European Commission

European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Sweden – National commitment

Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

COUNTRY	Sweden
Date	1 September 2023
Ministry(ies)	Ministry of Education and Research
Contact person(s), title(s)	Hans Almgren
Email(s)	hans.almgren@gov.se
Website	Ministry of Education and Research - Government.se

Overview of apprenticeship

General information on apprenticeships	
Overview	The Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) apprenticeship programme, introduced in 2011, offers the same syllabus and programme structure as the school-based IVET. Both pathways culminate in the attainment of the same vocational diploma, with half of the apprenticeship training conducted at the workplace.
Number of apprentices	In autumn 2021, 17 400 apprentices were enrolled in upper secondary education: • 15 100 in the national vocational education and training (VET) programme (corresponding to 14.4 % of all IVET students in upper secondary national VET programmes); • 2 300 in the introduction programmes bridging compulsory and upper secondary education.
Legal basis	The Education Act (SFS 2010:800) The Upper Secondary School Ordinance (SFS 2010:2039) The law introducing a new form of apprenticeship employment (SFS 2014:421) The ordinance on state grants to apprenticeship VET (SFS 2011:947) The ordinance regulating WBL for adult apprentices in municipal adult education (SFS 2016:937)
Target group	Upper secondary apprenticeship education targets learners that have completed compulsory school and are under the age of 20, students with intellectual disabilities, and

	students in programmes bridging compulsory and upper secondary education. There are also apprenticeship schemes available for adults studying VET in upper secondary municipal adult education.

Scheme(s) specific information		
	Upper secondary VET: apprenticeship pathway	***Apprentices in upper secondary VET in municipal adult education***
EQF level	4	4[1]
Duration	3 years	Varying duration. The apprenticeship scheme in municipal adult education should cover courses ranging from 400 to 1 600 upper secondary credits (corresponding to six months to 2 years of full-time studies) for being awarded state grants.
Status of the apprentice	Both Although apprentices can be employed while in upper secondary VET, the vast majority of upper secondary apprentices are learners.	Learner

[1] If the learners fulfil the criteria of obtaining 2,400 upper secondary education credits for attaining an upper secondary diploma.

Access to HE possible?	YES If a vocational diploma (i.e. passing grades) is awarded, the learner becomes eligible for Higher VET. If the study path includes elective modules in Swedish and English with passing grades, the learner qualifies for higher education. Although in 2023 the provision of upper secondary VET was expanded to encompass modules that grant eligibility for higher education, learners are given the option to opt out of these modules.	YES If a vocational diploma (i.e. an accumulation of 2 400 upper secondary credits, corresponding to three years of full-time studies) is awarded, the learner becomes eligible for Higher VET. If the diploma includes certain modules in Swedish and English with passing grades, the learner also qualifies for higher education.
Funding	Upper secondary education is funded through taxation of the home municipality. Additionally, state grants are available to companies that host learners during their workplace learning periods.	Upper secondary education is funded by the home municipality and through state grants.
Apprentice remuneration or compensation	Allowed In 2014, a new form of apprenticeship employment was enacted. A state grant is available to cover additional costs incurred by apprentices during the workday, such as lunches and transportation. Employed apprentices receive a salary paid by their employers.	Not considered in current legislation

Implementation of the national commitment

Progress and main achievements

Apprenticeships, alongside school-based education, provide an alternative pathway for studying vocational programmes at upper secondary school, aimed at preparing learners for the labour market. The apprenticeship pathway was introduced as a pilot in 2008 and became a regular pathway following the 2011 upper secondary reform. A new form of apprenticeship employment was introduced in 2014.

Students can begin the apprentice track in their first, second, or third year of studies. A mandatory education contract or learning agreement, specifying the content and scope of the work-based learning (WBL), is signed between the apprentice, the education organiser, and the workplace. The school is responsible for the agreement, and the apprentice is assigned a contact person or trainer at the workplace.

