

Sweden
a pocket guide

Facts, figures and advice for new residents

Integrationsverket

Sweden

a pocket guide

Facts, tips and advice for new residents

INTEGRATIONSVERKET

Sweden – a pocket guide

PRIMARY AUTHORS:	**Ingela Björck, Bulle Davidsson**
OTHER AUTHORS:	Jolin Boldt, Mark Olson, Göran Rosenberg, Jasenko Selimovic, Hanna Wallensteen
PROJECT MANAGER:	Ingela Dahlin
PROJECT SECRETARY:	Nenad Duborija
EDITORIAL COUNCIL:	Ingela Dahlin, Nenad Duborija, Britta Linebäck, Mark Olson, Anna-Sofia Quensel
REFERENCE GROUP:	Anne-Marie Egerö, Åsa Gredebäck, Eva Norinder, Ali Rashid, Wiwi Samuelsson
PRINTING:	Berlings Skogs AB, Trelleborg
PUBLISHED BY:	The Swedish Integration Board, Norrköping, Sweden 2001
DESIGN:	Forma Viva, Linköping, Sweden
PRODUCTION:	Adman, Stockholm / Forma Viva, Linköping
TRANSLATION:	Watchword AB
COVER PHOTO:	Håkan Sandbring, Pressens Bild

Special thanks to the National Judiciary Administration, the Migration Board, the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the National Social Insurance Board, the National Tax Board, the National Agency for Education, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Road Administration for valuable input on the book's contents.

Responsibility for the factual content of the book rests with the editorial staff and the Swedish Integration Board.
ISBN 91-89609-02-6

To the reader

Welcome to Sweden. In our society, everyone is entitled to equal rights and opportunities. That includes you too.

For new residents – such as you – to make the most of their opportunities, they need good information. The pocket guide provides ready answers on everything from schools to work and taxes to the history of the country.

Words printed in blue are worth noting. **Blue words with an asterisk*** are defined in the adjacent column.

We hope this book will make your Swedish voyage of discovery easier – and more enjoyable. It is presented as a gift to all who are granted a permanent residence permit in Sweden.

The factual information presented was accurate at the date of publication in October 2001. As time goes by, some information may become outdated. The latest version of the Swedish edition is therefore available on line on the Swedish Integration Board's website at www.integrationsverket.se

The digital edition will be updated regularly.

Contents

7 **The new country** Introduction
12 **Sweden in brief** Geography, climate and population
17 **Swedish history** A brief overview from the Ice Age to the Cyber Age
29 **Debate, vote, influence** How Sweden is governed
43 **How we usually do things…** Traditions and popular customs in modern Sweden
61 **Your new neighbours** Crooked path to community
63 **The municipality** Taking charge and providing services in your area
70 **Maps**
75 **Your initial period in Sweden** A fresh start in a new country
81 **Finding a home** Renting a flat, buying a house
90 **Your new neighbours** Human dignity gets a mangling
92 **Finding a good job** The Swedish labour market
107 **How much does it cost?** Money and day-to-day finances
124 **Your new neighbours** An umbrella
126 **Our nearest and dearest** On living together. Families, couples and relatives
140 **A safe place for children** Day nurseries, open pre-schools and recreation centres
146 **A school for all** Nine-year compulsory school and upper-secondary school
159 **Learning more** Folk high schools and universities
167 **The golden years** Support and service for the elderly
172 **To your health** Types of healthcare and support
196 **Churches and faith** Religion in today's Sweden
205 **Law and order** Sweden's efforts to promote justice
215 **On the road** Taking to the Swedish roads by car
221 **"What do you do in your leisure time?"** An ordinary question with some extraordinary answers
231 **Residence permits and citizenship** On temporary and permanent residence in Sweden
240 **Your new neighbours** Shame and shared humanity
243 **A fresh start in Sweden** An introduction for new arrivals
246 **Religious communities in Sweden** Address list
248 **National ethnic organisations in Sweden**
253 **In case of emergency** Emergency telephone numbers
254 **Index**



Photo: Torbjörn Andersson / Pressens Bild

First steps on Swedish soil. A family from Kosovo in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia arrives in Karlskrona in hopes of a new, more peaceful life in Sweden.

The new country

Introduction

Until just a decade or so ago, Sweden was a society that assumed all its residents were the same. They spoke the same language, shared the same history, religion and traditions, and had more or less the same ideas about what constitutes a good society.

It is possible that the similarities seemed greater than they really were. The regional and cultural differences that existed in pre-modern Sweden were great, as were the differences between social classes, and the differences between locals and outsiders. Even in the strong commu-

nity of Sweden's modern welfare state, some people were more equal than others. And thus there were those who, more or less under duress, had to adapt or be cast out: vagrants, the Sami, gypsies, homosexuals, Jews, the biologically inferior, the socially deviant, the mentally disabled.

Inner and outer boundaries opening up

Today, we are painfully aware that that was the wrong approach, that the dream of a society based on everyone's similarity can easily turn into a nightmare. Today, we better understand the distinctiveness and difference of every individual. This is not only because more people from diverse cultures have come here and become our neighbours; our entire culture has become more individualised. That which distinguishes us from one another has become as important and valuable as that which unites us. We all want to "do our own thing", shape our lives as we see fit, find the communities that suit us, be just as different as we feel we truly are. The boundary between the familiar and the foreign no longer runs through the nearest passport control – it runs right through our midst.

Diversity becomes everyday life

For a while, it seemed natural to speak of the Swedes and their immigrants, or of the majority society and its minorities, or of Swedish culture and multiculture. Today we realise that diversity and difference are here to stay. Sweden is now "a community with social diversity as its foundation", a society in which "general policy, in a way utterly distinct from previous eras, must spring from and reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity that exists in society" ("Sweden, future and diversity – from immigrant policy to integration policy", government bill 1997/98:16).

This may seem self-evident. A democracy should reflect



Photo: Lars Epstein / Pressens Bild

Curiouser and curiouser. A lively group of boys on an outing to one of Sweden's most imaginative museums, Tom Tits Experiment in Södertälje. Diversity has come to stay.

the composition and opinion of its citizens, shouldn't it? If a country's citizenry changes, so, reasonably, should its politics.

A revolutionary commitment

But it turns out not to be so self-evident at all. The fact that the ethnic and cultural composition of Swedish society is changing will not necessarily entail a corresponding change in Sweden's social apparatus. A society based on ethnic and cultural diversity is actually a revolutionary commitment for a country like Sweden, and indeed for all democracies which more or less explicitly base their community of welfare on ideas of historical and cultural affinity. And which thus, more or less explicitly, have demanded cultural adaptation and uniformity.

A democracy that wants to base its sense of community on ideas of human difference and cultural diversity cannot exact the same demands. It cannot assume an unwritten

ethnic and cultural affinity as the basis for social solidarity. Nor can it assume that its citizens have more or less the same values and preferences.

Instead, it must seek to unite culturally distinct values with culturally blind societal institutions, to bridge cultural differences with cross-cultural justice. It must succeed in disabusing itself of the notion that diversity is a passing unpleasantness. It must succeed in instilling the idea, in a majority of its citizens, that difference and diversity are permanent and essentially enriching conditions.

Get down to work – the only alternative

There are those who assert that such a democracy is an impossibility, for people instinctively shun the alien and cling to the familiar at the first hint of crisis. There are those who assert that people are just as instinctively drawn to and stimulated by encounters with other cultures and lifestyles, and that what democracy is facing today is a historic opportunity, not an insoluble problem.

In any case, we cannot opt out of the ethnic and cultural diversity of our society. We can no more do so than we can opt out of an existence with increasingly open borders, ever faster communications and more and more regular contact between people around the globe.

Those who today advocate a society based on ethnic and



Foto: Mark Olson

Over the years the face of Sweden has changed. People on the streets, in shops and restaurants often have traits which suggest that they come from other parts of the world.



Photo: Mikael Lundgren / Pressens Bild

Refugee children from Iraq play hockey in Lycksele, a town in northern Sweden. Fast moves – and a new way of being with friends.

cultural similarity advocate a society that does not exist, and that could only be brought about through assaults on basic democratic rights and freedoms.

This does not mean that a democracy based on ethnic and cultural diversity can be created in the blink of an eye. But it does mean that we have no alternative but to get down to work.

What will grow from this is a new Sweden, a new country. Just as a new country came into being in Sweden a century ago.

And just as it was a hundred years ago, it is up to us today to see that the new country is a good one in which to live.

Göran Rosenberg
author and social commentator

Sweden is unevenly populated. Most people live in the south, fewer in the north, where the countryside is dominated by forest, mountains and rivers.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Sweden in Brief

Geography, climate and population

Physically, Sweden is the fourth largest country in Europe. It is 500 kilometres wide and stretches 1,600 kilometres from north to south, with a surface area of 450,000 square kilometres. Its population, on the other hand, is not particularly large, just under 9 million. Most people live in the southern part of the country, while large parts of northern Sweden are entirely unpopulated.

