

Achieving the Lisbon Goal:

The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

Country Report: Sweden

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This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: *Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET*, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.

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Theme I: Progress of the National VET Systems towards Meeting the Challenges of Lisbon

1. Strategies and barriers for improving the status and attractiveness of Initial VET

Introduction

This report draws on various government sources, the OECD background report to Thematic Review of Adult Learning, recent research and ReferNET information about the Swedish educational system available at CEDEFOP- European Training Village.

A clear definition of the Swedish system for vocational education and training (VET) is difficult to establish since the VET system does not comprise specific objectives and clear boundaries, and there are no separate schools for vocational training within the educational system. *A basic objective in the Swedish education system has been to narrow the gap between vocational and general education as much as possible.* A result of this is a comprehensive school system which does not separate students attending different programmes before upper-secondary level. Even at upper-secondary level students are obliged to study a common core of subjects. Another distinguishing feature of the Swedish VET system is that there has been no real tradition for apprenticeship schemes that work in close co-operation with industry and commerce - although small scale apprenticeship programmes have existed at an upper-secondary level.

Despite the fact that there are seldom clear-cut borders between various parts of the education system, the main elements of initial vocational (I-VET) and continuing vocational training (CVT) in Sweden are presented below:

- Vocationally-oriented programmes at upper-secondary level (initial vocational training)
- Labour market training (continuing vocational training)
- Vocational training within the framework of municipal adult education (continuing vocational training)
- In-company training or staff training (continuing vocational training)
- Professional degrees at university level (continuing vocational training)

I-VET

Upper-secondary vocational education in Sweden is a school- based system.

Contrary to practice in many other countries, the general upper-secondary programme and the vocationally-oriented upper-secondary programmes have the same common core of core subjects. These subjects are Swedish/Swedish as a second language, mathematics, English, civics, science, religion, arts, as well as sports and health. Studies in these are seen as essential in contributing to a com-

mon foundation of democratic values and providing the necessary skills for lifelong learning.

There are a total of 17 national upper-secondary programs, of which 15 are primarily vocationally-oriented (the other two prepare for higher education). Almost 100% of a year group continue in one of the upper-secondary programmes. Those in a vocationally-oriented track are overrepresented among those not completing an upper-secondary programme. This is one of the backgrounds of the proposed reform.

At the national level, the government is planning to form a national vocational committee that will function as an advisory body to the government and to the educational authorities.

In order to strengthen the quality and attractiveness of upper-secondary education, the government presented on 28 April, 2004, a bill entitled *Kunskap och kvalitet - elva steg för utvecklingen af gymnasieskolan (Govt Bill 2003/04:140)- Knowledge and quality - eleven steps for improving upper secondary education.*¹

The aim of the bill has been to enhance the quality in vocationally-oriented programmes and for students taking individualised programmes and to give more emphasis to knowledge within a context, in-depth studies, and coherence. The reform will take effect as of 2007.²

The eleven steps aimed at modernising upper-secondary education within the existing framework, are:

_ Grades will be given for the whole subject instead of for modules, so as to encourage in-depth study and to reduce student stress. Accordingly, subject grades will be introduced within the framework of a modular programme based upper secondary programme. At the end of each module, a subject grade will be awarded replacing earlier grades in that subject to give a cumulative assessment of student progress in the subject.

_ An upper secondary certificate will be introduced to document that the holder has completed and met the requirements for upper secondary education. In order to get the certificate the student must have received a passing grade in at least 90% of the credits required for a completed course of studies.

_ The upper secondary certificate project will enhance the overall focus of the educational programme. This will replace present project work. The new upper secondary certificate project is intended to be an important quality instrument enabling students on a vocational track to demonstrate that they have achieved all educational objectives.

_ The individual program quality will be enhanced so as to reduce and hopefully eliminate drop-outs altogether.

_ Unrestricted application in other municipalities than where students live will give student freedom of choice and is aimed at stimulating regional cooperation.

_ History will be a new core subject.

¹ Facts-sheet, Ministry of Education and Science UO4.013. May 2004

² Prop 2003/04:140

_ Core subject and programme subjects will be integrated to assist students who do not achieve targets in cores subjects.

_ A modern system of apprenticeship will be established to renew vocational education. This is aimed to be an attractive alternative in upper-secondary nationally-oriented programmes. Apprenticeship training will have the same knowledge targets as school-based education.

- The quality of vocational upper-secondary education is to be improved through a better linkage to working life. Local collaboration between municipalities and the labour market partners will be compulsory in all matters that concern vocational upper-secondary education. The aim is for vocationally-oriented upper-secondary education to be viewed as being just as attractive as general upper-secondary education. For students taking programmes in preparation for higher education, learning at the workplace may take many forms and may also involve coordination with higher education institutions. The aim is for an increasing number of students to get opportunities to do work placement abroad.

_ Larger modules will be implemented so as to promote coherence and greater depth. The basic principle will be that modules comprise at least 100 upper secondary credits.

_ Local modules must be quality-assured by the National Agency for Education to ensure that education is of a uniform standard regardless of location. The same rule will apply to modules in local government adult education.

Since 2001, a new national assessment for upper-secondary education has been in place.³ It was developed in order to contribute to the quality in VET. The assessment is competence-based and is built on authentic situations or problems. The students' ability to handle a problem, dealing with various aspects of planning, practical action and evaluation is thus assessed. Student performance is evaluated against certain competence criteria, and the results are presented as a competence profile built on 10 different qualities.

Since the 1970s, there has not been any general apprenticeship system in Sweden, although the social partners have established their own systems for employees after upper-secondary schooling within certain branches, e.g. the building trade. In 1992, a possibility was created to integrate apprenticeship into the individual programme in upper-secondary school. This has been used only on a very small scale.⁴ A pilot scheme with a new modern type of apprenticeship training is currently being tried out in the Swedish system. The scheme, which is called Learning in Working Life, LIA, (*Lärande I Arbeta*) differs from traditional apprentice training since no employment relationship is involved and wages are not paid. The municipality is responsible for the student throughout the training.

LIA is an alternative method of taking a national programme. It gives basic eligibility to apply for higher education.

³ Skolverket, 2001-10-21

⁴ (Andersson, Ronnie, The financing of vocational education and training in Sweden Financing portrait. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 2000, Cedefop Panorama series).

The purpose of the pilot scheme is to meet the changed requirement for qualifications in working life. Students can choose to carry out the major part of their training, at least 30 weeks, at a workplace. The contents of the special syllabus for learning in working life are decided in agreement between the student, the school, and the workplace.