There are 12 VET programmes, each focusing on specific occupational fields. Graduates with passing grades in 90% of courses, including Swedish, English, and mathematics, have access to higher vocational education. If elective modules in Swedish and English are included in the programme and passing grades are achieved, IVET can also serve as a pathway to tertiary education. Starting in 2023, these elective courses are automatically included in the programmes, although learners can choose to opt out. The percentage of apprentices in national IVET programs increased from 10 % in the 2016/17 academic year to 14.4 % in 2021/22, indicating a growing participation in the scheme.

Adults study the same modules as learners in upper secondary school but have more flexibility in selecting subjects and modules aligned with their job prospects or preparation for further studies. Adults in municipal adult education can study VET courses as apprentices.

An analysis conducted in 2020 found that apprentices who start their apprenticeship programme early in their upper secondary IVET education tend to have slightly higher success rates and are more likely to secure employment after completing their education compared to students in school-based IVET pathways.

Update of the national commitment

Planned reforms and initiatives

Reforms to the grading system and updated programme and subject content, including the apprenticeship pathway, are planned for 2025. The current apprenticeship scheme is being implemented with no further reforms are scheduled.

The twin digital and green transition

Upper secondary education is addressing the dual transition by developing students' digital competencies and providing perspectives on sustainability and resilience.

EAfA six priorities[2]

As there are no particular reforms planned for apprenticeships, there are no priorities that will be specifically addressed. However, the current scheme addresses the EAfA priorities to (1) foster national apprenticeship coalitions, such as through the mission to the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), and the agency's work in the apprenticeship centre and national programme councils; (2) provide financial support to companies, including SMEs, to offer apprentice placements; (3-5) involve businesses and authorities, as well as social partners, through national and local programme councils to engage them in VET, the apprentice scheme, and the social dialogue among parties. There is no national apprentice organisation for the students that address priority 6.

[2] More information about EAfA six priorities is available in the EAfA Action plan accessible here: https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23080&langId=en

Targets and/or indicators

In accordance with the Ordinance on State grants to apprenticeship VET (SFS 2011:947), the National Agency for Education is responsible for annually reporting on activities undertaken to promote apprenticeships and the utilisation of state grants supporting this scheme. The agency is required to contribute to national skills provision, facilitate the integration of learners into the labour market, and support cooperation between educational institutions and the world of work (Ordinance 2015:1047).

Budget of the reform/initiative

Since 2018, the Government has allocated SEK 482 million (€ 40.5 million as of 30 August 2023) annually for state grants to promote and support apprenticeships in upper secondary education. According to the Ordinance on State grants to apprenticeship VET (SFS 2011:947), the National Agency for Education is responsible for administering the state grant.

Key stakeholders involved

Education provision in Sweden is highly decentralised. The primary stakeholders for the apprenticeship scheme include local education providers, companies, and public sector employers that offer training. At the national level, Skolverket, the National Agency for Education, is responsible for promoting and supporting apprenticeships schemes.

Further measures planned as a follow up to the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

Skolverket is responsible for promoting and following up on the active involvement of social partners in the design, governance, and implementation of apprenticeship schemes.

Measures planned to support gender balance, social inclusion and internationalisation of apprenticeships

Apprentice schemes are governed by the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the Ordinance for Upper Secondary Education (SFS 2010:2039). The legislation specifies goals and horizontal issues that all forms of education, including apprenticeships, must address. These include ensuring equal access, promoting of gender balance, fostering social inclusion, supporting internationalisation, and addressing work safety concerns.

Final overview of national commitment

Below are the objectives covered by the national commitment in a nutshell: (*please tick all relevant options*)

Increase supply	☒
Foster quality	☒
Promote image	☒
Support mobility	☒
Support national apprenticeship coalitions	☒
Support SMEs	☒
Mobilise local and regional authorities	☒
Strengthen social dialogue	☒
Engage sectoral social dialogue committees	☒
Support the representation of apprentices	☐
Address the twin transition	☐
Foster gender balance	☒
Support social inclusion	☒
Internationalisation	☒