



## **Education for all - national action plan for Sweden in accordance with the agreement reached at the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000**

### **Background**

The conference, World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal "Education for All" which was held in April 2000, determined that education is a fundamental human right. Education is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means of attaining effective participation in the society of the individual. Access for everyone to basic knowledge thus remains an unchanged, important and urgent concern.

The final document from Dakar contains an agreement that member states shall A. work to attain the six goals set up for EFA (EFA=Education for All), by year 2005 and 2015, B. develop and implement National Plans of Action for achieving the goals, C. mobilise human and financial resources, and D. establish and expand partnerships locally, nationally, regionally and internationally in order to attain the goals of EFA.

UNESCO has been given the task of leading and coordinating the international work and monitoring the declaration and attainment of goals.

Two of the six goals for EFA are also included in the Millenie goals adopted by the UN, namely the right of everyone to a basic education (primary schooling) by year 2015, and also equal right to primary and secondary schooling for girls and boys by year 2005.

The following provides an account of the conditions applicable to the Swedish school system for attaining the six goals.

The Dakar Agreement is an international commitment and stipulates the necessity of all parties in society co-operating. This also means taking a regional perspective and an aid-oriented perspective in the education area. Thereafter the Swedish action plan is presented (section IV) for development of basic education in Sweden.

### **I The situation in Sweden**

**Goal 1.** Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Sweden: Pre-schooling is the first step in lifelong learning and thus an important part of the overall education system of our society. Pre-schooling should be available for all children. No one should for financial or other reasons be denied the opportunity of having their

children attend pre-school.

Pre-schooling is run as pre-school, family day care centres and open pre-school. The majority of children today have a place in pre-school (68% of children aged between 1-5 years). Confidence in pre-schooling is great amongst the parents of small children and places are in demand for nearly all children. In 2003 a universal pre-school will be introduced for all four and five-year-olds. Thus all children will have access to pre-school free of charge three hours a day. The Swedish Riksdag has decided to introduce a maximum fee system for the pre-school. The aim of the maximum fee is that high fees should not prevent parents from having their children attend pre-school.

The working group considers that Sweden already fulfils this goal.

**Goal 2.** Ensure that by 2015 all children, especially girls, children in difficult circumstances, and from ethnic minorities have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Sweden: For children resident in Sweden, attendance at school is compulsory from the autumn term of the calendar year in which the child becomes 7. Parents may if they wish start their children's schooling at the age of six. All six-year-olds are offered a place in the pre-school class. The pre-school class is voluntary for the child, and always provided free of charge. In general all six-year olds who have not already started compulsory school attend the pre-school class. Compulsory schooling ends at the close of the spring term of the calendar year in which a child reaches the age of 16. Compulsory school attendance (nine years ) is provided in the compulsory school, the school for children with learning disabilities, the Sami school or the Special school for children who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and need instruction in sign language. Compulsory schooling may also be provided in independent schools, corresponding to the compulsory school or the school for children with learning disabilities, providing they have been approved by the National Agency for Education.

Education in the compulsory school aims at providing pupils with the knowledge and skills and the other education they need to be able to participate in society. It also provides a basis for further education in the upper secondary school.

Compulsory school is free of charge for all pupils. Pupils should have cost-free access to books, writing materials, tools and other aids. Pupils in the compulsory school should be offered free school meals. The home municipality is obliged to provide cost-free transport for pupils in the compulsory school if needed, taking into account distance to be travelled,

traffic conditions, functional impairments of a pupil or any other special circumstances. However, there may be some other factors which can lead to additional but insignificant costs for the pupils.