The capital of Sweden is Stockholm, which is also the country's largest city. Over 1.5 million people live in greater Stockholm. The second largest city is Göteborg, followed by Malmö, Uppsala and Linköping.

Sweden is a long country, and both countryside and climate vary greatly in different parts of the country. Cultivated land accounts for less than one tenth of the total land area and is found primarily in the south. The interior of northern Sweden is covered by vast forests and mountains – "fjällen", or "the fells" – along the Norwegian boundary. It receives a great deal of snow in the winter. On the other hand, the climate of the areas along the northern Swedish coast hardly differs from the climate further south

kraftverk: facility that produces electricity from coal, oil or other energy sources.

kärnkraft: electricity derived from the splitting of atoms.

Coast and islands

Sweden has a long coast, with many coastal islands in some areas. The Stockholm archipelago consists of some 25,000 islands, for example. Two islands in the southern Baltic – Öland and Gotland – are very large.

The country has vast forestlands and many waterways. There are fully 100,000 lakes. The largest lakes are Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren.

Four of the large rivers in northern Sweden are nature reserves. Their watercourses may not be destroyed to build **power plants**, **kraftverk***. Power plants have already been built on several other northern rivers and supply a great deal of electricity. Sweden's other energy sources include **nuclear power**, **kärnkraft***, as well as oil and coal, which are imported from other countries. However, pursuant to a decision of the Swedish Parliament, or Riksdag, plans are in place to phase out and eventually cease using nuclear power altogether.

A hundred years ago, iron and timber were the country's most important export products. They continue to consti-



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / REDAKTA

Two-thirds of all people who are gainfully employed in Sweden work for private companies. A third of the people work in the tax-financed public sector.

omsorg: professional category providing healthcare and care for children, the elderly, etc.

renhållning: handling of refuse

tute a portion of the country's exports, but industrial products such as cars, machinery, cellular telephones and pharmaceuticals are now more important.

Many Swedish industrial companies are now owned by major international companies.

Democracy with free elections

Approximately a fifth of the Swedish labour force works in industry. Just as many work in the **care sector**, **omsorg***, and as many again work in commerce, transportation and service.

Almost two thirds of all employed persons work in private companies large and small. Just over a third work in what is usually termed the **public sector**, **offentliga sektorn**. This includes activities financed by taxes, such as schools, healthcare, care of the elderly, police, **sanitation**, **renhållning***, and road-building. The public sector is larger in Sweden than in many other countries.

Sweden is a democracy, in the sense that it is governed

by **a parliament**, **Riksdag**, elected in free general elections. Sweden is also a monarchy, but the King has no real power today. *For more on this topic, see the chapter on Democracy.*

Since 1995, Sweden has been a member of the European Union (EU). Many Swedish regulations, including those governing customs and border control, have therefore been adapted to conform to EU norms. Sweden is also a member of the United Nations (UN).

The geographical region in which Sweden and its neighbours Norway and Denmark are situated is known as Scandinavia. Finland is also sometimes counted as a Scandinavian country. The expression "Nordic countries" refers to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland.

Minorities in Sweden

The Sami, or Laps, are a minority people in northern Sweden with their own culture and language. Many consider that the Sami were the first people to come to northern Sweden. Northernmost Sweden has also always been home to many Finns, as have parts of central Sweden.

During certain periods from the Middle Ages on, other ethnic groups also started coming to Sweden: German merchants, Belgian smiths, English shipbuilders. In the mid-twentieth century, many people immigrated from southern Europe to work in Swedish industry, which then needed manpower. Since the mid-seventies, many refugees have immigrated to Sweden, fleeing war and political persecution.

Over 900,000 people – more than one in ten of today's residents – were born abroad. Of residents born abroad, approximately a third come from the other Nordic countries, a third from the rest of Europe and a third from countries outside Europe. Over half of the residents born abroad have become Swedish citizens.

Nearly every fifth person

The most common country of origin for people born abroad is Finland. Almost 200,000 Swedish residents were born in Finland. The next most common countries of origin, in order, are Yugoslavia, Iran, Bosnia, Norway, Poland, Germany, Denmark and Turkey. Among refugees granted residence permits, the most common countries of origin during the nineties were Bosnia, Kosovo, Turkey, Iraq and Somalia.

There are 700,000 people who were born in Sweden but have one or more parents who were born abroad. All in all, this means that almost one in five residents of Sweden has a foreign background.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- The Swedish Institute, tel. 08-789 20 00 or www.si.se, offers some 70 brief brochures on Swedish films, royalty, foreign policy and many other topics. You can order them for 5 kronor each or download them from the Internet. Many are available in several languages, including some of the eastern European languages.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Petroglyphs freshly painted red at Himmelstalund in Norrköping, Östergötland. Beautiful messages from a distant time.

Swedish History

A brief overview from the Ice Age to the Cyber Age

For millennia, Sweden was an agricultural society. Differences between rich and poor were striking. Not until the mid-nineteenth century did modern Sweden begin to take shape. Land reforms were carried out, industrialism took wing. There was still great poverty, however, and in the early twentieth century labourers formed unions to fight for better conditions. As the twentieth century drew to a close, Sweden started to be affected by the rest of the world more than ever before.

Here you can read about the country's development from prehistoric times to the present day.

Long ago, during the last **Ice Age**, **istiden**, all of what is now Sweden was covered by ice. A huge icecap spread out over much of the northern part of the globe and did not begin to melt until approximately 15,000 years ago. In some places, the icecap was up to three kilometres thick.

Wandering hunters become farmers

When the ice melted, plants, animals and people migrated from the south to the ice-free areas. The people were small groups of hunter-gatherers, who lived by hunting, fishing and collecting edible plants, moving from place to place as they did so. Later, 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, they began to cultivate plants and keep domesticated animals, and the hunters gradually became settled farmers.

New metals for weapons and tools

The period of the hunter-gatherer societies and the first agricultural societies is called the **Stone Age**, **stenåldern**, for only tools of stone and wood were used. Later, around 1500 BC, bronze objects began being made. Bronze is an easily worked alloy of several metals, and could be shaped into axes, spears, swords and jewellery. This period was therefore called the **Bronze Age**, **bronsåldern**.

There were hardly any roads during this period, only narrow tracks and paths. People thus preferred to travel by boat along lakes and rivers whenever possible. Merchants came from far and wide, bringing goods from one part of Europe to another

In about 500 BC, the inhabitants of Sweden learned to manufacture iron, which is harder and more durable than bronze. They made new tools, which enabled them to build better dwellings and cultivate more land. This period is known as the **Iron Age**, **järnåldern**.

Voyages of the Vikings

The Viking Era, **Vikingatiden**, is a famous period of Swedish history. It stretched from approximately 800 to 1050 AD. In their large ships, the **Vikings**, **Vikingarna***, voyaged west to France, England, Iceland and Greenland, and east to the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, to Istanbul and Baghdad. Their voyages combined war-making with commerce. Sometimes they took what they wanted by force; sometimes they traded furs, skins and prisoners-of-war for silver coins and objects of glass and bronze.



Photo: Jan F Carlsson / Pressens Bild

Viking ships took long westward voyages, both to trade and to make war. This illustration comes from the exhibition Birkas krigare, "Warriors of Birka", on the island of Björkö in Uppland. Björkö was the site of the medieval trading site Birka. Relics of the Viking era have been found on the northern part of Björkö.

As the Viking Era approached its end, a new religion came to Sweden: Christianity. Until then, people had worshipped other gods, known as Æsir, with names such as Odin, Thor and Freyr.

viking: Nordic warriors and traders who undertook journeys in sailing ships.

Christianity spread slowly. For a century or more, old beliefs coexisted with the new, but gradually the new faith took over and Christian churches sprang up everywhere. The country also became more and more united. The protracted struggles between powerful families and different regions came to an end, and Sweden eventually became united under a single king who enjoyed the support of the church.

The country was divided into provinces, each with its own laws. Initially, these existed only as an oral tradition. The first written laws date from the thirteenth century. Later, in the fourteenth century, serfdom was abolished.

Until then, serfs – slaves who worked in the fields or in the house – had been permitted, and they could be bought and sold like cattle or horses.

Baltic trade

The period of Swedish history between the Viking Era and the beginning of the sixteenth century is usually referred to as the **Middle Ages**, **medeltiden**. In the beginning of this period, trade across the Baltic Sea was very important. Trade was controlled by the Hanse, a league of powerful cities in northern Germany. Hanse merchants also enjoyed great power in the Swedish cities that began to grow during the Middle Ages. Stockholm was little more than a village at this time, while Visby on the island of Gotland was an important city with many churches and large stone buildings.

