

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH POLICY IN SWEDEN



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1. Context and principles of national youth policy

1.1 Context of national youth policy

The target group for youth policy is young people aged 13–25.

Young people in Sweden have in many respects good living conditions, according to the youth policy monitoring system. The monitoring system is based on indicators of young people's living conditions, on annual thematic in-depth analyses on young people's living conditions and on periodic studies on young people's attitudes and values. Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor, [MUCF](#) (the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society) is responsible for the youth policy follow-up.

The main themes for the Swedish youth policy according to the Government's priorities in the Budget proposal for 2016 are:

- transition from school to work and society, mainly relating to employment, education and housing,
- young people's power and participation, and
- young people's leisure time, organizing and well-being.

National statistics on young people's living conditions are published on www.ungidag.se. The statistics are based on indicators, aiming to create an overall picture of youths living conditions over time, and the figures are shown by gender, by age group and by Swedish/foreign background. Some of the main findings that were reported to the Government April 2016 (MUCF 2016) are described below. All data comes from www.ungidag.se, unless another source has been specified.

Education

Swedish upper secondary schools provide education free of charge to all pupils who have completed compulsory schooling. Some of the contemporary challenges are:

- The number of learners who do not complete compulsory school, and therefore are not eligible for a national upper secondary school programme, is increasing, from 14.4 percent in 2015 to 16.9 percent in 2016.
- Among learners, girls achieve better in all school subjects compared to boys. The share eligible for higher education was 78 percent among girls and 63 percent among boys in 2015.

- Young foreign-born tend to have a more problematic situation compared to young born in Sweden. While 90 percent of those born in Sweden were eligible for upper secondary school vocational programs, the corresponding share among immigrant youth was 57 percent in 2015.

Employment

The Government has made extensive efforts in the field of education and to get young people into work. Many young people still find it difficult to enter the labour market, although the unemployment rate among youth has declined since the economic crisis in 2008. Young people who lack secondary education, are foreign-born or have reduced ability to work are in greatest risk of long-term unemployment.

- About 7.5 percent of young people aged 16–24 neither worked nor studied (NEET) in 2014. The share has been stable since 2010.
- The share of unemployed young people (15-24) was 13.1 percent of the labour force in 2015, a decrease of 5 percentage units compared to 2011.
- The share of unemployed foreign-born young people (15-24) was 34,6 percent of the labour force, compared to 10,6 percent among young people born in Sweden 2015.

Housing

Young people face increasing difficulties to find their own housing.

- 76 percent of the municipalities had a deficit of housing for young people in 2015. That is an increase of 14 percentage points compared to 2014 when 62 percent of the municipalities reported of housing deficit, according to the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (www.boverket.se).
- 42 percent of young people aged 20-24 still lived with their parents 2015. The share was 37 percent in 2008.

Participation

There is a positive trend concerning young people's participation in the representative democracy.

- Voter turnout among young voters has increased in the last three elections. Among 18–24-year-olds, 82 percent voted in the parliamentary election 2014, compared to 89 percent among 30-64-year-olds
- Youth remain underrepresented in decision making bodies, although the share of young

people aged 18-24 among those elected in municipal elections has increased from just over 2 percent in the 2002 elections to just below 4 percent in the election year 2014.

Well-being

Young people's own assessment of their general health and self-rated mental ill-being has not changed to any significant extent since 2010. While most of them consider that their health status in general is good, almost one of three witness of having some concerns with their mental well-being.

- In 2015, 84 percent of young people aged 16-24 assessed their general health as being good.
- In 2015, 28 percent of young people aged 16-24 suffered of symptoms such as uneasiness, anguish or anxiety.

1.2. Principles of national youth policy

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.

In addition to these areas, there are issues that the youth policy follow-up system has identified to deserve a particular attention. These issues are often linked to human rights, including gender equality, the rights of national and ethnic minorities, the rights of young LGBT-people and young people's sexual and reproductive rights.

1.2.1 Youth Policy Bill

The Swedish parliament (Riksdag) adopted the Governments proposal for a renewed youth policy With youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence in June 2014. The target group is young people 13-25 years.

The national youth policy goal 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 contributions concerning youth. The policy consists of a long term orientation as well as an action program for the period 2014-2017 containing 40 different actions. The action program is based on three main areas: transition from school to work, influence and mental well-being.

