

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

Sweden



Policy Frameworks

Does equity with regard to supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education feature in any government produced policy documents? If so, which government policy document(s) are these and can you provide website link(s) to them?

The question of widened recruitment to higher education (HE) features in the Swedish Higher Education Act (1992:1434).

You can find the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) in English on the following website: <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Swedish-Higher-Education-Act/>.

Another example of how widened access features in policy is that The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) is assigned to investigate and write a report about how the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) work to promote and widen access to HE. The report's deadline is the 1 March 2022.

Unfortunately, The Swedish Higher Education Authority's webpage where you can find more information about their report about widened access is not available in English. But here is a link to their Swedish webpage:

<https://www.uka.se/kvalitet-examenstillstand/tematiska-utvarderingar/breddad-rekrytering.html>

What policies and actions are described in these government policy documents in terms of supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education?

The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) says that the HEIs shall actively promote and widen recruitment to higher education.

Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education? If so, which document(s) is/are these? Can you provide a link(s)?

Sweden does, as mentioned before, have the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) which stipulates that the HEIs shall work to promote and widen recruitment. Besides the national legislation, the HEIs have their own guidelines and policies to promote widened access and participation in HE.

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents? (Please choose as many groups as apply in your own country)

The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) does not specify any target groups.

Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups in higher education?

No.

Which agency has responsibility for policies related to equity in student participation/success in higher education?

The HEIs themselves are responsible for student participation and student success during their education.

Which stakeholder groups are consulted during the equity policy formulation? (Please choose all the stakeholders that are invited to the consultation process in your own country)

- Higher Education Institutions' Associations
- Civil society organisations
- Private sector organisations
- International Organisations
- Student Organisations/Association

Achieving Policy Targets

Are there any non-monetary instruments such as outreach work between schools and universities, reforms to university admission etc. used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?

The HEIs themselves are responsible for outreach work. Many HEIs have student ambassadors that visit schools to motivate children to choose higher education, and some student unions do similar work.

The HEIs also provide different kinds of student support to ensure that they are successful with their studies. For instance, many HEIs help students to improve their language skills.

There have also been some admission reforms which are meant to widen access to HE. Someone can be admitted to a Swedish HE based on grades from upper-secondary education or with a result from the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (SweSAT). The SweSAT gives students another chance to be admitted to a HE, if they have achieved the grades from upper-secondary education which are required to be admitted to a particular HE, but in competition with others their grades are not good enough.

In Sweden some HEIs also provide additional alternative admission procedures with tests and interviews, and the ambition with such procedures is to widen access.

Are there any financial instruments such as bursaries, scholarships and loans used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?

All Swedish citizens who are admitted to HE can apply and receive student loan and grants for 240 weeks of HE studies. A foreign citizen needs to satisfy special conditions in order to be entitled to Swedish student finance.

You can read more about Swedish student finance on the following webpage: <https://www.csn.se/languages/english/student-grants-and-loans-for-studies-in-sweden.html>

There are no tuition fees for Swedish citizens and students from the EU/EES. International students from outside the EU/EES have to pay tuition fees, but they can apply for scholarships which are meant to cover the tuition fees.

Who is responsible for monitoring the impact of measures used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education?

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) is conducting an evaluation about access to higher education, and how the HEIs promote and widen access. UKÄ is thus responsible for monitoring access.

The HEIs themselves are responsible for monitoring the success of their students, and UKÄ regularly makes thematical evaluations that investigate the quality of particular kinds of HE in Sweden.

What instruments, methods and data are in place to carry out the monitoring and evaluation?

When UKÄ conducts the evaluation about widened access they use both qualitative and quantitative methods and data. The exact instruments, methods and data will be made public when the final report is published.

What kind of autonomy do higher education institutions enjoy in reaching the policy targets set by government?

Per the answer to the question “Does the country have concrete targets for the participation...”, the Swedish government does not have any policy targets for widened access.

It is important to note that The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) is the legal framework which all state funded HEIs are ruled by. Within this legal framework, the HEIs have large autonomy.

The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) says that the HEIs actively shall work to promote and widen access. The HEIs themselves are responsible for how they choose to promote and widen access within this legal framework.

How do you see the role of inter-governmental/international organisations in supporting higher education equity policies? In which areas would be their contribution the most valuable? (1= most valuable contribution 4=least valuable contribution)

1. Policy setting
2. Facilitating peer learning, exchange of experience among countries
3. Technical assistance and capacity building
4. Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)

COVID-19 and Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

How, if at all, has Covid-19 affected the existence and implementation of policies designed to encourage greater access and success on higher education of those from low-income/marginalized groups?

Due to Covid-19, UKÄ's report about widened recruitment to HE in Sweden has been delayed until 1 March 2022.

Concerning success, UKÄ has released a report about how HE has been affected by the pandemic.

In the report, UKÄ writes that there is a clear difference in immediate dropouts between new entrants from groups with different social backgrounds. The immediate dropouts among new entrants with parents having a low-level of education increased in the spring semester 2020 compared with the year before, while it decreased among new entrants with parents having a high level of education. Whether this is a consequence of the pandemic needs to be studied in more detail.

You can read the entire report on the following webpage: [The Swedish Higher Education Authority's Pandemic Assignment \(uka.se\)](https://www.uka.se/en/press/2022/03/01/asef-report-widened-access-to-higher-education-in-sweden).

Sources

This country brief was prepared as part of the “[ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education](#)” report, a collaboration between the [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#) and the [National Education Opportunities Network \(NEON\)](#). The report was launched at the [8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education \(ARC8\)](#) on “*Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe*” on 10 September 2021.

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