

1. Introduction

1.1 Swedish disability policy

The UN's Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is a cornerstone of Swedish disability policy. The Swedish Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. Unlike the Standard Rules, the Convention is legally binding. As a result, Sweden has committed to ensuring that national legislation does not discriminate against people with disabilities.

In the OECD countries, students with disabilities in higher education remain under-represented, although their numbers are on the increase, says the OECD. The Swedish Government and Parliament establish guidelines for disability policies, mainly through legislation. Government agencies have a national responsibility for specific sectors, including education, health care and employment. Their task is to accelerate the pace of development in their particular sectors and ensure compliance with policy.

Sweden does not keep any *statistics* regarding the number of children and young persons with disabilities in the education system. However, there are statistics regarding students with disabilities who receive special educational support within university education. The statistics do not provide a complete picture of all university students who have a disability. It depends on their need of support during their studies.

1.2 Legal framework

Regulations for how to include students with disabilities in Higher Education in Sweden;

- The Higher Education Act (1993:1434), the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and the Act concerning authorization to award degrees (1993:792)
- Appropriation and regulation of the state authorities responsible for implementing the disability policy (2001:52)
- Discrimination Act (2008:567) came into force on 1 January 2009 and replaced many of the previous laws on civil matters regulated discrimination. Discrimination Act purposes is to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief,

disability, sexual orientation or age. June 23, 2014, Parliament approved a new provision; Inadequate accessibility as a form of discrimination.

- DO, Act concerning the Equality Ombudsman, (2008:568)
Section 1. The Equality Ombudsman has the duties described in the Discrimination Act (2008:567). In addition, the Ombudsman shall work to ensure that discrimination associated with sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age does not occur in any areas of the life of society. The Ombudsman shall also work in other respects to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.
Section 2. The Equality Ombudsman shall provide advice and other support so as to help enable anyone who has been subjected to discrimination to claim their rights. **Section 3.** Further, within her or his sphere of activities, the Equality Ombudsman shall inform, educate, discuss and have other contacts with government agencies, enterprises, individuals and organizations, follow international developments and have contacts with international organizations, follow research and development work, propose legislative amendments or other anti-discrimination measures to the Government, and initiate other appropriate measures.
- January 1, 2015. The new law point in the Discrimination Act. This tightened the Discrimination Act which now classifies Inadequate accessibility in all types of school discrimination. The provisions include both pedagogical availability and physical accessibility.
- January 1, 2017. Changes in Discrimination Act third chapter will enter into force on 1 January 2017. A new feature is that all grounds covered in the requirements for active measures. It is an extension compared with the current rules.

2. Main section

2.1 Definition of “Disability” and statistics

To qualify for special support the following criteria must be met, which is according to the Discrimination Act (2008:567):

“Permanent physical, mental or intellectual limitation of functional capacity as a consequence of an injury or an illness that existed at birth, has arisen thereafter or which may be expected to arise.”

“Permanent” here means that the disability should be of long duration. If the disability is of short or temporary duration the Act is not applicable and the student is not entitled to special support measures.

Background info

The population in Sweden amounts to around 10 million. There are 35 institutions of higher education run by the state through the Ministry of Education and Research, plus 17 private institutions of higher education that are partly run by the state. There is also the University of Agricultural Sciences. In 2015, the number of students amounted to around 450 000. The number of students who had been in contact with the co-ordinator for students with disabilities at one of the institutions of higher education was, 12 220 i.e. (7796 female/4424 male) 2-3% of the student population in total.

Statistics

Statistics concerning the largest groups of known students with disabilities. Please note that the numbers only include students and postgraduate students who have been in contact with the Coordinator of pedagogical support at one of the institutions of higher education in Sweden.

| Known numbers of students - Sweden | Women | Men | In all |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Students with dyslexia/specific learning difficulties | 5 010 | 2 588 | 7 598 |
| Students with neuropsychiatric disorder | 2 055 | 1 613 | 3 668 |
| Students with mental health conditions | 1 091 | 356 | 1 447 |
| Students with mobility impairment | 434 | 202 | 636 |
| Students with visual impairment | 171 | 114 | 285 |
| Hard of hearing students – without interpreting | 181 | 79 | 260 |
| Students with interpreting – sign language interpreting and/or real time captioning | 78 | 30 | 108 |
| Students with other conditions | 911 | 324 | 1 235 |
| All in all | 9 931 | 5 306 | 15 237 |

Source: Stockholm University Annual Activity Report, 2017. Reg.nr: SU FV-1.1.8-3030-17)

The organisational perspective of educational support

At all universities and institutions of higher education in Sweden there is at least one contact person / co-ordinator, working with issues relating to educational support for students with disabilities. The co-ordinator is also involved in the work with plans and strategies for the development of accessibility and equal opportunities, and is a source of knowledge and guidance for the university staff.