The curriculum and syllabuses for the compulsory school give teachers and school heads great freedom to plan and organise teaching for pupils so that they have the opportunity of attaining the goals. The intention of this freedom is to provide maximal opportunities for each pupil to fulfil the goals. Already today there are ample opportunities for giving pupils the time they need to attain the goals. In certain cases, this means that a pupil may need an additional year in the compulsory school. The needs of each pupil must be recognised and as far as possible satisfied by means of individual solutions. This is much more effective than a simple system based purely on tests, where there is a risk that a child who fails may be excluded and forced to "redo" the same year. The individual situation of each pupil shall provide the basis for making decisions to provide support for the pupil. At the same time as some pupils need more time and support to attain the goals, others are much quicker in making progress in their learning. All pupils have the right to receive support and stimulus for maximal acquisition of knowledge.

Children seeking asylum and children who have been granted a time-limited residence permit have the same rights to pre-school, school age child care and school, as children who are resident in Sweden. Education for immigrant children on their own who live in hiding in Sweden since they fear deportation is, however, an unresolved problem.

An international OECD study, PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), shows that 15 year old Swedish pupils perform above-average in reading comprehension, mathematics and sciences. Results from PISA show that Sweden belongs to the six countries which have the lowest variation in results, which means relatively small differences between the best and worst performing schools. Variations in results exist in all schools, showing that social diversity is reflected in schools and that segregation is less than in many comparable countries, but is nevertheless manifest.

The Government views with great concern the fact that certain groups of pupils with a mother tongue other than Swedish are much more likely than others to leave school without having attained the goals of the education. Good knowledge in the mother tongue is of great importance for developing the individual child's identity and language. Teaching in Swedish as a second language also needs to be strengthened.

Gender equality is one of the foundation values set out in the curricula and syllabuses. An important part of the work on gender equality is developing an appropriate pedagogy. Girls

and boys encounter different expectations and reactions in the pre-school and school, often accompanied by stereotyped views of how girls and boys should behave. In order to overcome the challenges of adult life, girls and boys must have sufficient knowledge to be able to take their responsibilities in all areas of life, such as for supporting themselves, for their home and for their family, as well as their democratic involvement.

The working group considers that Sweden already fulfils this goal.

**Goal 3.** Ensure that the learning needs for all young people are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill programmes.

Sweden: All children and young people in Sweden regardless of sex, place of residence, ethnic affiliation, and social and economic circumstances, must have equal access to education in compulsory and upper secondary school. The education should be equivalent in each school form, irrespective of where in the country it is provided.

The municipalities are the principal organisers of the compulsory school. One of the foundation stones of handicap policy in Sweden is the principle that children with functional impairments shall as far as possible be provided with appropriate education in their home municipality and thus, similar to other children and young persons, have the right to live at home with their parents. An exception to the municipal undertaking applies to children who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and need instruction in sign language. In this context, it can be mentioned that the group involved is relatively small. Currently there is a total of approximately 800 pupils in the five special state schools for the deaf. Each municipality, either on its own or in conjunction with other organisers, is obliged to provide education in national, specially designed, or individual programmes in the upper secondary school for all young persons up to the age of 20, providing they are resident in the municipality and have completed compulsory schooling or its equivalent. Similar obligations apply to the provision of education in the upper secondary school for young persons with learning disabilities, who have completed their compulsory schooling.

Education in the upper secondary school is voluntary, but 97-98 percent of pupils who complete the 9th year of compulsory schooling in the spring, go on to the upper secondary school in the autumn term of the same year. All programmes are three years in duration and in accordance with the Curriculum for Non-compulsory education (Lpf94) shall deepen and develop pupils' knowledge in order to provide preparation for vocational life and further studies in higher education, as well as for adult life, as citizens of society, and take responsibility for their own lives.

Young people seeking asylum have the same right to education in the upper secondary school as other young people in Sweden. This means that if admission requirements to education in national or specially designed programmes are not fulfilled, the applicant can be admitted to an individual programme in the same way as other young people in Sweden. Education in individual programmes in the upper secondary school can be combined with education in Swedish for immigrants.

The working group considers that Sweden already fulfils this goal.

**Goal 4.** Achieve a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women as well as equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults.