All programmes with vocational subjects include a period of training located at the workplace outside the school. This training located at the workplace may also take place in other programmes if authorised locally.

Local decisions determine which parts of the courses are to be located at a place of work. The board of the school is responsible for supplying workplaces and for seeing that APU meets the demands placed on the training. The advisory bodies for cooperation between schools and local trade and industry, vocational councils, and programme councils, are important in planning issues such as the provision of training, the purchase of equipment, APU and the training of supervisors.

Several enterprise-based secondary schools have started during recent years. This type of school often provides more company-based education and training, often with education adapted to the enterprise's own needs.⁵

Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 by ISCED level,% (2002)

	Level of education		
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
EU-15	35%	43%	22%
SWEDEN	19%	55%	26%

⁶

2. Reducing the number of early school leavers

In Sweden, 85% have completed an upper-secondary degree at the age of 22. OECD statistics on 19-year olds indicate a lower proportion. The discrepancy is largely due to the fact that many young people supplement their upper-secondary qualifications later on, but also due to a higher drop-out rate in the vocationally-oriented programmes.⁷

Unemployment rates (people under 25)

1991	1996	2001
134,000	347,000	175,000
13.8%	30.4%	16.6%

Unemployment, per cent of labour force. Age 16-64 years. Seasonally adjusted

⁵ (Andersson, Ronnie, The financing of vocational education and training in Sweden Financing portrait. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 2000, Cedefop Panorama series).

⁶ ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education

ISCED 3-4: Upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education

Source: Eurostat, Newcronos, Labour Force Survey

Percentage of the population, aged 18 to 24 years having left education and training with a low level of education (2000, 2002)

⁷ A report on Education and training and the shared European goals. Prpr 2003/04:140

SWEDEN
2000 2002 2003

7.7 16.2

Note: Low level of education: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education - levels 0-2 (ISCED 1997)

Source: Eurostat, Newcronos, Labour Force Survey

All those who have completed compulsory or special school with acceptable grades in Swedish or Swedish as a second language are entitled to attend a national programme at upper-secondary school level. The student's home municipality is obligated to offer such education.

Those that are not accepted in a national programme because they do not fulfil the specified requirements are entitled to an individual or preparatory educational programme. A student who has completed a programme for students with learning disabilities is entitled to continue to such an upper-secondary programme.

Sweden: Population, 16-74, by level of education, sex and age

Kon/Ålder Sex/Age	Befolkning 16-74 år Population 16-74	Därav andel (%) med <i>Highest completed educational level (%)</i>								Totalt Total
		Förgymnasial utbildning Compulsory school	Gymnasial utbildning ≤2 år Upper secondary education ≤2 years	Gymnasial utbildning 3 år Upper secondary education 3 years	Eftergymnasial utb. <2 år Post-secondary education <2 years	Eftergymnasial utbildning 2 år Post-secondary education 2 years	Eftergymnasial utbildning ≥3 år Post-secondary education ≥3 years	Forskarutbildning Post-graduate education	Uppgift saknas Unknown educational level	
Män Men	3 235 526	27	26	20	6	5	12	1	2	100
16-19 år years	216 288	78	1	15	0	0	0	-	6	100
20-24 "	263 207	16	8	54	11	5	4	0	2	100
25-34 "	600 713	10	28	26	8	7	19	1	2	100
35-44 "	639 907	15	41	12	9	5	14	1	1	100
45-54 "	603 920	24	32	14	7	6	15	1	1	100
55-64 "	562 845	35	24	17	3	6	13	2	1	100
65-74 "	348 646	49	19	14	1	5	9	1	1	100
Kvinnor Women	3 188 470	25	28	17	5	9	15	0	1	100
16-19 år	203 863	77	1	17	0	0	-	-	5	100
20-24 "	253 797	13	6	50	15	7	7	0	2	100
25-34 "	579 646	9	21	27	7	9	25	0	2	100
35-44 "	611 361	11	35	17	6	12	17	1	1	100
45-54 "	590 990	18	36	11	3	13	18	1	1	100
55-64 "	556 456	31	36	7	2	9	14	1	1	100
65-74 "	392 357	50	29	4	1	6	8	0	2	100
Totalt Total	6 423 996	26	27	18	5	7	14	1	2	100
16-19 år	420 151	78	1	16	0	0	0	-	5	100
20-24 "	517 004	14	7	52	13	6	5	0	2	100
25-34 "	1 180 359	9	25	26	8	8	22	1	2	100
35-44 "	1 251 268	13	38	15	8	9	16	1	1	100
45-54 "	1 194 910	21	34	12	5	9	16	1	1	100
55-64 "	1 119 301	33	30	12	3	7	14	1	1	100
65-74 "	741 003	50	24	9	1	5	9	1	2	100

Source: SCB Utbildningsregisteret: Sveriges statistiska databaser, SSD: Utbildning och forskning (www.scb.se)

Sweden: Population 25-64, by field of education, level of education and sex

Utbildningsinriktning Field of education		Befolkning, 25-64 år Population 25-64	Därav andel (%) med Highest completed educational level (%)				Totalt Total
			Förgymnasial utbildning inkl. okänd nivå Compulsory school (incl. unknown level)	Gymnasial utbildning Upper secondary education	Efter- gymnasial utbildning <3 år Post- secondary education <3 years	Efter- gymnasial utbildning ≥3 år Post- secondary education ≥3 years	
Allmän utbildning General education	Båda könen Both sexes	1 227 917	73	27	–	–	100
	Män Men	626 268	80	20	–	–	100
	Kvinnor Women	601 649	66	34	–	–	100
Pedagogik och lärarutbildning Teaching methods and teacher education	Båda könen	308 547	–	1	41	58	100
	Män	75 589	–	2	35	62	100
	Kvinnor	232 958	–	1	42	57	100
Humaniora och konst Humanities and arts	Båda könen	139 140	–	24	32	43	100
	Män	57 664	–	29	29	43	100
	Kvinnor	81 476	–	21	35	44	100
Samhällsvetenskap, juridik, handel, administration Social sciences, law, commerce, administration	Båda könen	797 353	–	58	16	26	100
	Män	302 695	–	47	18	34	100
	Kvinnor	494 658	–	65	14	20	100
Naturvetenskap, matematik och data Natural sciences, mathematics and computing	Båda könen	105 901	–	12	32	55	100
	Män	63 052	–	8	35	57	100
	Kvinnor	42 849	–	19	29	53	100
Teknik och tillverkning Engineering and manufacturing	Båda könen	1 036 265	–	72	15	13	100
	Män	924 460	–	74	15	11	100
	Kvinnor	111 805	–	58	18	24	100
Lant- och skogsbruk samt djursjukvård Agriculture and forestry, veterinary medicine	Båda könen	78 971	–	75	12	12	100
	Män	60 185	–	77	13	10	100
	Kvinnor	18 786	–	70	10	21	100
Hälso- och sjukvård samt social omsorg Health care and nursing, social care	Båda könen	612 535	–	52	21	27	100
	Män	88 768	–	28	21	51	100
	Kvinnor	523 767	–	56	21	23	100
Tjänster Services	Båda könen	288 160	–	79	12	9	100
	Män	128 934	–	63	20	17	100
	Kvinnor	159 226	–	93	5	2	100
Okänd Unknown	Båda könen	151 049	34	52	8	6	100
	Män	79 770	34	53	7	6	100
	Kvinnor	71 279	34	51	8	7	100
Befolkning, 25-64 år	Båda könen	4 745 838	20	48	14	18	100
	Män	2 407 385	22	49	13	16	100
	Kvinnor	2 338 453	18	48	15	19	100