Each university and higher education institution in Sweden is obliged to set aside the funds to cover extraordinary costs for educational support measures for students with disabilities. A large part of these costs is financed and distributed annually from a common national pool. In the general prescriptions of the annual budget document from the Government - the yearly public service agreements - higher education institutions are prescribed to reserve 0,3 per cent of their allocation for basic education to finance special (compensatory) pedagogical support for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities, when the need arises. Stockholm University has, since 1993, been assigned a special task in this field to annually collect information from all universities and higher education institutions about the known number of students with disabilities, as well as

figures of the costs for pedagogical support measures. Thereafter, figures summarized, to distribute an extra grant to the higher education institutions who, for different reasons, have had extra high costs for this personal pedagogical support. Furthermore, Stockholm University shall describe in the annual report developments, initiatives and activities in higher education that has improved the situation for students with disabilities and enhanced the level of general accessibility. A prerequisite for Stockholm University to be able to fulfil this assignment, is a close cooperation in this field with all higher education institutions in Sweden.

The national network In a national university conference in 1993, an informal network for cooperation between the co-ordinators for students with disabilities in higher education institutions was created. At the same event a national reference group was established with a focus on questions relating to development and policy in the field of accessibility to - and in - higher education. With time, the national network of co-ordinators for students with disabilities has developed into a recognised and interactive forum for experience exchange, discussion and education/training.

The national coordinators' network holds conferences every year on different themes of current interest. This event is planned and organised by the national reference group, and the program contains both time for education and training, as relevant experts in different fields are invited to give presentations, and time for discussion. Often, co-ordinators give presentations as well about different initiatives and development projects at their universities.

At a national coordinator conference in 1999 four regional networks – the south, west, east and mid-region – were formed. By then, the national coordinator network was well established, and the yearly conference had been held many times, but the coordinators experienced a need to meet more often than once a year, for experience exchange and discussion relating to the constantly new and sometimes challenging issues to be solved in the everyday work. In this way, ideas and suggestions can flow from the meetings in the region networks to the national reference group, or the other way around, and, for example, result in a finalised program for the upcoming national network conference. A special training day is held every two years for new co-ordinators to introduce them into the field of work. This has been a welcome and appreciated initiative. The training programme is planned and lead by two experienced colleagues in the national network.

Support services outside HEI

The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, SPSM In addition, various public authorities have specific responsibility for certain specific measures. Thus SPSM, the National Agency for Special Needs Education, covers some costs at universities for services in the area of personal support to students with mobility difficulties and mentor support for students with cognitive difficulties due to for example ADHD and Aspergers syndrom.

Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille, MTM Swedish Agency for Accessible Media, MTM, belong to the administration of the Ministry of Culture. Their mandate is to ensure that all persons with reading impairments can access literature and daily newspapers through media appropriate to them. One special mandate is to provide university and college students access to their required reading through media appropriate to them. For more information on their activities in service, research and development www.MTM.se

The Swedish Agency for Participation

The work of the Swedish Agency for Participation is to ensure that disability policy will have an impact in all corners of society.

They work according the principle that everyone has the right to full participation in society, regardless of functional capacity through, for example; proposing methods, guidelines and guidance, disseminating knowledge and providing support and proposing measures to government. More information: www.mfd.se

Equality Ombudsman (DO) is a governmental agency that works on behalf of the Swedish Parliament and Government to promote equal rights and opportunities and combat discrimination, according to the Discrimination Act.