Sweden: Adult education for a number of decades has been an important part of the Swedish education system in providing everyone with opportunities for lifelong learning. The goals laid down by the Swedish Riksdag for adult learning mean that all adults should have the opportunity of expanding their knowledge and developing their competence in order to promote personal development, democracy, gender equality, economic growth and employment, in addition to equitable distribution.

Each municipality is obliged to provide access to adult education at the compulsory level to those of its inhabitants, who have reached the age of 20 and lack the skills normally acquired in the compulsory school. The municipalities are also obliged to organise out-reach activities to those in the municipality who have the right to such adult education and encourage them to participate.

Teaching adults literacy skills in Sweden accounts for only a small part of adult education at the compulsory level. Those who are illiterate in our country are immigrants with low or no education at all from their respective countries of origin. In adult education at the compulsory level, those with low levels of education and literacy are offered the opportunity of developing their reading and writing skills at the same time as they can also study Swedish for immigrants (sfi).

In order to increase accessibility to formal learning, a supply of different forms of education is needed. The individual's needs for flexibility as regards time, place and space need to be satisfied to make it possible to combine studies with e.g. work, taking care of children and/or other studies. One form of flexible learning is distance education which may be a good solution for many and function as a complement to the regular supply of more "school-type" oriented studies. In order to support the development of distance education and flexible learning in municipal adult education and popular adult education, the National

Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL) was established 1st January 2002. This is a national resource centre whose role is also to supplement municipal adult education by providing courses through distance education.

The municipalities should provide municipal adult education at the upper secondary level and aim at providing education which as far as possible corresponds to individual needs and demands. For many adults, taking the step to start studying as an adult may be difficult. An important instrument for encouraging more adults who are or are at risk of becoming unemployed or have functional impairments and with low levels of education to start studying is the state recruitment grant introduced as of 1st January 2003. The recruitment grant can be given to students with little earlier education for studies covering a minimum of 20 percent full-time providing the studies last for at least three weeks. The grant can be provided for a maximum of 50 weeks of studies.

Adults may also take educational routes through popular adult education. Folk high schools run compulsory and upper secondary level education providing eligibility for further studies. Adult Education Associations may also be commissioned by municipalities to provide similar forms of education.

In order to stimulate adults, who have not applied for education before, to start studying, out-reach activities are run in most municipalities throughout the country, often together with the national employment exchange and/or trade union organisations. As of 1997, the state sets aside special funds for such activities.

According to an OECD study (The report "Literacy Survey, IALS, Final report June 2000"), Sweden achieves the best results amongst participating countries irrespective of whether this is "prose literacy", interpreting documents or carrying out arithmetical calculations.

The working group considers that Sweden already fulfils this goal.

**Goal 5.** Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality 2015 - with a special focus on ensuring full and equal access for girls to basic education of good quality.

Sweden See points 2-4.

In Sweden all children and young people irrespective of gender have equal access to compulsory and upper secondary school. In the compulsory school girls have attained in recent years a higher average grade than boys in the school leaving certificate. This applies to

all subjects except Physical education and health.

There is no general gender difference as regards application to and frequency of transfer to the upper secondary school. On the other hand, gender differences remain when choosing upper secondary school programme. The proportion of girls in the Health Care Programme in autumn 2000 varied from 88 percent to only 1.6 percent in the Electricity Programme. In the building, electricity, energy, vehicle and industry programmes, the proportion of girls was lower than 10 percent. The future model for the upper secondary school currently being investigated by a Parliamentary Commission will have a study route structure, which will counteract such gender biases. Also in the upper secondary school, girls have a higher average grade than boys. This was true of all national programmes in school year 1999/2000. More than half of all applicants to higher education are women.

The working group considers that Sweden already fulfils this goal.

**Goal 6.** Improve all aspects of the quality of education to achieve recognised and measurable learning outcomes for all - especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Sweden: Responsibility for pre-school, school and municipal adult education has been decentralised over the 1990s. This means that the state determines goals, evaluates and follows up results, while the principal school organiser, usually the municipality, is responsible for implementing and developing the education. In the curricula and syllabuses, the state authorities have formulated the knowledge, skills and values which children, young people and adults shall have the opportunity of acquiring. The municipalities and other principal organisers of the pre-school and school are responsible for attainment of the goals. Children and young people have the right to an education which provides them with the prerequisites for attaining the goals in all respects, both the knowledge goals, as well as the overall goals relating to fundamental values.