Source: SCB utbildningsregisteret

3. Increasing VET at tertiary level

The proportion of people with higher education has increased in recent years. 32% of 24-64 year olds had completed at least one 3-year higher education programme in 2001

In an effort to increase the educational attainment beyond the upper-secondary level, the government has taken several initiatives:

- The government has introduced college programmes where the aim is to offer introductory higher education in combination with upper-secondary supplementary studies for individuals with a non-academic background.

- During the period 1996-2001, a pilot project involving Advanced Vocational Education, AVE (*Kvalificerad yrkesutbildning*) was carried out in Sweden. AVE was, as of 1 January 2002, a new form of post-secondary education in which one-third of the time is spent on the advanced application of theoretical knowledge at a workplace. What this entails is not the traditional traineeship period, but active workplace learning and problem-solving in an overall educational context. The courses are based on close cooperation between enterprises and various course providers (higher education, upper-secondary schools, municipal adult education, and companies). They are intended to correspond to real needs in the employment market. However, there are no restrictions in terms of sector on the enterprises in which AVE is to be provided. The courses are open to both individuals coming directly from upper-secondary school and to people who are already gainfully employed and wish to develop their skills within a defined area. The gender participation in AVE in 2002 was approximately 54% for men and 46% for women. In May 2003 Sweden hosted a peer review for the purpose of imparting its AVE experience to other EU member states.

In a number of sectors, a new form of education closely linked to the employment market is called for which should also include broader general and personal competences. Although the range of courses offered at post-secondary level is very broad in Sweden, in many areas there is a lack of post-secondary education with significant elements of workplace learning.

The purpose of the AVE project was to build a bank of experience relating to new courses, new educational forms, and new course providers. Concurrently with the project, an opportunity was provided to investigate the extent of interest in this type of vocational education on the part of the employment market and the students involved.

Successful results from the pilot scheme led the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdagen*) to decide to include AVE in the regular educational system in Sweden as of 2002, administrated by the Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education (*Myn-digheten för Kvalificerad Yrkesutbildning-KY*)

The education is post-secondary in the sense that completed upper-secondary education or equivalent knowledge is required for eligibility. The subject matter is taken from the employment market, courses in higher education, and upper-secondary, supplementary, and advanced courses. The aim is for courses to combine practical orientation with in-depth theoretical knowledge. The interplay between theory and the workplace is important both for course quality and to meet the needs of the employment market and the students. Courses may be divided into terms, or conducted continuously with no division into terms. The student is entitled to financial support according to the current regulations for higher education. The courses confer at least 40 "points" (i.e., comprise 40 weeks' full-time study) and will culminate in an AVE certificate.

In addition to vocational knowledge, the subjects intended for emphasis are:

- mathematics and natural science
- computer technology and its uses
- economics and economic thought – society and culture

- language and communication.

However, it is at least as important for the courses to comply with other crucial needs in the employment market of the future and to develop the students' social and personal skills such as their:

- ability to speak, read, write, and use information
- ability to solve problems and think critically and creatively
- ability to negotiate and work in a team.

AVE emphasises workplace learning. For one-third of the course students will be occupied at workplaces, honing their analytical abilities, applying comprehensive and system approaches, and assuming responsibility. If this process is to work properly, advanced counselling services must be available.

A further requirement is that the workplace itself should be so organised as to make learning feasible. Although the aim of training is to impart familiarity with an occupation or vocational area, it must not be so narrow as to be in essence a form of in-house company training. There are many areas in which AVE is conceivable, e.g., the engineering industry, trade and tourism, agriculture or forestry and the forest industry, information technology, health care, and the environmental sector.

A course provider applying for permission to arrange AVE must have an overall syllabus for the educational programme and a syllabus for the individual course in which the objectives are defined. The following information should be clearly specified:

- the main parts of the educational programme
- the structure of the educational programme
- the skills required of the teaching staff
- the focus and organisation of the workplace training included
- the requirements for eligibility
- the special requirements that apply with regard to previous knowledge.

Since the workplace-training element of AVE is so important, active participation by employers in designing the courses is a requirement. Workplace representatives must therefore make up the majority of a course management group. The labour market is to defray the expenses of the work-place training component of the education.

Other important considerations are:

- the quality of the education, and quality assurance in the education
- that the education should help to break traditional gender-bound patterns of educational and occupational choice and that it should stimulate women's interest in occupations oriented towards the natural sciences and technology
- that the education corresponds to needs in the employment market.

4. Incentives for updating knowledge & skills in the workplace

Access to learning opportunities and programmes

In the government bill on Adult Learning and the Future Development of Adult Education, 2000/2001:72, the government recommends that parliament adopt goals for adult learning and a strategy for formal adult learning - side-by-side with higher education - in a society characterised by lifelong learning. The learning needs and requirements of adults have changed successively in recent years. Learning cannot be restricted to early years and a few limited periods of working life later on. Learning and the need to learn is increasingly a feature of everyday life, and the need for flexibility and change is as great in the labour market as it is in the rest of society. Only a broad foundation laid in early years and the opportunity to build on that foundation later on with the knowledge and skills required in different situations give the individual freedom of choice and the ability to influence developments in both working life and society.