1.2.2 Youth perspective

What more, according to the Government Bill, all government decisions and actions that affect young people between 13 and 25 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.

2. Statistics on young people

The number of all young people aged 15-29 who lived in Sweden in December 2015 was 1 861 333.

The share of young people aged 15-29 in the total population in December 2015 was 19 percent (9,7 % males, 9,2 % females). In 2005 the share was 18 percent (9,4 % males, 9,0 % females).

The share of foreign-born among the total population of young people aged 15-24 in December 2015 was 15,3 percent (8,1 % males, 7,1 % females). In 2005 the share was 11,6 percent (5,8% males, 5,8 % females).

All figures in this section origin from www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se.

3. Actors and Structures

3.1 Public authorities

3.1.1 National public authorities

The [Ministry of Education and Research](#) is in charge of youth policy. The responsible minister is Ms. Anna Ekström, Minister for Upper Secondary School and Adult Education and Training. The duration of the mandate is September 2014 - September 2018.

Youth Department in the Ministry

The Division for Youth Policy and Civil Society is placed under the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for preparing the parts of the central government budget concerning such areas as financial support for students, education and academic research, adult education and youth policy.

Director responsible for Youth in the Ministry is Ms. Louise Edgren. Contact person in the youth department competent for European youth policy is Ms. Eva Hendriks.

The main task for the Division for Youth Policy and Civil Society is to coordinate and develop youth policy issues, including youth policy objectives and follow-up of youth policy. The division is also responsible for the conditions and development of youth organisations, as well as youth research and statistics on young people's living conditions. In addition, it is responsible for international cooperation on youth policy issues. The Division for Youth Policy and Civil Society is also responsible for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society. Five employees work in the youth department of the ministry of Ministry of Education and Research.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society

Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civillsamhällesfrågor, MUCF (the [Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#)) is in charge of:

- knowledge on young people's living conditions, attitudes and values and for disseminating the knowledge to the local, regional and national level,
- youth statistics that enable comparisons at both the local and the national level,
- methods that can improve young people's living conditions, power and influence and for spreading the knowledge to the local, regional and national level,

- contributing to a better cooperation and coordination of government initiatives aimed at young people,
- supporting local governments to improve knowledge-based youth policy work, and
- including gender-mainstreaming and non-discrimination in these efforts.

The Agency is also the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme. The Agency has approximately 70 employees.

Other Ministries

Several ministries are responsible for policy areas that concern young people, such as work, education, health, housing, culture, etc. Normally certain responsibilities will also be delegated to one or more government agencies within each policy area. For more detailed description of the different policy areas please refer to the Government's [website](#).

Other government agencies

In this section some examples of government agencies that are relevant to youth policies are presented. For more complete information please refer to the Government's [website](#).

The Swedish National Agency for Education

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

The National Board of Health and Welfare

The [National Board of Health and Welfare](#) 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 Swedish Public Employment Service

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 Ombudsman for Children

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 (CRC) 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.

Co-ordinator for young people who neither work nor study

In order to increase collaboration between stakeholders at the national and the local levels, the Government has appointed a Co-ordinator for young people who neither work or study ([Samordnare för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar](#)) for the period 2015-2018. The Coordinator shall develop forms for coordinated support to young people who neither work nor study, at the national, regional and local levels. The Co-ordinator will conduct a dialogue with both young people and organisations representing young people, and convey young people's voices and perspectives on the need for support from the public sector.

Parliament commission in charge of youth issues

In the [Parliament](#) (Riksdagen) it is the parliamentary committees that prepare all decisions. The composition of political representatives in each committee reflects the parliament as a whole. After a committee has presented its proposal the members of the parliament adopt a position. Youth issues are prepared in different committees depending on the specific issue.

Parliament commission in charge of youth issues is The Committee on Cultural Affairs (Kulturskottet). The Committee prepares matters concerning culture, education and popular adult education, youth activities, international cultural cooperation and sport and leisure activities.

The committee of Education (Utbildningsutskottet) prepares matters concerning pre-school and school system, higher education and research and study.

The committee of Health and Welfare (Socialutskottet) prepares matters concerning care and welfare services for children and young people except for pre-school activities and care services for schoolchildren.