The foundations of the Swedish parliament – the Riksdag – were laid in the Middle Ages. There were often struggles for royal power, and those who would be king convened meetings of the people from whom they desired support. These meetings gradually developed into a par-



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Duke Magnus – a dramatic human fate from Sweden's history, here presented on the operatic stage at Vadstena-Akademien. Opera performances at Vadstena have garnered international attention.

liament, or diet, with four estates which represented the interests of different sectors of society. The four estates were the nobility (great families who were granted special privileges by the king), the priesthood, the burghers (city residents) and the farmers. Only men could sit in parliament – women were not granted political power until the twentieth century.

Gustav Vasa

For part of the Middle Ages, Denmark, Norway and Sweden were joined together in a union. There was little peace in this union, however. The powerful men of Sweden did not want Danish masters; they wanted Sweden to be self-governed. When in 1520 the King of Denmark was also crowned King of Sweden, the Swedes protested vigorously. To preserve his power, the Danish king had about a hundred of the most powerful men of Sweden killed in Stockholm. This event is known as the **Stockholm bloodbath**, **Stockholms blodbad**, and the Danish King Christian II became known in Sweden as Christian the Tyrant.

Shortly after the Stockholm bloodbath, a rebellion began against Christian II, led by a young nobleman named Gustav Vasa who travelled the country inciting the Swedish people to rise up against Danish rule. The Danish armies were eventually defeated, and Gustav Vasa became king.

By this time, the church had grown very powerful, owning a fifth of all the land in the country. But the king needed money to defend the country. He proclaimed himself head of the church and let the state take over much of the church's wealth. At the same time, the church's Catholic teachings were replaced by the Protestant, Lutheran creed.

At this time, Sweden had nowhere near as many inhabitants as it does today. The population of the entire coun-



Bild: Oljemålning, Gripsholms slott

Gustav Vasa (1496–1560) led the rebellion against the Danish king. When he later became King of Sweden, he did his utmost to enhance royal power relative to that of the nobility and the church.

try was only some 800,000 people. The great majority were farmers, and the capital city of Stockholm had no more than 8,000 inhabitants

Era of Great Power

The seventeenth century is often called Sweden's **Era of Great Power**, **stormaktstiden.** Sweden was an important European power in those days, and much larger than it is today. The country's borders extended to include not only Finland, which had been part of Sweden for several centuries, but many other areas annexed in wars. These areas are now parts of Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Germany and Norway.

Sweden had a large army and a thriving arms industry. One famous Swedish king is Gustavus Adolphus II, who took part in the Thirty Years' War in Germany. He fell in battle during the **Battle of Lützen**, **slaget vid Lützen**. The Thirty Years' War pitted Catholic armies against Protestant armies; it was a war of both power and religion.

Another famous Swedish king is Charles XII, who incites strong feelings in Sweden even today. Some consider him a warrior and hero who defended Swedish honour and fought the Russians. Others consider him one of history's losers, for it was during his reign that the Swedish Era of Great Power came to an end and Sweden lost much of its territory.

Denmark, today a good friend and good neighbour of Sweden, was often an enemy in days gone by. During the

reign of Charles XII, Sweden was at war with Denmark, and Charles XII died in Norway, then under Danish rule. To this day, no-one knows whether the king was shot by the Norwegian troops the Swedes were fighting or was murdered by someone from his own side. In the latter case, the murderer may have been paid by a person or group hoping to gain power once the king was out of the way, or who wanted to put an end to a war that Sweden at any rate seemed to be losing.

In the case of another king, Gustaf III, there is no doubt that he was murdered. We know who committed the murder and why, too. Gustaf III wanted to expand royal power and reduce the power of the nobility, which made the nobility his enemies. In addition, he had involved Sweden in a war against Russia that many considered senseless. Gustaf III was shot at a **masquerade**, **maskeradbal***, by one of the guests, a nobleman who had come to the party with a pistol secreted in his coat.

maskeradbal: a masked ball at which all guests are in costumes.

Modern Sweden takes shape

In the early nineteenth century Sweden lost a war against Russia. As a result of this loss, Finland, long the eastern part of Sweden, had to be turned over to Russia. Sweden instead entered into a union with Norway, but the Norwegians wanted independence and left the union in 1905. Since then, Sweden's borders have been as they are today.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the great majority of Swedes still lived in the countryside as farmers. The differences between rich and poor were great. Only wealthy farmers and city dwellers could sit in Parliament, and the King still had great power.

At last, peace had come to the country after the many wars. Healthcare improved, and not as many children died. For this reason, the population grew, and soon there was

not enough land for everyone. Some moved to the cities and took work in the industries then beginning to emerge. Others left Sweden, seeking a better future in another country. Over a million Swedes emigrated during the nineteenth century, the great majority going to North America.

Great changes occurred in the nineteenth century. A series of land reforms were implemented, and old villages were divided up so that farms came to be widely separated. These reforms, termed "parcelling", were embodied in the statute on enclosures. Another law required that all children should attend school and that public schooling should be free of charge.

Industrialisation, **Industrialiseringen**, which we mentioned previously, began in earnest during this period. Factories began to be built – textile mills, sawmills, papermills, ironworks, metal shops, etc. Roads, railways and canals were built, too. Many people moved from the country to the cities, which grew ever larger.

Twentieth century

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was still great poverty in Sweden. Industrial labour was hard and poorly paid, and the workers joined together in labour unions to fight for better conditions. This was the beginning of the **labour movement**, **arbetarrörelsen**. Political parties were established, too. In 1909, a law was passed giving all men, not only the rich, the right to vote. Somewhat later, in 1921, women were also given the right to vote.

Sweden did not participate in either the First or the Second World War. The country's economy thus suffered no lasting damage as a result of war, and its earlier poverty gradually disappeared.

The Social Democratic party has dominated Swedish politics since the thirties. Labourers were the mainstay vot-



Photo: Carl Erik Sundström / Pressens Bild

Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme addressing a large crowd at the Liseberg amusement park in Göteborg during the 1985 election campaign. Palme and his Social Democratic predecessors sought to create a "home for the people", a society without great economic gaps between different social groups.

ers of the Social Democrats, who wanted to help those who were worst off. They spoke of creating a society that would be a **Home for the People**, **folkhem**, without great social and economic differences.

To this end, rules governing compensation for the sick and the unemployed were introduced. Later, additional rules were introduced governing paid holidays, child allowances, general pensions, etc. All of these are generally grouped under the heading of **social welfare**, **välfärd**, and are funded by all residents of Sweden through taxes and

fees. *For more information on taxes and subsidies, see the chapter on Money.*

In the nineteenth century, the old parliament with its four estates was replaced by a bicameral parliament. In the 1970s, it was replaced by today's single-chamber parliament. As of 2001, six parties are represented in Parliament. *For more information on Swedish political life, see the chapter on Democracy.*

One event that galvanised attention both in Sweden and



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Swedish paper pulp being loaded onto a ship in the Port of Norrköping. International trade is growing increasingly important, especially for small countries such as Sweden. Both goods and services are traded on the international market.

abroad was the murder of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986. Palme was shot in Stockholm one evening as he walked home from the cinema. We still do not know who committed the murder.

The new millennium

During the final decade of the twentieth century, the balance between the socialist parties and the non-socialist parties has been fairly even. The largest parties in each block, the Social Democrats and the Moderates, have agreed that state expenditure should be cut. For this reason, the number of employees in healthcare and the schools has been reduced

Taxes have also been reduced, for most political parties felt that they were too high. The tax cuts have primarily benefited those with high or medium incomes. The gap between rich and poor, which had long been unusually narrow in Sweden by comparison with other countries, has therefore begun to grow again. Growing income gaps and the impact of the state's savings programmes, which has affected many people, have led to hot debate.

Another factor that has also greatly affected Sweden in recent years is the increasingly international mobility of people, goods, services and money. This trend is usually referred to as **internationalisation**, **internationalisering**, or **globalisation**, **globalisering**.

Through **world trade**, **världshandeln**, Sweden's economy is now more greatly affected by events in other parts of the world than it was previously. Membership in the European Union (EU) has also forged closer links between Sweden and other countries.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Many of the days of the week got their names during the period when Swedes still believed in the gods of the ancient Æsir cult. Tuesday was the day of the god Tyr, Wednesday was Odin's day, Thursday was Thor's day and Friday was Freyr's day.
- Vasaloppet, a cross-country skiing race from Sälen to Mora in the province of Dalarna, was named after Gustav Vasa. He is said to have skied this stretch to escape the soldiers of the Danish king.
- Books on Swedish history are shelved under Kc at the library. It may also be a good idea to check the youth section for books on history and other topics. Books for young people contain fewer details than those in the adult section and may thus be a good choice if you are looking for a general overview of any particular field.
- There is an on-line journal of Swedish history at www.historia.nu.



Photo: Ola Torkelsson / Pressens Bild

The Swedish people choose their political representatives in general elections. Politicians are therefore eager to meet the people and present their parties' positions. Here, cabinet minister Mona Sahlin (Soc. Dem.) drums up votes for her party. Open-air meetings are a way of inspiring confidence and winning votes for the party.