The proposals contained in the government bill take as their starting-point the need for change and development in today's adult education if it is to meet the requirements of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is seen as being fundamentally an individual project, and it is essential to begin with the individual's needs if lifelong learning is to be taken as the starting-point for social measures. The opportunity to learn and assistance to do so must be readily available when and where the individual requires new knowledge and skills. Wherever possible, the individual must be free to decide on content, time, and form.

The government strategy for how these objectives are to be obtained contains the following points:

- Teaching and working methods are to be developed so that they correspond to the individual's constantly changing and increasing need to learn in a knowledge-based society.
- The individual's learning and knowledge acquisition are to be assisted through counselling and guidance based on recognition of previously acquired knowledge and skills.
- Appropriate learning environments, teaching, counselling, and distance education are to be available on a scale corresponding as far as possible to the varying learning needs and requirements of all adults.
- Financial support is to be offered to adults in order to stimulate their participation in education and skills development.
- Society, employers, and the individual, have a shared responsibility for ensuring that the needs of different people and groups for both general education and specialists training are met.
- All formal and informal learning receiving state funding shall be permeated by a democratic perspective and respect for the equal worth of everyone.
- Fundamental agreement across political boundaries and cooperation between authorities, social partners, and non-governmental organisations are seen as necessary in order to facilitate the individual's learning and skills development.

The state determines the goals and development guidelines for adult education and training. The state defines the framework that safeguards equivalence and

statutory rights. The state also provides limited funding. The individual organises his or her own learning with the assistance of the municipal authorities, folk high schools, study organisations, other education providers, employers, and trade unions.⁸

The Swedish system has several incentives for upgrading knowledge and skills.(OECD Adult Learning Review, Sweden 2001). These include:

- Many forms of adult education are provided free of cost.
- A mixture of grants and loans is available.
- Special adult support (svux) is directed at people with a satisfactory employment record or the equivalent.
- A variety of providers with different approaches to education and training
- Increasing use of e-learning options
- Right to educational leave

The four strands of adult education in Sweden (*Komvux, Särvox, Folkbildning, and labour market provision*) under the governance of the Ministry of Industry are impressive in terms of scope and size according to the OECD thematic review of adult learning in Sweden (2001). A fifth strand - *in-company training* - has a long tradition in Sweden. It is based on strong collaboration between the social partners. In the financing of in-company training the European structural funds play an important role.

Many workplaces also have extensive training programmes for employees at all levels. In-house training of this kind may involve anything from practical vocational training to extensive theoretical studies. It may be carried out, for example, in association with universities and colleges, municipal commissioned training, labour market training, or with various commercial training companies. In-company training provided by companies and public authorities has expanded faster than any other form of CVT during the 1980s and is currently the dominant part of CVT. Over the last decade, the participation rate in in-company training has almost doubled. Statistics for the first six months of 2000 show a 40% (roughly 1.5 million) participation rate by Swedish employees. In-company training is by definition financed by employers. The cost of in-company training in 1997 was about 95% of the total cost of CVT.⁹

In-company training takes place to a great extent during working hours, but there are also cases where training is supported by employers outside working hours. The training is organised partly by companies and administrative authorities. Its growth has also generated a competitive market for education in which municipalities and universities as well as private educational consultants are active. The employer makes decisions on in-company training, but the trade unions are able to exert varying degrees of influence. At present there are very few collective agreements concerning in-company training.

⁸ (Utbildningsdepartementet Fact sheet U01.004 March 2001).

⁹ source: http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/vetsystems/report/sv1200_en.asp

The Adult Education Initiative (Kunskapslyftet) was a five-year programme which started on 1 July 1997 to boost adult education and training in Sweden. The major objectives of this expansion of adult education were to update labour market and education policy, to achieve more equitable income distribution, and to promote economic growth. It was an important element in the Government's bid to halve unemployment by the year 2000.

The primary target group of the Adult Education Initiative was unemployed adults who lacked full three-year upper-secondary qualifications, but it was also aimed at employees who had left school early. The initiative was intended to promote workplace modernisation and development.

It was also designed to develop and upgrade adult education and training, in terms of both contents and forms of instruction. New ways of meeting adults' educational needs were to be tried out in practical project work, and theories and methods of adult education were to be developed. The goal of the initiative was for a new, reformed system of adult education to emerge in a form that would be better adapted to the demands made in the 21st century by individuals, the employment sector, and society.

The Adult Education Initiative was a joint task for state and local authorities, but it was the latter that was responsible for its implementation. The state contributed a special government grant totalling some EUR 2.1 billion which corresponded to the estimated cost of 100,000 full-time study places annually for five years. During the pilot phase 800.000 people actually made use of the programme.

The measure led to a reform of the adult secondary education, and has been replaced by a targeted government grant for the years 2003-2005. After that the grant will be included in the general grant to the municipalities.

Innovation in workplace practices as a measure to improve employees' skills and competencies has also been an important policy focus in initiatives by NUTEK and Vinnova.

On April 1, 2004, the government approved a new pilot initiative on adult apprenticeship within a number of both old and new crafts vocations (SFS 2004:167.). The initiative has been taken by Stockholm's crafts association (*Stockholms hantverksförening*). The authorities for KY(kvalificeret Yrkesutbildning-AVE) must approve educational plans prior to their start and have an inspection responsibility for those trades that the initiative comprises.. The pilot initiative will be running from 15 May 2004- 31 December 2008.

Financing education and training

According to EU Lisbon benchmarking figures, Sweden, like Denmark, spends more than 7% of its GDP on education and training.