The Committee on the Labour market (Arbetsmarknadsutskottet) prepares matters concerning labour market, and working life including labour law. The Committee also considers matters concerning integration and discrimination and equality between women and men.

3.1.2 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field

County councils

Sweden has 20 county councils/regions (landsting/regioner) with competences in fields relevant for youth. They have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. The main task of the county councils/regions is health care.

County administrative boards

In every county in Sweden there is a county administrative board (länsstyrelse). This board is a government agency that represents the Parliament (Riksdagen) and Government in the county. It is the responsibility of the county administrative board to see that the decisions taken by the Government and the Parliament (Riksdagen) have the best possible effects in that county. Among other issues related to youth that councils are responsible for, besides health care, are gender equality and supervision of the social service sector.

3.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field

Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. The local authorities have a considerable degree of autonomy and finance largely their own activities, as they have the right 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.

Many decisions that concern young people are taken at municipal level. Youth policy goals established by the Parliament (Riksdagen) are obligatory for the central government but only advisory for the municipalities. Youth policy in municipalities can, if the municipalities wish so, start from the national objectives but the way it is executed in practice is shaped on the basis of local conditions.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor) supports municipalities in the development of local youth policy, provides funds for local youth projects and provides knowledge on the conditions of young people.

For more information please refer to:

- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, [MUCF](#) (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor)
- The [Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions](#) (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL)

3.2 Youth welfare services

Young people have access to the general public welfare system, meaning that they should be treated on equal terms with others, for example when it comes to local social service offices and local health centres. The health care system is run by the Swedish counties, so the services may differ between different counties. Dental care and health care is free of charge for young people under 20 (in some counties also for older youth). Contraceptives are free of charge for young people up to 21-25 (depending on county).

There are certain services that are targeted more specifically at young people. One example is Youth Guidance Centres (Ungdomsmottagningar) which are local offices where young people seek advice and care on questions related to physical, mental and sexual health. Youth Guidance Centres are even accessible at the Internet, via [UMO.se](#).

3.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field

3.3.1 Youth Councils

The Youth Councils of Sweden ([Sveriges Ungdomsråd](#)) is an umbrella organisation for about 50 different local youth councils that work for democratic youth influence in municipalities and local districts. The organisation is a network that acts as intermediary between local youth councils that are members of the organisation. The focus is on developing the skills of its members.

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 of them 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 study showed that 63 percent of the municipalities of Sweden have some sort of platform for youth participation. In total there existed about 425 different platforms for youth participation in 2010. Many municipalities have more than one type of youth forum (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2010).

3.3.2 National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, [LSU](#) (Landsrådet för Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationer), is a coordinating body for 84 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.

Chairperson: Ms. [Rebecka Prentell](#).

3.4 National networks for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organisations, NGOs)

There have not been any attempts so far to start a general national network that links all the actors in the field. The Youth Policy Council might be relevant to mention though.

3.4.1 The Youth Policy Council

The Minister in charge of youth policy convenes a Youth policy council a few times a year since 2008. 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.

4. Legislation

Sweden does not have specific youth legislation apart from the legislation regulating governmental funding for youth organisations. Matters regarding youth are integrated in other areas of legislation and age criteria apply in different ways to e.g. crime legislation, social services, health care, compulsory care and compulsory schooling. The age of majority in Sweden is 18 and the age for criminal responsibility is 15. The Convention of the Rights of the Child serves as a basis for legislation concerning children up to 18 years.

5. National Policy Programmes on youth

Sweden decided on a renewed youth policy with youth in focus – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence in June 2014. The overall goal is that “all young people aged 13-25 should have access to good living conditions, power to shape their own lives and influence over the development of the society”.

In November 2015, the Government presented a strategy for young people who neither work nor study (Vägar framåt - strategi för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar), for young people who neither work nor study.

5.1 Young people without secondary education

A specific target group in the youth policy bill is young people 16-20 who are not in education and have not completed secondary school or equivalent education. Their situation is discussed in the Bill, and in 2015 the Government made following amendments in the Education Act.

Since 2015, the responsibility that municipalities already had - to stay informed about the situation of young people aged 16-20 who are not in education and have not completed secondary school or equivalent education – even includes appropriate individual measures. The measures should primarily aim to motivate individuals to begin or complete upper secondary education. The municipality must also document their efforts appropriately and maintain a register of young people, according to the proposal.

