upper secondary schools (gymnasieskolor).

The [National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools](#) (Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten), is the central authority responsible for allocating public funds for special pedagogical issues. The institute creates and provides support to school organisers on special pedagogical issues related to disabilities.

The [Swedish Institute for Educational Research](#) (Skolforskningsinstitutet) is a government agency that helps to provide teachers and other professionals in preschools, primary/secondary schools and adult education with reliable conditions for the planning, execution and evaluation of the teaching process, with the support of working methods and practices with a firm scientific basis. The objective of the Swedish Institute for Educational Research is to promote and encourage students' learning and development, and to improve their learning outcomes.

The [Swedish Higher Education Authority](#) (Universitetskanslersämbetet) is responsible for reviewing the quality of higher education and ensuring that higher education institutions comply with relevant legislation and regulations. The Higher Education Authority is also responsible for official statistics on higher education in Sweden and monitors how efficiently the higher education institutions operate.

The [Swedish Council for Higher Education](#) (Universitets- och högskolerådet) is responsible for providing information about higher education, administering admission to study programmes, recognising qualifications from abroad and promoting participation in international collaboration (e.g., national agency for Erasmus+).

The [Swedish Board for Study Support](#) (Centrala studiestödsnämnden, CSN) is the central administrative authority for student's social questions, and responsible for the allocation and repayment of financial support for studies, as well as following up and evaluating different systems for financing studies.

The [Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#) (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) is responsible for all publicly funded courses in vocational higher education. The principal missions of the agency are to determine what courses are to be provided, make decisions on public funding to be allocated to education providers, assess and audit quality and outcomes of courses, and to analyse and assess needs for skilled competence and the development of the labour market. The agency coordinates a national framework for validation, and serves as the national coordinator for EQF – the European Qualifications Framework in Lifelong Learning.

[Statistics Sweden](#) (Statistiska centralbyrån, SCB) is the official statistics provider. It is commissioned by the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education to collect data in the education area.

The [Swedish National Council of Adult Education](#) (Folkbildningsrådet) is civil society organisation with three members:

1. The Swedish National Federation of Study Associations (Folkbildningsförbundet).
2. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och landsting, SALAR).
3. The Interest Organisation of Popular Movement Folk High Schools (Rörelsefolkhögskolornas intresseorganisation, RIO).

Commissioned by the Government and the Riksdag, the Council allocates state appropriations to adult education associations and folk high schools and follows up and evaluates liberal adult education activities. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education also works on behalf of its members by monitoring liberal adult education policy, providing information and coordinating international work.

### **General distribution of responsibilities**

The municipalities have great autonomy to administer the education system within the legislative framework set up by the government. The municipalities are bound by law to provide a number of basic services for which they receive state subsidies. In addition, they have the right to levy income taxes and, in some cases, also to charge fees to finance their activities. State grants constitute around one sixth of the municipalities' income. Municipalities are the principal organisers of:

- Early childhood education and care
- The compulsory school (grundskolan)
- Education for pupils with severe intellectual impairments (särskolan)
- Upper secondary school (gymnasieskolan).
- Municipal adult education (kommunal vuxenutbildning)
- Adult education for adults with intellectual impairments (särsvux)
- Swedish tuition for immigrants (svenskundervisning för invandrare, sfi)

The municipality is also the employer of school personnel and hence responsible for their professional development.

Each municipal council appoints one or more committees responsible for ensuring that educational activities are provided in accordance with the law and state regulations and guidelines and that the best possible conditions for education are created. The committee or committees responsible for schools are obliged to ensure that:

- Goals of the curricula are achieved and general regulations are followed
- Municipal funds are allocated for school activities
- Qualified teaching and non-teaching staff is recruited and that staff members are offered competence development
- Appropriate facilities are provided for schools

In practice, it is a municipal responsibility to ensure that schools throughout the country maintain good standards. The municipalities should follow up and evaluate education on a regular basis, as well as take part in national evaluations. According to the Education Act, each school must monitor and evaluate its own activities. More details are available at the webpage of [Eurydice](#) network.

## 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

### National strategy

There is no national strategy in Sweden for preventing early leaving from upper secondary education. The Swedish Government has though determined that it is particularly important that municipalities are well informed of the situation of early school leavers. Therefore an amendment was made to the [Education Act](#) regarding the responsibilities of the municipalities. According to this amendment, Swedish municipalities have since January 2015 an explicit responsibility for early leavers from education younger than 20 years of age, who have completed their compulsory schooling but have not completed upper secondary school.

Upper secondary education is voluntary, but students are required to participate in the education. If a student in upper secondary school fails to attend the education for more than a month in succession, without a valid reason, the student shall be deemed to have left education. If there are special reasons, the principal may decide that the student should not be deemed to have left education, according to the Education Act.

As of July 1, 2018, the principal has an obligation to investigate repeated and longer periods of absence. The purpose for investigating the causes of absence is to be able to provide appropriate support, so that the student then can achieve the education goals. If there is a need for more ways of support, such as a need for special support or offensive treatment, these needs should be coordinated in one investigation.

When it comes to early leavers from education who have left education, the responsibility goes to home municipality. The municipality must offer appropriate individual measures, primarily aimed at motivating young people to begin or resume upper secondary education. Municipalities are obliged to keep records of early school leavers and to document the efforts taken.

### Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

#### Upper secondary education

The Swedish National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)) has several on-going efforts to develop the quality of formal education and vocational education and training (yrkesprogram). The tasks and activities that are of particular interest for ELET are the following:

*Collaboration for the best school* ([Samverkan för bästa skola](#)) is a measure where the National Agency for Education together with principals implement actions to improve school results and equity within and between schools. Efforts are directed to schools with low level of academic achievement or high proportion of early leavers, and who have or are expected to have difficulties to improve their performance on their own. At the end of 2019, the National Agency calculates that the Collaboration for the best school has reached a total of approximately 110 principals and nearly 300 school units. Of the 32 school units that are currently active in the programme, five are upper secondary schools and the majority are thus compulsory schools.

*Mission to implement measures to improve the quality of education for newly arrived students and the needs of pupils with mother tongue other than Swedish* ([Insatser för att stärka utbildningens kvalitet för nyanlända elever och vid behov för elever med annat modersmål än svenska](#)) consist of both general and targeted measures. The general measures are directed to principals, headmasters, teachers, tutors in native language and other personnel in the introductory programme. The aim is to help reduce gaps in academic achievement between newly arrived students, students with a first language other than Swedish and other student groups.

The national school development programme ([Nationella skolutvecklingsprogram](#)) is a national school development programme targeted at principals and schools. Several of the planned measures are of importance for preventing early leaving from upper secondary schools.

*Training for guidance counselors to improve the quality of guidance* (Uppdrag att genomföra fortbildningsinsatser för främst studie- och yrkesvägledare för att förbättra kvaliteten inom vägledningen) is a [training package](#) focusing on better knowledge of working life, contacts between school and work, and on how to integrate guidance and counselling in education.

## **Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

In recent years, there are no government initiatives for actions aiming at preventing and reducing ELET through non-formal or informal learning or youth work.

## **Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

In Sweden, the main focus when it comes to early leavers from upper secondary education is to get them back to education. If that doesn't work the focus is on alternative ways to training or employment (see [section 3.6](#) for more information on integration of young people in the labour market in Sweden. The government formed a delegation in 2015, tasked with promoting labour market policies against youth unemployment at local level. The mission of the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants ([Dua](#)), is to promote state and municipal cooperation and development of new forms of cooperation. The work is to be based on both existing labour market policies and additional initiatives in the field of labour market policy.

Within its overarching mandate, Dua's tasks include encouraging municipalities and the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) to enter into collaborative agreements at local level and to put the agreements into practice. Dua is also to allocate government grants to municipalities linked to these local agreements.

Dua's mandate includes conducting dialogue with and encouraging dialogue between individual municipalities, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), the labour market partners in the local government sphere (municipality and county council level), other central labour market partners, agencies, regional actors and others on how labour market policy initiatives to benefit young people and newly arrived migrants can be developed and made more effective at local level.

Dua is also to gather and spread knowledge about and best practice on labour market policy initiatives and forms of collaboration, and identify obstacles, problems and shortcomings in cooperation between the government and municipalities when implementing labour market policy. In its work, Dua is to pay particular attention to the importance of gender equality at work and seize opportunities to combat gender segregation in the labour market.

## **The national Youth Guarantee scheme**

In December 2007, the labour market policy programme 'Job guarantee for youth' was introduced in Sweden. The purpose of the Job guarantee for youth is to offer young people individual employment measures at an early stage, in order for them to get a job or begin or resume education as quickly as possible. When it comes to young early leavers from education (between 16 and 19 years of age), the measures aim to bring them back to education. The municipalities must offer appropriate individual measures, primarily aimed at motivating these young people to begin or resume upper secondary school education.

Early leavers from education between 20 and 24 years of age, and who lack completed upper secondary education are entitled to study in adult education (Komvux) or in a folk high school (folkhögskola), with the goal of completing upper secondary education. Folk

high school is an important second chance institute for those who have not been able to complete their education in the regular education system. With its unique pedagogy and its flexible conditions, folk high school succeeds to educate individuals that other school forms fail with. Therefore, the [government provided in 2017](#) extra funding for expanded opportunities for people without primary or secondary education to complete their education, or to attend a vocational education.

Further, participants in the Job guarantee for youth who have reached the age of 20 years are entitled to take part in the guarantee on a part-time basis, allowing them time to participate in municipal adult education courses or study Swedish for Immigrants. The aim is to increase their study motivation, clarify the role of education in the labour market and encourage more participants to choose full time studies.

### **Multi-agency partnerships addressing ELET**

Sweden's largest collaborative project in preventing early school leaving at upper secondary level is [Plug In](#). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting) is the central project owner. The aim is to help reduce the dropout rate in upper secondary school and to get more young people to complete their studies.

The first round of the project took place between 2012 and 2014. The continuation, Plug In 2.0, started at the beginning of the autumn term 2015. It is expected that the project will reach about 3 000 young adults spread over some 40 municipalities during the project period. The initiative has been awarded support from the European Social Fund.

[PlugInnovation.se](#) is a digital platform focusing on the school dropout issue. The platform provides information about developments and research in this field, for instance how municipalities are working to reduce truancy, to find more effective study plans for young newly arrived migrants and to support young people who have dropped out.

[The Flagship project School to Work](#) (S2W) aims to strengthen transnational cooperation between stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region. Flagship School to Work is a platform that represents projects in the fields of education and employment that aim to prevent early school leaving and to integrate young people who are not in education, employment or training into labour market. A strong emphasis is on initiatives that provide holistic measures to ease school to work transition and to increase employability of young people. Initiator of this project is the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. School to Work gathers more than 50 members, who since 2012 are actively engaged in prevention of early school leaving and in easing transition from school to work. Members of the School to Work project are schools, civil society organisations, municipalities, public employment services, welfare institutions, businesses, academia, and government institutions (regional and national). Membership covers the entire territory of the Baltic Sea Region.

### **Quality assurance**

The first step to assure the quality of the government measures to prevent early leaving from education was taken in 2013, when the Government commissioned Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) to propose various options for following up young people who did not finish upper secondary education. In 2014, Statistics Sweden received a supplementary government mission to carry out a follow-up of the establishment process in the labour market of this group.

The [follow-up](#) shows the extent to which young people born 1991-1995 entered upper secondary education and the results they achieved in the form of a school-leaving certificate, alternatively the highest grade in which they were registered. The report presented the extent to which they were established in the labour market, and the extent to which they studied at upper secondary level, in municipal adult education or took general courses at the folk high school.

The follow-up was based on a number of background variables. In addition, the young people's own perspective was presented. Their views on the reasons for never registering in upper secondary school or not completing upper secondary education was reviewed, as well as their impressions of receiving support to complete upper secondary education. Also, their views on the contacts with study and vocational guidance were reported.

### **Evaluation of the national strategy**

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) has been commissioned by the Government, as a measure of the national strategy for young people who neither work nor study, to review the work of the municipalities within their responsibility for early leavers from education. See section [4.3](#), Strategy for the social inclusion of young people, for more information about the strategy.

The Schools Inspectorate has during 2016 [reviewed 16 municipalities](#) on the basis of amendments in the Education Act that went into effect in January 2015. The municipalities were chosen because of a high proportion of early leavers from upper secondary school. The target group consisted of a total of 695 early leavers. Among other facts the results show that only in 190 cases the young person was a subject of an intervention. The Schools Inspectorate concludes that the Swedish municipalities have started to develop individual-based methods but that much work remains in relation to the intentions of the legislation.

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

### **Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

Sweden is the processes of developing a structure for validation of non-formal and informal education. There is no regulated framework for validation in Sweden yet.

The definition of validation was decided by the Government [in 2003](#). The definition states that

'Validation is a process which involves a structured assessment, evaluation, documentation and recognition of knowledge and competences possessed by a person independently of how it is acquired.'

This definition is included in the Education Act.

The [Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#) (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) is responsible for coordinating and supporting a national framework for recognition of prior learning and validation of skills and competences.

The agency collaborates with other public authorities to provide information and guidelines to support key actors, such as the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet) and the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket).

From June 2016, this responsibility has been revised to focus on supporting sector organisations in their work with validation and development of validation models. The agency's responsibility to promote the use of validation within higher vocational education is also being emphasised.

For more information, see [Sweden's report on the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014](#).

### **Strategy for validation**

In November 2015, the government decided on a national delegation for validation. The delegation consists of members representing trade unions, employers' associations and national authorities and has taken the name '*Valideringsdelegationen 2015–2019*'. Its main task is to follow, support and promote coordination of validation on both regional

and national levels. The delegation presented a [proposal for a national strategy for validation](#) in March 2017. The final report will be presented in December 2019.

### Skills audits

The notion of 'skills audits' is not relevant to Swedish formal education. All learners, including learners in vocational education and training, who aim to have their prior learning and competences validated, must follow the procedure relevant to the actual level of education.

In higher vocational education there is a concept of 'Real competence' ([Reell kompetens](#)), relating to a person's actual knowledge, skills and competences. Competences can be developed in formal education (organised education in the formal education system), non-formal learning (organised education outside the formal education system) or informal learning (e.g. working life or everyday life). Competence standards define the learning outcomes that an individual must have to be recognized for a qualification, such as a degree, a certification or an occupational certificate.

### Information and guidance

The [Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#) (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) has the main role in raising awareness and providing information on validation, along with the Swedish National Agency of Education regarding adult education. The main channel for information, advice and guidance is the website [valideringsinfo.se](#). The website is mainly targeted at counsellors and individual people who need validation and provides relevant information easily accessible.

The web portal includes a validation tool, [Your way to validation](#) (Din valideringsväg), for those who need to find their way among those who assess education and professional experience.

### Awareness-raising and recruitment

From 2016, the National Delegation for Validation is commissioned to follow, support and promote coordination of work to develop validation. In the ministerial report from 2016, [Validering med mervärde](#), the government has emphasised the task of each national authority for promoting and supporting the use of validation within their area of responsibility. The clarified responsibility of each national agency includes easy access to information about validation, for both individuals and practitioners.

### Quality assurance

The existing evaluation framework is provided in the national criteria and guidelines of validation in Sweden. The national criteria and guidelines focus primarily on systematic quality work and assurance to carry out validation at first hand, and do not include external quality assurance. However, the Delegation for Validation emphasises the need of further development of quality assurance in their proposal for a national strategy for validation from 2017.

### Validation methods

[Validation methods in Sweden](#) differ between different actors. Career and guidance counsellors within adult education and employment services are generally key practitioners in initial validation. They identify the purpose of a validation for an individual and follow up the process at different stages. Today, there are no formal requirements for carrying out a validation. The national criteria and guidelines note that those professionals who contribute to carrying out validation should meet set competence requirements. The information here is based on the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, country reports for Sweden [2014](#) and [2016](#).

### Working life

In March 2017, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education introduced a [standard for validation in different business sectors](#). The standard is based on the

competency criteria that the business sector has identified, for the individual to be employable within a field of competence or in a professional role. Validation can respond to the question whether an individual is employable, with or without competence development, and whether an individual meets the eligibility criteria for obtaining relevant qualifications. If the individual meets all the eligibility criteria, the certificate of competence from the validation may be the basis for the issue of a professional certificate or certification.

## Adult education

In adult education, the [guidelines](#) from the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) have another approach. First, a general competence mapping aims to describe in general the student's knowledge and competences in order for the student to identify which possibilities are available to him/her in adult education.

The adult learner has a central role in the validation process and his/her interests guide the direction of the process. The general validation process can be carried out together with a guidance or career counsellor and tools and methods such as discussions, self-assessment, portfolio or similar can be used.

After the general mapping, an in-depth mapping of competences can be carried out. In-depth mapping aims to describe the student's knowledge and competence in specific areas. The in-depth validation process can be carried out together with guidance or career counsellors and a subject or vocational teacher. The validation is implemented using the curricula as a standard.

## 6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

### Policy framework

In November 2011, Member States agreed on a benchmark of at least 20% of higher education graduates having had a period of study or training abroad, and 6% for vocational education and training students, both to be reached by 2020 ([the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training](#)).

There are no overall targets for the [IVET mobility policy in Sweden](#) in general (IVET, Initial Vocational Education and Training). The curriculum for upper secondary education states that the responsibility of the head teacher includes encouragement of international contacts, co-operation and exchange in education. It is applicable to all learners, but no targets are set.

According to legislation, career guidance for international learning should be available for all students nationwide. It is up to each school organiser to meet the goals. To ensure that school organisers meet the goals, and that students have access to adequate guidance in a decentralized educational system, the Swedish School Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) has a controlling function to ensure convergence.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet) is assigned to coordinate and make information and guidance available about all mobility programmes, including those available for IVET-learners, funded by the EU, the Nordic Council of Ministers or the Swedish State.

### Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The [Swedish Council for Higher Education](#) (Universitet- och högskolerådet) is a government agency with different tasks in the education sector. One of them is to provide organisations and individuals in Sweden with the opportunity to participate in international exchanges and partnerships.

The agency is responsible for a number of different programmes that give stakeholders in the entire Swedish education sector – from pre-school and school, to higher education, vocational education and training and adult education – the opportunity to apply for project funding for international partnership and exchange projects.

In general, it is organisations – for example, a school, a higher education institution or vocational training centre – that may apply for funds from the Swedish Council for Higher Education. It is then the organisation that sends staff, students and pupils on exchanges to other countries.

The Agency provides a web portal, [utbyten.se](http://utbyten.se), that gives information to both students and organisations.

### **Upper secondary education, general and VET**

[Athena](#) is an exchange programme for teachers and pupils in vocational upper secondary education, upper secondary education for pupils with learning disabilities and vocational adult education. The programme is managed by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet) and gives pupils, teachers, school management and other teaching staff the opportunity to participate in exchanges with developing countries.

[Nordic Agreement on Co-operation on Upper Secondary School Education](#) gives all young Nordic citizens the right to take part in upper secondary education in another Nordic country. The agreement commits the countries to give learners from other Nordic countries access to secondary education under the same conditions as nationals. The Agreement also guarantees that the countries will not seek compensation for educating each other's students, as this could constitute a direct obstacle to freedom of movement for students in upper-secondary education in the Nordic Region.

The Nordic countries also undertake to work to recognise the education obtained through studies in another Nordic country. The countries have even agreed to conduct information campaigns aimed at making students aware of the opportunities to study in other Nordic countries and to take up those opportunities.

[Nordplus Junior programme](#) makes it possible to apply for grants for cooperation with schools in the Nordic and Baltic countries, such as for project partnerships, pupil and teacher exchanges and work experience for pupils. Nordplus Junior is aimed at preschools, primary and secondary schools, both theoretical and vocational programmes, as well as vocational schools/apprenticeships.

Extended schools in arts and culture, that are part of a national or regional school syllabus, may apply as coordinators. Pupils, teachers and other educational staff may participate. Funding is available for various activities, including mobility activities: preparatory visits, class exchanges, pupil exchanges and work experience.

[Erasmus+ Mobility Project for VET](#) learners offers a VET traineeship abroad for up to 12 months. This activity is open to both apprentices and students in vocational training schools. These learners undertake a vocational training placement in an another country. Learners are hosted either at a workplace (in an enterprise or other relevant organisation) or at a VET school.

The learning outcomes are formally recognised and validated at an institutional level, course contents are adapted as necessary to ensure that the mobility period abroad fits well with the course in which the apprentice/VET student is enrolled. In order to strengthen the employability of young people and to facilitate their transition to the labour market, recent graduates from VET schools or companies providing VET to apprentices can participate in this activity as well.

[One-year Programmes](#) give upper-secondary school students in Sweden the opportunity to study in France, Spain, Germany or Austria for one academic year. Students who have been accepted on one of the programmes are placed in the programme that best matches the upper-secondary school programme they are studying in Sweden.

Swedish students participate in classes on the same terms as the host country's, and may choose to sit exams and receive grades or assessments. They receive a monthly study grant and boarding supplement. This is paid by CSN (Centrala studiestödsnämnden) in Sweden and contributes to covering the costs for boarding at the school or the host family.

[Atlas Practical Training](#) enables students of occupational preparatory programmes at secondary schools (VET) and adult students of further education institutions to conduct their practical training in a foreign country. Practical trainings abroad aim to give students the chance for professional development, cultural exchange and improvement of language skills. The practical training has to be carried out at a work place within the field of the student's education programme. It is not possible for individual students without the support of a school or organisation to apply for this programme.