Debate, Vote, Influence

How Sweden is governed

In this chapter we will discuss how Sweden is governed – the roles played by politicians and public authorities, and how Swedish residents can influence the life of society at large.

We will also discuss the various political parties, some important laws protecting the rights of people to express their opinions, and the authorities to whom you can turn if you feel you have been treated improperly.

Sweden is a democracy, meaning it is governed by its people. To call a country a democracy is to say that all its

adult citizens have the right to vote on an equal footing. Everyone can freely express his or her opinion, and there are political parties that represent different opinions. The people choose their political representatives in general elections, and the party or parties that receive the most votes are allowed to govern. Political decisions lead to the adoption of legislation and rules, which in turn govern public authorities and their officials.

The most important political body in Sweden is **Parliament**, **riksdagen**. The politicians who sit in Parliament make decisions at the highest level, applicable to the entire country.

lokal fråga: an issue affecting a limited area.

Sweden is also divided into **county council regions**, **landsting**, large areas which are primarily responsible for healthcare, and **municipalities**, **kommuner**, which are smaller areas responsible for schools, day nurseries and other **local issues**, **lokala frågor***. These are served by political bodies of their own, the **county councils**, **landstingsfullmäktige**, and **municipal councils**, **kommunfullmäktige**. *Municipalities and county councils are discussed in the chapter on The Municipality*. Elections to all three bodies are held on the same date, every fourth year in September: 1998, 2002, etc.

Voting

Swedish citizens who are at least 18 years old are entitled to vote in all three elections. Most foreign citizens who have been granted a residence permit can become Swedish citizens after five years' residence in Sweden. Some can attain citizenship even earlier. The Migration Board or your municipal refugee co-ordinator can provide more information on citizenship rules.

If you are a foreign citizen, you are not entitled to vote in parliamentary elections. On the other hand, you are entitled to vote in county and municipal council elections,



Photo: Jan Collsiöö /Pressens Bild

The house of Bernadotte has held the Swedish crown since the nineteenth century. The current king is Karl XVI Gustaf. At right is Queen Silvia, with Crown Princess Victoria in the middle.

provided that you are over 18 and have been listed in the Swedish population rolls for at least three years. If you are a citizen of another EU member state, you may vote in municipal and county council elections immediately, without having lived here for at least three years.

Everyone with the right to vote is entitled to stand for election. If you are a foreign citizen and a member of one of the Swedish parties, you may run for election to the municipal or county council.

A monarchy in the EU

Sweden is a member of the **European Union (EU)**, **Europeiska Unionen**. Swedish citizens are therefore entitled to vote in European parliamentary elections, which are held every fifth year.

Sweden is a monarchy. The royal family has no real political power, however; its significance is historical and symbolic. The King is Carl XVI Gustaf, and the Queen's name is Silvia. Their family name is Bernadotte. They have three children: Victoria, Carl Philip and Madeleine. Victoria stands next in line for the throne after the present King.

Parliament

The Swedish **Parliament**, **riksdagen**, has 349 elected members. The percentage of female MPs has increased, as have the numbers of women in other important positions in the country, though the percentages are still lower than the percentage of women in the population.

The party or coalition of parties that receives the most votes in a parliamentary election is entitled to form a **government**, **regering**, and rule the country for the next four years. The government (or cabinet) consists of **cabinet ministers**, **statsråd**, who head or are associated with the various **ministries**, **departement**. There are ten ministries, each in charge of a particular area. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs deals with international issues, the Ministry of Finance handles economic issues, while the Ministry of Education is in charge of schools and related issues.

Generally speaking, decisions on important issues are not made directly by the government. Such issues are also debated in Parliament, and sometimes a **commission**, **utredning**, is established. This entails appointing one or more people to study an issue and make a recommendation on what should be done.

The recommendation is detailed in an official report, which is generally sent to public authorities and organisations that might have opinions to express on the matter. If a commission is dealing with integration issues, for example, the Integration Board, other authorities and many immigrant associations might be asked to submit opinions on the report. They draw up a **statement of opinion**, **remissvar**, a letter in which they express their opinions and perhaps propose amendments. When the politicians eventually make a decision on the issue, they are required to take these statements of opinion into consideration.



Photo: Jack Mikrut / Pressens Bild

The assembly hall of the Riksdag. This is where votes are taken on new legislation, reforms and economic initiatives.

Government authorities

The decisions of Parliament and the government may be implemented through the auspices of government **authorities**, **myndigheterna***. Officials of a public authority must be **non-partisan**, **opartiska***, and follow the laws and regulations governing how the authority is expected to operate. If you believe an official has made an incorrect decision, you can often **lodge an appeal**, **överklaga***, against the decision with someone at a higher level. The official is obliged to inform you of where you can lodge an appeal. You can also appeal to the Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO). *For more information on the Parliamentary Ombudsman, see the conclusion of this chapter.*

Many public authorities operate in Sweden; some are very large, while others are quite small. Some of the authorities that are often in the news are the **National Labour Market Board**, **Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen**, which deals with labour market issues, the **National Board of Health and Welfare**, **Socialstyrelsen**, which deals with healthcare and social issues, the **Migration Board**, **Migrationsverket**, and the Integration Board, **Integrationsverket**, which handle immigration, emigration and integration, the **National Agency for Education**, **Skolverket**, which deals with issues relating to pre-schools and schools, the **National**

myndighet: a state or municipal organisation with officials who make decisions on the issues the authority is charged with handling.

opartisk: not taking a stand for or against a particular person or issue.

överklaga: appeal to a higher authority against a decision you consider to be wrong.

Officials of various public authorities implement the policies decided on by the government and parliament.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Regerings-kansliet

Agency for Higher Education, **Högskoleverket**, which deals with higher education issues, the **National Road Administration**, **Vägverket**, which handles traffic and driving licence issues, and the **National Environmental Protection Board**, **Naturvårdsverket**, which deals with conservation and protection of the environment.

County administrative boards, municipalities and county councils

länsstyrelse: A government authority represented in every county. Listed in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory.

Most public authorities operate at the national level, either through a single office – usually in Stockholm – or several offices around the country. **The county administrative boards**, **länsstyrelserna**, by contrast, are government authorities that are responsible for a smaller area, **a county**, **län**. There are 21 counties in Sweden. The director of a county administrative board is the county governor.

County administrative boards are in charge of regional planning. They deal with issues relating to industry, the labour market, and roads and transportation within the county. Hunting and fishing issues, nature conservation and environmental protection are also handled by the county administrative boards.

Municipalities and county councils are not government authorities. They are governed by municipal and county council politicians, who are chosen in elections that are

separate from parliamentary elections. Municipalities and county councils provide most of the services Swedish residents receive for their tax money, such as childcare, schools, care of the elderly, and healthcare. *For more information, see the chapter on The Municipality.*

Political parties

There are seven **parties**, **partier**, in the Swedish Parliament. The Social Democrats, or Social Democratic Labour Party, are the oldest, having been founded in 1889. Next oldest are the Moderates, or Moderate Coalition Party

The Social Democrats and the Left Party are sometimes referred to as the "socialist bloc", while the Moderates, Liberals, Centre Party and Christian Democrats are the "non-socialist bloc". In broad strokes, the socialist parties generally support public-sector solutions and believe that the state should take major responsibility for people's well-being. The non-socialist parties, on the other hand, advocate individual solutions and support the freedom of individuals to make a life for themselves.

Another way of talking about the same difference is to speak of **"right"**, **höger***, and **"left"**, **vänster***. Social Democrats and Left Party members are usually considered to be on the left, Moderates and Christian Democrats on the right, and Liberals and Centre Party members in the centre. The Greens are more difficult to categorise, for the party takes positions on every individual issue based on its consequences for the environment.

In 2001 the Social Democrats had 131 MPs, the Moderates 82, the Left 43, the Christian Democrats 42, the Centre Party 18, the Liberals 17 and the Greens 16. Only a few MPs have immigrant backgrounds.

In general, the parties have a local association in every municipality, or at least in the larger municipalities. The

"högern": The Right – in political contexts, often refers to the Conservatives. The concept originated during the French Revolution, when those who wished to preserve the old social system sat on the right-hand side of the National Assembly (parliament), while the reformists sat on the left.

"vänstern" Since then, groups wishing to change the system and give the state greater powers in creating like conditions for all citizens have been referred to as the Left, or "vänstern" in Swedish.

local associations are active in municipal politics. They can also voice opinions on national policy to the party's national association. You can find the local party associations under the heading Politiska organisationer in the Yellow Pages.

Party politics

When we were writing this book, we asked the parties represented in Parliament to give a brief description of what their party stands for. These were their answers, in alphabetical order:

Centre Party Centerpartiet

We are a moderate party founded on the premise that all people have equal rights and equal worth. All people should have the same opportunity to take responsibility and make the most of their opportunities, regardless of their background. Important issues: increased local power, equal rights to education and social welfare, free enterprise, environmental work, international solidarity.

