



The European Social Fund in Sweden, 2007-2013

The need to stay ahead and keep everyone on-board is what drives Sweden's ESF Operational Programme. It aims to build a more adaptable workforce that is open to learning the new skills needed to keep Sweden's high-technology industries at the forefront of world markets. In addition, the programme reaches out to those currently outside the labour market, such as the young and immigrants, and promotes the reintegration of people on sick leave, to bring them all into productive and fulfilling work.

The European Social Fund in brief

The European Social Fund, created in 1957, is the European Union's main financial instrument for investing in people. It supports employment and helps people enhance their education and skills. This improves their job prospects.

Member States and regions devise their own ESF Operational Programmes in order to respond to the real needs 'on the ground'. Over the period 2007-2013, the ESF will spend over 10 billion euros per year across all Member States. This represents more than 10% of the European Union's total budget.

These are the five priorities of ESF funding at EU level:

- Helping workers and enterprises adapt to changing circumstances in the economy
- Enhancing access to employment and participation in the workforce
- Improving training and skills, both for individuals, and through better education and training systems
- Promoting partnerships between actors such as employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion in the labour market
- Reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and combating discrimination in the labour market

In some Member States and regions, the ESF can also support actions to improve the capacity and effectiveness of public administrations and public services.

The socio-economic and employment situation in Sweden

The Swedish economy has historically been strong and has grown faster than other EU-15 countries in recent years – reaching 5.5% of GDP in 2006. The employment rate was one of the highest in the EU – 73.1% in 2006 – due to a high female employment rate (70.7%) and the relatively large number of older people in work (men 72.3%, women 66.9%), the highest share in the EU for this group. Further, the Swedish economy has been described as highly competitive by world standards, and the country meets many of the objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy, including the employment targets.

The global financial crisis that started in 2008 has had an impact on the Swedish economy, resulting in significant challenges for employment. GDP growth was around -5% in 2009, turning back into an expected growth of around 3% in 2010 – while the unemployment rate is expected to peak at around 9% in 2010 before decreasing again.

There are still pockets of persistent unemployment and groups of people out of work. For example, relatively fewer immigrants are in work, and youth unemployment is among the highest in the EU. Further, a relatively high proportion of workers are on sick leave, although many of these are willing to work if the appropriate workplace conditions are provided.

Challenges on the horizon for Sweden include its ageing population, the need to maintain its high level of welfare services and the need to sustain and build on the country's competitiveness. As an economy that is strong in technology-based industries, and has a growing service sector, Sweden must ensure an adequate supply of highly skilled workers who will meet the needs of Swedish industry both today and in the future.

While it is true that Sweden has a well-trained workforce, the changing demands made by global markets and new technologies means that new skills are constantly needed if Swedish businesses are to keep their competitive edge. To meet these challenges, Sweden needs to bring more people into work, and in particular those groups who are currently outside the labour market. Further, workers need to gain new skills, and to upgrade their skills on a continuous basis, to ensure the competitiveness of Swedish industry and the Swedish economy for the future.

Sweden's priorities for ESF funding, 2007-2013

Sweden has comprehensive national policies in the areas of employment, education and training which are closely aligned with EU objectives. ESF funding will support national efforts, in particular where it can contribute to strengthening regional competitiveness and employment. Funding will focus on training employees in the skills needed on the labour market, bringing more people into work including those who face difficulties in finding a job, and helping young people into the workforce. It is estimated that more than 300 000 people will benefit from these measures.

There are two priorities in the Swedish ESF Operational Programme that address the major employment

challenges that have been identified. These are 'Skills supply' and 'Increased labour supply'.

Priority 1: Skills supply

Activities are focusing on employees and entrepreneurs in the public and private sectors and the social economy. Support is being offered to develop relevant skills, comprising a careful analysis of needs followed by appropriate training. This will improve the adaptability and employability of workers and allow them to meet new challenges and a changing environment. Other projects are aimed at preventing long-term sickness leave and combating discrimination in getting and advancing in a job.

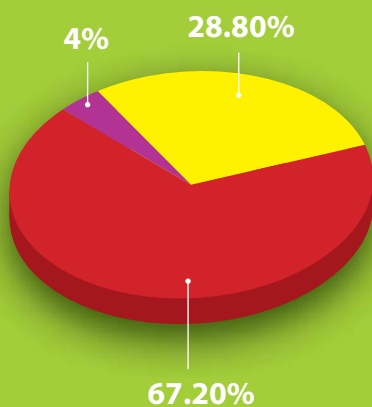
Priority 2: Increased labour supply






Here the focus is on people outside of the labour market, in particular the young, immigrants and those on long-term sickness leave. The aim is to make their path into work easier or, by means of education schemes or other measures, to bring them closer to getting a job – for example, by encouraging early school leavers to return to education or training or to participate in activities designed to prepare them for working life. Support is being given to projects to bring those on long-term sickness leave back into the labour market.

Transnational co-operation and gender equality

The Swedish OP is using transnational co-operation projects as a tool for learning and innovation through the exchange of best practice and experience. Transnational co-operation is of increasing importance in the current Swedish OP and will, to a greater extent, be used to foster benefits for policies and programmes. Gender equality is a priority across the whole Operational Programme, including funding projects to improve skills to eliminate gender-based segregation in the labour market where such gaps are identified.

Financial plan for the European Social Fund in Sweden 2007-2013 (euro)



Priority axis	 Community funding	 National counterpart	Total funding
Skills supply	199 166 733	199 166 733	 398 333 466
Increased labour supply	464 722 379	464 722 379	 929 444 758
Technical assistance	27 662 046	27 662 046	 55 324 092
Total	691 551 158	691 551 158	1 383 102 316

Some ESF projects in Sweden, 2007-2013

- The **NUEVO project** is a regional co-operation project between five municipalities in Östra Mellansverige: Norrköping, Uppsala, Eskilstuna, Västerås and Örebro. The project works with unemployed youngsters with special needs and aged between 18 and 29. Despite their participation in labour market programmes, these youngsters are not in work and are therefore obliged to claim social benefits. The NUEVO project wants to develop new strategies for the target group to help them get closer to working life.
Read more on www.nuevoprojektet.se
- The project **European Rehab Racing Center** is creating a rehabilitation model through co-operation between state agencies and private companies in the municipality of Kalix. The centre is coordinating programmes for people outside the job market, and provides an effective and individually tailored process for a quick return to a full and fulfilling working life.
Read more on www.eurrac.se
- The **SpråkSam** project in Stockholm aims at improving language education and making the workplace a language-learning environment for those at risk of exclusion from the labor market due to their poor knowledge of Swedish. A total of 21 workplaces are participating, as well as research institutions, sfi, Komvux and trade unions.
Read more on www.aldrecentrum.se/templates/normalpage.aspx?id=704

Eligible regions 2007-2013



The level of ESF funding differs from one region to another depending on their relative wealth.

- Sweden, with a GDP per head of more than 75% of the EU-25 average, is eligible under the regional competitiveness and employment objective.

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