The majority of schools and other organisers of education have their own bilateral co-operation agreements with institutions in other countries, those are described in more detail in [Eurydice](#).

### Higher education

The [Swedish Council for Higher Education](#) (Universitet- och högskolerådet) has the overall responsibility for exchange programmes for students in higher education in Sweden. Students are to apply via their universities. Several international student exchange programmes are available.

Erasmus and Nordplus are examples of programmes in which the majority of Swedish universities participate. Erasmus, which is the biggest programme, offers studies in Europe, while Nordplus has opportunities for studying in the Nordic and Baltic regions. There are also programmes for exchanges with countries in other parts of the world, such as Linnaeus-Palme, which offers grants for studies in low and middle-income countries.

The majority of universities and university colleges have their own bilateral co-operation agreements with institutions in other countries, those are described in [Eurydice](#).

[Erasmus+](#) is an exchange programme that provides the opportunity to study abroad for 3–12 months. It is financed by the European Commission. In Sweden, Erasmus+ is administered by the Swedish Council for Higher Education and the higher education institutions that participate in the programme.

Erasmus students study at a higher education institution (university) in another European country for 3-12 months, on the same terms as students of the host country. Erasmus students receive a grant from their university. The grant covers the extra costs associated with the overseas stay, but it is not fully comprehensive. The size of the grant varies from 315 to 375 euros per month.

[Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees](#) are high quality, specialised degrees where different parts of the programme are placed at the various participating universities. Students in Sweden can apply to all the joint Master's programmes within Erasmus+, provided they have the necessary eligibility; there is no need for a Swedish university to be part of the partnership.

Unlike other exchange programmes, most Erasmus+ joint Master's programmes charge tuition fees. However, it is possible to apply for grants that cover travel and living costs, as well as any tuition fees.

[Nordplus Higher Education Programme](#) is a mobility and network programme in the higher education sector, on bachelor and master levels, for the Nordic and Baltic countries. The aim of the programme is to create a collaboration between the institutions that participate in the programme through exchanges.

The Nordplus Higher Education Programme supports cooperation between networks, intensive courses, development projects, joint study programmes and student and teacher mobility in universities and university colleges. Grants are awarded e.g. for

innovative development projects, dissemination and use of results achieved by networks and projects, language training and establishment of new networks.

[Linnaeus-Palme](#) supports long-term, bilateral collaboration at the department level between higher education institutions in low- and middle-income countries and Sweden. The collaboration takes place in the form of projects based on teacher and student exchanges, each of which must have a concrete academic purpose.

Some of the objectives are to develop professional skills of the participating student and teachers, to broaden the recruitment base of young people who can work with development issues at home as well as abroad and to increase understanding of other cultures.

## **Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work**

Sweden takes part in the Erasmus+ Youth in Action, the programme the European Union has set up for young people. Youth in Action is a key instrument for non-formal and informal learning in an European dimension.

Based on government priorities, Sweden has chosen to focus specifically on young people who do not study or work. In 2016, Sweden has also focused on integration of newly arrived young migrants.

The number of applications within Youth in Action has increased the last years. In 2017, 282 applications were received (278 in 2016 and 193 in 2015). The number of applications granted in 2017 was 113 (134 in 2016 and 126 in 2015). The total size of Youth in Action grants in 2017 was 5,7 million euros, all according to the [annual report 2017](#) of MUCF.

Besides Youth in Action, there are no other programmes that promote cross-boarder mobility in the context of non-formal learning in Sweden.

## **Quality assurance**

### **Mobility**

Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) has studied young Swede's mobility for learning purposes in Europe. The [report](#) presents statistics available on international mobility for learning purposes and the scope of mobility in Sweden. The report builds on a pilot survey initiated by the European statistical authority, Eurostat.

Two European benchmarks (mobility among those who have completed post-secondary education and mobility among those who have completed initial vocational education training), and an indicator for the area (general mobility for learning purposes among young people) are measured for the first time.

Among those between 18 and 34 years of age in 2014, who were studying or had studied in a post-secondary education for at least two years, about 17% had been abroad for at least three months within the framework of their post-secondary studies. The share having been abroad within the framework of their post-secondary education is close to the European benchmark of 20%.

About 11% had attended some courses abroad that can be credited to the Swedish education. About 6% had attended a complete education programme abroad.

About 10% among people between 18 and 34 years of age, with completed initial vocational education and training, had been abroad for at least two weeks within the framework of their upper secondary education. The share in Sweden is higher than the benchmark of 6% set up by the European Union. The majority visited a workplace during their time abroad. Barely three out of ten visited a school.

Among all 2,2 million people between 18 and 34 years of age in Sweden 2014, about 700 000 had taken part in international mobility for learning purposes. This corresponds

to a third of the surveyed age group. Among those who had been abroad for learning purposes, the share of women was slightly higher than that of men. Activities included taking part in a pupil exchange, or some other participation in formal education, for instance in the framework of compulsory school, upper secondary education or higher education.

Non-formal education activities were also included. About 25% of all those between 18 and 34 years of age had been abroad for learning purposes outside their formal education. The share was slightly higher among women than men. The most common activities were language courses, study-, sports- and class trips, work-related courses, conferences or study visits.

### Mobility programmes for students in higher education

The main instrument to monitor student's views on Erasmus+ is the Eurostudent project that collects comparable data on the social dimension of European higher education, including mobility. According to the latest data from [Eurostudent V](#), about 14% of Swedish higher education graduates have had a period of study or training abroad.

The average age of Swedish students is higher than in the rest of Europe and many have both settled down and have children. These students find it generally more difficult to break to study abroad, compared with younger students. Swedish students indicate above all that separation from relatives and financing barriers hinders them from study or training abroad. Study financing is the second biggest obstacle for Swedish students, even though they have better economic conditions compared to other students in Europe.

Table 6.1 Student mobility in Sweden, 2011/2012-2015/2016 (total number).

EXCHANGE PROGRAMME GENDER	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Total, exchange students	<b>6 696</b>	<b>6 948</b>	<b>6 946</b>	<b>7 178</b>	<b>7 255</b>
Female	3 774	3 894	3 980	4 108	4 181
Male	2 922	3 054	2 966	3 070	3 074
Bilateral programmes	<b>3 393</b>	<b>3 687</b>	<b>3 742</b>	<b>3 941</b>	<b>3 898</b>
Female	1 870	2 008	2 026	2 152	2 124
Male	1 523	1 679	1 716	1 789	1 774
EU-programmes	<b>3 149</b>	<b>3 139</b>	<b>3 065</b>	<b>3 084</b>	<b>3 220</b>
Female	1 817	1 807	1 850	1 845	1 970
Male	1 332	1 332	1 215	1 239	1 250
Nordplus	<b>201</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>158</b>
Female	112	106	122	120	102
Male	89	63	61	57	102

Source: EUROSTUDENT V En kort inblick i studenternas mobilitet. Universitets- och högskolerådet 2015. Statistics on student mobility is provided by the Swedish Council for Higher Education and Statistics Sweden.

## 6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

### Educational support

The basic principle guiding Swedish education since the Curriculum from 1980 is 'a school for all', meaning access to equivalent education regardless of background, prerequisites or needs. If a learner is in need of additional adjustments to reach the educational targets, he or she should in the first instance be offered that within the ordinary education programme. If additional adjustments are not enough, or not expected to be enough, it is the responsibility of the head teacher to ensure that the learner's needs are investigated.

The right to adjustments and support also applies to learners' general situation, including disadvantaged backgrounds resulting from disability, personal, socio-economic and/or cultural circumstances.

Universities and university colleges are obliged to consider the special needs of students who have physical disabilities or for other reasons experience difficulties in following courses and therefore they also receive special funds to be used for special pedagogical support to disabled students to compensate functional limitations.

Special educational support is provided within mainstream education as well as in education in following cases:

- for pupils with severe intellectual impairments (*särskola*),
- for pupils with severe physical disabilities (*specialskolan*),
- the upper secondary school for pupils with severe intellectual impairments (*gymnasiesärskolan*),
- the upper secondary school for pupils with impaired hearing (*riksgymnasiet för döva och hörselskadade*),
- upper secondary schools for pupils with severe physical disabilities (*riksgymnasium för svårt rörelsehindrade*), and
- education for adults with severe intellectual impairments (*särvux*).

More detailed information is provided in the European Commission's web portal [Eurydice](#).

### Policies in the context of formal education

The Swedish government has implemented a number of initiatives for educational support in order to reinforce equal opportunities in formal education. All major initiatives and national reforms are described in in the European Commissions web portal [Eurydice](#).

- *State grants for increased equity* ([Statsbidrag för ökad jämlikhet](#)). The Government has in 2017 introduced a state grant in order to increase the proportion of pupils qualified for upper secondary school's national programmes. The National Agency for Education has the task of distributing the grant of total SEK 500 million (52 million euros) in 2017 to those schools that are situated in socio-economically most deprived neighbourhoods.
- *Education during school holidays*. Education providers will be required to provide education during school holidays for pupils in year 8 and 9 of compulsory school. The pupils concerned are those risking not to meet one or more goals of knowledge and especially those risking not to be eligible for a national programme in upper secondary school. The reform entered into force in 2017. The education providers will be

compensated through an increase of SEK 60 million (6,3 million euros) in the general state grants received by the municipalities.

- *Homework support.* SEK 390 million (41 million euros) per year is set aside for homework support during 2016–2019. The basic amount is SEK 1 000 (105 euros) for each student who is offered to participate in the activities. In 2016, the Swedish National Agency for Education paid nearly SEK 269 million (28 million euros) to 2 211 schools and SEK 12 million (1,3 million euros) to 37 non-profit organisations to provide homework support. It is nearly ten times as much compared to 2015. In 2017, SEK 8 million (836 000 euros) were earmarked for non-profit organisations to provide homework support. An equal amount was reserved for the same purpose in 2016.

### Newly arrived young people

In 2015, approximately 71 000 asylum-seeking children and young people arrived in Sweden. Of these, approximately 43 000 were between 13 and 18 years of age, according to the [Swedish Migration Agency](#). In autumn 2015, the newly arrived young people represented nearly 8% of the population in the age group 16 to 18 years. In order to facilitate the efforts of schools to meet the needs of young foreign born, several initiatives target newly arrived pupils.

Assessing newly arrived pupils' knowledge became mandatory for schools from 1 January 2016. The Swedish National Agency for Education got the task of providing support to schools, both general support, such as skills development, and targeted interventions to schools in particular need of support.

- *Improve equal opportunities for newly arrived children* To further improve equal opportunities for newly arrived children across Sweden the municipalities did in 2016 benefit from a significant [economic contribution](#). Local governments received SEK 9,8 billion (1 billion euros) for better reception of asylum seekers and newly arrived. SEK 200 million (21 million euros) was allocated to the municipalities that have received a large proportion of asylum-seeking children over the last year. The Government also raised the school voucher to local authorities for asylum-seeking children by 50 per cent, which is an investment of SEK 393 million (41 million euros).

The government initiatives that are described in [6.3 Preventing early leaving](#) address social inclusion as well.

## Social cohesion and equal opportunities

### In formal education

In Sweden, citizenship education objectives are integrated into wider subjects or learning areas and it is also a cross-curricular objective where all teachers share responsibility for delivery. For more information on citizenship education please consult Euridice report [Citizenship education at school in Europe 2017](#).

The subjects of social studies are the two central subjects when it comes to citizenship education. Both are foundation subjects, that will say a subject studied by all students in the upper secondary school.

According to its [syllabus](#), teaching in the subject of social studies should aim at:

... 'helping students broaden, deepen and develop knowledge of people's living conditions based on different social issues. Political, social and economic interconnections today link together people from different societies throughout the world. Teaching should give students the opportunity to develop knowledge of issues relating to power, democracy, gender equality and human rights including the rights of children and young people in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.'

According to its [syllabus](#), teaching in the subject of religion should aim at:

... 'helping students broaden, deepen and develop knowledge of religions, outlooks on life and ethical standpoints, and where applicable different interpretations of these.'

(...)Teaching should take as its starting point a view of society characterised by openness regarding lifestyle, outlooks on life, differences between people, and also give students the opportunity to develop a preparedness for understanding and living in a society characterised by diversity. (...)Teaching should lead to students developing knowledge of how people's moral attitudes can be understood on the basis of religions and outlooks on life. They should be given the opportunity to reflect on and analyse people's values and beliefs, and thus develop respect and understanding for different ways of thinking and living. Teaching should also give students the opportunity to analyse and assess how religion can relate, amongst other things, to ethnicity, gender, sexuality and socio-economic background.'

### **In teachers training**

The [National School Leadership Training Programme](#) (rektorsprogrammet) is a state-regulated professional training programme for school heads, preschool managers and people with corresponding leadership positions. The leadership training programme plays a key role in organisations that are state-regulated and governed by the curriculum. The programme focuses on, among other things, the statutes that affect the rights of all children and pupils, and the responsibility of the school head to ensure these rights, and on pupils in need of special support (i behov av särskilt stöd) and pupils living with activity limitations (funktionsnedsättningar).

### **In legislation**

From 1 January 2017, new rules for schools on active measures against discrimination came into effect. The amendments in the [Discrimination Act](#) apply to pre-schools, schools and other activities regulated under the Education Act. The obligation to combat discrimination has been extended to cover all discrimination grounds, including gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. An obligation to have policies and procedures in order to prevent harassments, including sexual harassments, has been introduced in the act.

## **6.7 Skills for innovation**

### **Innovation in formal education**

Sweden's current national strategy for the development of entrepreneurship competence and of entrepreneurial mind-set among young people, 'Strategy for Entrepreneurship in Education and Training' (*Strategi för entreprenörskap inom utbildningsområdet*), was adopted in 2009.

The [Curriculum for Upper Secondary school](#) from 2011 states that

'The school should contribute to students developing knowledge and attitudes that promote entrepreneurship, enterprise and innovative thinking. As a result, the opportunities for students to start and run a business will increase. Entrepreneurial skills are valuable in working and societal life and for further studies.'

(p.6)

The incorporation of entrepreneurship competence in formal learning and in the curricula is presented in section [3.8](#), Development of entrepreneurship competences. There are also changes in the Curriculum, entered into force in 2018, that include the task of developing innovation skills through digital technology. See section [6.8](#) for more information.

### **Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

Sweden has no specific policy or measure to encourage young people to develop entrepreneurial skills through non-formal and informal learning, and youth work.

## 6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

### National strategy

In 2015, the Government commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to propose two IT strategies, one for preschool and compulsory education and one for upper secondary education. The agency has completed the task and [reported](#) to the Government in 2016. The strategy includes the following vision for 2022:

- All students develop adequate digital skills.
- The school system is characterized by the potential of digitalisation, so that digital tools and resources contribute to improved results and efficiency.

In order for the vision to be realized, the following needs to take place, according to the strategy:

- The governance documents for upper secondary school need to clarify the task of providing students with adequate digital skills.
- Head masters need to have adequate ability to strategically lead digital development work.
- Staff working with students in upper secondary school need to have the ability to choose and use appropriate digital tools in their work.
- Staff working with students in upper secondary school need to have access to digital tools and teaching resources for work in and outside school.
- Students need to have access to digital tools and teaching resources for work in and outside school.
- There has to be sufficient infrastructure as well as technical and educational support at the school units.
- There has to be a wide range of digital teaching materials that make efficient use of digital techniques' capabilities, and in addition, other digital learning resources need to be widely used.

### Media literacy and online safety through formal education

In March 2017, the Government [decided on](#) the following adjustments in curricula and syllabuses that aim to strengthen media literacy and online safety in different ways:

- programming is introduced as a distinct element in various subjects in compulsory education, especially in technology and mathematics
- the abilities of students to critically evaluate sources is to be strengthened
- the abilities of students to solve problems and translate ideas into action in a creative way with the use of digital technology is to be strengthened
- students are to work with digital texts, media and tools
- students are to use and understand digital systems and services
- students are to develop an understanding of the impact of digitalisation on the individual and society.

The amendments apply from July 2018. The Swedish Media Council (Medierådet) and the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) are the main government actors responsible for promoting the use of digital media, empowering children and young people as conscious media users and protecting them from harmful media influences.

## Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

The Swedish Media Council ([Statens medieråd](#)) is a government agency devoted to gathering, interpreting and disseminating research on children's and young people's use of media. The council also produces information and teaching materials on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for schools and libraries.

The Swedish Media Council has, during January 2015–June 2016, been responsible for the Swedish part of the EU Commission's project [Safer Internet](#), to promote a safer and better use of the internet and mobile technologies among children and young people.

Safer Internet Centre Sweden (SIC SE) worked with the concept of MIL based on the UNESCO framework and definitions, with minor national adaptations. The Swedish Media Council's learning tool [MIL for me](#), an online training resource on media and information literacy, is available at the Safer Internet network's site [Betterinternetforkids.eu](#), as well as at the web site of the Media Council.

The digital training materials in 'MIL for me' are aimed for strengthening young people's skills to cope with anti-democratic messages at the Internet and in social media. Part of that work is to strengthen young people's critical thinking and their abilities to evaluate different sources in relation to the media.

'MIL for me' won the prize for the best educational tool in media and information literacy for children and young people of the European network Insafe (a part of the Safer Internet).

## Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

### No hate speech

Since 2013, the Swedish Media Council runs the European Council campaign [No Hate Speech Movement](#) in Sweden, at the directive of the Swedish government. The aim of the campaign is to prevent racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance and to shield democracy from violent extremism. The campaign focuses particularly on promoting human rights, democracy and equality on the Internet, and encouraging source criticism and critical thinking in relation to media.

In 2015, the Government gave the [Swedish Media Council](#) (Statens medieråd) [the task](#) to develop the No Hate Speech Movement-campaign to include efforts to safeguard democracy against violent extremism. The campaign is to be specifically focused on the internet and social media, as extremist groups use the internet and social media to distribute propaganda and other materials that glorify and reinforce norms relating to masculinity and violence.

The Media Council provides schools with the method material 'Propaganda and the power of images' ([Propaganda och bilders makt](#)), as a part of their efforts to safeguard democracy against violent extremism. The campaign aims at strengthening the ability of children and young people to resist anti-democratic and pro-violence messages in the media.

See section [4.5](#), Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation which lead to violent extremism, for more information.

## 6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

### Information providers / counselling structures

In Sweden, there are for the moment no sources of information and guidance that are directly organised or funded by public national authorities available to young people to learn about non-formal and informal learning and youth work.

Instead, there are interesting cases of digital youth work with national or regional funding, such as [umo.se](http://umo.se) or [youmo.se](http://youmo.se). More information about online youth guidance is available in section 7.7.

[Fryshuset](http://Fryshuset) is a non-profit organisation that promotes empowerment and social inclusion of youth with a special focus on those who are at risk or already face exclusion. The financing comes from many differentiated sources, including both public and private financiers and sponsors. Fryshuset combines schools, youth culture, social projects and projects connected to labour market and entrepreneurship. Fryshuset has its own meeting places in Stockholm (Hammarby Sjöstad, Skärholmen, Husby), Gothenburg, Malmö, Nybro, Östra Göinge, Borlänge and Copenhagen. Fryshuset's operations are also available in more places in Sweden, for example through agreements with municipalities and companies. Fryshuset also has digital meeting places, such as [we change](http://wechange) and [ungdomar.se](http://ungdomar.se), which helps them work with young people throughout Sweden. Fryshuset's international network grows and they have cooperation and partnership agreements with organisations and cities across the globe, such as the UN Habitat, the Change House in Norway, Sosped in Finland and the city of Fortaleza, Brazil.

### Awareness raising initiatives

Generally speaking, youth work in Sweden takes an inclusive position, aiming for to reach all youth, from a positive standing point where young people are seen a resource rather a problem. At the local level however, most efforts are done to reach to a diverse youth group from socially more deprived neighborhoods. This is done because of existing economic restrictions, but also based on the requests and needs of young people.

Youth work is a municipal responsibility, both when it comes to outreach activities and to youth centres and youth clubs. The work may be carried out and/or governed by different entities, such as municipalities, CSOs, faith communities or schools. Youth work takes place in different localities, such as youth centres and clubs, sport facilities, schools, churches etc.

The Swedish Government has though initiated a number of comprehensive programmes and actions, where the target group consists of young people in a more vulnerable position, such as NEET, young people at risk for violence and radicalisation, young people with a migrant or ethnic minority background, young LGBT-persons, young disabled, and lately, also newly arrived young migrants. These government actions usually target professionals working in health care or in schools, in social work, in police force and in organised leisure, including both youth centres and sports. Even volunteers active in CSOs and in faith communities are targeted. More details are presented in section [4.7](#), Youth work to foster social inclusion.

## 6.10 Current debates and reforms

### Better opportunities for students to reach the knowledge requirements - active support and student health work and strengthened education for students with intellectual disabilities

In February 2021, the *Inquiry into students' opportunities to reach the knowledge requirements* ([Utredningen om elevers möjligheter att nå kunskapskraven](#)) submitted

their proposals to, among other things, improve the school's support work, make student health more accessible and strengthen the special needs school.

The inquiry proposes, among other things, that:

- The National Agency for Education shall be commissioned to produce compilations of knowledge in the areas of student health and support that can contribute to improving the principals' and teachers' opportunities to choose effective initiatives.
- A requirement for access to special teachers or special educators in student health must be introduced. The purpose is to increase the quality of mapping support needs and designing interventions, and to give teachers better support in the work of designing inclusive learning environments
- A guarantee for early support measures must be introduced for students who study the subjects Swedish, Swedish as a second language and mathematics according to the compulsory [special needs school](#)'s syllabi.