Educational routes in popular adult education via Folk High Schools and Study Associations are independent of the state. However, state grants are offered under certain conditions. Follow-up takes place through the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, a non-profit making organisation consisting of the Swedish National Federation of Study Associations, the Federation of Swedish County Councils and the organisation representing Folk High Schools. However state grant is offered to popular adult education under certain conditions.

Even though Swedish schools compare favourably with others in international studies, improvements still need to be made. The school is not fulfilling its mission so long as there

are young people leaving compulsory school with inadequate reading, and numeracy skills and also leaving before completing their upper secondary education. Pupils with a foreign background need special attention as do adult immigrants. It is important to recognise and remedy problems connected with working conditions and the results achieved by schools.

The working group will return to this in section IV.

In autumn 2000, the Swedish Riksdag made a decision to reform teacher training by radically changing structures and other contents. The new structure means that the common base in teacher training will be expanded i.e. the part which is common to the training programme irrespective of orientation or level. The common part for all teachers contains a general educational area of 60 credits (studies over 1.5 years or 60 weeks) of which 10 credits should be made up of work practice. One of the main knowledge areas included in the common part concerns issues on learning, teaching and special pedagogy. Additionally concerns issues such as socialisation, culture and society, which may deal with how to work to develop children's and pupil's awareness and attitudes to democracy, a sense of community and solidarity. Yet another main knowledge area puts the focus on the tasks of teachers in society, democracy and foundation values.

Teachers completing the new training programme should find it easier to further develop their competence in the future. A programme for reinforcing research into education was a part of the reform.

## **II Regional cooperation**

The responsibility of the Nordic countries in fulfilling the goals of Dakar were discussed at a special conference in 2002 between the Ministries responsible for aid and education and this forms a part of the co-operation in the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Swedish National Commission for UNESCO is involved in the work on building up co-operation around the Baltic Sea to strengthen the EFA process.

Many voluntary aid organisations, teacher representative organisations, folk high schools and adult education associations are deeply involved in the EFA process.

The working group proposes that Sweden should continue to support the EFA process in the region.

## **III Aid oriented perspective**

Swedish aid is administered through the Swedish International Development Agency

(SIDA). SIDA has a policy for educational aid "Education for All: a Human Right and Basic Need" which was adopted in April 2001. The policy is based on Education for All. The EFA principles set out the right to education for all.

The aid provided by SIDA in the education sector is based on the education programmes of the recipient country. Here Sweden has given priority in her aid programmes in the education sector to basic education and literacy for all, children, young people and adults since the middle of the 1970s. This still applies, but SIDA has changed its focus from providing support for different programmes and projects in education to supporting the sectoral strategies of recipient countries which give priority to basic education for all.

SIDA's policy is based on a holistic perspective of the education sector, covering non-formal and all levels of formal education, but the focus is basic education in a broad sense.

SIDA supports EFA goals by increasing and developing its support, particularly to countries where it has long-term co-operation.

During 2001 SIDA allocated SEK 688 million to programmes classified as educational programmes. Of this 43 percent was allocated to basic education for children and young people, and 12 percent to adult literacy. 53 percent of all support went to Africa. The ten largest recipient countries were Tanzania, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Bolivia, Namibia, Afghanistan, South Africa, Cambodia, Eritrea and Nicaragua.

During the year SIDA has initiated or made preparations for support to educational programmes in Rwanda, Mali, Burkina Faso and Laos.

In addition to direct bilateral co-operation, SIDA also contributes to international, regional and different national education programmes as well as to the UN, including UNESCO for coordinating and following up EFA.