5.2 Young people who neither work nor study

In November 2015, the Government presented 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 presents measures the Government has taken or will take in the years 2015-2018, for young people who neither work nor study. The actions aim to improve opportunities for these young people to get established in working and social life. Increased collaboration between stakeholders, increased knowledge of young people who neither work nor study and efforts targeted directly to young people are some of the ways the Government introduced in the Strategy.

6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth

6.1 National level

The situation of young people is affected by a wide range of policy areas in the Government's Budget Bill such as education, employment, culture, health, etc. Listing them all, and specifying those parts related to youth only, is unfortunately not possible.

In December 2015, the Parliament (Riksdagen) took its decision on the central government budget for 2016. The budget consists of 95,6 billion Euro (933 billion Swedish kronor) in total. The Youth Policy area received 32,5 million Euros (317 million Swedish kronor). Of the total amount, 28,5 million Euros (278 million Swedish kronor) are deposited as a state grant to youth organisations (to national and international youth work) and 4 million Euros (39 million Swedish kronor) as a grant for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Budget Bill for 2016).

7. European Dimension of youth policy

7.1 Council of Europe

As regards to the implementation of the Council of Europe activities, this is rather selective (meaning depending on whether it is in line with Swedish youth policy or not). In short, the concrete implementation is done through the activities of LSU who are represented in the Council of Europe Steering Group. The government is responsible for the implementation of the resolutions or other agreements that have been adopted at the ministerial conferences. The implementation process takes place through assignments to the government authorities.

Sweden does not provide financial support for the European Youth Foundation.

7.2 European Union

7.2.1 Implementation of the Youth in Action programme

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is the national agency for the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme in Sweden and responsible for its implementation. From the first of January 2008 the Agency is even in charge for Eurodesk.

7.2.2 Follow up of the EU Youth Strategy (2010 – 2018) on the national level

The Swedish Government takes part in all follow-up-activities that are initiated by the European Commission. Moreover, the Government monitors the national youth policy that is well in line with the EU Youth Strategy. Therefore, there has been no need for a special national monitoring of the EU Youth Strategy.

8. Further sources of information on youth policy in Sweden

General information about Sweden is provided at www.sweden.se. The website is an official source for facts about Sweden. It is publicly funded, with four organisations behind it: the [Swedish Institute \(SI\)](#), [Business Sweden](#), [VisitSweden](#) and the [Swedish Government Offices](#), including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications.

General information on Swedish youth policy in English is provided by [the National Agency for Youth and Civil Society](#) and by [the Swedish Government](#).

[Theme Group Youth](#) gathers and disseminates knowledge and experiences from labour market projects (ESF projects) directed at young people using funds from the European Social Fund. The focus is on young people not in education, employment or training.

References

Legal documents

[Proposition 2013/14:191](#) [Government Bill 2013/14:191]. Med fokus på unga – en politik för goda levnadsvillkor, makt och inflytande [Focus on young people – a policy for good living conditions, power and influence].

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[Regeringens budgetproposition för 2016](#) [Budget Bill for 2016]. Utgiftsområde 17, Kultur, medier, trossamfund och fritid [Expenditure area 17, Culture, media, faith communities and leisure].

[SFS 2010:800](#) Skollagen [Education Act]

[SFS 2015:49](#) Förordning med instruktion för Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor [Ordinance for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society].

[SFS 2015:502](#) Förordning om samverkan för att minska ungdomsarbetslösheten [Ordinance On cooperation to reduce youth unemployment].

Utbildningsdepartementet [The Ministry of Education and Research], 2015. [Vägar framåt – strategi för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar](#) [Strategy for young people who neither work nor study].

Utbildningsdepartementet [The Ministry of Education and Research], 2015. [Samordnare för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar](#) [Coordinator for young people who neither work or study]. Kommittédirektiv [Committee Directive] 2015:7.

Data and statistics

www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se A web site for official statistics, provided by Statistics Sweden. Stockholm: Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB.

www.ungidag.se A web portal for national youth policy indicators. Stockholm: Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor.

Studies, reports and academic publications

Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor [The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society], 2016. Ung idag 2016 [Youth Today 2016]. Stockholm: Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor.

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