DO also receive complaints and investigates suspected discrimination related to sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. It costs nothing to do so

More information: www.do.se

Examples of compensatory pedagogical support and service for exchange students with disabilities

Each university and higher education institution offers special support to students with disabilities but each decides what form that support is to take. There are frequently possibilities to receive various individual support measures, although their availability cannot be promised to all students in all study programmes.

Examples of often available services are talking books, note-taking help, extended time for exams, alternative forms of examinations, access for using accessible computers on campus for studying and/or for exams and assessments, certain technical aids on campus, sign language interpreting, extra teaching and tuition, mentors and courses in study skills and time management and more.

Exchange studies – student mobility

The number of students crossing Swedens borders has increased significantly in recent decades until the academic year 2014/2015. This applies both to Swedish students who travel abroad to study and foreign students who come to Sweden to study. Swedish universities and colleges participating in various exchange programs. Swedish students can thus carry out part of their studies at a foreign university while foreign students carrying out part of their training in Sweden. Swedish universities have student exchange with numerous countries.

Källa; Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ). <http://english.uka.se/about-us/publications/statistical-reports/statistical-reports/2016-12-08-international-mobility-2015-16.html>

The positive impact of student mobility has long been acknowledged and promoted in Europe: studying abroad fosters education, language skills, cross-cultural contacts, and job opportunities. This vision led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area and of the Erasmus+ programme. By 2020, the EU aims at bringing to 20 percent the number of university students spending time abroad, either for education or training. Källa; [European Data Journalism Network \(EDJNet\)](#)

Fewer Swedish students studying abroad

In the academic year of 2014/2015 there were 29 100 Swedish students abroad, either in exchange programs or as free-movers with financial support from the Swedish National Board of Student Aid (CSN). But in the academic year of 2016/17, fewer Swedish students studying abroad, 24 100.

Compared to the previous academic year, the number of exchange students has fallen by 2 percent and the number of free-movers has fallen by 8 percent. The number of Swedish students studying language courses abroad has decreased to only a few, mostly due to a reclassification of language courses abroad that previously were considered higher education. Poland still popular for Swedes studying abroad. The majority of Swedes who studied abroad studied in Europe, especially in the UK, Poland and Denmark. North America and especially the US also draws many Swedish students. The US and the UK were the single largest recipient countries of Swedish students in the 2016/17 academic year. Next came Australia, Poland, Denmark, Norway and Germany. These seven countries together received 61 percent of all the students leaving Sweden. The countries of choice have changed over time. In the last ten academic years, Spain, France and Italy have lost students while the number going to Poland and the US, among others, has increased. Källa; Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ).

The introduction of tuition fees in the autumn of 2011, for students outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland, led to a reduction in the number of incoming students. In the 2014/2015 academic year, the total number of incoming students was 33 200. Of these, 41 percent were exchange students and 59 percent were free-movers. *The number of incoming students is still higher than the number of outbound students, despite the introduction of fees.*

Most of the incoming students studied for one or two semesters in Sweden. The difference between exchange students and free-movers was considerable. The percentage of exchange students who only studied one semester was significantly higher than among free-movers. Of the registered exchange students 81 percent studied for one semester in Sweden. The corresponding proportion of free-movers was 15 percent. The differences in length of studies is to a large extent due to the fact that more free-movers studied degree programme while virtually all the exchange students did freestanding courses. 80

percent of the of the degree programme students studied a second-cycle programme. Most of those Swedes who studied abroad also studied for one or two semesters abroad. So the proportion of free-movers who have been abroad for seven semesters or more was high.

Källa; Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ). <http://english.uka.se/about-us/publications/statistical-reports/statistical-reports/2016-12-08-international-mobility-2015-16.html>

To increase the number of outgoing students, it is important to find out what kind of obstacles there are for mobility at each university and in the individual programs.

Financial support – funding – services for educational support for students within the EU

Some exchange programmes provide special support

The Erasmus+, Nordplus, and Linnaeus-Palme exchange programmes all offer special support. If the disability means students need extra aids in order to go on the exchange, it is possible to receive extra funding to cover these costs. Contact is to be made with the international student counsellor or the disabilities officer at the university for more information and help with students application

The majority of universities and university colleges in Sweden have a coordinator for students with disabilities. Students can discuss the opportunities for special support when studying abroad, with the coordinator.