Christian Democratic Party Kristdemokraterna

We want:
- a new non-socialist government.
- 20,000 new healthcare places in the next ten years. Improved personnel policies, with continuing education and generous compensation in the care sector.
- a school that is safe and stimulating for both teachers and students, consideration for others, compassion, good order and structure.

Green Party Miljöpartiet

Our most important issues:

Shorter working hours – a society with time for its children has to reduce the number of hours people work.

Climate issues – through their present lifestyle, humans

are changing conditions for other forms of life on Earth.

European Monetary Union (EMU) – Sweden should remain outside the EMU on democratic and economic grounds.

Left Party Vänsterpartiet

Shorter working hours and narrower wage differentials.

Equality between women and men.

A society based on ecocycles; renewable energy sources instead of nuclear power.

A fair economic world order, refugee policy based on solidarity and efforts to combat racism. Co-operation between independent states instead of EU membership.

Liberal Party Folkpartiet

Freedom is our central tenet. We strive to give all people greater influence over their everyday lives.

A school that truly provides all types of knowledge is the most important issue we face today. Every student must be given the opportunity to attain basic reading, writing and arithmetical skills.

Moderate Party Moderaterna

We are in favour of free enterprise and free economic activity; we are against socialism.

Taxes should be cut so that people can live on their after-tax wages without being dependent on subsidies.

We want to combat unemployment by creating new, real jobs. It is in companies that we can create the jobs that generate growth and welfare.

Social Democratic Party Socialdemokraterna

Our vision is a society in which human value is more important than market value and everyone has the right to a job. To create an egalitarian, just society, schools, healthcare and care of children

and the elderly should by financed by taxes. We also want to improve child and family policy, working life and dental health.

Associations and organisations

Sweden is a country with many associations and organisations. **Popular movements**, **folkrörelser**, generally refers to organisations that operate nation-wide and have many members. Among the popular movements that have existed for many years are the labour unions, educational associations, sports institutions and free churches. *For more information on free churches, see the chapter on Religion*. The environmental movement is a more recent example.

The popular movements offer activities in which many people take part. Educational associations organise study circles, free churches hold services, sports associations organise training and competitions, environmental groups hold meetings to discuss various environmental problems.

Most associations have a permanent organisational structure, with governing boards, annual meetings and reports of their proceedings. **Networks**, **nätverk**, are more informal structures, linking people with the same profession or interests. Female physicians, people who sing in choirs and parents who want more staff in the day nurseries are examples of groups that may establish networks to stay in touch with one another.

Some major national associations are called **interest groups**, **intresseorganisationer**; their primary objective is to promote the economic interests of their members. The Federation of Private Enterprises, for example, helps its members – small businesspeople – to stay abreast of new tax regulations and get other information of interest to them.

Both popular movements and interest groups use **lobbying** in their efforts to influence politicians to make decisions



Photo: Sam Lindh / Pressens Bild

The right to demonstrate is guaranteed by law in Sweden. Here a group of students in Göteborg demonstrates in favour of more resources for the schools.

that benefit their members. Major organisations often visit ministers and public authorities to voice their opinions on issues affecting their area. Their opinions are often solicited on commission reports, as discussed previously. They are given the opportunity to say what they think about the report and how its proposals would affect the organisation's members.

Freedom of speech and the press

In a democracy it is important for everyone to be able to voice his or her opinions freely. For this reason, there are laws protecting certain important rights and freedoms in Sweden:

- freedom of speech
- freedom of the press
- freedom of assembly
- freedom of association
- freedom of religion

Freedom of speech is the right to express your opinions freely. The only limitation is that you are not permitted to

insult named individuals or engage in **agitation against a group of the population**, **hets mot folkgrupp**, meaning attacking another group on grounds of race, skin colour, religious belief, national or **ethnic origin**, **etniskt ursprung***, or sexual orientation.

nationellt eller etniskt ursprung: the country or ethnic group someone comes from.

Freedom of the press is the right to express your opinions in books and periodicals freely and without political censorship. It is always up to the newspaper owner or publisher to decide what will be published, however. Freedom of the press therefore does not mean that anything that can be printed actually is printed.

The last three freedoms on the list guarantee you the right to organise and participate in meetings, demonstrations and associations, and to practise your religion freely.

The constitution also asserts the principle of public access to official records. It states that the majority of documents drawn up by public authorities must be accessible to all who ask to see them. Some documents are excepted from this rule, however, such as those pertaining to individual people or economic negotiations.

Mass media

One way of making your voice heard is to try to gain exposure for your opinions in the mass media. There are many periodicals in Sweden, both in printed form and, more recently, on the Internet. In many towns, however, there is only one local or regional newspaper.

Sveriges Radio (the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation) and Sveriges Television (SVT) are companies funded not by advertising or political parties but by licence fees payable by all people who have a television. Under a contract between these companies and the state, their programming is to be characterised by non-partisanship, objectivity, diversity and quality. That means that they are not per-

mitted to take a stand for or against a controversial issue, and that they must give air time to many different opinions. The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation operates radio stations P1, P2, P3 and P4, and SVT operates the TV channels SVT1 and SVT2. Besides their offerings, there are many **commercial**, **kommersiella**, radio stations and television channels that derive their income from advertising.

Public ombudsmen

There are government-appointed ombudsmen in Sweden who are charged with ensuring that people receive fair treatment. If you believe that a public authority has broken the rules governing its operations, you can appeal to the **Parliamentary Ombudsman**, **Justitieombudsmannen**, **JO**. If you believe that an employer has broken the rule requiring equal treatment of men and women, you can report the matter to the **Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, Jämställdhetsombudsmannen**, **Jämo**. Similarly, anyone believing person he or she has been discriminated against in the workplace on grounds of race, skin colour, religious belief or national or ethnic origin can report the matter to the **Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination**, **Ombudsmannen mot etnisk diskriminering**, or **DO**. The DO has information in many languages on its website.

Children's rights are protected by the **Children's Ombudsman**, **Barnombudsmannen**, **BO**, and cases involving the **functionally disabled**, **funktionshindrade***, are dealt with by the **Disability Ombudsman**, **Handikappombudsmannen**. Those who believe they have been discriminated against on grounds of their sexual orientation may appeal to the **Ombudsman against Discrimination because of Sexual Orientation**, **HomO**. If you feel you have been treated improperly or non-objectively by the press, you can contact the **Press Ombudsman**, **PO**.

funktionshindrad: a person with a physical or mental disability that cannot be cured, e.g. a person with a hearing , visual or motor disorder.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- All the parties represented in Parliament have websites on the Internet where you can ask questions and express opinions on the party's policies. These are their addresses:
  www.centerpartiet.se
  www.folkpartiet.se
  www.kristdemokrat.se
  www.mp.se
  www.moderat.se
  www.sap.se
  www.vansterpartiet.se
- **SverigeDirekt** is the starting point for all websites giving information on the public sector. Here you will also find website addresses and information on whom to contact at municipalities, county councils, public authorities, etc.
  www.sverigedirekt.se
- Most ombudsmen have websites on the Internet.
  These are their addresses:
  Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, **Jämo**: www.jamombud.se
  Children's Ombudsman, **BO**: www.bo.se
  Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, **DO**: www.do.se
  Disability Ombudsman: www.handikappombudsmannen.se
  Ombudsman against Discrimination because of Sexual Orientation, **HomO**: www.homo.se
  Press Ombudsman: www.po-pon.org
- The Parliamentary Ombudsman, **JO**, does not have a site of its own, since it is part of the organisational structure of Parliament. For information on JO, go to www.riksdagen.se; click on Sök and enter JO.
- The Government and Parliament have their own homepages:
  www.riksdagen.se
  www.regeringen.se



Summer fun – airborne thrills or an outdoor training session.

Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

How We Usually Do Things…

Traditions and popular customs in modern Sweden

In getting to know a new country, you encounter many things that seem strange because they are unfamiliar. The country's traditions are one of them. In this chapter, we discuss some common Swedish traditions. Some have religious origins, while others spring from popular culture. You can also read something about what is specifically Swedish – if there is such a thing.

"Swedish" is a diffuse concept. Ultimately, the ancestors of all Swedes came from somewhere else, whether millennia or centuries ago, fifty, twenty or ten years ago – or even more recently. Sweden has nine million residents, and one out of every five people was born in another country or has one or two parents who were. In some cities and certain areas, the percentage is much higher. Some children and grandchildren of immigrants may feel more Swedish than, say, Chilean or Turkish. Others may feel more Chilean or Turkish than Swedish.

And there are many who feel equally at home in both countries.

New contributions to the language

New residents contribute to new phenomena such as "Rinkeby Swedish". This is a dialect that has developed in Rinkeby, near Stockholm, where people from many different countries live. As long as it has been spoken, the Swedish language has incorporated words and expressions from other languages. People have picked up words while travelling, or from books and magazines; words are brought by visitors and immigrants. In the past century, the language has been influenced greatly by films, radio and television, and now by the Internet. Swedish has incorporated so many English words and expressions that people sometimes speak of svengelska, or Swenglish.

