



Ministry of Education and Research

Sweden's National Consultations Report to the Transforming Education Summit

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government Offices of Sweden held 17 meetings with national authorities and representatives of schools, as well as seven meetings with unions and student organisations in order to discuss appropriate measures for schools. During the autumn 2021 the Government Offices also conducted three consultation meetings with civil society as part of the process of conducting the Government's first written communication to the Parliament (the Riksdag) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all. The consultations ended with a national forum in February 2022. On 24 May 2022 the Swedish Government submitted a written communication to the Riksdag on Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sweden's National Consultation Report to the Transforming Education Summit (TES) is based on these consultations, focusing on recovery from Covid-19 disruption and measures to transform education.

Recovery from the Covid-19 disruption

Monitoring the effects of the pandemic

The Swedish Government made it a top priority that students would receive the education they are entitled to during the pandemic. The general guideline was to make schools and preschools the last establishments to close and the first ones to open. This was highly important for several reasons. Preschools and schools are safe environments for children and pupils and are important for their health and wellbeing as well as everyday life. Closed schools might lead to great learning losses that could have negative effects for a long time and affect possibilities later in life and long-term health. To keep preschools and schools open is also an important measure since it allows for parents with jobs of vital importance for society to go to work. Teachers have taken a great responsibility during the pandemic. We also know now that there are challenges with distance teaching and learning. However, measures to allow for remote teaching were taken during the pandemic, as a precaution. These measures are elaborated below.

In order to monitor the effects of the pandemic, the Government commissioned its school authorities and the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education to follow up and evaluate the effects of the pandemic on the school system and on post-secondary higher vocational education. Results from these reports are fed into the policy-making process on measures to alleviate or dampen any negative consequences of the pandemic. This has been an ongoing effort that will continue, for some time.

The Swedish school authorities have furthermore provided support materials for principals and teachers to help them evaluate pupils' learning losses and gaps and improve their teaching, not least their distance teaching.

Measures taken in response to the pandemic

In March 2020 the Riksdag enacted a new law that allowed the Government to temporarily close school activities if needed. This law has not been put into practice.

A new temporary regulation made it possible for schools and upper secondary schools to be more flexible when it came to where, how and when education would take place, in order to minimize the spread of infection. Some exceptions were also made that allowed a limited number of students to enter a closed

school, for example with regards to students that have special needs and therefore require personal contact with teachers. The temporary regulation that made it possible for schools and upper secondary schools to be more flexible when it comes to where education takes place ceased to apply on 1 April 2022 as Covid-19 is no longer classified as a disease categorized as dangerous to public health or dangerous to society.

Those who already face challenges in school, such as pupils with special needs, who come from socioeconomically vulnerable homes or who learn Swedish for immigrants, are the ones who have the most difficulties to profit from remote teaching. Many pupils have been negatively affected by the pandemic and not least those who are in their final year of upper secondary school and are preparing to enter the labour market or higher education. To remedy their situation the Government has made it easier for pupils that finished upper secondary school in 2020 or 2021 to contest their final grade and ask for a re-examination by lowering the cost for doing so (from 500 SEK to 150 SEK).

In 2021 and 2022 the municipalities received higher state subsidies. In addition, the municipalities received additional state funds directed to education, the so-called "School billion" (Skolmiljarden), to ensure that children and students receive the education they are entitled to, despite the pandemic. The funding is distributed proportionally based on the number of children and young people aged 6–19 in the municipality.

The Swedish Government has commissioned the National Agency for Education to carry out efforts to support education providers, principals, teachers and other staff during the outbreak of the corona virus, with the aim of facilitating their work situation. The Swedish National Agency for Education provides additional support on distance learning via its website. It focuses on providing teachers with knowledge and guidelines on how to improve distance learning. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has provided support on distance learning for higher vocational education providers and other post-secondary education providers. The Government also proposed additional funds to enable the agency to develop further its support on distance learning.

Transforming education

The Swedish Government Offices has held consultations regarding the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG 4. Sweden is well placed with regards to the prospects of achieving SDG

4. The level of education in Sweden is high. Sweden has a well-developed education system for all children, young people and adults. Primary and lower secondary school education is compulsory. Education is free of charge at all levels. Preschool is offered at a subsidised cost. Access to university and technical and vocational training, without an upper age limit, offers a lifelong opportunity for higher education and learning. However, some challenges remain in order to ensure high-quality education for all. Efforts to give all pupils the same opportunities to develop as far as possible, regardless of their circumstances and background, are still needed. There are challenges in relation to the gender gap when it comes to school results, boys are lagging behind, and continued efforts are needed to increase equity within and between schools to tackle segregation. The Swedish Government has therefore taken initiatives to increase the possibility for all children and pupils to access good and equitable education regardless of responsible authority, as well as to increase equity in school and reduce school segregation. The Government has furthermore taken initiatives to increase participation in preschool. In order to improve students' learning outcomes and strengthen equity, the Riksdag has decided to increase state funding in these areas with SEK 6.5 billion. The Government has also decided to establish a council to promote reading.

Continued efforts to promote good access to education for adults and increased possibilities for re- and upskilling are needed. The Government has therefore launched a new student finance scheme for re- and upskilling. This reform is also an important step in the green transition. Since 2015 the Government has increased the number of education program places for adults at all levels by 160 000. Parts of this investment makes it possible to increase education of great importance for sustainable development. Well qualified teachers with good working conditions are key to learning and there is a need to increase the number of qualified teachers in order to improve learning outcomes. More teachers have therefore been given the opportunity to supplement their training and become qualified to teach more subjects across more school years and in more school forms. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is a long-term commitment for Sweden and is incorporated into regulations at all levels of the Swedish education system. Tougher requirements have been introduced for universities and higher education institutions to report on their work to promote sustainable development and the linkages to the 2030 Agenda.

As regards global support to education, the Swedish Government has a holistic approach to learning with a focus on resilient, national education systems. Particular and increased attention is paid to equity and inclusion to safeguard education as a fundamental human right and public good, leaving no-one

behind. The poorest and most vulnerable groups – including girls, refugees and children with disabilities – are at the center of the Government’s attention.

Swedish multilateral support to education is primarily allocated to UNESCO, UNICEF and Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Sweden is the largest donor to UNESCO with completely unearmarked, flexible funding to the organization’s education sector. This includes policy support in key areas such as gender equality, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and education for sustainable development (ESD). Sweden is the third largest donor to UNICEF and has contributed to giving more than 300 million children access to distance learning during the pandemic and to giving 43,4 million children access to learning materials last year. As the ninth largest donor to GPE, Sweden has financed education plans in nearly 70 partner countries including an increased number of conflict-affected countries. Sweden has also contributed to a substantial reallocation of GPE resources to distance learning and safe reopening of schools.