## 7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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In general, young people in Sweden have good health, when measured by prevalence of diseases and hospital care or by public health surveys covering information on self-reported health. Mental health problems have though shown an increasing trend among young people in Sweden since mid-1980s. Therefore, the government has initiated a number of actions, in order to turn this negative trend. When it comes to healthy lifestyle, there is a trend of polarisation, where some are physically very active and have conscious eating habits, while others have sedentary lifestyle and suffer of over-weight or obesity.

The Swedish government's national public health policy has the [overarching objective](#):

'To create social conditions to ensure good health, on equal terms, for the entire population'.

ANDT is one of the objective domains in the national public health policy. The government's [strategy for alcohol, narcotics, doping and tobacco](#) (ANDT) for the period 2016–2020 is:

'To create conditions in society so that the entire population can enjoy good health on equal terms. The objective of alcohol, narcotics, doping and tobacco policy is a society free from narcotics and doping, with a reduction in medical harm caused by alcohol and a reduction in tobacco use.'

The government is also working to close avoidable health gaps within a generation. In [the youth policy action plan](#) that the government launched for the 2014-2017 period, one of the three priority areas was promoting young people's mental well-being. The other priorities were promoting youth influence and the transition from education to labour market.

### 7.1 General context

#### Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Most adolescents in Sweden judge their health as being good. In general, young people in Sweden have healthy lifestyle habits, including regular physical and outdoor activities. A decreasing number of adolescents report of high consumption of alcohol or of being regular smokers.

On the negative side, an increasing share of young people report of having recurring mental and somatic problems, such as anxiety, feeling low, sleep disorders and abdominal pain or headache.

Most health problems are more common among children and adolescents living in less favourable social circumstances, compared to children and adolescents in socially advantaged groups. According to a systematic review of social health inequalities in Swedish children and adolescents (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2011), physical health problems were 30% more common, mental health problems and risk factors for ill-health 80% more common, and intentional injuries 120% more common among those young people who were living in less favourable social circumstances.

Other groups who face high risks of having health-related problems are persons with disabilities, LGBT-persons, persons with a national minority background and immigrants, according to the [public health report 2017](#) from the Public Health Agency of Sweden.

### Alcohol abuse

Alcohol consumption among young people in Sweden has declined continuously during the last decade. Between 2006 and 2016, the share of high consumers of alcohol (that on average drink at least 14 standard glasses (boys) and 9 standard glasses (girls) of alcoholic beverages per week) has declined:

- from 11 to 3% among students at last year in compulsory school
- from 22 to 8% among students at school year 2 of upper secondary school.

([The Public Health Agency](#))

### Substance abuse

Substance abuse among young people in Sweden shows a less positive trend. [Between 2007 and 2016](#), the share that testifies of having used narcotics over the past 12 months (narcotics refers to, for example, hash, marijuana, amphetamine, cocaine, heroin) has slightly increased from 11 to 13% among students at school year 2 of upper secondary school, while the share among students at last year in compulsory school has stayed at 4%.

### Tobacco consumption

Tobacco consumption among young people in Sweden has declined somewhat during the last five years. Between 2012 and 2016, the share of smokers (that testify that they have smoked over the past 12 months and still smoke) has declined:

- from 16 to 10% among students at last year in compulsory school
- from 30 to 24% among students at school year 2 of upper secondary school.

([The Public Health Agency](#))

### Physical activity

Physical activity level among young people has remained unchanged the last ten years. About 70% in the 16–29 age group report of being [physically active for at least 30 minutes a day](#). Sedentary lifestyle, which means spending [less than two hours of physical activity a week](#) – walking, cycling or doing another exercise – also shows a stable trend, the level has been around 10% the last five years.

### Outdoor activities

Approximately one third of the population in Sweden is active in terms of [outdoor recreation](#), i.e. has been outdoors in the nature at least once per week over the past year. Compared to other age groups, the level of outdoor activities is low among young people in the 16–24 age group; about 18% have been active in outdoor recreational activities during the last 12 months (at least 20 times). The average for the population between 16 and 84 years of age is 31%.

## Overweight and obesity

The prevalence of [overweight and obesity](#) is increasing among young people. In 2016, 29% among 16 to 29 year-olds reported of having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or higher, compared to 22% in 2006.

## Mental health

Mental health problems have shown an increasing trend among young people in Sweden since mid-1980s. Both register-based indicators on suicide attempts and self-reported well-being indicators confirm the trend. Among 16 to 29 year-olds, 43% witness of [having anxiety](#) (36% in total population 16–84 years). The share that reports of [very good wellbeing](#) is 29% in the 16 to 29 age group, compared to 36% in total population.

[Hospital care due to a suicide attempt](#) is more common among young people compared to those that are elder. In 2015, the share was 156 per 100 000 young people between 13 and 24 years of age, and 85 per 100 000 adults between 30 and 64 years of age.

## Suicide

Sweden's [suicide rate](#) is roughly at the same level as the EU average. Over the past 15 years, the suicide rate in Sweden has reduced by around 20%. This positive trend in Sweden does not apply to children and young adults in the 15–24 age group, where the suicide rate has remained at the same level. The reported share in 2015 was 10.9 per 100 000 young people between 13 and 24 years of age.

## Sexual and reproductive health

Of the sexually transmitted diseases, chlamydia infection is the most common and the chlamydia incidence is at a high level compared to other STIs. In the 16–24 age group, the share of reported chlamydia infections in 2014 was 2.1%. The level has been relatively stable since 2010.

[Abortions](#) among teenagers have decreased the last ten years. In 2018, the share was 11 per 1 000 girls up 19 years of age, compared to 23 per 1 000 girls in 2009.

## National surveys assessing the state of health of young people

There are a number of national surveys assessing the health conditions of young people.

[The Public Health Agency of Sweden](#) (Folkhälsomyndigheten) is responsible for health surveys targeting both the population in general and for specific youth health surveys. The [National Public Health Survey](#) covers health, lifestyle and living conditions. The study has been conducted annually since 2004 and comprises a random sample of 20 000 individuals between 16 and 84 years of age.

The aim is to show the population's state of health and to monitor changes in health over time as a part of a follow-up of public health policy. The study is an ongoing collaborative project between the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Swedish regions and county councils

The Public Health Agency is also responsible for the survey [Health Behavior in School-aged Children](#) (Skolbarns hälsövanor i Sverige), which is an international study coordinated by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The study is carried out every four years and presents data from 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds.

The study is based on survey questions about health, lifestyle and environment at school and at home. The results are used to monitor children's and young people's health over time and to identify areas that require actions to promote children's and young people's health.

[Statistics Sweden](#) (Statistiska centralbyrån SCB) conducts regular surveys on living conditions. Since 1975, Statistics Sweden has conducted the annual survey [ULF/SILC](#) covering work environment, housing conditions, income, leisure time, health, civic activities, social relationships, employment, security and education. Since 2001,

Statistics Sweden has, within the framework of ULF/SILC, conducted a specific survey targeting children between 12 and 18 years of age, the [Living Conditions Survey of Children](#).

[The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs](#) (Centralförbundet för alkohol- och narkotikaupplysning, CAN) is a civil society organisation that conducts an annual nation-wide survey on alcohol and other drugs among students in year nine of compulsory school and in second year at upper secondary school. The results from the survey are published in [Skolelevers drogvanor](#) (Alcohol and drug use among students).

## Main concepts

The concept of health in Sweden is in line with the one of WHO's. It includes overall health, well-being and quality of life. Health is seen as a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.

Therefore, public health reporting in Sweden provides a broad description of the state of public health. It contains analyses of both the prevalence of diseases and hospital care and of public health surveys covering information on self-reported health, lifestyles and living conditions, which largely affect the development of public health.

## 7.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

#### Main actors

The [Ministry of Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is in charge of youth policy. The ministry is responsible for preparing the parts of the central government budget concerning youth policy.

The Division for Civil Society and National Minorities is placed under the Ministry of Culture. Coordinating and developing youth policy issues, including cross-sectorial youth policy objectives and follow-up of youth policy is a part of the division's responsibilities. The division is also responsible for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)).

[The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs](#) (Socialdepartementet) is responsible for issues concerning the welfare of society. The responsibilities include both health promotion, health care, social care and social insurance. The ministry's work also includes sport issues, rights of the child and rights for people with disabilities and gender equality.

[The National Board of Health and Welfare](#) (Socialstyrelsen) has overall responsibility for providing equal health and welfare services to all Swedish citizens. The board ensures good health care and services by producing guidelines, working with regulations, carrying out evaluations and exercising supervision and follow-ups.

[The Public Health Agency of Sweden](#) (Folkhälsomyndigheten) has the national responsibility for public health issues and works to ensure good public health. The agency monitors the health status of the population and factors that affect health. The agency pays special attention to population groups with particular risk to suffer of ill-health. A specific task is to promote mental well-being and to prevent suicide, where one of the target groups is young people.

[The Health and Social Care Inspectorate](#) (Inspektionen för vård och omsorg, IVO) is a government agency responsible for supervising health care, social services and activities under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS). Under the Health and Medical Services Act, all citizens are to be given good care on equal terms irrespective of where in the country they live. The individual patient, care receiver or relative must be able to be sure that the Act is

followed and that their interests are safeguarded. Supervision means an independent and free-standing examination that laws and other regulations are followed.

[The Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare](#) (Forte) has the responsibility to promote and support research in the field of working life, as well as in social and public health sciences. The Council also has the task of coordinating research on, among other things, children and young people, including children and young people's health and social research on alcohol and drugs.

In 2015, the government appointed a special commission, [The Commission for Equity in Health](#) (Kommissionen för jämlik hälsa) with the task to submit proposals that can help to reduce health inequalities in society. The Commission has left its [final report](#) in June 2017. The proposal is presented in more detail in section [7.8](#), Current debates and reforms.

### **Non-public actors**

[The Swedish Sports Confederation](#) (Riksidrottsförbundet) is the umbrella organisation of the Swedish sports movement. The main task for the confederation is to provide support for their member organisations and to represent the sports movement. The confederation is also responsible for distributing government grants to sports and athletics associations. The sports movement is by far the largest domain for young people in the Swedish civil society.

[The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs](#) (Centralförbundet för alkohol- och narkotikaupplysning, CAN) is a non-governmental organisation with 47 member organisations. The main task for the organisation is to follow the drug trends in Sweden and to inform the public and educate professionals on alcohol and other drugs. The organisation is mainly financed by an annual government grant. CAN conducts an annual nation-wide survey on alcohol and other drugs among students in compulsory and upper secondary schools.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

Since public health policy is cross-sectorial, every ministry is responsible for the public health aspects of the work within their areas. The [Ministry of Health and Social Affairs](#) has a special responsibility to coordinate public health policy.

The County Administrative Boards ([Länsstyrelserna](#)), which are government bodies in the counties, are charged with a range of tasks, including implementing national objectives, co-ordinating the different interests of the county, promoting the development of the county, establishing regional objectives and safeguarding the rule of law in every instance. The County Administrative Boards are responsible for implementing the national public health objectives by taking public health into account in within their areas of responsibility.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions ([Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, SKR](#)) is both an employers' organisation and an organisation that represents and advocates for local government in Sweden. All municipalities, county councils and regions in Sweden are members. SKR and the Government have, since a number of years, [agreements on investments in the field of mental health](#). One goal of the work is to improve and coordinate efforts for the mental health of children and adolescents.

## **7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

### **National strategy(ies)**

#### **National guidelines for prevention and treatment for unhealthy lifestyle**

In the national guidelines for prevention and treatment for unhealthy lifestyle from 2018 ([Nationella riktlinjer för prevention och behandling vid ohälsosamma levnadsvanor](#)), the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) gives recommendations

concerning unhealthy lifestyles and habits. The purpose of the guidelines is to stimulate the use of scientifically evaluated and effective measures in this area, and to provide a basis for open and systematic healthcare priorities.

Recommendations for children and adolescents under 18 are presented in a separate chapter. These recommendations include insufficient physical activity, tobacco use and alcohol consumption. Three recommendations affecting children under 12 years of age include unhealthy eating habits and insufficient physical activity.

### 1. Insufficient physical activity among young people under 18 years

Insufficient physical activity increases the risk of poor physical and mental health and poor physical capacity. It may also affect future health and increase the risk of developing certain chronic diseases of adulthood. The recommendation given in the guidelines is that health care should:

- Guidance and support to young people under 18 who are insufficiently physically active.

For young people under 18 years with unhealthy eating habits or inadequate physical activity, there are also recommendations for the following measures:

- Web-based intervention
- Family support programme

### 2. Tobacco use among young people under 18 years

Many among those who start smoking early in their adolescence become nicotine addicted. The risk of disease and mortality increases with the amount of cigarettes and how long time a person has smoked. It is therefore important that health care supports young smokers to get rid of their tobacco use. Qualified counselling on tobacco use involves healthcare professionals for a person-centered dialogue with a young person in order to support her or him to quit smoking. Web-based intervention to support a behavioral change related to tobacco use includes personalised support, including how to quit smoking, as well as a number of interactive components, such as giving personal support within 24 hours. The intervention can be supplemented with counselling and telephone monitoring. The recommendation given in the guidelines concerning tobacco use is that health care should:

- Provide qualified guidance to young people under the age of 18 smoking tobacco.
- Provide web-based interventions for young people under the age of 18 smoking tobacco.

There are also recommendations for the following measures:

- Guidance
- Qualified counselling combined with prescription drugs
- Family support programme

### 3. Alcohol consumption among young people under 18 years

Use of alcohol is one of the largest individual risk factors for deaths and ill health among young people aged 15-19. Alcohol consumption during the teens has been shown to increase the risk of later problematic alcohol use. For young people under the age of 18, all alcohol consumption is defined as risk-taking, and guidance is identified as the best available measure for this target group. The recommendation given in the guidelines concerning alcohol consumption is therefore that health care should:

- Provide guidance to young people under 18 years.

There are also recommendations for the following measures:

- Family support programme

- Web-based intervention

### **Sports policy**

The current government document promoting the role of sport, youth fitness and physical activity is the government bill *Government support to sport activities* ([Statens stöd till idrotten](#)) set up in 2009, based on the government bill [A sports policy for the 2000s](#) (En idrottspolitik för 2000-talet), set up in 1999. The policy bill addressed the population in general, while children and adolescents are identified as a priority group.

The bill consists of following main elements:

- An overview of the government's role in relationship to the sports movement.
- A statement that current principle of responsibilities between the government and the sports movement should remain unchanged. That is, the government formulates objectives and guidelines for the subsidy allocation, while the sports movement independently set objectives for their own activities.
- The Swedish Research Centre for sport science (Centrum för idrottsforskning) is tasked to monitor and evaluate the government support.
- A new guideline for the government support, with sharper focus on children and adolescents. In order to receive grants for sports, activities for children and teens must comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The policy consists of a long-term orientation, focusing on high ethical standards, increased participation, volunteering, equity and integration in sports.

The key objectives in the policy bill are:

- Providing opportunities for all girls and boys, women and men to exercise, hence contributing to a lifelong interest in exercise and healthy lifestyle.
- Supporting a free and independent sports movement and providing positive experiences of sport as entertainment.
- Ensuring that all sports activities for children and youth are consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Strengthening and developing cooperation between sports associations, schools and others engaged in efforts to promote physical activity and good exercise habits.

### **Responsible authority and organisation**

The National Board of Health and Welfare ([Socialstyrelsen](#)) is responsible for giving recommendations concerning unhealthy lifestyles and habits.

Since 2015, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs deals with issues concerning sports policy. As mentioned above, the government approach comprises mainly of subsidy allocations.

The responsible actor for coordination of the subsidy allocations is the Swedish Sports Confederation ([Riksidrottsförbundet](#)), a civil society organisation. The Swedish Sports Confederation is responsible for distribution, administration, organisation and monitoring of the grants.

According to the ordinance on government grants to sports ([Förordning om statsbidrag till idrottsverksamhet](#)), the Swedish Sports Confederation has to annually provide a comprehensive accounting of who has received grants, the amounts and purposes. Also, the confederation must each year present a summary to the government on how the allocations have been used and assess the impact of the subsidy, in relation to the objectives set by the government.

## Evidence based monitoring

Since 2009, the [Swedish Research Council for sport science](#) (Centrum för idrottsforskning) at the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences (Gymnastik- och idrottshögskolan), has the government task to follow up the government's support to sports organisations. This is done through regular and long-term monitoring of the government support to sports organisations, based on a number of indicators, in-depth analyses and additional research.

The latest [evaluation](#) of government's support to sports movement was conducted in 2016.

Some findings from the evaluation were:

- The majority of children and adolescents do not meet the daily physical activity [recommendations](#), which, according to the Swedish Medical Society and WHO, is at least 60 minutes per day.
- Girls in upper secondary school were least active. In that group, only 14% met the daily physical recommendations.
- Also, the evaluation showed a polarised image of young people's participation in sport associations. About 20% do not exercise at all in their spare time. An equal share is very active. Those who are active in a sports association are in general more physically active, less sedentary and have less screen time, compared to those who are not active in a sport association.

## Specific target groups within the youth population

A specific target group in the bill '*Government support to sport activities*' ([Statens stöd till idrotten](#)) is young people with disabilities. The bill states that young people with disabilities are underrepresented within organised sports activities, and that they tend to quit exercising earlier than others do in their age group. For that reason, sports associations need to increase their efforts to create activities that are more inclusive and where even children and young people with disabilities can feel included. This means that children and young people with disabilities, who can exercise and compete with children and young people without disabilities, should be encouraged and supported to do so.

## Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

The government's support to sports amounts in 2019 to roughly 200 million euros ([2.1 billion SEK](#)). In 2017, about 56 million euros ([585 million SEK](#)) were distributed as local activity support (lokalt aktivitetstöd) for organised sports activities for children and young people between 7 and 25 years of age. [According](#) to the Swedish Sports Confederation, grants can be allocated to sport activities which involve performance and competitive oriented sport, health and fitness oriented sport, and to recreational sport in which a central element of physical activity is included.

Targeted initiatives are a part of the government's support. One such initiative is the Lift for Sport ([Idrottslyftet](#)), launched in 2007. The Swedish Sports Confederation is responsible for the Lift for Sport programme, intended for getting children to try out sports activities, as well as encouraging older youngsters to continue with sports. Lift for Sport has been applied for more than 10 000 clubs and attracted more than 800 000 participants. The [government grant](#) in 2019 was about 54 million euros (569 million SEK).

## Evaluations

[Evaluations](#) have been conducted on a regular basis since the start of the Lift for Sport. The overall picture is that both the Confederation and the associations are experiencing Lift for Sport as a very positive initiative. The support has enabled the associations to develop and renew their activities for children and young people.

According to a [summary analysis](#), education in leadership has been found to be a key factor for raising the quality of the activities. That in turn has led to a higher number of young people that have chosen to remain active in the associations. Another finding is that many sport associations mostly rely on try-it-out activities, in order to open up their activities.

Further, the evaluation shows a lack of common understanding of the objectives for the Lift for Sport. The associations have interpreted the guidelines in different ways. What does the sports movement mean by opening up the doors for more young participants? To encourage youngsters to stay active longer? To work on gender equality? A common interpretation of the main objectives could have served as a basis for formulating goals and development plans for all involved.

## Physical education in schools

### Status of physical education in the curriculum

The curriculum states that schools should aim to ensure that learners have opportunity of regularly carrying out physical activities. Physical education and health is one of the upper secondary foundation subjects that are included in all [upper secondary education](#), both general and vocational. All students are obliged to 100 credit points (corresponding about the same number of lessons) in physical education, of the total of 2 500 credits required for a vocational diploma/a diploma for admission to higher education.

Following general courses are offered:

- Physical education and health 1, 100 credits, which building on knowledge from the compulsory school or equivalent.
- Physical education and health 2, 100 credits, which building on the course physical education and health 1.
- Physical education and health 1 – specialisation, 100 credits.
- Physical education and health 2 – specialisation, 100 credits, building on knowledge from the course physical education and health 1 – specialisation.

**Introducing daily physical exercise in schools** In autumn 2017, the Government introduced an initiative for enhanced possibilities for daily exercising in schools ([Samling för daglig rörelse](#)). The background is that, in comparison to other European countries, Sweden has been at the lower level when it comes to the extent of teaching hours in physical education. [A report](#) from the European Commission from 2013 showed that only seven out of 31 countries had fewer sports lessons in compulsory education than Sweden.

As a part of the initiative, the government has instructed the National Agency for Education to submit proposals on how to reach the goal of all students being part of physical activity every day. In December 2018, the Agency for Education has sent a proposal for consideration to actors such as central government agencies, special interest groups and local government authorities. The proposals concern an addition in the Curriculum. New area of responsibility is proposed for school principals, and that is for creating good conditions for physical activities during the school day.

The teaching time in the subject of physical education and health was [expanded with 100 hours](#) in compulsory education, starting from 2019. If the lessons were concentrated on, for example, grades 7 to 9, this means about one extra lesson per week.

A network of stakeholders, the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet), the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences (Gymnastik och Idrottshögskolan) and Swedish Outdoor Life (Svenskt Friluftsliv), together with the teachers' unions, will hold a continuous dialogue on, among other things, skills development among teachers in physical education and health.