A good way to get to know Sweden and the Swedes is to learn the language as quickly as possible. Language is an important key to Swedish society, to the labour market and to participation in schools, associations, sports – essentially everything. It also makes it easier to make new friends and let others get to know you if you can understand and speak the language. It doesn't have to be perfect.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Nature is important to many Swedes. The right of common access entitles all of us to move freely in the countryside, no matter who owns the land. It is prohibited to walk on planted fields, however, such as this field of rape. Doing so might damage future harvests.

Swedes and the countryside

If we are to try to identify something that is characteristically Swedish, we might choose a **love of nature**, **kärlek till naturen**. Sweden is sparsely populated, with vast tracts of countryside to enjoy. People who come here from the world's densely populated areas are often surprised to discover that you can spend hours in the forest without meeting another soul. The **right of common access**, **allemansrätten**, is a venerable tradition, enabling you to move freely through the countryside, regardless of who owns the land. There are exceptions, of course. You are not permitted access to certain military areas, nor may you walk on cultivated fields or close to private houses. But forests, meadows and waterways may be freely enjoyed by all. With this privilege come responsibilities: you may not pull up plants, break branches or litter. *For more information on the right of common access, see the chapter on Law and order.*

When Swedes live abroad, there are certain things they tend to miss. For many expatriate Swedes, the image of Sweden is a red cottage on a lake, with a Swedish flag billowing in the breeze. When visitors come from Sweden, Swedes living abroad often ask them to bring Swedish food, such as crispbread, fish roe spread or pickled herring.

Traditions year round

Swedish **traditions**, **traditionerna***, are often rooted in Christianity, but they sometimes date to the pre-Christian era. Here is a concise guide to some of the most important Swedish traditions year round.

WINTER

Most people celebrate the **New Year**, **nyåret**, with parties and fireworks, as in many other countries. In fact, though, you can celebrate the new year several times in Sweden if you want to. One week after the "Swedish" new year, the new year is celebrated according to the Orthodox Christian tradition. Special new year dates are observed by Sikhs, Muslims, Jews and Hindus. Iranians and Vietnamese also have their own new year celebrations. The Swedish ecclesiastical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent, which falls at the end of November or the beginning of December.

traditioner: Stories, poems, holidays, costumes and social codes handed down from generation to generation.

In the early months of the year, you may notice a special pastry in the windows of bakeries. These are **semlor**. A semla is a plain wheat bun that has been sliced open and filled with marzipan and cream. Semlor start filling the bakery shelves early nowadays, but traditionally they are associated with Lent, which falls later in the year. **Quinquagesima Sunday**, **fastlagssöndagen**, falls sometime in February or March. Around that time, birch twigs decorated with coloured feathers are sold. These are placed in water indoors and provide an early taste of spring when their tiny leaves unfold.

SPRING

Easter, **påsken**, is the Christian festival celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection. The weeks leading up to Easter are called **Lent**, **fastan**. During this period, the Christian

churches commemorate what happened to Jesus during the final period before his crucifixion. The old tradition of Lenten fasting is no longer observed. The last Thursday before Easter is called **Maundy Thursday**, **skärtorsdag**, and in the Churches the theme is the last supper Jesus ate with his disciples. This is the origin of the celebration of Holy Communion, in which the congregation shares bread and wine during the service.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

On Maundy Thursday, children dressed as "Easter witches" go from house to house, wishing people a happy Easter. Householders thank them by putting sweets in their baskets or coffee pots.

A popular non-Christian tradition of **Easter witches**, **påskkärringar**, is also associated with Maundy Thursday. You may see children going from house to house in costume, knocking on doors and saying, "Glad Påsk!" You are expected to give them sweets or biscuits, or perhaps give them a coin. The children are dressed as Easter witches, with long skirts and kerchiefs round their heads. According to a venerable popular tradition, on Maundy Thursday witches mounted their broomsticks and flew off to Blåkulla, a mythical mountain where they would meet on that day. And that's why the children dress up the way they do.

The day after, on **Good Friday**, **långfredagen**, Jesus' death on the cross is commemorated. Today, the message does not have the same impact on family life that it had 30–40 years ago. Then, having fun on Good Friday was considered poor form, and for many children it was a long day indeed. Good Friday is a public holiday and most people take the day off work. Many shops are closed.

Easter weekend incorporates both Christian and non-Christian traditions. On Saturday, **Easter Eve**, **påskafton**, Swedes eat eggs that have been painted in colourful hues. There is often herring of one sort or another on the Swedish Easter table. Coloured eggshells and other decorations are strung from the feather-dressed birch twigs.

On Easter Sunday, hymns of celebration are sung in the churches in memory of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Easter Sunday falls on different dates in different years. It always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the **spring equinox**, **vårdagjämningen***, on 20 March.

vårdagjämning: The day in the spring when day and night are equally long.

The spring equinox occurs around 21 March, and the autumn equinox around 23 September.

The last day of April, or **Walpurgis night**, **Valborgsmässoafton**, is an important one in Sweden. That's when we welcome the spring. People gather around a **bonfire**, **valborgsmässobål**. Someone toasts the arrival of spring, and choirs – usually male – sing springtime songs. This is the biggest holiday of the year for men's choirs.

The **1st of May**, **första maj**, is the day of the labour movement, and is always a holiday. Political speeches are held by representatives of the Social Democrats and the Left Party. These parties usually organise demonstrations, too.

Ascension Day, **Kristi himmelsfärdsdag**, always falls on a Thursday. In the Swedish ecclesiastical calendar, it is a celebration of the day Jesus left the earth and rose up to heaven. For many, the day is a strong symbol of spring. Some people get up early for a **gökotta** – a dawn picnic in the countryside. Otta means early morning, and a gökotta is an outing when people get together to hear the gök, or cuckoo, call for the first time. Cuckoos don't necessarily consult the calendar, of course, so you can never be sure they will put in an appearance. At many places of work, the Friday after Ascension Day is a day off. Schoolchildren usually have this day off, too.

Whitsuntide, **pingsten**, a couple of weeks later, is a big

weekend for weddings. Many couples get married on Whitsun Eve. The delicate greenery of early summer is usually on its way by this time of year. Christians celebrate Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Whitsun, when the earliest warmth of summer is beginning to make itself felt, is a big weekend for weddings. Throwing rice at the bride and groom is a popular tradition.

SUMMER

The sixth of June is **Sweden's national day**, **Sveriges nationaldag**, celebrated with music, folk dancing and speeches. In some cities, Swedish flags are passed out. In some places, a special welcome is extended to people who have become Swedish citizens during the year. In Sweden, certain days of the year are **flag days**, **flaggdagar**. The Swedish flag is flown at public buildings, on buses and on private houses. The flag days include New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, the King's birthday on 30 April, 1 May, the Swedish national day on 6 June and Queen Silvia's name day on 8 June. Private people often raise the flag at home when someone is celebrating a birthday. When someone dies, the flag is flown at half-mast.

This is the season when students begin their **summer holiday**, **sommarlov**. On the last day of school, **breaking-up**, **skolavslutning**, is celebrated; different schools have their own traditions. Parents are usually included in the lower grades. The students dress up and the classroom is decorated with flowers. The celebrations for students who have completed nine-year compulsory school or graduated from upper-secondary school are especially important. *For more information on student celebrations, see the chapter on Schools and Education.*

Around 21 June, it is time for Midsummer, **midsommar***. For most Swedes, Midsummer means a party to celebrate the summer with dancing round the maypole. Summer is important in this relatively dark, cold country. Midsummer, then, is a major holiday, and if it rains on Midsummer Eve everyone who wanted to celebrate outdoors is disappointed. In most towns there is a public Midsummer celebration in the town square, sports field or community centre. In the morning, many people like to go out and pick flowers and leaves to decorate the **maypole**, **midsommarstången**. Maypoles are different in different regions. In Dalarna, which organises the country's most renowned Midsummer celebrations, the same pole is often used year after year, and the pole, with its withered decorations, is left standing until it's time to decorate it again next Midsummer. Once the maypole is decorated it must be raised, often by a few strong men to a chorus of lusty cheers, and during the

midsommar: Holiday including Midsummer Eve, Midsummer Day and the following Sunday.



The maypole is raised and the dancing begins. If the rain stays away and the sun shines, the party will be a real success.

Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

afternoon there is ring-dancing round the pole. People dance to traditional Swedish songs. Later in the evening, there may be dancing for the adults.

According to church tradition, Midsummer is celebrated in memory of John the Baptist, and there is a name day for Johannes (John) in conjunction with the weekend. This holiday may have been preceded by pagan festivals of the sun, and may also have been inspired by the Jewish Sukkoth festival.