During 2002 SIDA has prepared and made decisions to provide support to UNESCO for the EFA Monitoring report as a part of a multi-year programme to UNESCO in the EFA process. In order to achieve the goal of equal rights of girls and boys to primary and secondary education, SIDA is making preparations to support the UNICEF global programme for girls. In addition, SIDA is preparing to continue its support to FAWE, Forum for African Woman Educationalists, which aims at strengthening the right of girls to education in Africa.

SIDA has also during the year participated in discussions with the World Bank and other

donors concerning the Fast Track Initiative to accelerate the EFA process in a selection of countries.

Popular Adult Education organisations are also participating in international work. Many folk high schools and study associations are working together with organisations in Asia and Africa.

In the next few years the volume of aid will increase substantially. This increase in resources will be used mainly to strengthen i.a. programmes in education.

The Working Group recommends that Sweden continue to support the EFA process in the world.

#### **IV Swedish Action Plan**

Sweden's goal-oriented programmes in the educational area have produced results, as can be seen from comparative studies showing the performance of Swedish pupils in relation to others. The effects of these programmes in the educational area can be seen from an increasingly well-educated population. Continuing efforts to improve opportunities to attain all the goals are, however, important and necessary.

Good reading skills are crucial if pupils are to acquire knowledge from all the subjects they study in school. The relationship between reading skills and mathematics has been given particular attention. Those children who at an early stage lag behind in their reading development may find these shortcomings more difficult to remedy later. One result of the PISA study of particular concern is that in Sweden, as in most other countries, the average results of pupils with a foreign background is much lower than pupils with a domestic background.

Basic knowledge in subjects such as mathematics, Swedish and English is required for admission to the upper secondary school and is necessary for everyone, but other subjects are also important for each pupil's future learning and personal development. In the upper secondary school, far too large a proportion of pupils do not attain the goals and thus do not receive a final grade.

Teachers play a key role in the school's work of satisfying the requirements of a knowledge society and providing a foundation for lifelong learning. School quality is dependent on good access to well-educated teachers. This in its turn requires that the school should be an attractive workplace and that Sweden successfully manage the generational change that will be required when members of the teaching profession retire in the next few years. Teacher

training plays an important role in satisfying the need for well-educated teachers. In addition, teachers who are currently working must be given the opportunity for competence development. In order to manage the increasing need for teachers, the Government has raised the target for the number of newly qualified teachers. By means of the new teacher training programmes, practising teachers can return to higher education and supplement earlier qualifications.

The reform in teacher training contains a structure (see above) that better corresponds to the requirements for competence and flexibility faced by the teaching profession. In 2004 the reforms in teacher training will be evaluated by the National Agency for Higher Education, the governmental body responsible for evaluation and quality assurance in higher education.

Competence of teachers in the mother tongue and Swedish as a second language has been given attention in connection with the success achieved by children and young people in school. The proportion of pupils with a foreign background in the compulsory school amounts to 12 percent. Multilingualism and intercultural development is being strengthened through developing both the mother tongue, as well as Swedish. In order to improve access to teachers in these subjects, the Government has set aside resources for a comprehensive education programme of teachers in the mother tongue and Swedish as a second language. Mother tongue teachers not possessing pedagogical competence will be provided with such training. The competence of teachers of Swedish as a second language is uneven. To give these and other teachers who wish to acquire relevant competence, resources will be set aside for approximately 500 teachers to study teaching of Swedish as a second language.

The state, municipalities and the labour market partners are working together in the project "Attractive school" (Attraktiv skola) to enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a profession.

The high ambitions of achieving a good education for all necessitates further initiatives for achieving a nationally equivalent and qualitatively high level of education throughout the country in all schools. Below follows a list of measures, some of which have already been initiated, and which will be implemented over the long-term. Some also represent new initiatives or have not yet been initiated.