Erasmus. Universities and colleges within the EU and the EES can apply for extra funds to cover additional costs for students with disabilities participating in exchange studies. It is always the responsibility of the students' home university to make such an application for their exchange student - not the responsibility of the individual student. Extra funds, for each student individually, covering additional costs for exchange students with disabilities who participate in

NORDPLUS, can be applied for all the year round. It is the home university, not the individual student, who can send this application to **CIMO**. CIMO is an expert organisation providing services on international mobility and co-operation. Students or higher education staff with a disability may be eligible for additional financial support to help them take part in international mobility. This support will be in addition to a mobility grant.

Accessibility grants are intended to enable international mobility in circumstances when an injury, impairment, illness, learning difficulty or other special need causes such additional costs as are not covered by other sources.

The grant can be awarded to accessible accommodation, assisted mobility or such study-related special arrangements as learning materials.

CSN is the Swedish Government authority in charge of financial aid for studies and home equipment loans. Students can apply for extra financial aid when they want to study abroad. Student aid consists of grants and loans. Students can

also borrow money for additional costs such as tuition fees, travel and insurance. Students with disabilities can contact CSN for more information about additional costs due to disability.

Delegation of responsibilities. The host university has the responsibility to create the right conditions so as to be able to receive exchange students with disabilities. The home university covers the extra costs that may occur in connection with compensatory educational support. The host university is obliged to adjust the curriculum to individual students by offering educational support that compensates for the students' functional disabilities.

MTM is the central lending facility of production and distribution of talking books and Braille books for Swedish libraries, with the legimus.se (digital library). Foreign students with disabilities studying at Swedish universities and colleges have the same possibilities and rights of being provided with course literature as adapted media from MTM like Swedish students. The requirement is that students must have been accepted to a programme or a course at a Swedish university or college where you can obtain university credits.

Service provided from MTM to exchange students Students at Swedish universities and colleges who participates in an exchange programme will receive the relevant course literature as adapted media from MTM during their studies outside of Sweden. Student borrowers can borrow talking books from the data base. If students want to order newly produced talking books or need other kinds of library service, they should contact the Swedish university library.

Community interpreting in Sweden. If the student has a residence permit he/she has the same rights of receiving sign language interpreting as a Swedish subject. In the absence of a residence permit the following applies: in case of emergency the County Council must provide a sign language interpreter when visiting a doctor or a dentist. The costs for a community interpreter servicing a student from another EU-country will be charged the student's home country through the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. In emergency one contacts the local interpreting agency. A student from a non EU-country without a residence permit may run the risk of having to pay the fees him-/herself. As regards rights and possibilities of obtaining community interpreting abroad the student should contact a Swedish interpreting agency.

Educational interpreting – leaving exchange students. Formally deaf students who participates in an exchange programme abroad have the same right of receiving educational interpreting as they did when studying in Sweden. However, in reality it is the access to qualified interpreters that is the decisive factor, as well as the access to interpreters who have the possibility to travel and live abroad. When a deaf student is preparing him-/herself to participate in a student exchange programme in another country, it is strongly recommended that the interpreters at the universities in Stockholm and Örebro are contacted for general advice and planning.

Educational interpreting – visiting exchange students. Before receiving students from other countries who uses a different sign language from the one

used in Sweden, detailed discussions between students and interpreters are necessary in order to plan the educational interpreting. The access to interpreters who are qualified to work with other sign languages than the Swedish one is limited to just a few in Sweden.

Technical/physical aid. As a general advice the student should contact “his/her” referral agency and/or an occupational therapist for information about technical/physical aid when studying abroad. A few things to take into consideration are for example: how should the device/-s be transported? What are the possibilities for service and repair abroad, etc.? Visiting students are advised to do the same thing in his/her country well in advance before leaving for Sweden.

Visiting foreign students from a non EU-country (no exchange)

The requirements for a student from a non EU-country to have the right to receive educational support measures and to have these measures funded by a Swedish university/college, is that the student must be registered by the Swedish Tax Agency. If the student wants to be registered in Sweden he/she must plan to stay in the country for a minimum of one year. A person must be registered where he/she is considered to be a resident according to the Population Registration Act, 7-13§§.