Total educational expenditure in current prices and percentage of GDP

Typ av utbildning m.m. Type of education etc.	Totala kostnader, milj. kr Total expenditure					Kostnad per skolform 2001 som andel (%) av BNP 2001 Expenditure by type of school, percentage of GDP	Andel av total utbildnings- kostnad 2001 (%) Percentage of total Educational expenditure
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001		
Pedagogisk verksamhet ¹ Pre-school teaching	9 826	8 029	7 911	7 889	8 384	0,39	4,8
Förskoleklass Pre-school class	..	2 984	3 623	3 719	3 854	0,18	2,2
Grundskola Comprehensive school	50 934	52 789	56 295	59 508	64 433	2,97	37,0
Specialskola ² Special school	445	458	468	487	468	0,02	0,3
Särskola ³ Special school for intellectually disabled	2 829	3 058	3 355	3 825	4 301	0,20	2,5
Gymnasieskola Upper secondary school	20 713	21 320	22 028	22 367	23 786	1,10	13,7
Komvux Local authority adult education	5 021	6 641	6 587	6 403	6 304	0,29	3,6
Särsvux Adult education for intellectually disabled	93	96	107	109	122	0,01	0,1
SSV, Statens skolor för vuxna National schools for adults	58	49	45	53	51	0,00	0,0
Svenska för invandrare Swedish for immigrants	712	529	604	687	756	0,03	0,4
Högskola University/university college	30 400	31 900	34 000	36 522	38 249	1,76	22,0
Studieförbunden Adult educational associations	3 311	3 501	3 587	3 562	3 686	0,17	2,1
Arbetsmarknadsutbildning Labour market training	6 178	7 234	8 296	5 546	4 166	0,19	2,4
Svensk utb. i utlandet Swedish schools abroad	110	126	123	126	143	0,01	0,1
Centrala kostnader Central administrative costs	1 303	1 289	1 415	1 749	1 599	0,07	0,9
Studiestöd ⁴ Financial support to students	11 226	16 755	15 522	13 808	13 860	0,64	8,0
Totala kostnader ^{5,6} Total	143 159	156 758	163 966	166 360	174 162	8,04	100,0

Source: SCB Statistiska meddelanden, serie UF12 (www.scb.se)

- 1) Excluding pre-school class from 1998.
- 2) Including costs of special pedagogical resource centre.
- 3) Incl. costs of state-recruited and independent special schools from 2000
- 4) Excluding loans, depreciation and subventions
- 5) Cost of childcare which is not pedagogical-oriented is not included
- 6) As more education programmes are part of the statistics on education costs, information for the years 1997-2000 has been revised.

Sweden has a long tradition for vocational training and skills development at work and strong social partner collaboration.

Existing collective agreements offer many opportunities for local collaboration. Employers defray the costs of work-related skills development, but in some cases share it with the employee. Some salary agreements specify that the employer annually allocate a certain percentage of payroll expenses for the development of staff skills, work organisation, etc.,. If the local social partners fail to agree as to how this sum should be allocated, individual pay rises averaging 0.3% annually are given (NAP 2003).

4.D Successful Measures of social Inclusion

In 2002, the labour force participation for women aged 20-64 was 79.3%. For men in the same age group it was 83.9%. Both figures are high compared to the rest of Europe. At the same time the number of people enrolled in government-financed or subsidised training and employment (“labour market policy”) programmes has fallen sharply, from 185,000 in November 1998 (4.4 per cent) to 142,000 (3.3 per cent) in November 2000.

The work experience programme was implemented as of 1 January 1999, and replaced earlier forms of trainee programmes (workplace introduction and employment development, or ALU). Unemployed people who are found to need a period of workplace training may join the programme for up to six months while receiving activity support. Those entitled to income-related benefits from an unemployment insurance fund receive activity support in an equivalent amount. Others receive SEK 143 per day. For certain participants, the employer pays a funding contribution which goes toward financing the program.

Sweden’s municipalities have signed agreements with the Country Labour Boards to provide municipal youth programmes. The purpose of these agreements is to ensure that municipalities assume responsibility for their unemployed youth under the age of 20. These programmes are aimed at preventing long-term youth unemployment from emerging and continuing. The municipalities provide individually tailored programmes in the form of work experience or training to prepare or facilitate these teenagers’ entry into the regular labour market.

Grants for in-house training at companies are a form of financial subsidy to employers who train their own personnel. This subsidy may be available in connection with new recruitment, to adapt employee skills to changing technology or work systems, or as an alternative to layoffs.

The Employment Service Rehabilitation (Arbetsförmedlingen Rehabilitering) helps individuals with particular disabilities such as visual impairment or motor disfunctions. Participants have been able to receive training grants equivalent to the unemployment benefits they would otherwise have been entitled to.

To promote restructuring in the labour market, a special investigation submitted a report to the government on more active support for people who are made redundant (NAP 2003). The report recommends an agreement for the whole labour market whereby employers are given greater responsibility for employees’ adjustment, especially where older workers and people with a low level of education are concerned. Today there are labour market restructuring agreements in a few collective bargaining sectors, and surveys show that these have a beneficial effect for the individual.

The integration of persons with a foreign background is a particular policy focus area with regard to social inclusion.

In 2000, the government initiated a special training effort aimed at integrating persons with a foreign background into the labour market with a focus on occupations where there are significant staff shortages. For the period 2001-2003, the labour market authorities received further funds for efforts on complimentary training for persons with non-utilised foreign qualifications.

The budget concerning 2004-2006 includes a support for workplace introduction in order to improve the establishment of work-competent immigrants.

At the request of the Swedish government, the Swedish National Labour Market Board and the Swedish National Social Insurance Board are conducting a joint pilot project in order to identify ways of coordinating the organisation of rehabilitation. A survey conducted in 2000 showed that 80,000 unemployed job-seekers were at the same time on long-term sick leave. The aim of the project is to build up a coordinated organisation for vocational rehabilitation.¹⁰

5. Meeting the challenge of an ageing population

Labour force participation among people aged 55-64 in Sweden is the highest in the EU, nearly 1.7 times higher than the EU average.

In 2001, the average retirement age for women was 61.9 and 62.1 for men. In Sweden – as in many other countries – the focus has shifted during the last years from education and training to individual learning. The concepts lifelong and life-wide learning are widely used nowadays. The term life-wide learning is usually used to mean non-formal and informal learning that takes place outside the formal education system. Many municipalities have established special learning centres in the premises of municipal adult education centres, in community centres, or in libraries. Here, learning is provided and supported in various subject areas at the initiative of the individual, and in many cases also distance learning in cooperation with a university or university college. There are no statistics available on how many people study at learning centres, and it is not possible to distinguish between learning in theoretical subjects and vocational learning.

In 2002 a survey was made in Sweden of informal learning during the academic year 2001/02. This survey covers the adult population between 20 and 74 years of age. Four types of informal learning were investigated:

1. Reading professional, technical, or scientific literature
2. Visits to exhibitions and fairs
3. Learning through computers, internet, and CD-ROM;
4. Learning through radio and television, particularly educational radio and television (UR)

The survey shows that a large proportion of the adult population - 77% - has taken part in informal learning of the types mentioned above. There are no big differences between women and men, but learning through computers and the Internet is a little more frequent among men and learning through radio and television is more frequent among women. The most frequent type of informal learning is reading professional literature, and the least frequent type is learning through radio and television (See the following table)

¹⁰ European Employment Observatory Review 2003.