### **Initiative for raising basic skills and increasing goal fulfilment**

- Special funds have been set aside for development measures during 2001 and 2002 for the purpose of promoting learning of basic skills i.e. reading, writing and counting. The initiative is primarily directed to the early years of the compulsory school.
- Special funds have been set aside for competence development covering teaching for pupils in need of special support e.g. pupils with reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia.
- By means of the new teacher training, the pedagogical expertise of teachers will be enhanced. In order to increase the number of trained teachers with special pedagogical skills, the state has commissioned a number of teacher training institutes to organise competence development in special pedagogy for trained and practising teachers. Such studies shall also be offered part-time and through distance education provide opportunities for participants to combine work and education.
- The number of guaranteed teaching hours in the upper secondary school has increased as of school year 2002/03, thus providing pupils with better conditions for attaining the goals, mainly in core subjects where current results need to be improved.
- By reinforcing support to municipalities by SEK 1 billion a year as of school year 2001/02, until support has been raised by SEK 5 billion, municipalities will then be able to increase staffing in the school by a total of approximately 15 000 positions by 2006.
- The number of places in regular teacher training will be increased over the next few years. New teacher training in technology-natural science orientations is to be developed.

### **Pupils with a foreign background**

- Measures to improve the pre-school and school situation for children and young people in areas of social and ethnic segregation are necessary. The Government is thus considering providing the authority for school development, to be established in 2003, as its first and most important task in the next few years the task of improving the education conditions for pupils in segregated areas.

- Continuing measures in competence development for teachers in schools with pupils from many countries and with many languages. Measures are being taken to strengthen mother tongue tuition in the pre-school and school.
- Children seeking asylum and children who have been granted a time-limited residence permit should have the same right to pre-school, school age child care and school, as children who are resident in Sweden.

### Quality work

- The school will be required to more explicitly not only provide information to parents and pupils about the pupils' progress in studies on a regular basis throughout compulsory schooling, but also provide written assessments for all pupils who do not attain goals in one or more subjects or blocks of subjects in the 9th year of the compulsory school and the 10th year in the special school.

The information should be based on an assessment of pupils' development in relation to the goals of the curriculum and the syllabuses for years 5 and 9. As a rule, this should lead to regular reviews of the individual development plan for the future. The individual development plan is intended to support pupils in their development of knowledge, but not to be used to assess it. An individual development plan should show what further measures are needed for a pupil to attain the goals. This is to strengthen the pupil's right to receive the support and stimulus needed to make progress.

A written assessment verifies the work the pupil has done and the knowledge the pupil has acquired, and provides important information to subsequent teachers in the upper secondary school. The obligation to issue a written assessment should also be applied when a pupil discontinues a language option and a grade cannot be issued in accordance with the syllabus.

- In order to increase pupils' knowledge and interest in mathematics and thus stimulate their interest in further studies in i.a. the natural sciences and technology, a Mathematics Delegation will be appointed. Its task is to draw up an action plan with proposals for measures to stimulate pupils' interest in the area. The plan will cover the whole of the school system from pre-school to higher education.
- Vocational education is an important developmental area when implementing the future upper secondary school. To increase quality of education, workplace training

components should be increased and the exchange of information between school and working life should be strengthened. In order to find new forms for cooperation between school and working life, the Government intends to appoint a Delegation on Vocational Education with persons from industry, employees and the public sector. The Delegation will i.a. identify strategic development areas which can raise the popularity and quality of vocational education.

- All adults shall receive good opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to participate both in a knowledge intensive working life and a more information-oriented society. It is thus of great importance to continue the development of an infrastructure for learning covering all knowledge areas and all forms of learning i.e. formal, non-formal and informal.
- Education plays an important role in the work of creating sustainable development. The work of developing education which integrates economic, social and ecological aspects of sustainable development at all levels in the education system will thus be continued.
- The tasks of the National Agency for Education will be redefined by transferring the Agency's current tasks involving support for school development to a new authority. The tasks of the National Agency for Education will focus on quality control through follow-up, evaluation and monitoring as well as inspection. The National Agency for Education's inspection of pre-school and public schooling is regulated under the Education Act.
- Four regional conferences to introduce the governmental programme for enhancing quality in school are planned to be held during spring 2003.