3. Summary/Conclusion

Of the students who graduated in Sweden at first level and advanced level in 2016/2017, 14 percent had studied abroad sometime during the last twelve semesters. It is under the EU's objective that 20 percent of all students should have studied abroad by 2020, and far after comparable countries. Among our neighbors Norway, Finland and Denmark are the corresponding shares of 28, 33 and 39 percent, respectively.

The proportion of known students with a disability in an exchange, according to the statistics is very low. The lack of data tells us that students with disabilities very seldom participate in exchange program or that they maybe choose not to disclose that they have a disability. The academic year 2017 over 15 000 students with known disabilities asked for support measures during their studies. It is therefore a big question why we cannot find them in our statistics.

We know that most HEI are working hard and very well with internationalization and that it is on top of the academic agenda. But when asking a couple of universities about how many students with disabilities they were in contact with the latest two years it was a very low result or none at all. Statistic information shows the same results. This might also be an explanation about why so few students with disabilities choose to study in Nordic countries.

- **Sweden has a clear legislation** that sees lack of accessibility to studies as discrimination and also a well-conceived model of support to students with disabilities in higher education.
- **Sweden has a clear financing strategy** for different types of studies, if you need special assistance due to a disability, e.g. through the Erasmus +, CSN, Nordplus and Cimo. A big advantage for Sweden is that it is already in the Directive in its annual grant from the Ministry to the universities and colleges that, if necessary to set aside 0.3 percent of the grant for basic education assistance to students with disabilities.
- **The directive gives a clear indication of the students' right to educational support throughout their education** and for a purpose budget. Students with disabilities who participate in exchange programs are entitled to educational support through the out sending university and other organizations.

Despite these opportunities it has been shown that there are still very few students with disabilities who applied for additional funds despite the fact that it is easy to get extra funding in Sweden. Some conclusions would be that HEI need to set the same objectives for participation in studies and exchanges studies abroad for all students, with or without disabilities.

How to reduce institutional barriers for students with disabilities?

- Better information about how it is to study abroad – this must include students with disabilities.
- Information is needed about, when to start the planning for studies abroad and how, whom to contact from the beginning and adequate information during the whole process and what the added value will be, both personal and educational, after exchange studies.
- The need of a strategy for HEI in how to recruit students with disabilities, maybe use positive role models?
- Provide individual coaching and group coaching about practical issues and assistance throughout the application process for funding for students with disabilities.
- Educate international relation officers in how to include students with disabilities and how to promote positive attitudes and values in organization.

According to the national survey conducted in May 2016 the students point out some important aspects for taking the step to study abroad. They emphasize that the information about the special educational support must be clear and adequate and easy to find and that the staff at the home university, both International Office and the Study Guidance Counselors, are aware of the opportunities to apply for additional funding for special educational support. And finally:

- Clear information how to contact the coordinator at the host university
- Clear information about what type of special educational support that is provided at the host university

- That the support is individualized

References;

Swedish Government, www.regeringen.se,

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DO, Equality ombudsman, The Discrimination Act, <http://www.do.se/lag-och-ratt/diskrimineringslagen/>

UKÄ, Universitetskanslerämbetet, Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ). <http://english.uka.se/about-us/publications/statistical-reports/statistical-reports/2016-12-08-international-mobility-2015-16.html>

UHR, Universitets och Högskolerådet, <http://studera.nu/studera-utomlands/studera-utomlands/> www.uhr.se,

ERASMUS, www.erasmus.se, European Commission, 2014 Erasmus, The European Union Programme for education, training and youth and Sport.

CSN, Centrala studiestödsnämnden, The Swedish Government authority in charge of financial aid for studies, <http://www.csn.se/en/2.1076/2.1078>

SPSM, Specialpedagogiska Skolmyndigheten, <https://www.spsm.se/funktionsnedsattningar/>

MFD, Myndigheten för delaktighet, www.mfd.se

MTM, Swedish Agency for Accessible Media, MTM, is under the administration of the Ministry of Culture, <http://www.mtm.se/english/>

SU, Stockholm University www.su.se

CIMO is an expert organization in international mobility and co-operation, http://www.cimo.fi/programmes/nordplus_and_other_nordic_programmes

SFS, SFS is the national student organization in Sweden and the overall student voice, which drives all the common issues concerning students at the national and international level, www.sfs.se