The traditional **Midsummer meal**, **midsommarmaten**, is herring and potatoes – preferably fresh, new ones – and many adult Swedes wash it down with brännvin, a type of spirits. Dessert is often fresh strawberries.

In late summer, many go fishing for crayfish, or buy them ready prepared, and hold **crayfish parties**, **kräftfester**. A traditional crayfish party, is lit by colourful paper lanterns, and party-goers wear little party hats while they eat. The crayfish are cooked in a dill-flavoured broth, and brännvin is often served.

Another very special late-summer culinary tradition is the **surströmming party**. This is primarily a northern tradition. Surströmming is fermented Baltic herring sold in cans. It is eaten with boiled potatoes and the traditional thin bread of Norrland. Surströmming has a strong smell that many simply cannot abide.

AUTUMN

Autumn is long in Sweden. Mornings and evenings grow darker. At the end of October and beginning of November falls **All Hallows Day**, **Alla helgons dag**, when thoughts turn to departed relatives and friends. A relatively new tradition is for people to place small candle lamps on graves, and on All Hallows Eve hundreds of lights now flicker in the graveyards.



Photo: Torbjörn Andersson / Pressens Bild

Hundreds of candles glow in the November darkness on All Hallows Eve. Candles are lit on graves in memory of departed friends and relatives.

In recent years, the American tradition of **Halloween** has come to Sweden. It has become popular for children and young people to dress up as witches and skeletons and light candles in carved pumpkins.

Advent falls at the end of November or beginning of December. Advent means arrival, and refers to the birth of Jesus. It is celebrated on the four Sundays before Christmas. In homes and at places of work, people place electric candles in the windows. This is something to look forward to as the long, dark autumn progresses. People also burn wax candles at home in special holders for four candles. The first candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent, the second on the second Sunday, and so on. Advent is a time of Christmas preparations. Shops have a special **Christmas window-display day, julskyltningsdag**, at the beginning of the period, and many Swedes head into town to view the Christmas displays.

In the middle of Advent, on 13 December, comes **Lucia day**, **Luciadagen**, when Lucia brings light in the darkness. Lucia was a Christian virgin in Syracuse who was martyred in 304 during Caesar Diocletian's persecution of the Christians. In the Roman Catholic church, her saint's day is celebrated on this day.

In Sweden, Lucia is celebrated everywhere as a bearer of light, especially in schools, day nurseries, old-age homes

and workplaces, and also in certain churches and associations. It usually works like this: all the lights are turned off. In the distance, you hear singing, that gradually comes closer and closer. Soon you see candles, either electric or live. It is Lucia approaching with her cohort of attendants. All are dressed in long white shirts. Lucia wears a crown of candles on her head. Her **maidens**, **tärnor**, carry candles in their hands, and tinsel glitters in their hair. Sometimes there are **"star-boys"**, **stjärngossar**, too, boys dressed in white with pointed white hats decorated with gold stars. Nor is it uncommon to see little brownies and gingerbread men in the procession. The procession sings Lucia and Christmas carols, and sometimes serves coffee and **lussekatter**, saffron and raisin buns baked especially for the occasion.

Christmas, **julen**, is the biggest holiday of the year in Sweden, and commemorates the birth of Jesus. Preparations begin early in December. Now is the time to start thinking about **Christmas presents**, **julklappar**, and send **Christmas cards**, **julkort**, to friends and acquaintances. **Christmas Eve**, **julafton**, falls on 24 December, and by then



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Santa Lucia lights up Sweden. On 13 December, Lucia celebrations large and small illuminate the country. Choral singing, white dresses and candle-studded crowns are part of the tradition.

The weeks leading up to Christmas are stressful ones for many, full of Christmas shopping, cleaning and cooking. Christmas has another significance, too, though – in the churches, the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated.



Photo: Peter Hoelstad / Pressens Bild



Photo: Tord Hanlin / Pressens Bild

most people have a **Christmas tree**, **julgran**, real or artificial, at home. The tree is dressed with shiny balls, flags, elves and the like, and candles are clipped onto the branches. Nowadays, they are usually electric. The home is also adorned with other Christmas decorations. At many Christmas parties, people dance around the tree and sing traditional carols. The most popular one goes like this:

Nu är det jul igen, och nu är det jul igen,
och julen varar än till påska!
Men det var inte sant, nej det var inte sant,
för där emellan kommer fastan!

Now it's Christmas again, now it's Christmas again,
and Christmas lasts right up to Easter!
But, no, that isn't true, no, that isn't true,
for in between comes Lenten fasting!

On Christmas Eve, people exchange gifts. The traditional Swedish **Christmas foods**, **julmaten**, include ham, pork ribs, pork brawn, pickled herring, lutfisk – boiled salt ling – with sauce, and rice pudding. In days gone by, when people worked hard in the forests, this was a nourishing repast. Now we don't need such hearty fare, and many people have trimmed back the menu significantly.

The birth of Jesus is traditionally celebrated early on Christmas morning, when the churches hold a special early service called **julotta**. In the past, people rode to the julotta in horse-drawn sleighs with jingling bells. Today, many churchgoers instead opt for the **midnight mass**, **midnattsmässa**, held between Christmas Eve and Christmas day.

Many people who live by themselves feel especially lonely at Christmas, when families and relatives get together to celebrate. Churches and associations therefore arrange **alternative Christmas**, **alternativ jul**, events at which all are welcome.

Christmas is a Christian holiday, but even before the advent of Christendom a great **fertility festival**, **fruktbarhetsfest***, was celebrated in late autumn. In the winter, there was a **midvinterblot***, when animals were sacrificed to the gods and the celebrants then feasted on the remains.

A week after Christmas is the New Year, and the cycle begins again. But Christmas is not quite over. Just a few days after the New Year's celebration comes **Epiphany**, or Twelfth Day, **Trettondedag jul**. As the name implies, this falls twelve days after Christmas – or thirteen days according to the Swedes, who call it Trettondagen, or Thirteenth Day. It is the day on which the church commemorates the arrival of the three wise men in Bethlehem, having been guided there from the Orient by a great star. The definitive close of the Christmas season is **Hilarymas** on 13 January, known in Swedish as **Tjugondag Knut** – Twentieth Day Knut – for

fruktbarhetsfest: In many cultures, people have had rites and festivals to induce the gods to grant fertility for people, animals and plants. The Nordic fertility festival was one such rite.

midvinterblot: Blot was an important element of Old Norse worship. It involved sacrifices of objects, animals and sometimes even people. After the rite was carried out, a meal was always made of the sacrificed animal.

it is twenty days after Christmas Eve and it is Knut's name day. To mark the end of Christmas, a **julgransplundring** party is held. Guests dance round the Christmas tree for the last time, singing:

Nu är glada julen slut, slut, slut,
julegranen kastas ut, ut, ut,
men till nästa år igen
kommer han vår gamle vän
ty det har han lovat.

Jolly Christmastime is through, through, through
the Christmas tree is going out, out, out
But next year again
he'll be back, our dear old friend,
and he'll keep his promise.

They then strip away the candles and decoration and throw out the tree, which by now has lost quite a lot of its needles.

Birthdays and name days

Birthdays are important occasions in Sweden, especially for children. Name days are not so commonly observed. Some families give each other presents on name days, while others pay them no attention at all. Birthdays are more important. Children often have a party and invite their friends. They play and eat cake and decorate the home with balloons and streamers. Often, each child is given a bag of sweets.

Adults have big celebrations for even birthdays – 30, 40 and 50 years – and for older people, major celebrations are also held on 75th, 85th and 95th birthdays. Fiftieth birthdays in particular are cause for proper celebration, with presents, parties and the flag flying high. In some areas, friends dress up and stop by to surprise the celebrant the night before his or her birthday.

Traditions change



Photo: Magnus Hallgren / Pressens Bild

Jitterbugging in the green grass. Every summer, a couple of thousand dance lovers from 20 countries get together at the Herräng community centre in Roslagen. The world's largest jitterbug training camp attracts enthusiasts young and old.

No tradition stays the same forever. Swedish traditions have changed over the years. Some 70–80 years ago, it was not Father Christmas who brought the presents but the Christmas Goat. One once common springtime tradition that has now practically disappeared is "Singing in May" at the beginning of May. Groups of young people used to go from house to house singing *Maj är välkommen* – "May is welcome"; sometimes they received biscuits or sweets in return.

Some traditions have fallen by the wayside, while others have been adopted. We have already mentioned Halloween, which has begun being celebrated in recent years. Muslims in Sweden have introduced many to Ramadan, the month of fasting. The Iranian new year often features in the press, which covers the celebrations.

New cultural impulses

At festivals and get-togethers of various types, groups with their roots in other cultures often take part with music, dance and literature. Just as people's traditions may change when they move to a new country, the new country may be affected by the culture of new arrivals. A multicultural exchange is the result.