## Pedagogical tools and support provided to teachers

The Swedish National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)) has in collaboration with the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools ([Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten](#)) developed the movie Physical Education and Health on Equal terms (Likvärdig undervisning i ämnet idrott och hälsa). The film describes ways to create opportunities for all students, regardless of ability, to participate in physical education.

In connection to the movie, a study package has been developed containing guidelines and materials to support teachers, work-teams and schools with their efforts to develop physical education for those in need of special support, in order to create equal conditions for all students.

## Continuing professional development (CPD)

In Sweden, the 'teachers boost' programme (Läraryftet) is aimed at providing CPD opportunities for compulsory school teachers lacking formally required qualifications for subjects which they already teach as part of their duty. As far as physical education is concerned, this initiative offers several courses intended specifically for general teachers in charge of physical education and health in compulsory education.

## Collaboration and partnerships

### Collaboration between schools and sports organisations

There is no clear support or legal framework in Sweden for collaboration and formation of partnerships between authorities, schools, health professionals and youth workers, in order to promote youth fitness and physical activity among young people.

However, the government supports collaboration with schools and sports clubs indirectly through subsidy allocations via the Sport-lift initiative ([Idrottslyftet](#)), a government initiative that the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) is responsible for. The goal for the period 2016-2019 is to develop sports associations so that children and young people between 7 and 25 years of age can choose to take part in activities and be stimulated into lifelong activity in the sports movement.

Although school collaboration is not a priority area within the Sport-lift initiative, a sport association/club may receive support for school-collaboration.

In order to receive support for school-collaboration it is important that:

- the sport association has been approved by the school administration,
- the planned activities do not aim to replace the subject Physical education and health,
- activities are conducted in the school's district,
- activities are offered to all students in the chosen school/class and that continuing activities within the sports association/club are offered after the project has ended.

## Physical literacy

In 2017, the Swedish Sports Confederation has been [commissioned by the government](#) to make another commitment for increasing physical activity in the lower grades of compulsory education. The aim is to improve the development of physical literacy, well-being and school results among school children. The Swedish Sports Confederation's efforts are made in connection with the school day and are led by the regional sports federations in collaboration with municipalities and schools.

## School sports associations

School sports associations (skolidrottsföreningar) offer activities for learners on their own terms, in connection with the school day. The School Sports Federation ([Skolidrottsförbundet](#)) is the national organisation for school sports clubs. Today, there are about 1 300 school sports associations with about 150 000 members.

## 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

### National strategy(ies)

The current Swedish governing document for healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition policy is the government's bill 'A renewed public health policy' ([En förnyad folkhälsopolitik](#)). Key parts of the bill were decided by the parliament in 2009.

Specific target groups in the bill are children, young people and parents. Particular focus is on strengthening and supporting parents in their parenting, in order to intensify suicide prevention, promote good eating habits and physical activity and reduce the use of tobacco.

In order to achieve the overall public health objective – creating social conditions for a good health on equal terms for the entire population – the government has identified that a long-term and cross-sectorial approach is needed in all sectors that affect the development of the public health. To facilitate this work, a combined target structure with eleven target domains has been developed. One of the target domains is eating habits and food.

According to the Public Health Agency, unhealthy [eating habits](#) are one of the biggest risk factors for ill-health and premature death in Sweden. The eating habits among adults in Sweden have improved in many ways since 1990s, but the intake of vegetables, fruit, whole grains and vegetable oils, as well as seafood, is still too low. At the same time, intake of sweet drinks, pastries, fat dairy and salt is too high, as well as consumption of red meat. The daily physical activity level is also low and has remained unchanged in the last decade.

Based on facts like these, the government instructed in 2016 the Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten) and the Swedish National Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket) to develop support for health-related activities related to eating habits and physical activity.

In 2017, the agencies gave a [proposal](#) describing an overall structure at national level. The authorities consider that national goals and broad collaborations are needed to reduce ill-health and to reduce health gaps related to eating habits and physical activity. According to the proposal, the Public Health Agency should be assigned the task of establishing a structure for national coordination of public health work related to healthy nutrition and physical activity.

### Responsible authority

The [Public Health Agency of Sweden](#) (Folkhälsomyndigheten) is an expert authority with responsibility for public health issues at a national level. Among other responsibilities, the agency monitors the development of and knowledge on the eating habits of the population, including different factors which can affect this.

The [Swedish National Food Agency](#) (Livsmedelsverket) is an expert authority with responsibility for the food sector. The agency works towards the following goals: healthy dietary habits, safe foods and fair practices in the food trade. The main tools are regulations, recommendations and communication.

### Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

#### Public meals

Sweden has a comprehensive and service-oriented welfare system, where all citizens are to have equal opportunities for good and equitable health. Meals served in public institutions such as schools, nursing homes and hospitals are considered an important part of the task.

The safety of all public meals is regulated by European and national food legislation. National nutritional guidelines are developed in [Nordic collaboration](#), and these guidelines set the standards for the nutritional quality of public meals.

School lunches are served in many countries, but the Swedish school meal model is unique in offering free meals to all children between 7 and 16 years of age, and to most students between 16 and 19 years of age, on an everyday basis. The meals are hot and several alternatives are often available. Salad, bread, butter, milk and water are also on the menu.

Since 2011, the [Education Act](#) stipulates that school lunches must be nutritious, thus equal a third of the recommended daily intake of energy and nutrients. In November 2011, the National Food Agency was commissioned to work in cooperation with the Swedish National Agency for Education, supporting work with nutritious school meals. One element of this work involved revising the guidelines Good school meals ([Bra måltider i skolan](#)). These guidelines are intended to provide support for efforts to produce good school meals.

## **Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

### **Health education in upper secondary education**

In Sweden, health education is included in the subject of physical education and health. At upper secondary level, as described in section [7.3](#), Sport, youth fitness and physical activity, the subject is mandatory both for vocational and academic study programmes.

### **Physical education and health**

The [subject of physical education and health](#) aims at helping students at upper secondary level to develop their physical ability, and the ability to plan, carry out and assess a variety of physical activities that promote all-round physical capacity. Teaching should also lead to students developing knowledge of how their own bodies function, and the importance of lifestyle and the consequences of physical activity and inactivity.

In addition, teaching should also help students to develop their health and environmental awareness, and gain general interest in health issues.

Teaching should raise awareness and challenge stereotypes of what is considered to be masculine and feminine, and inform about the consequences of different body ideals. It should also give students opportunities to develop knowledge of the importance of physical activities and nature experiences for physical ability and health.

### **Health**

The [subject of health](#) is a programme specific subject for Child and recreation programme and Health and social care programme, both being vocational programmes at upper secondary level. The subject covers health and health promotion from individual, group and societal perspectives. The subject is based on a holistic view of people as biological, psychological and social beings.

Teaching should aim at helping students to develop knowledge of people's health, and of different kinds of health promotion measures. Students should be given opportunities to develop knowledge about public health goals and the content of public health work. Teaching should help students to develop their abilities to work in a health promoting way using a salutogenic approach, thus reinforcing what is healthy and seeing people as a resource for their own well-being.

### **Sex education**

In Sweden, sex education became mandatory as early as in 1955. Terms such as sexuality, relationships, gender, gender equality and norms have been included since 2011 in several of the course and subject syllabuses for compulsory and upper secondary school and adult education. This means that the responsibility for this subject falls on

several teachers, and that it will be brought up within the scope of multiple courses and subjects ([Skolverket](#)).

The major part of sex education is conducted in years five, eight and nine of compulsory school. In year five, when the pupils are 11 years old, topics like puberty, body development and masturbation are covered. In year eight, at the age of 14, many schools focus on topics like bodily functions and STIs. In year nine, the focus is often on relationships.

The upper secondary school's [subject syllabus](#) sets out a central content for sex and relationships teaching. The subject has been integrated primarily in other subjects such as history, physical education and health, natural science, social sciences and religion.

Sex education in Sweden conveys facts about sexual and reproductive health such as anatomy, sexual functions, sexual orientations, STIs, HIV/AIDS, abortion and contraceptives. Moreover, the possibility to discuss, reflect and work on attitudes, norms and values regarding for example the use of condoms, gender, harassments and expressing love is also an important part of sex and relationships education. Here, different methods such as value clarification games and group talks are used.

At many schools, condoms are distributed within the context of sexuality education. Many schools also provide condoms at the school nurse's reception. If there is a youth clinic located nearby, many schools include a visit.

Gender perspective is an important part of the Swedish policy in relation to sex education. Currently in Sweden, there are on-going discussions about the possibility of linking sex education and gender equality education more closely. In 2018, the [Government allocated SEK 50 million](#) (about 4,8 million euros) for better coordination of sex and relationship education and preventing sexual assault in school environment.

#### Pedagogical tools

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) offers both pedagogical tools and support to teachers responsible for sex and relationships education. All tools – films and other support materials – are free for [downloading](#) for teachers. The films, together with related discussion questions, are meant to provide a basis for discussion in the work team or the subject group, on how gender equality, sex patterns, sexuality and relationships can be integrated into teaching.

Today, there are films aimed at teachers in natural science, physical education and health, religion, social sciences, history, biology, art, English, Swedish and music.

## Peer-to-peer education approaches

### Sex education

Local associations of [RFSU](#) (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, see Collaboration and partnerships below for more information) offer specialised school informers. School informers work with information about sexuality issues, based on a positive sexual opinion. RFSU informers meet learners between 13 and 20 years of age, for discussions about feelings, sexuality and the body, consent, norms and rights. The school informers are between 20 and 30 years of age, and have received informant training.

## Collaboration and partnerships

### Physical education

At present, there is no clear support or legal framework in Sweden when it comes to collaboration between authorities, schools, health professionals and youth workers for promoting physical activity among young people.

However, the government supports collaboration with schools and sport organisations indirectly through subsidy allocations via the Sport-lift initiative ([Idrottslyftet](#)), which the

Swedish Sport Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) is responsible for (see section [7.3](#) for more information).

### **Sex education**

[RFSU](#) (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education) is the leading organisation in Sweden in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). RFSU works locally (e.g. with information provision in schools), nationally (e.g. by influencing policies) and internationally (e.g. in the form of development projects in Africa). RFSU sees openness on sexuality as the point of entry of health promotion and STIs and HIV/AIDS prevention.

## **Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people**

### **A Healthier Sweden**

On behalf of the government, an annual campaign week giving attention to healthy eating habits and physical activity – A Healthier Sweden (Ett friskare Sverige) – was arranged during 2010-2012. Particular attention was paid to children, teens, elderly people and people with intellectual impairment.

A Healthier Sweden aimed to provide inspiration and knowledge on how to eat healthy and how to exercise, by paying attention to concrete examples from all over the country. The mission was carried out in collaboration with municipalities, county councils/regions, civil society organisations as well as private actors. The final year of the campaign, 2012, in total 2 800 activities were organised throughout the country and 1 000 different actors contributed to highlighting the importance of good eating habits and physical activity.

The campaign was evaluated by two external evaluators. The first of the two independent reports ([Bakhsi 2013](#)) highlighted the appropriateness of the mission. That is, has the campaign week been successful and has the Public Health Agency as coordinator succeeded. The second independent report ([PA Consulting Group 2013](#)) examined whether initiatives like a Healthier Sweden actually contribute to increased public awareness about the benefits of good eating habits and physical activity.

Some of the conclusions were the following:

- the campaign week A Healthier Sweden generated good media attention and a wide range of activities has been offered to the public and the priority target groups, with regard to the financial resources available.
- Social disparities in health have been highlighted in particular over all three years. Despite of that, this effort did not have a significant impact on organisers' choices for activities. Only about 10% of the activities were targeted for teens, while about 45% of the activities were of open character.
- There is some scientific support for that activity and information-based campaigns, such as A Healthier Sweden, may have some effect on public awareness and knowledge.
- There is stronger scientific support for that theory-based campaigns, based on health science theory and communication strategic knowledge, have greater potential for effect.
- In conclusion, it should be noted that there is no evidence that campaigns such as A Healthier Sweden actually cause behavioral changes, such as healthier eating habits or increased physical activity.

## 7.5 Mental health

### National strategy

#### National mental health strategy

In 2016, the Swedish government presented a national mental health strategy for 2016-2020 ([Regeringens strategi inom området psykisk ohälsa 2016-2020](#)). The strategy forms the basis for the government's work in the area of mental health.

The strategy is based on five focus areas which have been identified as the most urgent for strengthening mental health and preventing mental illness. The five priority areas are:

1. Prevention and promotion efforts
2. Accessible early interventions
3. Focus on vulnerable groups
4. Participation and rights
5. Organisation and leadership

Each focus area includes people of all ages - children, young people, adults and the elderly, as well as girls and boys, men and women. Starting point is that the society's actions need to be understood and conducted on the basis of the overall population, and the individual needs.

#### Revision

In 2020, the Government has commissioned the Public Health Agency and the [National Board of Health and Welfare](#) to provide a basis for a new national strategy in the area of mental health and suicide prevention. The assignment must be reported to the Government no later than 1 September 2023, through a comprehensive proposal for a strategy with goals, priorities and indicators for follow-up.

### Responsible authority

The Public Health Agency of Sweden ([Folkhälsomyndigheten](#)) is responsible for coordinating the work of many different stakeholders, such as governmental agencies, regions and municipalities. The agency is also responsible for monitoring, compiling, analysing and disseminating knowledge to support mental health promotion and preventive mental health work.

#### Evaluations

In 2020, the Government commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Medical and Social Evaluation (SBU) to evaluate efforts to promote mental health and prevent mental illness and suicide among children and young people. Among other things, the SBU will review the scientific basis for what is required of structured manual-based interventions (programmes) to promote mental health and prevent mental illness and suicide among children and young people aged 2-18. The [assignment](#) will be finalised in October 2022.

#### Suicide prevention

Over the past 15 years the suicide rate (the number of individuals per 100,000 inhabitants who have committed suicide) in Sweden has reduced by around 20%. Internationally, Sweden's suicide rate is around the EU average. This positive trend in Sweden does not, however, apply to children and young adults in the 15-24 age group, where suicide has remained at the same level for a long time. Among young women, the rate of suicide attempts has risen. In all age groups almost everywhere in the world, more men than women take their own lives. In Sweden more than twice as many men as women commit suicide. Other over-represented groups in Sweden are LGBT and those born abroad ([Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2016](#)).

In 2008, the Swedish Parliament decided on a [National Action Plan for Suicide Prevention](#) (ett nationellt handlingsprogram för suicidprevention). The Action Plan contains nine strategic areas of action for reducing the number of suicides. Since 2015, the Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten) has been assigned by the government to coordinate efforts within the nine areas of the Action Plan on a national level. The agency is responsible for:

- developing the coordination and cooperation between relevant agencies and stakeholders working with suicide prevention on a national level
- developing knowledge-building, knowledge compilation, dissemination of knowledge and guidance to relevant stakeholders

The Public Health Agency develops and disseminates knowledge about suicide and suicide prevention, based on the needs of different target groups. This may include summarizing research and presenting it in a way that is adapted to different target groups, such as in factsheets, and spreading it through different channels e.g. on the web, in social media, at conferences and seminars. Our work with knowledge support focuses on population-based suicide prevention, i.e. measures mainly carried out outside the health care sector. More information is provided at [suicidprevention.se](http://suicidprevention.se).

The Public Health Agency is also responsible for monitoring and following up suicide prevention work. The latest report is from 2019 ([Psykisk hälsa och suicidprevention Lägesrapporten 2019](#)). Like in the area of mental health, suicide prevention is a collaborative effort and the agency cooperates with a number of other government agencies, CSOs and researchers within the field to reduce the number of suicides in Sweden.

## Improving the mental health of young people

Improving of young people's health conditions is a priority area within Swedish youth policy, and many initiatives have been taken, in order improve the mental health of young people. Even though not all initiatives targets young people specifically, young people are a priority group.

The Government and the Swedish Association of local authorities and regions (Sveriges kommuner och regioner, SKR) has since 2016 reached agreements within the area of mental health. In 2021, the Government has set aside SEK 1.7 billion for [SKR's work with mental health and suicide prevention](#). One goal of the agreement is to improve and coordinate efforts for children's and young people's mental health. Continued investments are made in, among other things, suicide prevention, care and support, patient and user participation, people with comorbidity and psychiatric trauma care.

The agreement for 2021–2022 will be based on three overall purposes. It aims to:

- support continued development work based on the local and regional action plans developed in accordance with the 2016–2018 agreements
- contribute to better conditions for regions and municipalities to work on the basis of the best available knowledge
- initiate or develop special forms of care and effective target group-adapted initiatives to prevent mental illness and increase the availability and quality of care for those who have already been affected.

## Initiatives for young people not in education, employment or training

Mental illness is one of the identified risk factors for a young person to neither work nor study. The Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor](#)) was in 2016 assigned for developing arrangements and disseminating knowledge on how social support to young people with mental health problems and who are not in education, employment or training can be organised and developed in collaboration between different actors.

According to the final report from 2018, there were a few on-going activities that showed good results, while opportunities for peer learning and evaluations were lacking. This is partly due to the fact that the support activities were project-financed in the short term and that the local actors did not have access to resources that were needed. Therefore, a continued focus on mental health is required among young people who are neither working nor studying. (MUCF 2018: Kunskapsspridning avseende unga med psykisk ohälsa som varken arbetar eller studerar)

## 7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

### Policy framework

Young people facing health risks (e.g. substance abuse, emotional and mental suffering) often have a complex life situation, with problems related to family, friends, school and work. Social services work to ensure that young people who are in a difficult position can get the help and support that they need. How the Social Services Act ([SoL](#)) controls the social services is described in section [4.6](#), Access to Quality Services.

The Social Services Act contains provisions on plans for individuals. When a person needs support from both the social services and the health services, the municipality together with the county council shall draw up an individual plan. The plan shall, when possible, be established together with the individual.

### Stakeholders

When it comes to young people facing health risks, school health services, other municipal/county council health services, and social services are the key actors for cooperation.

### Health care

If a child or an adolescent shows signs of a risky lifestyle, health services in schools should be able to offer well-planned efforts to combat an obvious risk development. The infrastructure for youth-specific health services is described in section [4.6](#), Access to Quality Services. The description there includes health services in schools ([elevhälsan](#)), Youth Guidance Centres (ungdomsmottagningar) and Psychiatry clinics for children and young people (Barn och ungdomspsykiatri, [BUP](#)).

In 2015, the [Swedish Schools Inspectorate](#) (Skolinspektionen) inspected health services in upper compulsory schools (grundskolans årskurser 6-9). The purpose of the review was to find out if health services in schools manage to develop and maintain mental well-being among learners and prevent problems related to mental ill-health. The [inspection report](#) revealed that health services in the audited schools did not fully support learners with mental health issues. Access to student health was found to be insufficient in most of the reviewed schools. What more, the results showed that students lacked knowledge of the assignment and function of school health services, and that most of the schools did not have a clear strategy and did not systematically work to develop their services.

In 2020, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate inspected how 30 upper secondary schools promote students' health and well-being. The results of the review are expected to be published in June 2021. The review focuses on three areas within students' health and physical, mental and psychosocial well-being. The first area concerns the upper secondary school's contribution to students' health and resilience to physical and mental illness through the school's teaching about healthy lifestyles and risk and health factors. The second area examines whether the education is designed from a health-promoting perspective. In this area, it is examined whether the school offers students opportunities for physical activity and access to a good and nutritious diet, and also promotion of good relations between students and between staff and students. In the third area, the school's conditions for promoting good health are examined. Questions that are asked

are whether students' health situation is included in the systematic quality work and whether the competencies of school health services are used strategically for the development of teaching and the learning environment.

### Guidance to stakeholders

The National Board of Health and Welfare ([Socialstyrelsen](#)) has drawn up [guidelines](#) for how different actors at national, regional and local level can cooperate in order to better meet the needs of children and young people.

The National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)) have drawn up [guidelines](#) for how to strengthen school health services and how to contribute to the development of equivalent school health services throughout the country.

Guidance to stakeholders is also described in section [4.4](#), Inclusive Programmes for Young People.

### Target groups

The [national mental health strategy](#) (see section [7.5](#), Mental health, for more details) identifies several groups facing larger risks and who's situation therefore should be given special attention. Those identified are LGBT-persons, children and adolescents placed in social care, individuals with complex life situation (suffering of mental discords and having other problems at the same time), individuals with criminal behaviour, asylum seekers and immigrants, and persons belonging to national minority groups.

The Government strategy for young people who neither work nor study, for the period 2015-2018, identified young NEETs to be particularly at risk of developing health problems. Groups specifically targeted in the strategy (see section [4.3](#), Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Young People, for more details) were young people with disabilities, early school leavers and young immigrants.

### Funding

#### School health services

In order to [strengthen school health services](#), school providers can, since 2016, according to the [Ordinance](#) on interventions within School health services (Förordning om statsbidrag för personalförstärkning inom elevhälsan), apply for financial support. The Government has tasked the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) to allocate the grant. In 2021, the Government allocated a total of SEK 150 million (about 15 million euros) in state grants for improving school health services ([2021 Appropriations Directive](#), National Agency for Education).

## 7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

### Youth Guidance Centres

Youth Guidance Centres (ungdomsmottagningar) are clinics targeted for young people between 12 and 25 years of age. Guidance centers can be found in most of the municipalities in Sweden. They offer free-of-charge services with the mission of promoting sexual health and strengthening identity and personality development. Prevention and early detection of mental health and social problems are also parts of the mission.

