



Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Education, training, life-long learning and capacity-building

The aim of the Swedish government's education policy is to equalize socioeconomic differences. All children, young people and adults should be given the opportunity to develop their abilities and skills to their full potential regardless of age, sex and disability. Adults shall have good access to education throughout life regardless of where in Sweden they live.

The right to education has been recognized in a number of international conventions, for example in article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 24 states that the right to education for persons with disabilities shall be granted without discrimination and on equal terms. States Parties shall ensure inclusion in the education system which enables equal participation in undergraduate, higher education, vocational and adult education and lifelong learning. Sweden has been state party to the convention since 2009. Education is also one of 17 sustainable development goals within Agenda 2030. Goal 4 of Agenda 2030 is that states ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all, something that the government considers important, the implementation of Agenda 2030 is a priority to the Swedish government.

In Sweden higher education is, regardless of age, free of charge (with minor exceptions) for all students from Sweden, the Nordic countries, the EU/EES and Switzerland. The right to study as an older age student is not expressed explicitly in legal frameworks, but on the other hand it is not denied either. There is a possibility to uphold student grant and student loan until the age of 57.

An important actor for older age students/-learning is the liberal adult education which is the collective term for organized activities, such as courses, study circles and other cultural events conducted by the country's folk high schools and study associations. Folk high schools and study circles are a part of a liberal non-formal educational system and are not covered by the Education Act. This means that a folk high school or a study circle in Sweden put up curricula and courses and employs teachers who are considered necessary for its operation.

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education has been assigned by the Government and Parliament of Sweden to distribute national funding to folk high schools and study associations which fulfill certain criteria.

There is no age-limit for non-formal education in Sweden and anyone can apply to study at a folk high school or take part in a study circle. In folk high schools 3 to 13 percent of the persons attending education (public funded) is over 65 years old. People taking part in activities like study circles in old age: 28 percent are over 65 according to statistics for 2015.

Age is one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination in Sweden and it is regulated in the Discrimination Act. The Equality Ombudsman (DO) is to supervise compliance with the Act, promote equal rights and opportunities and to combat on seven grounds of discrimination covered by the Act which includes sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. It is possible to lodge complaints to the Equality ombudsman based on age discrimination.

The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM), works to ensure that children, young people and adults – regardless of functional ability – have adequate conditions to fulfil their educational goals. This is done through special needs support, accessible teaching materials and government funding.

The agency has a broad knowledge of the educational consequences of disabilities. The support they offer involves individuals' learning and as well as organizational issues. The knowledge and skills offered by the agency complement the resources of the municipalities and schools.