

# Sweden

## Background information

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- Sweden has slightly more than 9 million inhabitants.
- About 1,5 million children go to school.
- Sweden's land area is about 450 000 km<sup>2</sup> with a distance between the extreme northern and southern points of almost 1 600 km. The cultivated area amounts to around ten per cent of the land surface area. The population is very unevenly distributed over the country with most of the people aggregated to the southern third of the country (Eurypedia)
- Sweden exhibits one of the fastest urbanization processes in Western Europe. However, still a large portion of the population live in smaller municipalities.

## Structure of the general education system

The school system is divided into:

- Preschool: ages 1 to 7 (final year is compulsory)
- Comprehensive school (grundskolan): ages 7 to 16
- Upper secondary school (gymnasiet): ages 16-19

The last year in preschool and the comprehensive school are mandatory, i.e. 10 years of education is mandatory. However, most children spend 18 years in the educational system, i.e. including preschool.

## Pupil numbers (Statistics Sweden)

<b>All schools (incl adult special ed)</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Pupils</b>	<b>% of population</b>
Preschool classes	3,843	97,587	1.4
Primary/lower secondary	4,755	906,189	13
Compulsory	714	13,261	0.19
Special school	8	516	0.01
Upper secondary	945	396,336	5.69
Upper secondary 'särskola'	271	9,339	0.13
'Särvux' (adults)	-	4,907	0.07
'Kompletterande utbildninga??'	102	5,175	0.07

# Legislation

In the autumn term 2011, a new [Education Act](#) (*Skollagen*) came into force with a:

- a **new curriculum** for the compulsory school system (*Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011*) applies as of autumn 2011. It covers the compulsory school (*grundskola*), the pre-school class (*förskoleklass*) and leisure-time centres (*fritidshem*).
- In addition, there are **new curricula** for schools for pupils with impaired hearing (*specialskola*) and schools for pupils with severe intellectual impairments (*grundsärskola*).
- The pre-school (*förskola*) received its first national curriculum (*Läroplan för förskolan, Lpfö 98*), which was revised in 2010

## Legislation: general changes

- Clearer basic values for all types of schools will be laid down by law. The responsibility of education to communicate and gain acceptance for respect for human rights and fundamental democratic values will be clarified. By establishing clear links to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is emphasised that the best interests of the child are the basis for all education.
- The legal rights of pupils and their parents/guardians will be strengthened by making it possible to appeal against a considerably larger number of decisions. Decisions on remedial programmes and decisions to deny a pupil a place in a municipal school on the grounds that this would lead to considerable organisational and financial difficulties for the municipality can be mentioned as examples. It will also be possible to appeal against decisions on school transport by means of an administrative appeal, which means a broader review of the decision compared with the legality review that is possible today under the Local Government Act.
- The proposal requires that school health and welfare services, apart from a school doctor and nurse, also include access to a psychologist and school welfare officer. (Eurypedia)

## **Ongoing debates and future developments** (Educational support and guidance, Eurypedia)

### **New Education Act**

- 'The new Education Act - for knowledge, choice and security'. The Riksdag approved the bill in June 2010, and the new Education Act applies as of 1 July 2011. The new Education Act does not contain many new texts on special educational support. For more information on the new Education Act see previous chapters.  
(Eurypedia)

## **Structure of SEN/ASN system/relationship to general education system**

- Best described as a dual integrated system, i.e. there is a clearly definable special educational system which to a large extent is in close connection with the general education system.
- The most segregated educational arrangements are the special programs for children with learning disabilities (about 1,4 % of the school population), special school (with few pupils) and special teaching classes in local schools (most often for children with neuropsychiatric diagnoses or in socioemotional difficulties).
- There are no official statistics about how many pupils are placed in such special groups. However, we know that these segregating practices are increasing.

## Special education

- Most pupils with special needs receive education in the mainstream education system. The curricula set out specific goals to attain for pupils with impaired hearing/vision and physical disabilities as well as for pupils with intellectual impairments. Compulsory and upper secondary teachers often teach pupils with intellectual impairments.
- Regional resource centres promote the all-round development of children and young people who are either deaf or have visual, hearing or speech impairments. Activities focus primarily on special pedagogical research and training.
- Municipalities can organise special provision according to the specific needs of the pupils in their catchment area.

(Eurypedia)

## Definition of the target group

### **Pupils with severe intellectual impairments**

•Pupils who are considered unable to attain the knowledge goals of the compulsory school (*grundskolan*), due to intellectual impairments have a lawful right to education that covers both compulsory education for those with severe intellectual impairments (*obligatoriska sarskolan*) and the equivalent for the upper secondary level (*gymnasiesarskola*). For pupils who cannot assimilate instruction in a compulsory school for pupils with severe intellectual impairments (*grundarskolan*) there is training school (*traningsskolan*) which provides instruction within five so called subject areas and not in traditional subjects (see [12.2 - Education for Pupils with Severe Intellectual Impairments](#)). This kind of school is intended for those who have an important and enduring intellectual disability due to neurological damage as well as those with autism or similar conditions.

### **Pupils with severe physical disabilities**

•Pupils with severe physical disabilities have the right to specially adapted education. The criteria for having the right to such education is that the physical disability itself or in combination with other functional disabilities means that the pupil cannot follow regular education, and also that the pupil need rehabilitation and in certain cases residential arrangements in pupil homes with appropriate care.

(Eurypedia)

## Number of pupils and institutions – 2010-2011

Type of school	Number of pupils	Number of institutions	Average number of pupils per school
<i>Compulsory education for pupils with severe intellectual impairments</i>	12 115	702	17
<i>Upper secondary education for pupils with severe intellectual impairments</i>	9 280	272	34
<i>Special school</i>	501	10	50
<i>Education for adults with severe intellectual impairments</i>	4 835	No figure*	No figure*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education for adults with severe intellectual impairments, sårvox was provided in 215 municipalities</li> <li>• From Eurypedia</li> </ul>			

## Major challenges - 1

There are of course different opinions concerning what the major challenges are.

- lowering levels of excellence and equity are major challenges.
- However, there are also the additional challenges of the narrowing down of the goal structure of the educational system since knowledge goals are put to the forefront.
- Thus, other goals such as critical thinking, joy of learning, establishment of learning communities, preparing for citizenship and so on are less focused.
- The steering documents acknowledge these wider concerns. However, the political debate (and some research) is mostly concerned with the knowledge goals only. Challenges for the special needs system is to account for an inclusive education. An education which is able to handle diversity and support pupils to reach the goals of schooling.

## Major challenges - 2

Perhaps the biggest challenge to the Swedish educational system concerns the necessity to improve the teaching profession in order to be able to meet the whole population with different skills and needs . There are several threats to the teaching profession:

- 1.status has been lowered which makes it harder to recruit students. Lowering of status has to do with a) demonization of the education system in media, b) comparatively low salaries
- 2.the quality paradox which implies that teachers is extremely focused on assessment and ranking of schools which implies less time for activities that are fundamental to achieve quality such as planning of lessons and teaching children.
- 3.too few resources are given to research and teacher education.