The centres collaborate with child and adolescent psychiatry (BUP), adult psychiatry, maternal health care, schools and other municipal actors in the youth field. The centres also conduct outreach activities, mainly through visits to or from school classes. Outreach work even include visiting festivals, residential care homes for young persons (HVB-hem) and youth recreational centres. More information about Youth Guidance Centres is available in section [4.6](#), Access to Quality Services.

## UMO.se – online youth guidance

[UMO.se](#) is a website for young people between the ages of 13 and 25, offering information about sex, health and relationships. The website provides information about bodily functions and development, sex, alcohol and drugs, self-esteem, depression and more. Information is provided by different kinds of media: texts, videos and slideshows. UMO.se aims to offer information and inspiration to help young people to manage their own situation: at home, in relationships, in school or at work. Conventional norms are questioned and discussed.

Anyone between the ages of 13 and 25 can ask personal questions about sex, health and relationships and be anonymous. The questions are answered by professionals working at UMO or at a youth guidance centre. Answers to many common questions are also available on [Ask UMO](#).

UMO.se contains information on how to seek help and support. Information links to all local youth guidance centres are listed. The local guidance centres are responsible of updating the information on their activities.

Interviews with young people on various topics, including having HIV, young parenthood and online dating are available at the website. UMO.se contains even [Our Stories](#) page, where young people are invited to tell their life stories and read other people's stories.

UMO is run by Stockholm County Council, at the request of the e-healthcare consortium of the county councils/regions in Sweden, Eira ([Inera](#)), and in cooperation with youth guidance centres, student health and organisations like RFSU, RFSL Youth, BRIS and many others. UMO also involves young people for controlling the quality of the contents.

### Youth guidance for newly arrived – Youmo.se

The multilingual [Youmo.se](#) website provides information about health, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The website is targeting newly arrived young people between 13 and 20 years of age, and is part of the government's effort to provide information for newly arrived young people.

Youmo.se is based on content from the UMO.se website, presented in Swedish, English, Arabic, Dari, Somali and Tigrinya. The website contains texts, illustrations, slideshows and films that answer questions about the body, about love and friendship, mental health, sexuality and gender equality. UMO.se, an online youth guidance service, has developed the site in close cooperation with young people. Several content parts are specifically designed for Youmo.se. An example is a slide show that explains concepts like stress and anxiety and provides suggestions on how to feel better. Another example is an easy-to-read overview on where to get health care and support. Subjects like honor-based oppression, selling sex and sexual abuse are presented from several viewpoints. Besides Youmo.se, this government initiative includes training for professionals working among young asylum seekers and newly arrived, in healthcare or in youth guidance centres, on how to provide better information by using youmo.se. Training material, Youmo in practice, for this purpose has been developed by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, MUCF. The material is available both in [Swedish](#) and [English](#) versions (a short version).

## 7.8 Current debates and reforms

### Quality health care for children and young people

The government has in December 2019 commissioned a special investigator to [review the conditions of health care for children and young people](#). The purpose of the assignment is to attain a more equal health care with preventative and health-promoting efforts for children and young people throughout the country. The intention is also to relieve the specialized child and adolescent psychiatry.

Evaluations have shown that the fragmentation of and lack of access to health care often results in children and young people falling between the cracks. This is especially true for children and young people with mental health problems. Children and young people with mental health problems are at risk of deficiencies in coordination and an incoherent care chain. What more, primary care does not always have the capacity and competence to care for young people and families in crisis.

According to the Government, the roles and responsibilities of various health care actors and professionals should be clarified. Today, the coordination of children and adolescents' care contacts is often handled by parents or other relatives, which is not a good solution. That is why the Government now starts an investigation on the preconditions for a coordinated and accessible care for children and young people.

The investigator shall, inter alia:

- investigate the conditions for a coordinated, efficient and accessible health care of good quality for children and young people, and propose how such a reform can be implemented;
- assess how children and young people with minor mental health problems can be offered support to a greater extent than currently, for example by introducing a new intervention in primary health care;
- propose how a comprehensive follow-up of the physical and mental health of children and young people can be developed, supporting both health promotion and the design and content of health care;
- promote the development of a continuous and accessible health care for children and young people at regional and local level.

Work on the prerequisites for a coordinated and accessible health care for children and young people and the development of efficient and accessible health care of good quality for children and young people with, among other things, mental health problems shall be reported no later than 1 May 2021. Other parts of the assignment will be reported no later than October 1, 2021.

## 8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

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Providing young people cultural activities outside of school is in general a municipal responsibility in Sweden. The government is though co-financing a number of activities, such as culture schools. Municipal culture schools form the largest voluntary cultural activity for children and young people in Sweden.

Young people's own cultural activities, outside of family or school/culture school context, often take place in youth associations, study circles or other non-formal education activities within [liberal adult education](#) (folkbildning).

The government promotes the creative use of new technologies in its IT strategy for compulsory and upper secondary school. According to the strategy, schools are to strengthen the creative abilities of students to solve problems and translate ideas into action, by using digital media and tools.

### 8.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

The Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (Myndigheten för kulturanalys) has the main responsibility for official statistics within culture and leisure. In 2017, the agency presented a study of trends in creativity and cultural participation among Swedes

between 16 and 85 years of age ([Kulturvanor. Socioekonomiska analyser och tidstrender Kulturfakta 2017:2](#)).

In this study, cultural practices the past 12 months were divided into four general groups:

1. Traditional culture
2. Cultural environment
3. Cultural participation
4. Broad popular culture

### **Traditional culture**

Traditional culture encompasses activities such as book reading, going to a theatre, listening to classical music/opera, visiting art exhibits and attending a dance performance.

Traditional culture has a strong correlation with socioeconomic factors. Women engage in traditional culture to a greater degree than men.

Only minor differences turned out when comparing age groups. For instance, among 16-29-year-olds, 90% had read a book the past 12 months, compared to 88% among 30-49-year-olds and 85% among 50-64-year-olds.

Among 16 to 29-year-olds, 15% had visited a classical music concert/opera (ages 65-85 years had the highest share, 20%). About 40% had been to a theatre, regardless of age.

### **Cultural environment**

Cultural environment constitutes another general group of cultural practices. The term encompasses visiting historical sights/buildings, nature reserves/national parks, monuments and museums.

The correlation with socioeconomic background is clear, although somewhat weaker than in the case of traditional culture.

Differences between age groups are small. Among all participants, about 60% had visited a museum (61% among 16-29-year-olds).

About 60% had visited a nature reserve/national park (63% among 16-29-year-olds). Almost 50% had visited a historical sight (48% among 16-29-year-olds).

### **Cultural participation**

Cultural participation consists of, for example, singing in a choir/playing an instrument, playing theater, writing texts/poetry, handicrafts, drawing/painting and photographing/filming. Gender, socio-economic background and education are significant with regard to cultural participation.

Age plays a major role in cultural participation. Younger people participate to a significantly greater extent compared to elder. For instance, in the age range 16-29 years, the activity level of painting/drawing was 64%, compared to 42% in the age range 30-39 years and 23% in the age range 40-64 years.

Also, among 16-29-year-olds 35% had been singing in a choir/played a musical instrument, 11% had played theatre/acted, 57% had worked with handicraft/needlework, 35% had been writing poetry/kept a diary and 84% had been photographing/filming.

### **Broad popular culture**

Broad popular culture includes activities such as playing computer games, watching movies, going to movies, attending pop/rock concerts and music listening. The feature most common to these activities is that they are part of contemporary popular culture, and that they are readily accessible, for example, digitally.

Age is the main factor influencing participation in broad popular culture. The younger a person is, the more likely she or he has engaged in these activities. Factors such as education, place of residence and socio-economic background have limited significance.

In the age range 16-29 years, 99% had listened to music, 99% had watched a movie, 90% had been to a movie theatre, 74% had played computer games and 54% had visited a pop/rock concert.

### **Culture schools**

Among children and young people in school age, about 181000 participated in extracurricular municipal [culture school](#) activities every week in 2018. That is about 10.6% of all 6-19-year-olds in Sweden. Most commonly the activities offered are music, theatre and musical, dance and circus, arts and media.

Among them, the largest share, 62%, are girls while 38% are boys. See section [8.2](#), Administration and governance, for more information on culture schools.

### **Cultural associations**

According to the latest available [survey](#) conducted by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society in 2013, a larger share of young women compared to young men between 16 and 29 years of age are active, or have been active, in an cultural association focusing on music, dance, film or theatre (45% among young women and 26% among young men).

### **Main concepts**

Current cultural policy objectives were established in 2009. Swedish cultural policy objectives govern actors and institutions at the national level. They should also inspire and provide guidance to local government policies. The national cultural [policy objectives](#) are:

'Culture is to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on freedom of expression. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity and artistic quality are to be integral parts of society's development.'

To achieve the objectives, cultural policy is to:

- promote opportunities for everyone to experience culture, participate in educational programmes and develop their creative abilities
- promote quality and artistic renewal
- promote a dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, used and developed
- promote accessibility
- promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation in the cultural sphere
- pay particular attention to the rights of children and young people to culture.

The cultural policy goals specify that everyone must have opportunity to participate in cultural life. This can be taken to mean that gender, variations in levels of function, foreign background or place of residence in the country must not be an impediment for participating in cultural life.

### **The right of children and young people to culture**

According to the government cultural policy, there is a specific need to stress the rights of children and young people to culture:

'Children and young people are in many respects dependent on adults and have limited opportunities for influencing or taking responsibility for the environment in which they grow up. Society and the adult world therefore bear special responsibility for giving children and young people good and equal opportunities to take part in cultural life.'

Cultural policy should provide the conditions that enable children and young people throughout the country to have access to cultural choices and cultural activities characterised by diversity and quality.

By experiencing culture, and devoting themselves to creative activities of their own, children and young people can retain and develop their imagination and independent thinking.'

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

#### Ministry of Culture

The [Ministry of Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is responsible for issues relating to culture, media, democracy, human rights at national level, youth, sports, the national minorities and the language and culture of the Sami people. The ministry is also responsible for anti-discrimination work and issues concerning civil society.

#### The Swedish Arts Council

The Swedish Arts Council ([Kulturrådet](#)) is a public authority under the Swedish Ministry of Culture, with the task to promote cultural development and access to culture, based on the national cultural policy objectives. The Council achieves this by allocating and monitoring state funding, alongside with other promotional activities.

Under its mandate, the Swedish Arts Council focuses in particular on developing activities of artistic and cultural merit relating to:

- independent cultural activities in the performing arts and music
- literature, arts periodicals, reading promotion and public libraries
- graphic art and design, museums and exhibitions
- regional cultural activities
- the culture of the Sami people and other national minority groups
- other cultural areas.

The Swedish government has given the council the tasks of promoting the right of children and young people to culture, encouraging cultural diversity, and fostering equality. These issues must be addressed in all operational areas. The Swedish Arts Council is also responsible for disability policy in the field of culture.

#### The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis

The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis ([Myndigheten för kulturanalys](#)), under the Swedish Ministry of Culture, is assigned by the Government to evaluate, analyse and present the effects of proposals and measures taken in the cultural field. This is to be done based on the cultural policy objectives. The aim of the agency is to provide a substantial contribution to the development of cultural policy, to support the government and in this way create better prerequisites for those active in the cultural field.

The agency is responsible for main parts of the official statistics within the spheres of culture and leisure. The agency strives to monitor, illustrate and analyse trends and developments nationally and in other countries and in associated areas of policy. The agency also has a research task, which implies monitoring research in the cultural field and the area of evaluation both nationally and internationally. A part of the task is to carry out a cultural habit survey (kulturvaneundersökning), with a special focus on children's and young people's cultural habits. The results of the first survey among children and young people in compulsory and upper secondary school were published in 2017 ([Kulturfakta 17:5](#)).

## The Swedish National Heritage Board

The Swedish National Heritage Board ([Riksantikvarieämbetet](#)), under the Swedish Ministry of Culture, is Sweden's central administrative agency in the area of cultural heritage, cultural and historic environment. Its assignment includes ensuring that the cultural value of buildings and landscapes is preserved, utilized and developed, as well as watching over the interests of the cultural heritage and cultural environment in community planning and construction.

### Local government

Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. The local authorities have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. Many decisions that concern young people are taken at municipal level. The municipalities are responsible (partly in some policy areas) for youth policy issues such as schools, employment and training, health care, social care and services, youth work, culture and leisure.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions ([Sveriges kommuner och Regioner, SKR](#)), represents and advocates for local government in Sweden. All of Sweden's municipalities and regions are members of SKR.

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Government finances regional cultural activities together with regions, county councils and municipalities.

### National level

There are certain national cultural institutions that receive funding directly from the government, such as the Royal Opera (Kungliga Operan), the Royal Dramatic Theatre (Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern, Swedish Travelling Exhibitions (Riksställningar) and Music Development and Heritage Sweden (Statens Musikverk).

### Regions

In every region there are theatres, music institutions, regional libraries and museums. These often function as regional centres in their respective cultural spheres, working together with schools, the business community and others. Regional and municipal heads of these organisations have financial responsibility for their own institutions, and thereby decisive influence over the scope and nature of their activities.

However, since 2011, the state has been promoting the establishment of a regional network of institutions, providing substantial funding each year. The collaborative cultural model ([kultursamverkan](#)) allocates state allowances to regional cultural activities. County councils and regions included in the model decide how to allocate the government grant to regional cultural activities. The purpose of the collaborative cultural model is to contribute to achieving national cultural policy goals, as well as providing opportunities to regional priorities and variations.

### Municipalities

In Sweden's 290 municipalities there are cultural institutions that are funded by local income taxes, e.g. public libraries, art museums and municipal music and arts schools for children and young people specialising in music, theatre and arts. In certain cases, the state provides funding for projects and special commissions.

### Cooperation between formal and non-formal cultural education

In smaller municipalities, civil society organisations, such as study associations (studieförbund) and non-formal liberal adult education (vuxenutbildning), are key actors in the local cultural sphere. The study associations are financed by both municipal and government grants, besides student fees. Study associations may have some form of cooperation with the cultural school.

## Municipal culture schools/music and arts schools

The [municipal culture school](#), also referred as music and art school, has a long tradition of close collaboration with compulsory and upper secondary schools. The most common form of cooperation is that arts school operates in schools, either during or after school hours.

Another common form of cooperation is combined services for teachers, that is teaching music or arts both in schools and in arts schools. Arts schools may also have more administrative functions, such as coordinating cultural events in schools - for example theatre and dance performances, museum visits, cinema, music events etc.

Municipal culture schools offer voluntary extracurricular activities for children and adolescents for a relatively low individual fee. The activities take commonly part once a week, either during or after the school day. Most of the schools offer music lessons on a wide range of instruments, solo singing and choirs. Moreover, lessons in dancing, drama/theatre, arts and media are frequent but there are also schools that have circus, rhythm and acrobatics.

According to the Swedish Arts Council's latest follow-up report from 2019, ([Kulturskolan i siffror](#)) the number of municipalities offering subjects other than music (especially dance, drama / theatre, arts and media) has increased between 2011 and 2017 and, above all, seems to have increased after 2015. It is still a big overweight of girls in culture schools, although the proportion of girls decreased from 65% in 2015 to 62% in 2018. Some more interesting facts from the report are:

- Although the total number of pupils in culture school has increased, the proportion of all children and young people between the ages of 6 and 19 who attend culture school has stood still or decreased slightly between 2015 and 2017.
- Attendance at the culture school in smaller towns and rural areas shows a negative trend but is still somewhat higher than in big cities, larger cities and metropolitan municipalities, which is believed to be due to the fact that the supply of other similar cultural activities is greater in, for example, big cities.
- According to the Art Council's compilation for 2018, 78% of children in the cultural school had at least one parent with post-secondary education, compared with 59% for the entire country. Similarly, children and young people who are newly immigrated, born abroad or have a foreign background are underrepresented in the cultural schools.
- The differences decreased with the time the children spent in the country. Almost 18% of children and young people aged 6-19 in the cultural school had a foreign background, compared with just over 26% for the population as a whole.

## Financing of culture schools

The vast majority of Swedish municipal culture/music and arts schools are run by local municipalities. This means that each school is governed by local representatives using funds allocated from local budgets. Arts schools have been established in 285 of 290 municipalities. The local municipality, or in some cases, a local organisation runs the school. The activities are mainly financed by the local municipality, but there is an obligatory student fee. The fee per term is in average 656 SEK (69 euros). All information in this paragraph is based on [Swedish government's official report](#) from 2016, on municipal culture schools.

In 2016, for a first time an annual state grant of SEK 100 million was introduced to culture schools in order to enable them to broaden their operations and reach new groups. The government has decided to continue with the grant at least until 2022 ([Budget Bill for 2020](#)).

## The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och regioner, SKR) decided in 2015 to during the period 2016 to 2019 ensure that local culture schools have real opportunities to contribute to the goal of every child's right to culture. In 2016, the [municipalities invested](#) about SEK 2.7 billion (253 million euros) on children's and young people's opportunities to take part in the activities of municipal music and arts schools, according to SKR.

## 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

### Existence of a national strategy

A national strategy for municipal culture schools was adopted in 2018. The strategy is based on the inquiry 'An inclusive culture school on its own basis', [En inkluderande kulturskola på egen grund](#). The Riksdag (the parliament) adopted [the government proposal](#), based on the inquiry, in May 2018.

### Scope and contents

The government proposition, adopted by the Parliament, in May 2018 sets the overall objective in supporting the municipal culture school to:

"Municipal culture schools shall:

- Provide children and young people with the opportunity to learn, practice and experience artistic expression at first and, in groups, be carried out in children and young people's free time.
- Be characterised by a high quality and be broad artistically and in terms of the genres covered, with activities in three or more types of artistic expression.
- apply an educational philosophy that is based on the child's own experiences and interests. Provide children and young people with good opportunities to have an influence on the structure and content of the activity. Have a high proportion of educationally and artistically trained staff.
- Take place in premises that are adapted to the activity and are appropriately equipped. Actively work to inform the municipality's children and young people about the culture school and to provide them with the opportunity to participate in its activities.
- Work in broad partnership and conduct outreach activities with and the community at large.

In order to monitor and support municipal efforts based on these objectives, the inquiry proposes the establishment of a national culture schools centre that has responsibility for national monitoring and statistics."

([Government's proposition 2017/18](#), pp.22-23)

### Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

As a part of the national strategy on creativity and culture for young people, the government has given the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) the tasks of supporting national coordination, contributing to development and supporting improved skills supply.

A [National culture school centre](#) was established in 2018 as part of the Swedish Arts Council. The Centre's mission is to support the municipal culture school. The mission includes:

- allocating state grants

- being responsible for statistics and follow-up
- following and disseminating research
- identifying educational and developmental needs,
- promoting cooperation between municipalities engaged in municipal cultural education and other actors.

The culture school centre provides research reports and statistics, information on working methods and good examples and on training opportunities etc., addressing both municipal culture school staff and local and national level decision makers.

## Revisions/updates

Not applicable.

## 8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

### Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

#### Lower student fees in municipal culture schools

High student fees may hinder equal opportunities for participating in culture school activities (kommunala kulturskolan). Therefore, the Government has in 2016 commissioned the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) to allocate project funds for municipal culture schools. Municipalities can, since autumn of 2016, apply for a government grant.

Since 2016, the Swedish Arts Council distributes grants totalling SEK 100 million (9.5 million euro) annually to municipal culture schools. By the end of 2018, the majority of municipalities with culture schools had applied for grants, and these were primarily used to broaden the offering and reach new groups.

#### Free entrance to museums

Both young people and schools benefit from the [free entrance to museums reform](#). The reform covers 18 state-financed museums located both in Stockholm and in other towns. The aim is to attract and facilitate for those who are not accustomed museum visitors.

The government increased the allocation to the state museums by SEK 80 million (8,4 million euros) in 2016, to cover the costs of introducing free entrance. The museums may continue to have entrance fee for adults who wish to visit temporary exhibitions.

#### Cultural heritage and schools

Institutions for cultural heritage, such as museums, archives and libraries, can be described as alternative learning environments that serve as meeting places for open discussion on art, history and social issues. Many cultural institutions offer activities for schools. Many institutions even have various types of partnerships with schools. The policy documents for public museums emphasise the need to engage in educational activities.

The government [proposed](#) in 2017 that the Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) to be commissioned to define how cultural heritage can contribute to the school system. The board was tasked to promote increased cooperation between cultural institutions and schools in all parts of the country. The assignment is to be reported to the Government in autumn 2020.

### Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

During the recent years, no nation wide information campaigns or policies have targeted young people in order to inform about opportunities to access cultural environments, besides the initiatives already described in this section.

## Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

Each year in September, Heritage Days are arranged all around Europe as a part of the Council of Europe's and the European Commission's joint programme, [European Heritage Days](#). In Sweden the event is called [Kulturarvsdagen](#) (Cultural Heritage Day) and is organised by the Swedish National Heritage Board ([Riksantikvarieämbetet](#)). On Cultural Heritage Day, cultural environments, cultural landscapes and historic places of interest are shown all over the country and the history around these is told. A 'Little Heritage Day' (Lilla kulturarvsdagen), focusing on children and young people is a part of this event.

The Swedish National Heritage Board is the national coordinator, and arranges the event in Sweden in collaboration with Sweden's Local Heritage Federation (Sveriges Hembygdsförbund) and the Working Life Museums Co-operation Council (Arbetslivsmuseernas Samarbetsråd).