Participants (thousands) in informal learning 2001/02 and percentage of the population

	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
Reading professional literature	1 730 (58)	1 840 (61)	3 570 (60)
Exhibitions and fairs	1 430 (48)	1 510 (50)	2 940 (49)
Computers, Internet, and CD-ROM	1 250 (42)	1 360 (45)	2 610 (44)
Radio and television	690 (23)	513 (17)	1 200 (20)

The survey also shows that persons who have taken part in formal or non-formal learning, courses, and study circles, are also more inclined to take part in informal learning than those who have not taken part in formal or non-formal learning (91% and 65% respectively). Participation in informal learning shows the same picture as participation in all other kinds of education and training; persons with a high level of education are more inclined to take part in informal learning than those with only a compulsory education background.

There are no significant differences between age groups, except that persons between 55 and 74 years of age are less inclined to take part in informal learning.

There are no statistics available from previous years.

There is no systematic account of company best practices relating to active ageing. However, the FöreningsSparbanken 55+ programme could be considered an example of best practice. In the wake of financial deregulation there has been considerable structural change in the financial sector. FöreningsSparbanken is one of the major Swedish banks. By 2003, 26% of its employees were older than 55. In January 2003 the bank introduced its 55+ programme to keep and update their older workers. The programme is summarised in the table below:

Forening Sparbankens 55+ programme

AGE:	
55+ Medical Care: Exercise during work, health examinations	On-the-job training: Individual development plan
58+ Reduction in working time 80% working time for 90% salary	Days off 3 extra days free from work per year

6. Effectiveness and Efficiency in the System

Theme II. Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes

7. Improvements in learning processes and contents

Unlike many other vocational systems in Europe, the Swedish system does not have a separate scheme for vocational education and training at upper-secondary level. This has been the case since 1971. To improve quality of curriculum contents the philosophy has rather been to integrate vocational education and general education at upper-secondary level as much as possible. The result is a common system with a common core curriculum at upper-secondary level (NCVER 2003)

The government bill *Adult Learning and the Development of Adult Education (prop2000/01:72)* presented proposals for goals and strategies for the development of adult learning. The Bill set out a strategy for support from the state and the municipalities for adult learning based on the needs of the individual. The focus has shifted from teaching in school-like forms to more flexible ways of providing support for the individual's learning. Outreach activities, counselling and validation, accessibility, and study support, are seen as the foundation and building blocks and infrastructure for lifelong learning

In recent years the government has applied the term *flexible learning* to the field of education and training. The aim has been to make a rich choice of programmes available with plenty of opportunity for individuals to obtain qualifications or supplement their education as they wish. The system is constructed in such a way as to enable people to return to primary level education even as adults.

Swedish higher education is made up of courses that can be followed independently and that are accredited on a points basis. This makes it possible for an individual to gradually build up an academic qualification. This also makes it easier for adults to return to higher education.

The Swedish Net-University is another example of innovation. It is a joint effort between universities and university colleges offering e-learning courses. Offers are available on a joint portal. The aim has been to broaden the recruitment base to higher education. Between 2001 and 2002 the number of e-students increased from 29.000 to 41.000.

Training in entrepreneurship and working for entrepreneurship play a central role in Swedish policies. Students in higher education may choose courses or programmes in entrepreneurship. In some counties ALMI also organises entrepreneurship courses for unemployed people and for those at risk of becoming unemployed. Most recently, NUTEK has been commissioned to establish resource centres composed of new types of municipal colleges of entrepreneurship and technology - to supplement other training institutions. The pilot started in 2002 and will last for three years.

8. Improving the integration of different learning sites; integration of formal and informal learning

In national I-VET programs at least 15% of the students' total time is to take the form of training at a place of work (APU, Arbetsplatsförlagd Utbildning). This is syllabus-guided training. Only vocational courses may be transferred to a place of work. Local decisions determine which parts of these courses are to be located at a place of work. The board of the school is responsible for supplying workplaces and for seeing that APU meets the demands placed on the training.

As mentioned above in the section on I-VET, a pilot scheme with a new type of apprenticeship training is currently being tried out in the Swedish system. The scheme, which is called Learning in Working Life, LIA, (*Lärande I Arbete*), differs from traditional apprentice training in that no employment relationship is involved and wages are not paid. The municipality is responsible for the student throughout the training.

Learning in Working Life is an alternative method of completing a national programme which gives basic eligibility to apply for higher education. The contents of the special syllabus for Learning in Working Life are decided upon collaboratively between the student, the school, and the workplace.

All programmes with vocational subjects include a period of training located at the workplace outside the school.

9. Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision

The main principle of division of responsibilities and functions within the Swedish education system today is that parliament and government should control educational activities by defining national goals and guidelines for education. The central and local education authorities together with the different organisers are responsible for ensuring that the education system is organised in accordance with national goals. Within the framework and guidelines laid down by parliament and the government, the organisers enjoy considerable freedom to determine how activities are to be implemented and resources distributed and used.

The change to goal and result-oriented management of the education system requires the central and local authorities, as well as individual schools, to systematically follow up and evaluate educational activities in relation to goals and conditions applying to them.

The inspection tasks for the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) have been separated from its development support activities. The authority is being divided into two: The National Agency for Education and the National Agency for School Improvement (*Myndigheten för skolutveckling*). The objective of the change is to enhance the supervision as to whether schools meet their targets so as to further the cause of high quality education throughout the country.

The National Agency for Education is the central authority for the state school system, pre-school activities, childcare, and adult education, and provides parlia-

ment and government, local authorities, and the public with ongoing information on policy. The national Agency for Education's duties are being streamlined and concentrated on quality control by follow-up, supervision, and quality audits. Educational inspection is a new integrated branch of activity that includes both supervision and quality audits.

The task of the Educational Inspectorate, a high-priority operation within the National Agency for Education, is to assess how well an educational institution is functioning in relation to regulations of the Education Act, statutory regulations, and national curricula. The Educational Inspectorate also aims to provide a basis for quality development in pre-schools, care of school children, and the education system as a whole.