## 8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

### Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

According to the [Curriculum for the upper secondary school](#), a task for the school is to promote understanding and compassion for others:

'The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity. The school is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen this ability among all who work there.

Familiarity with the culture and history of Sweden and the Swedish language should be strengthened through teaching in many of the subjects studied in the school. A secure identity and awareness of one's own cultural origins, and sharing a common cultural heritage, strengthens the ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others.

Schools must help students to develop an identity that can be related to and encompass not only what is specifically Swedish, but also that which is Nordic, European, and ultimately global.'

#### Arts subject

Since 2011, arts subjects are not among the obligatory foundation subjects (gymnasiegemensamma ämnen) in upper secondary education. The Upper Secondary Education Inquiry ([Gymnasieutredningen](#)) proposed that all the national programmes in upper secondary schools should again incorporate an arts subject. The Swedish Parliament rejected the proposal by a vote in June 2018.

#### Non-formal learning

##### Municipal culture schools

Municipal culture school (kommunala kulturskolan) form the largest voluntary cultural activity for children and young people in Sweden, and activities in arts school attract larger number of children and adolescents than the schools can accept. See [chapter 8.2](#) for more information.

##### Folk high schools

The folk high school ([folkhögskolan](#)) is aimed primarily at adult students from the age of 18 years. There are about 150 folk high schools in Sweden. Many are linked to the civil society, CSOs, foundations or associations. Some 40 folk high schools are operated by county councils or regions. Each school is free to create their own profile, as there is not a common curriculum.

Studies in arts, music, handicraft, theatre etc. have a very strong position among the courses offered. For many young people a year or two in folk high school is their first step towards a creative carrier.

### Study circles

Young people's own cultural activities, outside of family or school context, often take place in [study circles](#) and in other activities within [liberal adult education](#) (folkbildning). Young people from the age of 13 years can participate in these activities.

Of all [study circle participants in 2010](#), the share in the age range:

- 13-24 years was 13%,
- 25-65 years was 67%
- over 65 years was 20%

Of the total number, about 175 000 young people took part of a cultural study circle. Among them, only 36% were female while 64% were male.

### Government grants to youth organisations and projects

There is a long tradition of government grants to non-profit youth organisations in Sweden. Support to young people's creativity is one of the priorities. Of the year 2019 central government budget for the youth policy area, 21.6 million euros (233 million Swedish kronor) were deposited as a state grant to youth organisations and 21 million Swedish kronor (1.9 million euros) for grants to local youth projects. More information is provided in section [5.6](#), Supporting youth organisations.

Besides the total figures above, it is currently not possible to estimate the size of the share that has been granted for benefiting young people's creativity and cultural participation.

### Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

The [Culture School Inquiry](#) proposed in 2016 that a new vocational qualification of arts school teachers should be established. According to the Inquiry, a programme targeting the specific educational environment of culture schools is essential for many reasons, but especially in order to strengthen the educational foundations of the arts school sector.

This proposal has resulted in that, since 2019, six higher education institutions are offering new courses for those wanting to supplement their artistic education with pedagogy for work in culture school. The new courses are aimed at both active artists and people already working in the culture school.

Municipalities have a great need for teaching skills in areas of the arts that are not found within the scope of any of the existing training programmes' main fields of study, according to the Culture School inquiry. Working in an arts school requires both artistic and teaching skills, which means that a arts schools teaching qualification should have a basis in educational science, but with artistic skills as an entry requirement.

### Providing quality access to creative environments

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning ([Boverket](#)) has been commissioned by the Government to distribute [grants](#) for better access to physical meeting places throughout the country. Support can be granted to measures aiming for adapting a community centre (samlingslokal) for youth activities.

A community centre is a location that is open and available to the civil society for meetings, study activities, cultural activities, entertainment, leisure or any other similar activity. Support may also be granted for stimulating young people's activities in the cultural and leisure area.

## 8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

### Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

The incorporation of entrepreneurship competence in formal learning and in the curricula is presented in section [3.8](#) (on Development of Entrepreneurship Competences) of the chapter on Employment and Entrepreneurship.

#### Upper secondary education

The Arts Programme is a higher education preparatory programme at upper secondary level. The education aims for developing students' knowledge in and about aesthetic forms of expression, and about people in contemporary society, in history and in the world based on artistic, cultural and communicative perspectives. Students should be given the opportunity of developing both their skills and analytical ability.

The education should also make students aware of legal and ethical issues concerning freedom of expression and copyright in cultural activities and in communication with the general public. Many cultural workers receive commissions in their own companies. There should be opportunities for students to develop knowledge of entrepreneurship and business.

The Arts Programme has five orientations:

1. Art and design
2. Arts and media
3. Music
4. Theater
5. Dance

#### University college education

The universities of Uppsala and Gothenburg offer bachelor programmes on [Media, aesthetics and cultural entrepreneurship](#) (Medier, estetik och kulturellt entreprenörskap, kandidatprogram) and on [Cultural entrepreneurship](#) (kandidatprogram i kulturentreprenörskap).

#### Non-formal education

##### Folk high schools

The folk high school ([folkhögskolan](#)) is aimed primarily at adult students from the age of 18 years (see section [8.5](#) Developing cultural and creative competences, for more information). Cultural entrepreneurial skills may be developed by following a profile course, targeting those who already have the basic skills needed. An example is digital music production, a one year programme for those plan to work professionally with digital music production. Another example is education in music creation for interactive environments such as games and web applications, preparing for work in the growing industry of games, multimedia and IT.

### Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

There are no specific schemes for young creative professionals who wish to start up a business. General information and advice on how to get started is provided by three government agencies, the Swedish Companies Registration Office (Bolagsverket), the Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket) and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) at [verksamhet.se](#), where those who run or about to start their own business can find information and services.

## Young Enterprise

Young Enterprise Sweden ([Ung företagsamhet](#)) is a politically independent, non-profit educational organisation and is part of the worldwide organisation Junior Achievement. Young Enterprise gives children and young people the opportunity to practice and develop their creativity and entrepreneurial abilities. Among other activities, Young Enterprise even provides teachers and school leaders with training opportunities, assessment support and seminars.

In 2017, Young Enterprise Sweden arranged a competition for the most creative young enterprise of the year (årets mest kreativa UF-företag), alongside with the annual Championship in Young Enterprise. The competition aimed to reward creativity and ability to think outside the box. Young creators were to compete with contributions for example for a new product or service.

## 8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

### New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

In 2017, the Government decided on a [new IT-strategy for school](#). The strategy addresses even creative use of new technologies. In the strategy, the aim of school has been broadened to even include developing an understanding of how digitalisation affects the individual and society. All students should be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use digital technology. They should also be given the opportunity to develop a critical and responsible approach to digital technology, in order to see the possibilities and to understand the risks, and to evaluate information.

In March 2017, the Government [decided on](#) the following adjustments in curricula and syllabuses:

- programming is introduced as a distinct element in various subjects in compulsory schools, especially in technology and mathematics
- the abilities of students to critically evaluate different sources is to be strengthened
- the abilities of students to solve problems and translate ideas into action in a creative way with the use of digital technology is to be strengthened
- students are to work with digital texts, media and tools
- students are to use and understand digital systems and services
- students are to develop an understanding of the impact of digitalisation on the individual and society.

### Crafts

In compulsory school, working with crafts involves creating concrete solutions within the tradition of handicrafts and design, based on needs in different situations. Crafts involve a combination of manual and intellectual work, which together develop creativity, and increases confidence in one's ability to manage tasks in daily life. These abilities are important, both for the individual and the development of society.

The new [IT-strategy](#) adds the skill of learning the opportunities of digital technology to be achieved in various subjects, including crafts:

'Competence on different materials, tools and craft techniques in grades 7-9: metal, textile and wood, their combinations with each other and with other materials, such as recycled materials. Learning which materials that can be combined with digital technology.'

The amendments shall apply from 1 July 2018.

Besides that, there are currently no other policies, programmes or initiatives for making new technologies available to empower young people's creativity and capacity for innovation.

### **Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

There are currently no policies, programmes or initiatives at the national level, aiming at attracting young people's interest in culture, the arts and science through the use of new technologies.

Institutions for cultural heritage, such as museums, libraries and archives, offer rich historical sources that are open for all through their collections of digital and analogue documents, such as books, maps, audiovisual recordings, magazines, etc. The rapid digitalisation in Sweden has contributed to increased opportunities for the public to take part in and for their own purposes reuse this material. Still, more initiatives are needed to attract young people's interest in culture, the arts and science.

The use of digital communication technologies has created significant opportunities for developing new approaches for the cultural heritage institutions. When collections are made available as open data and are accessible free of charge via the Internet, they can also be used by a broad audience for a variety of purposes.

The government has in February 2017 [proposed](#) that the Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet) should be commissioned to study how the national digital archives can be made open for the public, free of charge.

The government has also [proposed](#) that Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) should be given the task to coordinate and support digitalisation, digital preservation and digital agency in the cultural heritage sector. The task should be carried out in collaboration with other cultural heritage institutions and universities.

What more, the government has proposed that the National Library of Sweden (Kungliga biblioteket) and the Swedish Film Institute (Svenska filminstitutet) should be tasked to jointly investigate and submit proposals in order to enhance collaboration on the digitalisation of audio-visual material.

## **8.8 Synergies and partnerships**

### **Synergies between public policies and programmes**

#### **Creative Schools**

Creative Schools (Skapande skola) is a cooperation programme between the Swedish Arts Council (Statens konstråd) and the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), initiated by the government. The aim is to give children and young people the opportunity to be creative and to participate in cultural activities in school context. The Swedish Arts Council has the government task to annually allocate a grant. The grant is worth about SEK 188 million (18 million euros) per year and can be applied for by compulsory schools and pre-schools.

In 2018, about 91% of the Swedish municipalities received [Creative School funding](#) for the academic year 2018/2019. An [evaluation](#) of the Creative Schools programme from 2016 shows that all Swedish municipalities have applied for and been granted a Creative School grant, at least for one academic year over the past decade. What more, most municipalities and county councils/regions have stable or slightly positive development of allocating resources for culture. The evaluation could not find any signs for municipalities to have reduced their resources to culture for children and young people since the introduction of Creative Schools grant.

## Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

Not applicable.

## 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

### Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

There has not been any major initiatives from the government the last years to foster young people's involvement through cultural activities.

### Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

#### Taking place

Taking place (Äga rum) is a government initiative, in order to encourage cultural activities in residential areas with socioeconomic challenges or low voter turnout. Responsibility for this government investment is shared by the Public Art Agency Sweden (Statens konstråd) and the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet). The project will be based on the needs and desires of local residents and be characterised by participation by representatives from a wide range of organisations.

The Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) [allocates SEK 100 million](#) (10,5 million euros) over the period 2016–2018 to projects across Sweden that carry out cultural activities based on the needs of local residents and in collaboration with local stakeholders. Those who live in the area should be included as project participants, cultural practitioners and audiences. The goal is to enable more people to choose, create and enjoy culture where they live. The programme is targeting all local residents, and is not youth specific.

#### Creative Schools

The cooperation programme between the Swedish Arts Council and the Swedish National Agency for Education ([Skolverket](#)), Creative Schools ([Skapande skola](#)) (see section [8.8](#), Synergies and partnerships) is on-going since 2008.

For the academic year 2016/2017, cultural activities aimed at integrating newly arrived children in schools were prioritized. For the academic year 2017/2018, reducing gaps in access to arts and culture was in focus. Activities in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas were therefore given a specific priority.

## 8.10 Current debates and reforms

### Developing the Creative School

The Government has given the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) the [task of analysing](#) how the government grant for cultural activities in school, Creative School (Skapande skola), can be developed with the aim of reaching more and new groups of children and young people. The analysis shall include the reasons why smaller municipalities and independent schools do not seek funding to the same extent as larger municipalities and municipal schools. The final report, [Översyn av skapande skola](#), was submitted to the Government Offices in November 2019.

The results in the final report confirms that the government grant for cultural activities in the school is appreciated by those receiving a project grant. The grant gives students the opportunity to meet art and culture in different forms, try different art forms under professional guidance and develop their skills in ways that they according to the curriculum are entitled to.

The grant is also considered important from an equality perspective, as students who usually do not take part in cultural activities are given the opportunity through Creative School. However, the study has highlighted several challenges with the design of the grant, which need to be solved in order for new groups of students to be able to take part in Creative School activities.

The study confirms that all principals do not apply for grants or know the purpose of the Creative School grant. Principals in smaller schools perceive the grant's design as inadequately adapted to their circumstances. Small schools generally lack the administrative capacity for applying for government grants. One suggested solution is that the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) should develop targeted information material for the target group, and that principals should have the opportunity of collaborating when it comes to Creative School grant application.

The review shows also that the principals have had difficulties interpreting parts of the grant regulation, as the concepts do not correspond with current policy documents for school. The formulations in the Creative School grant regulation need to be reviewed and adapted to the current governing documents for school.

Against this background, the Swedish Arts Council presents a number of recommendations and proposals. The main proposal is that the Government is recommended to adjust the regulation and clarify the purpose of the Creative School grant and give principals the opportunity to apply in collaboration.

## 9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

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Human rights, sustainable development and green patterns of consumption continue to be great challenges both at national and global level. Exploring options and alternative strategies engages many young Swedes.

Empowering young people to be able to participate in the society is one of the main goals for the Government's youth policy. The main strategy to support young people's participation, both at national and global level, is to offer upper secondary education for all young people and financial support in form of government grants to youth CSOs.

### 9.1 General context

#### Main concepts

In Sweden, empowering young people to be able to participate in the society is one of the main goals for the national youth and education policies. There are though no specific priorities for youth participation in cooperation at global level, or in green volunteering/production/consumption.

#### Youth interest in global issues

Young people in Sweden are interested in global issues. According to the latest figures of a recurrent [national youth survey](#), the share of young people between 16 and 25 years of age, interested in global issues, was 65%. The figures are from 2018, and there was no difference between young women and men. The share was larger compared to the share of those interested in societal issues at the national level, 60%.

These levels have been quite stable since 2009.

## 9.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The objective of Sweden's Policy for Global Development is fair and sustainable global development. Sweden's international development cooperation focuses on creating opportunities for better living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression.

The [Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#) (Utrikesdepartementet) and Sweden's missions abroad are responsible for Sweden's foreign policy, development cooperation and trade policy.

The [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency](#), Sida, is a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government, with the mission to reduce poverty in the world. In cooperation with others, Sida contributes to implementing Sweden's Policy for Global Development.

The [Swedish Institute](#) (Svenska institutet) a government agency with responsibilities covering foreign policy, education, international aid and development. The Swedish Institute's activities span over fields such as culture, society, research, higher education, business, innovation, democracy and global development.

### Non-public actors

#### United Nations Association of Sweden

United Nations Association of Sweden ([Svenska FN-förbundet](#)) works for a better and stronger United Nations. The Swedish UN Association works with information, education, advocacy, reviews of how Sweden lives up to its obligations to the UN, international development cooperation and support to the UN's work in the field. The association has a close cooperation with 30 certified upper secondary schools, [UN schools](#), that want to develop their global school profile. The activities are aimed at increasing students' and teachers' skills and involvement in global issues. The Swedish UN Association encourages and supports individual students to start and run the UN school clubs at their schools in order to act locally to inform of and influence in pressing global issues.

#### Nature and Youth Sweden

Nature and Youth Sweden ([Fältbiologerna](#)) is a nationwide association for children and young people interested in nature and environmental issues. Nature and Youth Sweden is an independent youth organisation connected to the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. Young people, members being between 6 and 25 years of age, run the entire organisation from local level up to the National Association.

#### Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation ([Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen](#)) is a charitable environmental organisation. The priority areas of work are climate change, seas and fishing, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins. Members and others who wish to volunteer are recommended to contact [Volontärbyrå](#) (Voluntary Office). Volontärbyrå is an on-line matching tool for volunteering opportunities in Swedish non-profit organisations.

#### Greenpeace

[Greenpeace](#) is an independent global campaigning organisation that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace. Greenpeace organises local voluntary groups in six Swedish cities. Greenpeace provides a way for volunteers and local groups to participate in campaign work, but a large part of local work is also based on what the volunteers themselves are inspired to do.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

### Sida

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, [Sida](#), cooperates with schools by providing training opportunities and materials on global development issues. The material is primarily intended for upper secondary level education, and aims at creating commitment and changing attitudes and prejudices, by problematising and explaining global developments.

Sida also arranges an annual conference, *'The school meets the world'*, for teachers, school leaders and others. Learning for global sustainable development is enrolled in the Swedish curriculum, and therefore it is necessary for the school to work with internationalisation as well as sustainability in all respects.

Sida has a partnership with [we\\_change](#), that is Sweden's largest education initiative for sustainable development. See section [9.4](#), Raising awareness about global issues, for more information on [we\\_change](#).

### National Agency for Education

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) cooperates with various actors in order to contribute to international work in the field of education for sustainable development. For instance, the agency has an exchange of experience with CSOs that are active in the field. Same examples are:

- [Life Link](#), promoting international exchange between upper secondary schools, with focus on sustainable development
- [WWF](#), linking learning of entrepreneurship with sustainable development
- Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation (Håll Sverige rent), coordinating the international Eco Schools programme ([Grön Flagg](#))

The National Agency for Education cooperates with the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet) regarding the Global School. The Global School focuses on teaching sustainable development, both in Sweden and internationally. See section [9.4](#), Educators' support, for more information on the Global School.

## 9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

### Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

Young people's opportunities to to exchange views on global issues with national and international policy-makers may mainly take place through specific consultations and hearings. As an example, ahead of the high-level 2030 Agenda meeting, government representatives have met for dialogue with representatives of the young civil society.

When it comes to influencing government decisions, citizens and organisations have the opportunity to be heard through the referral system. The umbrella organisation for Swedish youth organisations, [LSU](#) (the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations), is customarily appointed as a referral body for proposals affecting young people.

For more information see section [5.4](#), Young people's participation in policy making.

### Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU, nominates annually three young persons to represent Sweden in the United Nations.

One representative participates for 2-3 weeks in the session of the General Assembly in New York. The mission includes holding a speech in the General Assembly's committee responsible for human rights issues. The young representative attends the Swedish delegation to the General Assembly, and works close to the Swedish UN Representation in New York and the Ministry of Education in Sweden. Preparatory meeting with youth representatives from other EU countries is organised by the European Youth Forum during the summer.

One representative participates in UN High Level Forum for Sustainable Development. That is a relatively new forum for contributing to political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, as well as following up and evaluating the implementation of 2030 Agenda. The young representative is included in the Swedish delegation and works close to the Swedish UN Representation in New York and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sweden.

The third representative participates in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

LSU has also a representative in the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO.

## 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

### Formal, non-formal and informal learning

#### Formal learning

According to the [Curriculum for upper secondary school](#), education should provide students with insights so that they can develop a personal approach to overarching, global environmental issues. Education should illuminate how the functions of society and ways of living and working can best be adapted to create sustainable development.

The subject science studies, one of the mandatory foundation subjects for all upper secondary programmes, contributes to an understanding of sustainable development. Teaching in the [course](#) should cover the following core content:

- Issues concerning sustainable development, such as energy, climate and impact on the ecosystem. Ecosystem services, utilisation of resources and the viability of ecosystems.
- Different aspects of sustainable development such as consumption, allocation of resources, human rights and gender equality.

#### Non-formal learning

Young people Ltd (Ungdomar AB) creates and operates cross-border cooperation between business and society. The aim is to create opportunities for the young to take place as community stakeholders to help shape their own future. Young people Ltd. operates in three different areas:

1. research on young people's health
2. events for advocacy
3. training for companies, organisations and community stakeholders.

Long-term sustainability is the most central issue for the business. Young people Ltd operates the digital meeting place [ungdomar.se](#), which is one of the largest discussion forum for young people in Sweden with approximately 100 000 visitors each week.

The campaign [we change](#) is arranged on an annual basis by Young people Ltd together with partners (IKEA, WWF, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), government offices, etc.) in order to educate and inform upper secondary school

students on global sustainable development. More information on we\_change is provided in the section 'Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues' below.

### **Young leaders visitors programme**

The Swedish Institute promotes international exchange, and one of the programmes is [Young leaders visitors programme](#). The programme offers personal and professional development to young leaders between 22 and 32 years of age, from a number of countries in northern Africa and Sweden. The programme addresses young leaders who work for positive social change in the fields of democracy, human rights, sustainability and equality.

### **Educators' support**

Teachers, school leaders and other staff in school can take part of Global School training activities (den globala skolan), offered by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR). The training is focusing on global sustainable development and intercultural understanding.

The purpose of the Global School is to contribute to school development through insight into global issues and application of success factors for school work. The end goal is to support promotion of global issues among students by giving them the prerequisites for making informed choices and thereby pursuing a sustainable world.

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues**

#### **We\_change**

[We\\_change](#) is Sweden's largest education initiative for sustainable development, based on the 17 global goals for sustainable development.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, is a major partner to we\_change. The project is run by Young people Ltd (Ungdomar AB), with the vision that all young people, through their potential, will feel that they can change the world for the better.

Every year, we\_change visits Swedish upper secondary schools with the aim of increasing young people's commitment and demonstrating their potential to influence the world in a sustainable direction. We\_change aims at contributing to changing attitudes, raising knowledge levels and creating opportunities for young people, companies, organisations, schools and government to together change the world for better.

### **Information providers**

In Sweden, there are not specific public authorities that are responsible for disseminating information on global issues among young people. Instead, each actor who is active in the field should find appropriate ways of reaching the young audience.

### **Key initiatives**

#### **#FirstGeneration**

In order to strengthen the global work for the 2030 Agenda, the Swedish Foreign Ministry has in 2016 taken the initiative to [#FirstGeneration](#), a campaign to create commitment around the UN Global goals for sustainable development. The key to a sustainable future depends on the ability to convert knowledge into engagement among young people. The aim of the campaign is to strengthen the international work of 2030 Agenda and to let younger audiences take on the challenges linked to the UN's global goals for sustainable development.

#FirstGeneration operates in collaboration between the Swedish Foreign Ministry, Swedish embassies and consulates abroad, together with local and international stakeholders. Two major events took place in 2016:

- In June, the ministers for International development cooperation and climate and for Education participated in a seminar in New York. The focus was on young people's involvement and the important role of teachers and trainers in inspiring young. Other participants included UNESCO, UNDP and AIESEC, the world's largest student organisation.
- In October 2016, more than 300 young people, teachers, inspirers and representatives of civil society and the business sector gathered for the #FirstGeneration Global Goals Forum in Stockholm.

The campaign aims at creating engagement, strengthening communication and broadening the popular support for the 2030 Agenda and the global goals. By collaborating with a diversity of actors, Sweden wants to help influence the work of other countries in a positive direction.

## 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

### Green volunteering

#### Keep Sweden Tidy

The Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation ([Håll Sverige rent](#)) is a creator of public opinion that promotes recycling and combats litter through public awareness campaigns, awards and environmental education. The foundation strives to influence people's attitudes and behavior in order to encourage a sustainable development.

Keep Sweden Tidy has been organising Litter Picking Days for decades. Annually, during the spring months of March, April and May, schools, pre-schools, companies, organisations and municipalities are encouraged to go out and pick litter in their nearby environment. In 2015, more than 804 000 people and 268 municipalities joined in, which shows that littering is an important issue for many people.

Keep Sweden Tidy educates children and youngsters about environment, mostly through the [Eco-Schools](#) Programme, an international programme of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). Eco-Schools aim to empower learners by engaging them in action-orientated learning. The programme started in Europe in the early 1990s and was introduced in Sweden in 1996, coordinated by the Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation. In Sweden the programme is called [Grön Flagg](#) (Green Flag) and there are about 2 500 units in the Swedish network.

### Green production and consumption

The Swedish Consumer Agency ([Konsumentverket](#)) is a government agency whose task is to safeguard consumer interests. In March 2017, the Government [commissioned](#) the Swedish Consumer Agency to build a forum for environmentally sustainable consumption.

The agency was also tasked to start working to encourage environmentally friendly consumption patterns. The aim is to stimulate knowledge exchange and cooperation, and thus increase knowledge in the field. Another purpose is to promote initiatives and to provide better conditions for environmentally sustainable consumption.

The background to the Government task is that today's major environmental problems are related to consumption and production patterns that are not environmentally sustainable.

There are yet no public organisations that promote green production/consumption among young people specifically.

## 9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

### Intercontinental youth work cooperation

Besides the Erasmus+ Key action 2, *Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices*, supporting capacity building in the field of youth, both at an EU and international level, there are no other large-scale programmes that promote intercontinental youth work cooperation in Sweden.

There are though interesting minor programmes that the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, [LSU](#), is responsible for:

#### Global Youth Network

The Global Youth Network consisted out of 16 young persons active in a youth CSO, ambassadors, within the programme [GALE](#). GALE is a global partners programme hosted by LSU. During 2015 and 2016, the Global Youth Network gathered young ambassadors from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Burma, Sweden, Lebanon and Turkey to share their experiences and knowledge with each other.

#### Youth Cooperation Initiative

The [Youth Cooperation Initiative](#) creates possibilities for young people from different countries to realize ideas together. The project should cover any of the following themes: sustainability, youth perspective, non-discrimination, leadership, organisational development or advocacy.

The implementers should be two youth CSOs or organised youth groups, from two different countries (one from a country on the [DAC-list](#)). The majority of the project group should be younger than 30 years old.

### Development cooperation activities

The Swedish Institute promotes international exchange within the areas of culture, education, research, society as well as areas regarding international experiences and media. The exchange programmes aim to develop active and lasting networks and mutual learning processes through meetings, education and cultural experiences. They simultaneously aim to strengthen openness and democratic structures.

The programmes primarily focus on the areas of gender equality, sustainability, democracy, children's rights and freedom of expression (see section [9.4](#), Raising awareness about global issues, for more information).

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

### The Swedish Delegation for the 2030 Agenda

The Government has appointed a [delegation](#) with the aim of promoting, facilitating and stimulating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The delegation is commissioned to:

- assess the extent to which Sweden fulfils the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda
- submit proposals for an overarching action plan for Sweden's implementation
- disseminate information on examples of best practice in the area of socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development.

Collective ownership, inclusive participation and dialogue with stakeholders is central to the work of the delegation. The work of the delegation is carried out in consultation with cooperative bodies, local authorities, regions, government agencies, the scientific community, unions, the private sector and civil society.

## Young people's perspectives and participation

Children and young people's perspectives, participation and ownership are key aspects in working towards sustainable development.

In autumn 2016 and spring 2017, the delegation has collaborated with the young civil society through the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU. Some of the overall challenges identified to be further developed [were](#):

- To facilitate, within the framework of existing structures, the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making at all levels, in all aspects of the agenda's implementation and in society at large.
- To deepen and broaden the anchoring efforts and the dialogue with non-organised young people and youth movements, and to submit proposals linked to youth participation in the action plan.

The delegation's ambition is to use the existing structures and venues for deepening the dialogue with children and young people, as young people's knowledge and views on future challenges is needed in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The delegation sees cooperation with young people as a long-term partnership where young people's participation also includes the design of the processes that will engage them.

### Timeline

The delegation has submitted a [proposal for an overarching action plan](#) in May 2017. The delegation's remit ended in March 2019 when the final report was presented. Among the proposals in the [final report](#), the following can be mentioned:

- The Government should instruct the National Agency for Education to develop a plan regarding the content, implementation and funding of skills enhancement and support measures to strengthen teachers' and school administrators' capacities to educate on sustainable development, and how this should be coordinated. The Agency should also be instructed, in collaboration with the Swedish School Inspectorate, to follow up how, and the degree to which, education for sustainable development is currently carried out in preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools in Sweden.
- Starting in the Budget Bill for 2022, the Government should present a status analysis in an annex, and a full account of the Government's work to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Swedish National Financial Management Authority should be instructed to develop a proposal on the specific details of the annex.

## 10. YOUTH WORK

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In Sweden, youth work is seen as a part of youth policy where the responsibility rests at the local level. That means that youth work is a municipal responsibility, steered and financed at local level both when it comes to outreach activities and to youth centres and youth clubs.

What more, the concept of youth work is seldom used. Instead, in government policy documents the concept of meaningful leisure activities (meningsfull fritid) is central. That concept relates both to mainly membership-based activities in youth organisations and to open meeting places for young people such as youth clubs or recreational centres (öppna fritidsverksamheter).

The Ministry of Culture ([Kulturdepartementet](#)) is in charge of youth policy, and indirectly also for youth work. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCE](#)) works to ensure that the objectives of youth policy will be achieved. According to its instruction, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society (MUCE) is to ensure that all young people have meaningful and developing leisure activities. Since 2017, the agency has been

supporting open leisure activities and supports efforts to increase the skills of those who work with young people.

## 10.1 General context

### Historical developmets

This section builds on Forkby in "[Youth policy and participation in Sweden: a historical perspective](#)" in *The history of youth work in Europe Relevance for today's youth work policy* from 2014.

A milestone in Sweden's history of youth policy took place in 1939 when the Youth Care Committee was set up. The committee looked broadly at youth-related questions. A motivation for the committee was to challenge the moral indignation involved in discussions about young people's behaviour. The concern focused on unemployed youth and organised leisure activities.

The committee took stance in that having too much free time was a risk for those young people whose families did not provide adequate support and did not allow them to develop their talents or competences. This was believed to lead to unstructured free time outside the family and away from adult supervision. To address this situation, the committee declared that young people should be educated and fostered so they could make better use of their free time. Leisure time should involve productive activity, the pursuit of hobbies and interests, and interaction with fellows in a spirit of companionship. From there on, recreational youth centres were established all over Sweden, offering a variety of activities.

**From prevention to promotion and empowerment** An ideological shift towards a different kind of youth work was formulated in late 1960s. The intention was to shift perspective from prevention to promotion, and instead of threats and risks, focus on young people's personal strengths and resources. But, as social problems such as binge drinking and drugs use were increasing among teenagers during the 1970s, prevention of social problems remained the most important goal for youth work, not capacity building.

As a result of the International Youth Year in 1985, youth policy with focus on youth participation took place in the Swedish political agenda. A comprehensive youth policy agenda was put in place during early 1990s. Ways of introducing participatory steering models in recreational youth centres was discussed, in order to create free spaces for teenagers. A "free space" meant a place free of adult steering and commercialism, a place where young people could develop individual learning processes with their peers.

The shift in perspective demanded that goal of promoting young people's right to give voice to their opinions and to experience a real sense of participation also meant that young people should be able to change things – that is to have real power.

This line of thinking has since then been influential in Swedish youth policy. Young people are seen as agents for their learning processes, and the role of grown-ups is to step back in order to show their support.

### Recreational youth centres in Sweden today

More than eight out of ten young Swedes, 83%, stated in a national youth survey in 2018 that they have good or very good opportunities to participate in recreational and social activities. The share was lower in disadvantaged urban areas. Further analysis showed that young people in rural and remote areas find it difficult to find organized activities other than sports for their leisure time. In rural, remote and disadvantaged urban areas, young participants in focus group interviews described that there is a lack of such activities that they want to participate in. What more, many expressed that there is a lack of meeting places for young people where they feel included. Young residents in cities, on the other hand, told that the main obstacles to participating in recreational

activities were waiting lists for fully booked popular activities and lack of time, all according to a [study from 2018](#) of the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society.

The share of young people aged 16–19 who visited an open leisure activity (öppna fritidsverksamheter) has been around 10–12% during the last ten years. In 2018, the share of boys was about twice as high compared to girls, according to [Swedish youth statistics](#).

According to a [report from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCE) from 2019, most open leisure centres are run by the municipality and are located in a socio-economically neutral area that is neither characterised by a high nor a low share of economically vulnerable households. The most common approach was to offer general, open leisure activities for 13-18-year-olds. Other orientations that were relatively common were creating activities and spaces for girls or for visitors older than 18 years. Mobile youth work was also a common orientation.

Young people visiting open leisure activities such as youth clubs (ungdomens hus) and recreational youth centres (fritidsgårdar) are most often in lower secondary school age, according to a [study from 2016](#) of the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society. Open leisure activities also seem to mostly attract young people from families with scarce economical resources. Young people with foreign background and young people from disadvantaged areas participate more frequently in open leisure activities compared to others. When it comes to gender balance, it is mainly boys who take part.

It also emerged that there were groups of young people that avoided visiting a leisure activity because they were afraid of being harassed. Those were mainly young people with disabilities and young LGBTQ people, but even girls generally.

### **National definition or understanding of Youth Work**

In Sweden, there is no definition or common understanding of youth work at national level.

## **10.2 Administration and governance of youth work**

### **Governance**

In Sweden, there is no national level policy framework for youth work. Youth work is seen as a part of youth policy that should be a local level responsibility only. That means that youth work is a municipal responsibility, steered and financed at local level both when it comes to outreach activities and to youth centres and youth clubs. The work may be carried out and/or governed by different entities though, such as municipalities, CSOs, faith communities or schools. Youth work takes place in different localities, such as youth centres and clubs, sport facilities, schools, churches, etc.

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

The [Ministry of Culture](#) (Kulturdepartementet) is in charge of youth policy, and indirectly also for youth work. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCE](#)) works to ensure that the objectives of youth policy will be achieved. Various government agencies share the responsibility for young people's living conditions, each within their sectorial responsibilities. More information can be found in section 1.4, [Youth policy decision-making](#).

## **10.3 Support to youth work**

### **Policy legal framework**

The Swedish Government's main tool for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature is the national youth policy. The Swedish Agency

for youth and civil society ([MUCF](#)) is a government agency for matters relating to youth policy and civil society.

The government's initiatives directed towards young people are mainly channelled through the Swedish Agency for youth and civil society, and from the agency towards different professions and arenas. See [chapter 1.4](#) for more information.

### **Youth work providers**

Probably the most common connotation to youth worker is recreation leader (fritidsledare), working in a recreational centre. Other relevant professionals are e.g. those working with:

- young people not in education, employment or training;
- young newly arrived;
- young people's participation in local democracy;
- young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- young people's mental well-being.

In the History of Youth Work in Europe volume 6, Björn Andersson states that one should not expect to find much youth work in Sweden. But, he continues, there are a lot of actions and efforts directed towards young people, but few, if any, would be identified by the concept of youth work. Professionals and volunteers involved rather specify the concrete organisational setting where they work in, or just say they work with young people. He proposes six main areas for youth work in Sweden:

- recreational youth centres;
- outreach and field work;
- investigative/support-oriented services;
- residential care;
- therapeutic work.

([Andersson 2018](#)).

Besides these six arenas, the civil society is a large arena for youth work, both when it comes to youth organisations and sports associations.

### **Primary target groups**

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are a priority group within the government's youth policy initiatives. Other groups that during the recent years have been specifically targeted are young newly arrived, young people with immigrant background or who belong to ethnic minorities, young LGBT-people and young people with disabilities.

Initiatives focusing on better knowledge and addressing mental health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality, discrimination, violence prevention and better access to leisure activities often target the above-mentioned groups.

### **Funding**

Local youth work is funded by respective municipality. Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. The municipalities have a considerable degree of autonomy and finance largely their own activities, due to independent powers of taxation. Activities that take place in within the civil society may be funded by grants from the national government as well as from the local government, and by membership fees.

Only information on the national government's funding is available.

## Swedish Inheritance Fund

If a deceased person has no spouse or close relatives and has not left a will, his/her property goes to the Swedish Inheritance Fund ([Arvsfonden](#)). The Fund supports non-profit organisations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas for developing activities for children, young people and the disabled.

Applications that may be supported come in most cases from non-profit organisations engaged in voluntary work, but even municipalities may be granted the right to implement a project. In such case, the project should be innovative and conducted in close cooperation with a non-profit organisation. A project can be granted funding from the Inheritance Fund for three years.

In 2018, SEK 647 million (62 million euros) were distributed to [project grants](#). About SEK 174 million (17 million euros) for projects with the target group children and about SEK 311 million (30 million euros) for projects targeting youth. Projects targeting persons with disabilities were allocated about SEK 163 million (16 million euros). Projects aimed at persons with disabilities refer to projects where the main focus is on persons older than 25 years or projects without focusing on a specific age group.

## Government grants

The [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) (MUCF) is the government agency for matters relating to youth policy and civil society. The agency shall, according to its ordinance, work to ensure that the objectives of youth policy and of civil society policy will be achieved by:

- presenting, gathering and disseminating knowledge;
- contributing to the coordination of government efforts concerning youth policy;
- cooperating with government authorities, municipalities, county councils and civil society organisations;
- distributing state grants to civil society organisations.

In 2019, 22.7 million euros (237 million Swedish kronor) were deposited as a state grant to youth organisations. See section [1.7 Funding youth policy](#) for more information.

## EU-funds

At the national level, the Swedish ESF Council funded the Theme Group Youth in Working life during 2009-2017. The task of the Theme group was to collect and disseminate information on the methods and the results of youth projects for young people in NEET-situation.

In 2019, The Swedish ESF Council has granted an application for young people in mobility where the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SKR, is the project owner and the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is a national actor. The project is called "[MOVES - Mobility Offering Valuable Experience for Swedish Youth](#)" and runs from December 1, 2019 - June 30, 2022. The project is aimed at making it possible for small groups of young people who neither work nor study to together do international internships within the EU. The aim is that young in neet-situation can enter or approach work or education and strengthen their self-confidence, motivation and ability to act.

Another example is that the Swedish Agency for Youth And Civil Society is a member of the [Europe goes local – Supporting youth work at the municipal level](#). That is a transnational network initiated by the national agencies of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme, aiming for raising the quality of local youth work. Europe goes local is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

## Cooperation

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has the government task of ensuring that young people have meaningful and developing leisure activities since 2017. A part of that

task is to investigate the needs of local youth workers and facilitate collaboration between youth work networks and other groups and actors into the field of youth work.

In 2019, the agency started collaborating with the Swedish Arts Council ([Kulturrådet](#)), the Swedish Sports Federation ([Riksidrottsförbundet](#)) and the Delegation against Segregation ([Delmos](#)). As a first result a joint proposal for democracy-promoting efforts was submitted to the government. The proposal is addressing the role of open leisure activities as an arena for learning democracy and for promoting democratic values.

## 10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

### Quality assurance

There is no system of quality assurance applying to youth work organised by municipalities in Sweden. There are though interesting local initiatives for [quality tools for youth work](#), developed within the KEKS-network, and for providing a better knowledge base for youth work within the Research and Development Centre for Youth Work. This initiative is presented in the following section on research and evidence supporting youth work.

### Government grants for youth organisations - quality assurance

Quality assurance within youth work organised by youth organisations, aiming to support the organisations' long-term conditions and work, builds on the Ordinance on Government grants for child and youth organisations ([Förordning \(2011:65\) om statsbidrag till barn- och ungdomsorganisationer](#)). This grant aims to support children's and young people's independent organisation and involvement in society.

The Ordinance regulates the requirements that the applying organisations need to meet. The applying organisation has to meet both the formal criteria and the purpose of the grant according to the Ordinance. Another condition is that the organisation is independent and democratically structured, and in its activities respects the ideas of democracy, including equality and non-discrimination.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) is responsible for distributing the grant. All applications that fully meet the requirements are granted. Organisations that have received a grant are required to annually report how the grant has been used. The following parts are mandatory: financial reporting, auditor's report and annual report. Composition of the board and the number of members must be reported by gender. The accounts must be reviewed and approved by an auditor.

MUCF decides annually on each organisation's report. If the grant has not been used in accordance with the decision, or if a complete report has not been submitted, the organisation may need to repay the grant, partly or completely. The decision can be appealed to a general administrative court.

### Government grants to youth projects - quality assurance

MUCF also distributes government grants to time-limited projects. This is based on special ordinances governing each projectform. The ordinance states, among other things, the purpose of the grant, who can apply, the conditions for the grant and how it is to be reported back. MUCF examines the applications on the basis of the requirements set by the ordinance. All project funds are distributed in competition and are based on a limited amount of funds, which means that an application may be rejected. MUCF may decide that the grant has to be returned, totally or partly, if it is used in a manner that is contrary to the regulations. Controls and requirements linked to project grants have been strengthened in recent years. Demands in the application on concrete descriptions of the project have increased. Similar increased demands on concrete descriptions in the final reports have been made.

More information on the government's funding of youth organisations is available in chapter [5.6 Supporting youth organisations](#).

### **Youth work network KEKS**

Quality and expertise in cooperation, [KEKS](#) (Kvalitet och kompetens i samverkan, KEKS) is a network for youth work. The network exists since 2005 and is built on common goals and a common system of quality assurance. The network has about forty members, municipal administrations in charge of youth centres, youth houses, and youth projects.

The network has developed a quality system that is used by all members in order to develop youth work. This is done both by benchmarking, peer learning, exchange of best practices and other forms of cooperation within KEKS.

The quality system consists of five different tools centred on the core principles of participation and non-formal learning:

1. A digital logbook where all youth work is systematically documented through both statistics and written comments.
2. An annual survey of young people visiting the youth centres. The survey consists of two parts; one with questions about the respondent (age/sex/background, etc.), and one with questions about safety, participation, accessibility, etc. (in 2014 over 7 300 young persons answered the survey).
3. A group survey answered by young people who take part in creating activities for themselves and/or others, answering questions about how and to what extent they have participated.
4. ELD ([Experience, Learning, Description](#)) – a method for documenting and making visible non-formal learning.
5. Statistics regarding the number of visitors, number of activity hours, costs, etc.

Each year the results from surveys, statistics and economic data are compiled into key figures for every youth centre and municipality showing development over time, as well as in relation to other youth centres. The results are reported in five different areas: target group, safety and treatment, accessibility, social needs (participation, influence, responsibility and learning) and resource utilisation.

Based on an analysis – done together with staff and young people – of these results (which can be differentiated by sex, age, background, etc.) the following may take place:

- Youth centres set measurable goals for the next year, e.g. 'We will increase the participation index to 60%'
- KEKS provides its members with competence, methodological and organisational development.

### **Quality tools for youth work, provided by KEKS network**

#### *Logbook for Continuous Documentation of Youth Work*

The logbook for Continuous Documentation of Youth Work is a web-based system for documentation of youth work within youth centres, youth projects and informal groups. Through it, statistics are compiled on:

- Number of visitors and gender balance.
- Opening and activity hours.
- Hours and participants in spontaneous activities, planned open activities and group activities.
- Type of activities carried out (culture, sports, etc.).
- Extent of young people's participation.

The logbook has also space for written comments regarding what is taking place and how staff manages this. This is used as a basis for continuous analysis and reflection on work processes. It also has a section for planning and documentation of group activities. All information is stored and made searchable in a database.