Asserting the individual's rights

To reinforce individuals' opportunities for lifelong learning, the government presented a principal bill in 2002 with a proposal for individual learning accounts. The proposal was based on the assumption that knowledge acquisition and competence development are a tripartite responsibility between the individual, the employer, and the state. The bill was passed by the parliament. This proposal furthers the government ideals of flexibility and the individual's influence as to how to use allocated funding for lifelong learning. Currently the initiative is under review and a more detailed bill on ILA is expected (lifelong learning report 2003).

Since 1975, all employees in Sweden have had the right to leave of absence to study. This right is formulated in the Act on Leave of Absence for Studies. This act provides a framework for everyone who has been employed for a certain period. It gives employees the right to take time off to study without giving up their job. The requirement is that their current employer has employed them at least six months. Employees themselves determine which kind of education they wish to participate in. The employer has the right to postpone participation maximum for six months. Employees have the right to return to work at the end of their studies.

Quality

During the next six years, all local authorities and independent schools, including institutes of adult education, will be subject to inspection. The Educational Inspectorate thoroughly examines all the activities of the various educational institutions. The ambition is to gather information that can serve as a basis for decisions on future action at all levels, from pre-school to adult education. The Inspectorate is to produce facts and provide a picture of the situation in each local authority or school for further local action.

Before the actual inspection, both the responsible authority, which may be a local authority or the board of an independent school, and the individual schools themselves are surveyed. Existing statistics, quality reports, any previous supervisory decisions and reports from quality inspections are used during this process. If the decision of the inspectorate requires action to be taken, the institution in question will later be reinspected to check that the deficiencies have been addressed.

10. Teachers' Qualifications and Status

The status of VET teachers is equal to that of other teachers in upper-secondary school. They have the same opportunities to develop competencies and skills as teachers who teach core subjects.

There has existed since the 2001 autumn term an integrated teacher education programme for all pre-school, compulsory school, and upper-secondary school teachers. It is a post-secondary programme carried out at universities or university colleges, and comprises a wide range of courses to choose from. Teachers enrolled in this program can choose to graduate after taking 140, 160, 180, 200 or 220 credits. All teachers have to take a common core programme of 60 credits, but are otherwise free to decide the length of their studies. To qualify as compulsory-school teachers, however, they must have 140, 160 or 180 credits.

Vocational training in upper-secondary schools is provided by subject teachers with advanced economic or technical qualifications or by vocational teachers who have completed vocational training and studies in vocational theory as well as acquiring long experience in their trades and having undergone teacher training at institutes of education. The future of upper-secondary teacher training is presently under discussion in the Ministry of Education and Science. The major task for the in-service training of teachers in upper-secondary school and municipal adult education is to supplement subject qualifications in order to bring them more in line with the qualifications needed in the new programmes within upper-secondary education.

Theme III. Building European Competences for a European Labour Market

11. Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy

The Kok report¹¹ concludes that Sweden exceeds all EU employment targets. Efforts should be maintained to avoid labour supply constraints.

The report gives a number of suggestions particularly relating to social assistance (the welfare model). Efforts to reduce early school leavers, and an increased access to training for low-skilled.

Also the employment report (NAP 2003) identifies the need to reduce the long term need for social assistance as one of the main challenges. While both costs of social assistance and the number of households subsisting on social benefits have fallen dramatically since 1997, the long-term need for social assistance has not decreased. Alongside labour market initiatives, measures directly targeting special groups such as immigrants are envisaged. During 2003, a pilot project has

¹¹ *Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, Creating more employment in Europe. Report by the Employment Task Force, Nov. 2003*

been conducted involving workplace induction for immigrants who lack experience with the Swedish labour market and have difficulties finding jobs.¹²

As part of a general trend in Swedish society towards decentralisation of responsibility and decision-making powers, the education system (including VET) has undergone fundamental changes in recent years. In accordance with decisions in the Swedish parliament in 1991, full mandate for teaching staff was transferred from the central authorities to the municipalities and their local school authorities, which were also given undivided responsibility for organising and implementing school activities. Parliament also laid down the principles of school management by objectives and output management with fewer regulations and clearer goals.

Another guiding principle of education policy has been to create scope for diversity within the education system and freedom for individual students to choose between different types of schools as well as between study routes.

The main principle of division of responsibilities and functions within the Swedish education system today is that parliament and government should control educational activities by defining national goals and guidelines for education. The central and local education authorities together with the different organisers are responsible for ensuring that the education system is organised in accordance with national goals. Within the framework and guidelines laid down by parliament and government, the organisers enjoy considerable freedom to determine how activities are to be implemented and resources distributed and used.

The change to goal and result-oriented steering of the education system requires the central and local authorities as well as individual schools to systematically follow up and evaluate educational activities in relation to goals and conditions applying to them.

12. Involving stakeholders

Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) is viewed by the social partners as a prerequisite for maintaining a highly qualified labour force in the face of rapid technological and industrial change. Well-educated employees are a prerequisite for adaptation and renewal. Accordingly, the social partners agree that almost all IVT and most CVT (with the exception of in-company training) should be publicly funded, as is the case in Sweden today. This has to do in part with the extensive representation of the social partners in the various administrative bodies, especially at regional and local levels. Providers of CVT can be subdivided into public institutions, trade unions and employer associations, private enterprises, and training companies.

While formal education has been developed as a result of government policy decisions, the social partners have also influenced vocational education. Thus, a major part of CVT is not regulated by the government or parliament, but is subject to the negotiations and local solutions of the social partners. This is particularly true of in-company training and various forms of workplace training.

¹² No reference to evaluation results in the NAP.

Special local bodies for cooperation between school and working life are not compulsory, but in a majority of municipalities there are what is known as vocational councils (*yrkesråd*) or programme councils (*programråd*). Here, cooperation between the school and local trade and industry is fostered by for example planning workplace training, discussing equipment investments, and course counselling by professionals working outside the school.¹³ Other issues to discuss could be student counselling, marketing of a certain programme, or quality assessment of the contents of a programme.

Other kinds of voluntary joint actions between school and working life include business councils, reference groups and informal networks, foster companies, business seminars, and conferences – all a great help when it comes to establishing contacts between school and working life. Within the councils it is also possible to monitor the development of and need for competencies in the local labour market. The local school board can decide to establish courses in adult education suited to the needs of the local labour market.¹⁴ Local courses suited to the needs of the local labour market can also be established for students in upper-secondary education.