The main objective is to initiate and support reflective work within staff groups through gathering statistics that relate to common aims and indicators on, mainly, target group and youth participation. The information gathered is used as a basis for evaluation on all levels of the organisation (work group, department, KEKS). This evaluation is in turn used as a basis for designing support actions like competence development or development of new methods, manuals, etc.

Statistics from the logbook are annually put together with results from KEKS annual meeting-place survey of young people, KEKS on-going group activity survey of young people and economic information in order to give a complete picture of how well they reach their aims. This in turn is the basis for the developmental support (competence, methods, organisation) that KEKS provide to its members.

### **Survey for follow-up of youth centres**

The survey is annual and web-based survey, directed towards young people visiting youth centres, youth houses, etc. All questions relate to common aims regarding the target group, youth participation, etc. All answers are stored and made searchable in a database.

The aim is to study how well youth centres and municipal administrations meet central indicators on youth work quality, in order to be able to take adequate measures for quality improvement. The main indicators are the following:

- Target group
- Safe environment
- Attractiveness,
- Inclusiveness
- Youth participation, influence and responsibility.

The survey instruments are directly linked to the over-all aims of inclusiveness, safety, participation, influence and attractiveness. All questions are posed as statements to which a respondent can agree with, from not at all to totally, on a five-point Likert scale. For example, 'Staff encourage me to take active responsibility for the carrying out of activities.' The survey creates reliable and comparable statistics on the target group and how young people in different youth centres and municipalities perceive youth work.

It takes about 20 minutes for a young person to fill in the survey. If young people have problems understanding the questions, they might need some assistance from youth workers. The results are documented and presented on each variable/question together with a manual for analysis of local results. The general trends are presented to all staff, heads of municipal administrations and politicians at municipal level.

The results from the survey are combined with results from continuous group surveys and quantitative figures from the logbook and other statistics into an annual results presentation for each youth centre and local department within KEKS.

### **Group-survey for follow-up of group activities**

The group survey for follow-up of group activities is a web-based survey directed towards young people taking part in group activities (e.g. international youth exchanges, creating cultural events, etc.). The survey focuses on ways of participating and how young people have perceived their participation.

All survey instruments are linked to the overall aims of participation and learning. All questions are posed as statements to which one may agree from not at all to totally, on a

five-point Likert scale. For example, 'I have been active in planning the activities of our group', 'I feel that staff and group members listen with respect to what I have to say'.

Results are handed out continuously as soon as the group members have completed the survey as a basis for reflection and evaluation in the group. All answers are stored and made searchable in a database. The results are compiled for groups, units and municipal administrations and disseminated centrally, by KEKS.

To see how well group activities meet indicators on participation and learning, in order to be able to set specific aims in relation to indicators and take adequate measures for quality improvement, results are documented and presented on each variable/question together with a manual for analysis of local results. General trends are presented to all staff, heads of municipal administrations and politicians.

The results from the group survey are combined with results from meeting place surveys (also web-based) and quantitative figures from the logbook and other statistics into an annual results presentation for each youth centre and local department within KEKS. This is then used as a basis for future work.

## Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

### Research and development centre

[Research and development centre](#), R & D (Kunskapscentrum för Fritidsledarskap) is for youth work in youth centres in the capital area (Stockholm and surrounding municipalities). The Research and development centre develops and evaluates methods and leadership for youth work at youth clubs and recreation centres. The focus is on a promotion approach and empowerment and not on social work.

The aim is to seize and restructure both youth leaders' skills, and existing research in the area, and to produce efficient systems for the development, documentation and evaluation of activities. R & D strives for to connect research to youth work. The Centre also networks in order to contribute to the development of open leisure and recreation leader profession. The R & D is based on regional collaboration between [Skarpnäck Folk High School](#), youth work education (fritidsledarutbildningar) and a number of municipalities around Stockholm.

### National surveys on youth work

In 2019, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society conducted two questionnaires on youth work, focusing on educational levels of youth workers, the span of activities at youth centres and young people's needs and opportunities for influencing the activities. 212 out of 290 municipalities participated. The results of both surveys were presented 2019 in [a report](#).

### Participative youth work

There are no specific forms of consultation specific to youth work policies at the national level in Sweden. Young people's participation in decision-making in general is described in [section 5.4](#). The section above describes a method developed by the youth work network KEKS, that includes a survey that local youth centres can use in order to learn how and to what extent the young visitors have participated in creating activities at the centre.

There is though information on the presence of youth participation at the local level. The information is from 2019, when the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society conducted a questionnaire on youth work, focusing among other things on young people's needs and opportunities for influencing the activities. 212 out of 290 municipalities participated. The results were presented in [a report](#). When it comes to opportunities for influencing the space and activities that are offered, all respondents stated that young people have the right and are given opportunities to influence the activities. More than half of the respondents stated that young people can have a great influence, and just over 45% stated that young people had some influence.

## Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

### Promoting young migrants' health and participation in society through increased knowledge about health, sexuality and gender equality

The Youmo project is operated by the Swedish [Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) in cooperation with [UMO.se](#). The project is fully financed by the Swedish government and has been running since 2016. It is a cross sectoral cooperation involving a government agency, a public sector owned company, several regional authorities and several NGOs.

The target groups are young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as youth-workers and professionals who meet these young people. The project is composed of three parts:

1. The website [www.youmo.se](http://www.youmo.se). Youmo.se is a site in six languages for young migrants from ages 13 to 20. Youmo.se addresses questions about sex, health and relationships, as well as informs about gender equality and human rights in Sweden.
2. The handbook "[Youmo in practice](#)". "Youmo in practice" is a handbook guiding professionals who meet young migrants in their daily work in how to talk with young migrants about issues relating to health, sexuality and gender equality. The handbook has 28 methods for youthworkers to do together with young migrants. A short version of the handbook is translated into English.
3. "Right to know!" seminars for youth workers. One-day seminars that presents all the parts of the Youmo project. These are trauma sensitive care and how to discuss issues relating to health, sexuality and gender equality with young migrants. Even a local example of work within this theme is included.

## 10.5 Youth workers

### Status in national legislation

In Sweden, there are no specific standards and criteria regarding health and safety requirements for working with youth. Neither are there requirements for minimum qualifications for specific pedagogical, educational, relational competences or for compliance with specific codes of ethics.

In Swedish national youth policy, the concept of youth work is seldom used. Instead, in government policy documents the concept of meaningful leisure activities (meningsfull fritid) is central. That concept relates both to mainly membership-based activities in youth organisations and to open meeting places for young people such as youth clubs or recreational centres.

In the context of youth organisations, those in charge of activities are most commonly members of the organisation and working on a voluntary basis. The organisation is responsible for their training. Those working in youth clubs or recreational centres are commonly employed, by the municipality or by the organisation running the centre.

On the other hand, almost all professional efforts to address social conditions of young people are organised, regulated and financed by the public sector. The concept of social work has come to be the general category to identify these efforts. Therefore, few professionals identify themselves as youth workers, even if their tasks relate to young people in a way that in other contexts would be understood as youth work ([Andersson 2018](#)).

In the *History of Youth Work in Europe*, volume 6, Björn Andersson states that one should not expect to find much youth work in Sweden. But, he continues, there are a lot of actions and efforts directed towards young people, but few, if any, would be identified by the concept of youth work. Professionals and volunteers involved rather specify the

concrete organisational setting where they work in, or just say they work with young people. He proposes six main areas for youth work in Sweden:

- youth organisations;
- recreational and activity-orientes youth centres;
- outreach and field work;
- investigative/support-oriented services;
- residential care;
- therapeutic work.

(Andersson 2018).

The Swedish Government has also initiated a number of comprehensive programmes and actions, where the target group consists of young people in a more vulnerable position, such as NEET, young people at risk for violence and radicalisation, young people with a migrant or ethnic minority background, young LGBT-persons, young disabled and newly arrived young migrants. See section [4.4, Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#), for more information.

These government actions usually combine knowledge compilations on the current theme, as well as dissemination to relevant professionals working in health care or in schools, in social work, in the police force and in organised leisure, including both youth centres and sports. Even volunteers active in CSOs and in faith communities are targeted.

## **Education, training and skills recognition**

### **Youth work training**

Training for youth work is mainly provided by Swedish folk high schools (folkhögskolor). The folk high schools provide a two-year study programme ([fritidsledarutbildning](#)), leading to a diploma in youth work. There is a common training plan/curriculum that all folk high schools follow. Information on the study programme is made available at the youth work [website](#).

In 2019, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil society conducted a questionnaire on youth work, focusing on educational levels of youth workers. 212 out of 290 municipalities participated. The results were presented 2019 in [a report](#).

According to the survey, over 60% of the professionals working in open leisure centres lack formal education. This means that some basic skills are lacking in many leisure activities.

### **Mobility of youth workers**

There are no national policies or programmes offering the possibility for youth workers to take part in exchange opportunities, cooperation and networking at local, regional, national and international level.

## **10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work**

### **Existing arrangements**

Young people participating in youth work activities in Sweden cannot obtain recognition or validation of the skills and competences acquired. Participation in youth work activities does not give credit points or other accreditation towards a qualification within the system of formal education.

## Skills

In Sweden, there are no top-level national policies and/or recognition mechanisms for identifying specific skills and competences that can be acquired through youth work.

## 10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

### Information providers

In Sweden, there are no by government provided or funded information providers available to young people to know about youth work and opportunities for engagement.

Instead, there is a non-governmental information provider, [Non-silence generation](#) that is financed by the national postcode lottery (Postkodslotteriet). The Non-silence generation provides information on how to engage in or to start a youth association, and a matching guide that helps young people to connect with associations around Sweden.

### Key initiatives

In Sweden, there has not been any top-level authorities' initiatives to raise public awareness about the value of youth work.

## 10.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

In spring 2019, the Ministry of Culture, responsible for youth, announced that a renewed youth policy action plan will be presented in early 2021. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society ([MUCF](#)) was then given the task of analysing the government's youth policy and submitting proposals for the forthcoming action plan.

The agency [reported the assignment](#) in November 2019. Among the proposals, there were two that address the field of youth work. The agency proposes a two-part assignment: training opportunities for recreation leaders and a government grant directed to the municipalities in order to enable more open leisure activities.

MUCF proposes that the government assigns the agency to promote democratic skills and democratic values among young people visiting open recreation centres, by providing training opportunities for the professionals working there. According to the proposal, the agency aims to cooperate with education and training actors in the youth work sector as well as with municipalities and regions. The purpose is to strengthen recreation leaders' knowledge on democracy and participation, so that they in their professional role can promote young people to democratic citizenship.

The idea behind this proposal is that by strengthening their skills in democracy-promoting processes, recreation leaders will be more skilled in supporting and encouraging young people to participate in social issues. That may also lead to young people gaining deeper knowledge of their rights and the laws that govern society.

The second proposal is about a new government grant aimed at enabling more open leisure activities in socio-economically vulnerable areas. Supporting good working methods and meaningful activities for young people in these areas is the main goal. The main purpose is to promote young people's development to democratic citizenship, and in addition to prevent risk behaviour and social exclusion. This proposal builds on the learnings from 2018. In 2018, MUCF was tasked with distributing a one-time grant to municipalities for supporting open leisure activities. The [final report from 2019](#) shows that a total of 248 out of 290 municipalities chose to request the grant, of which 240 have used the whole or at least a part of the grant. The report shows that, with the help of the grant, new target groups had been reached and methods and activities had been

developed to include groups that previously had not participated in open leisure activities.

## GLOSSARY

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### A

**Aktivitetsersättning:** Activity compensation. A specific sickness benefit from the Swedish Social Insurance Office (Försäkringskassan), available for young adults from the year in which they turn 19 years old. The Swedish Social Insurance Office, together with the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), offers the young individuals with activity compensation help with rehabilitation activities and with finding a workplace for work training.

**APL, Arbetsplatsförlagt lärande:** Workplace-based learning. According to the upper secondary school ordinance ([Gymnasieförordningen](#)), all pupils in Sweden in upper secondary schools vocational programmes and within special needs upper secondary schools national programmes shall accomplish part of their training at a workplace. This is called workplace-based learning (arbetsplatsförlagt lärande, APL)

### B

**Barnperspektiv:** Child perspective: Having a child perspective means regarding their rights and interests on the basis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

### C

### D

### E

### F

**Folkbildning:** Liberal adult education. Adult education not tied to academic qualifications. The education is organised through folk high schools ([folkhögskolor](#)) and study associations ([studieförbund](#)). It aims at reaching groups of people who have traditionally remained outside the educational system.

**Folkhögskola:** Folk high school. Independent adult education colleges that are part of the Swedish liberal adult education ([folkbildning](#)). Every folk high school provides a general course that gives its graduates basic eligibility to higher education. People with little previous education have priority of application. The students must be at least 18 years of age.

**Förordning:** Ordinance. Ordinances are governmental regulations based on the laws decided on by the Swedish parliament ([riksdagen](#)). The Higher Education Ordinance ([högskoleförordningen](#)) for example includes governmental regulations regarding Swedish higher education. The Education Ordinance ([skolförordningen](#)) includes regulations for compulsory school and the Upper Secondary School Ordinance ([gymnasieförordningen](#)) includes regulations for upper secondary school.

### G

**Gemensam beredning:** Joint preparation. All government decisions are taken jointly. Additionally, an institutionalised mechanism, the Joint preparation procedure (Gemensam beredning) is a common process for all government ministries. The Joint preparation procedure implies that government affairs that fall within the remit of several ministries should be prepared in consultation with other ministers concerned. This also applies within a ministry when a case involves more than one minister. Related to youth policy, the Joint preparation procedure takes place relatively often because of the cross-sectoral character of youth policy.

**Grundskola:** Compulsory school. Nine-year comprehensive compulsory school, equivalent to primary and lower secondary education. Swedish children start compulsory school at the age of seven.

**Grundsärskola:** Compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities. Compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities consists of nine years of schooling and is an alternative to compulsory school ([grundskolan](#)). Within the compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities there is a special orientation called the training school. This is intended for pupils who have a lack of knowledge in all or parts of compulsory schooling for pupils with learning disabilities.

**Gymnasieskola:** Upper secondary school. The Swedish upper secondary school includes three years of study. After those three years students with sufficient results receive an upper secondary higher education preparatory diploma (*högskoleförberedande examen*) or an upper secondary vocational diploma (*yrkesexamen*), depending on which national programme they have studied at. The Swedish upper secondary school includes 18 national programmes. It also includes five introduction programmes not leading to an upper secondary diploma and several specially designed programmes.

**Gymnasiesärskola:** Upper secondary school for pupils with learning disabilities. Upper secondary school for pupils with learning disabilities is a free, voluntary type of school that young people with developmental disorders or acquired brain injuries can choose to attend once they have completed compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities. It consists of nine national programmes as well as individual programmes and programmes that diverge from the national programme structure. Each national programme spans four years and consists of fundamental subjects, programme-specific subjects, more in-depth programme-specific courses and assessed coursework.

## H

**HVB-hem:** Residential care homes for young persons.

**Högskola:** University college. Higher education institution with limited or no right to award doctoral degrees. Some university colleges have additional degree awarding powers at third cycle level regarding a specific disciplinary domain. University colleges that currently has no authority to award doctoral degrees may apply to the Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet) for permission to award doctoral degrees within a particular field of which they have specific knowledge. The field is defined by the university college.

## I

**ISCED:** The reference international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields.

## J

## K

**Kommun:** Municipality. Local authority with extensive autonomy. There are 290 municipalities in Sweden. Local self-government is an important element of the democratic system in Sweden, as specified in the Instrument of Government, one of the fundamental laws of the Swedish Constitution. Under the Instrument of Government, municipalities have the right to levy taxes. The law also details what municipalities may do (voluntary activities) and what they must do (compulsory activities). The framework for local government activities is set up by the Riksdag and the Government in laws and ordinances.

**Kommunal vuxenutbildning (Komvux):** Municipal adult education. The municipalities (kommunerna) are obliged to provide adult education on compulsory school level and upper secondary school level. The starting point is the needs and conditions of the individual. Those who have received least education should be given priority.

## L

**Landsting:** County council. Sweden is divided into 21 counties. Political tasks at this level are undertaken by the county councils, whose decision-makers are directly elected by the people of the county. Under the Instrument of Government, county councils have the right to levy taxes. The law also details what county councils may do (voluntary activities) and what they must do (compulsory activities).

**Liberal Adult education** (folkbildning): Liberal adult education is non-formal and not tied to academic qualifications. The education is organised through folk high schools (folkhögskolor) and study associations (studieförbund). It aims to reach groups of people who have traditionally remained outside the education system.

**LSU:** National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations. The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, [LSU](#), is a coordinating body for about 100 Swedish youth organisations. The members consist of all kinds of organisations. LSU operates as a platform on issues concerning youth, both international and national, and provides a network for national as well as international organisations dealing with youth issues.

**Länsstyrelse:** County administrative boards. The county administrative boards are government bodies in the counties.

**Läroplan:** Curriculum. The curricula are steering documents that Swedish schools have to follow. There is a joint curriculum for compulsory school (grundskolan), the preschool class (förskoleklassen) and the leisure-time centre (fritidshemmet) and a curriculum for upper secondary school (gymnasieskolan).

## M

**Myndighet:** Public/government agency. The remit of each ministry includes responsibility for a number of government agencies. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society and Swedish National Agency for Education are two examples. The agencies must apply the laws and carry out the activities decided and financed by the Riksdag and Government.

## N

**Nationell samordnare:** National coordinator. A national coordinator is a person appointed by the government who operates outside ordinary government structures in order to coordinate and implement government policy. The coordination may take place between national government agencies and between actors at national and local level.

**Nyanlända:** Newly arrived. A person who has lived abroad and who is now a resident in Sweden. After having stayed four years in Sweden a person shall not longer be considered newly arrived.

## O

## P

**Proposition:** Government bill. Government bills are proposals from the government (regeringen) to the parliament (riksdagen), applying new laws or funding. The budget bill for example includes proposals regarding state funding for the upcoming budget year, for youth policy as well as sectorial policies.

## Q

## R

## S

**Skolval:** School elections. School elections are arranged in connection with parliament elections, local (municipal) elections and elections to the European Parliament. In these mock elections, pupils vote according to the same procedure as in ordinary elections.

**SOU, Sveriges offentliga utredningar:** Swedish Government Official Reports. Before the Government can draw up a legislative proposal, the matter in question must be analysed and evaluated. The task may be assigned to officials from the ministry concerned, a commission of inquiry or a one-man committee. The reports setting out their conclusions are published in the Swedish Government Official Reports series (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, SOU).

**Specialskolan:** Special school. Children who due to a functional impairment or for other special reasons cannot attend the compulsory school (grundskolan) or the compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities (grundsärskolan) can attend the special school. This includes children that are blind or have visual impairments as well as children that are deaf or hearing impaired or have a severe speech disorder.

**Studiecirkel:** Study circle. The study circle is the most common form of activity characterising the study associations (studieförbund). Study circles offer different subjects, such as artistic subjects, languages and social studies, through regular informal education during a limited time period.

**Studieförbund:** Study association. The study associations are part of the Swedish liberal adult education (folkbildning) which aims at reaching groups of people who have traditionally remained outside the educational system. Study circles (studiecirkel) are the most common activities characterising the study associations.

**Studiemedel:** Post-secondary student aid. Student aid at higher educational level or for adult education at upper secondary level. It consists of student grants (*studiebidrag*) and a repayable student loan (*studielån*).

**SFS, Svensk författningssamling:** The Swedish Code of Statutes. All current laws are published in the Swedish Code of Statutes (in Swedish only). Copies of the Code are kept at the Library of the Riksdag and most public libraries. Full-text electronic versions of valid laws and ordinances are available in Swedish on the Riksdag website.

**Sveriges ungdomsråd:** The Swedish Youth Council. The Swedish Youth Council is a civil society organisation. Local youth councils are members of the central Swedish Youth Council, and the local councils are also either CSOs or organised by municipalities. The majority of the members are enrolled in secondary education.

**Särskild utbildning för vuxna (sär vux):** Special education for adults. Special education for adults covers education at compulsory school and upper secondary school level. At the upper secondary level, the education should correspond to that provided in the national programmes of the upper secondary school for pupils with learning disabilities (gymnasiesärskolan). It is also possible for municipalities to apply for state grants to run vocational adult education and apprenticeship education in special education for adults.

**T**

**U**

**Ungdomsperspektiv:** Youth perspective. In Sweden, all government decisions and actions that affect young people between 13 and 25 years of age ought to have a youth perspective. This according to the youth policy bill from 2014, *Med fokus på unga – en politik för goda levnadsvillkor, makt och inflytande*. A youth perspective is based on the human rights and states that young people are to be seen and treated as a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds and different conditions. It also states that young people's independency is to be supported and that all youth should have the possibility of influence and participation.

**Universitet:** University. Higher education institution with the right to award doctoral degrees. Universities have degree awarding powers at first, second and third cycle level.

**V**

**W****X****Y**

**Yrkeshögskola:** Higher vocational education. Post-secondary vocational education. The programmes are usually between one and three years and most of them are free of charge. The students are able to receive a Diploma in Higher Vocational Education (*yrkeshögskoleexamen*) after one year of full-time studies and an Advanced Diploma in Higher Vocational Education (*kvalificerad yrkeshögskoleexamen*) after two years of full time studies.

Z

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Ö

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## ARCHIVE

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Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

### 2019

[Sweden 2019](#)

### 2018

[Sweden 2018](#)

### 2017

[Sweden 2017](#)