Training at a workplace requires close cooperation between the school and the workplace. School boards at municipal or county levels are responsible for the procurement of training opportunities and for supervision of the students during their workplace training. Students have a purely student status during this part of their education. Supervisors from the company play an important role in evaluating the performance of students. Through this training, students come into direct contact with working life and therefore with companies which may wish to employ them. Participation in workplace training allows companies to influence the content, planning, and implementation of the training, and also to form an opinion of the individuals they may wish to see as future employees.

Forecasting Skills

Statistics Sweden and the National Labour Market Administration are the main providers of forecasts.¹⁵ The latter provides forecasts twice a year. Recent forecasts show diminishing problems, although there are exceptions, notably within the municipality sector in technical areas and in construction. Both short-term and long-term forecasts are carried out.

Other actors are the Swedish Business Development Agency, Conference of Swedish Enterprise, Federation of County Councils, and the Federation of Municipality Councils.

According to the study by Lindskog, current forecasting methods have proven very suitable for well-identifiable qualification demands, but they unsuitable for new types of jobs and the needs for new forms of educational provision.

¹⁵ Magnus Lindskog Forecasting and responding to qualification Needs in Sweden. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Sept 2003

The Swedish Foresight (Framsyn)¹⁶ did to some extent cover skills needs deriving from new technological developments in different areas, though that was not the main purpose of the Swedish Foresight project.

13. Transparency, recognition & mobility

In Sweden, internationalisation - collaboration with other countries and emphasis on the global perspective in education - is a goal in its own right. Internationalisation is also regarded as an important factor in improving the quality of the Swedish educational system.¹⁷

The national curriculum for education states that international communication, educational exchange, and in the case of upper-secondary education workplace training in other countries, are to be encouraged. Swedish education policy documents emphasise the international rather than the European dimension. Exchange and collaboration with other countries is considered important irrespective of whether these countries are European or not.

The resolution on the transparency of vocational training certificates in 1996 has been followed up by National Reference Points. The Swedish NRP was established at the National Agency for Education, which made it possible to create synergy with national information initiatives.

The resolution on transparency also established a framework so that vocational certificates would be accompanied by a supplement describing what the holder knows, i.e. the competence the person concerned can be expected to acquire through education. The supplement has a common format in all member states. A common format for European Curriculum Vitae has also been established and may be accessed at the web site of the Swedish NRP.¹⁸

Recognition of competencies

Compared to a number of other European countries, Sweden has relatively recently started to work on general systems for assessment of competencies that have been acquired outside of formal learning settings. While the social partners have seemed to focus more on competencies acquired in working life, the government has had more focus on making learning arrangements more flexible (Thematic Review of Adult Learning, OECD 2001)

In April 2003 the government formed a committee with tri-partite representation. This committee is in the period 2003-2007 commissioned to analyse and come up with a proposal and a framework and methodology for skills assessment/recognition of skills.

A pilot initiative on assessment of skills has been running since 2002 in Sweden: CERK – (*Centrum för Erkennande af Kompetens, Sweden. Centre for the Recognition of Skills/Competencies* <http://www.cerk.org>). CERK focuses on the assessment of prior learning. It is a pilot project based in the Municipality of Botkyrka in

¹⁶ www.tekniskframsyn.nu

¹⁷ Swedish report on implementation of the recommendation on the mobility of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers

¹⁸ www.senrp.se.

the Stockholm region. It is financed partly by the EU's Social Fund Objective 3, partly by National Labour Council (Landsarbejdsnævnet) and partly by the Municipality of Botkyrka. CERK represents the most advanced attempt in Sweden to develop and institutionalise systems for the assessment and validation of skills. It does not, however, involve initiatives producing aggregate data or data which may be aggregated to regional or national level. The project has so far focused on validation (i.e. certification of competencies) for individuals and sectors. Validation projects are carried out in close cooperation with the social partners. Initially, the target group was individuals who wanted to improve their possibilities in the labour market through validation/certification of skills/competencies. However, increasing focus has been put on industries and sectors, but still with the individual employee as the ultimate beneficiary.

The end result of the validation process is often a merit certificate which allows the individual to obtain credits in the formal education system or to obtain recognition of professional skills which improves the individual's possibilities of obtaining work. A plan for continuing/further training or education may be an additional result. The overall purpose of validation can be seen as a way to make employees' competences "visible". The validation process focuses primarily on general competencies and relies among other methods upon psychometric tests.

The first project year focused on individuals. This proved very demanding in terms of resources. Since then, more focus has been placed on industries and sectors. In June 2003, a project was completed for an ABB enterprise which was facing closure, involving 150 employees.

Swedish approaches to assessment and recognition of non-formal learning are not limited to these centrally initiated projects and experiments. We see a number of other assessment approaches initiated by public as well as private players. These initiatives focus more on work-related competencies and are only marginally linked to formal education and training. The Swedish IT-programme (SWIT) can be looked upon as an interesting example of high-volume assessment of prior and non-formal competencies. The great number of applicants, more than 80,000, emphasised the need for a high capacity assessment and selection methodology. The purpose of the methodology was to identify persons capable of completing the training in question as well as to identify persons suitable for the various IT functions. Eventually, a methodology based on a combination of interviews and highly formalised tests (individual numerical/logical/language skills as well as social/relational skills) was used. The formal tests were given to establish a basis for more personalised interviews aimed at the final selection of candidates.

Identification of prior and non-formal learning is indirectly demonstrated by many of the local and regional initiatives supported by the government in the Adult Education Initiative. In the region of Gothenburg, efforts to co-ordinate guidance and counselling resources have led to the introduction of systematic mapping of adults' experiences and abilities. While not leading to any formal recognition, the process of identifying more or less hidden competencies is seen as crucial for counselling. The recent Bill on validation (Ds 2003:23) also states greater need for study guidance and counselling.

A number of national initiatives have been taken with the aim of promoting internationalisation at all education levels. Besides Western European and Scandinavian integration, another political priority since the early days of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s has been cooperation in the Baltic region, especially with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Government policy stresses the existing commitment to regional cooperation around the Baltic and the need to refocus on cooperation with developing countries. A number of agencies play a central role in the implementation of national policy through the administration of cooperation and mobility programmes and information activities.

Sweden uses the Europass, which is a certificate of recognition of work-linked training carried out within the EU. The document certifies that one or more parts of a work-linked training programme have been completed/taken place abroad.

The International Programme Office for Education and Training (*Internationella programkontoret*) is a national agency supporting schools, universities, companies, organisations, and private individuals, who wish to take part in international cooperation. This covers activities ranging from international cooperation projects in education and competence development to placements and studies abroad.