Swedish food

Swedish eating habits have changed a lot in the past ten to twenty years. More and more people have begun to eat more vegetarian food, and many new dishes have been introduced by immigrants from other countries. Many Swedes now spend their holidays abroad, especially around the Mediterranean, and so have become aware of the cuisines of other countries.

Nowadays, it's not hard to find something for most tastes at restaurants. There are pizza and kebab bars in almost all larger towns. Swedes often eat pasta dishes at home, and might have a Greek salad with tzatziki at a party.

Traditional Swedish dishes often contain pork, especially Christmas fare. The Christmas ham is a smoked or lightly salted loin of pork that is boiled or roasted, then coated with eggs and mustard and browned.

Sausages, pork ribs, meatballs and liver spread are also standard Christmas fare, as are various types of marinated herring, red cabbage, sauerkraut, beetroot, apple sauce and boiled pudding made of rice and milk.

Many families no longer prepare the vast servings of Christmas food that were once the norm, but Christmas ham and rice pudding still turn up on most tables. The traditional Swedish Christmas buffet is served at many restaurants during December.

Husmanskost – a stable meal

Everyday fare of traditional character is usually called **husmanskost**, and is based on meat, fish and root vegetables. Examples include **meatballs**, **köttbullar**, with boiled potatoes and lingonberry jam, **lightly salted pork**, **fläsklägg**, with root vegetable mash, **pea soup with pork**, **ärtsoppa med fläsk**, **fried Baltic herring**, **stekt strömming**, with mashed potatoes, **fried cured Baltic herring**, **stekt salt sill**, with boiled potatoes and onion gravy, **meat patties**, **pannbiff**, with fried onions



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

There are speciality shops in most cities carrying foods from around the world. Dishes that once seemed exotic are now everyday fare for many.

and boiled potatoes, and **pyttipanna**, which consists of diced meat and potatoes that are fried and eaten with pickled beetroot. Husmanskost is hearty fare. That's what was needed in the past, when most people were manual labourers.

People from other countries often think Swedish bread is too sweet. Sweet loaves are among the commonest offerings in Swedish shops. A much greater variety is available today than 15–20 years ago, since so many people have brought their culinary culture here from other countries.

Many ordinary grocery shops now sell "immigrant" foods, and special shops carry the foods of East Asia, Southern Europe and North Africa. They specialise in ingredients common in those areas, such as various types of rice, beans, flour and spices. Such shops often have names such as "Orient-livs" and are usually run by immigrants. In the larger Swedish cities there are shops where you can buy meat from ritually slaughtered sheep and cattle. Kosher shops, selling traditional Jewish foods, have operated here for many years.

Not so long ago, semlor were eaten only during a few weeks before Easter. Today, bakeries sell them from January to December.



Photo: Calle Jismark / Pressens Bild

GOOD TO KNOW

- Semlor, buns with marzipan and cream, are usually eaten with coffee or tea. In northern Sweden, however, they are served in a dish of hot milk; this is called a hetvägg. The semla goes by other names, too, such as: fastlagsbulle, "Lent bun", fettisdagsbulle, "Maundy Thursday bun", or simply tisdagsbulle, "Tuesday bun".
- Flag days are listed in Swedish calendars. You are free to fly a flag whenever you like. The flag must be taken down at night. Recommendations on how to treat the flag are often included in calendars and almanacs.

Your new neighbours



Crooked path to community

Jolin Boldt

Congratulations! You have been granted a residence permit and Sweden's doors are open to you.

That doesn't mean it will be a walk in the park (as you have probably already realised).

Sometimes you will absolutely quiver with rage. You will bang your head against the wall. You will wonder what kind of madhouse you have ended up in. And in the end, maybe you, like I, will come to love Sweden and the people who live here.

You have come to the first country in the world that banned corporal punishment of children. What does that prove? It proves that Sweden is a country that is not afraid to acknowledge those who are weak and need protection. There is respect even for the weakest of all – the children.

Sweden was also the first country in Europe to grant municipal voting rights to immigrants without Swedish citizenship. Not such a bad place to live at all.

But my path to loving Sweden has not always been an easy one. I often get angry. There are so many bureaucrats, for example...one time I seriously considered sending a bill to the Insurance Office for the coffee thermos I flung at the wall in a rage after a phone conversation with them.

I have lived in Sweden for 25 years. My first year, I did everything wrong. Swedish is my native language, yet people couldn't understand what I said. Because of my "Finnish accent", many people didn't notice that I spoke perfect Swedish.

And I made mistakes. Lots of them. Mistakes that make my cheeks burn when I think back on them today, such as saying, with typical Finland-Swedish understatement, "Oh, I can't do anything much, really" at a job interview (I didn't get the job), or not passing the sugar round the table, or saying, "Do it!" to my coworkers instead of "I don't suppose you might consider doing something about this..."

It took about five years before I stopped being bothered by typically Swedish things that I thought were ridiculous.

▶

Crooked path to community continued

You are going to make a lot of blunders. You will stumble across a thousand invisible boundaries and be surprised when acquaintances and coworkers get angry. Years later, you may realise that the pained silence around the coffee table was caused by some taboo topic you brought up.

After ten years I began to understand the social code

And since no-one here will tell you what it was, it will take some time for you to figure out what's right and wrong.

After ten years, I began to understand the social code.

Now, after 25 years, I feel I have a fairly good understanding of things Swedish. I know the unspoken rules well enough to break them. Because now I know what they are: never just tell it like it is; never contradict anyone, even in a debate; never try to show that you are better than anyone else

So the job ahead of you is a tough one. But don't worry – most of the time, it's actually good fun

Make a game of observing the Swedish way of doing things. A lot of things will surprise you and even make you sad. But most people have one very positive quality: they really do want things to work out for the best. Almost everyone is friendly and helpful. Unless you ask for something that's against the rules. Then you will run right into a brick wall.

I often speak with angry people who believe they are victims of discrimination. And sometimes they are – discrimination against people from other countries exists; it is not uncommon.

But as often as not, it's a question of rules. Most Swedes are absolutely unwavering: if the rules say do it this way, this is the way to do it. There's no point in discussing it, you will just make a nuisance of yourself. That is not discrimination – it's the same for native Swedes

You have to put up with a lot, living here. Don't give up! Give Sweden the benefit of the doubt. Even if it sometimes seems hard to believe, this is one of the world's wonderful places. Give the country a chance – it really is worth it.

Jolin Boldt is the editor of Sesam, a magazine for new residents of Sweden.



Sweden is divided into 289 municipalities. Some are large, others small, but all deal with issues that are important to local residents.

More maps can be found at the end of the chapter.

The Municipality

Taking charge and providing services in your area

Municipality, **kommun**, and county council, **landsting**, are words you will often hear in Sweden. What is a municipality and what does it do? Who governs a municipality, and how can you influence their decisions? What are the county councils, and what do they do? We will try to answer these questions in this chapter.

Whether you live in the city or the country, you live in a municipality. Sweden is divided into 289 municipalities, all with their own executive board and tax rates. Municipalities vary greatly in size. Some, such as Stockholm, are very large, while others have just a few thousand residents. Some of the largest municipalities are styled city rather than municipality, as for example the **City of Stockholm, Stockholms stad**.

Municipalities have great significance in Sweden. They serve many functions that are handled by state-level authorities or private companies in other countries. As a resident of a municipality, you will thus often come into contact with its various departments.

taxa: schedule of prices.

servicehus: building in which elderly people live in their own flats but can get extra help.

hemtjänst: help with cleaning, cooking and other chores for the elderly and people with problems such as limited mobility.

renhållning: dealing with refuse.

A few important rules govern the operations of municipalities. One is that a municipality may not charge more for its services than they cost to provide. Another important rule is that everyone living in a municipality must be treated equally, provided that the same conditions prevail locally. For example, parents with children at day nurseries pay the same **fee**, **taxa***, regardless of which nursery they select. The fee must be the same even if the costs of operating a day nursery may vary in different parts of the municipality.

What do municipalities take charge of?

The Local Government Act governs both what municipalities may do and what they are obliged to do. They are charged with providing schools, pre-schools and libraries in the municipality, ensuring that refugees are introduced successfully, providing **service flats**, **servicehus***, and **home help services**, **hemtjänst***, for the elderly and others in need, and providing firefighting and **sanitation**, **renhållning***, services. The Act also gives the municipality responsibility for the planning of streets, housing, water and electricity.

Income support, **försörjningsstöd**, which was previously known as socialbidrag, or social welfare, is also a municipal responsibility. *For more information on these topics, see the chapter on Money.*

Some municipalities take on additional duties as well, such as provision of leisure and cultural activities. This varies from municipality to municipality. There are youth recreation centres, swimming pools, sports facilities, museums and theatres in some municipalities but not others. Some municipalities operate their own housing companies and power companies.

Municipal income

Municipalities need money to provide all these services. Funding comes from three sources: taxes, government grants and fees.

Municipal taxes, **kommunalskatt**, are paid by all municipal residents who have an income. Approximately 30 kronor out of every hundred kronor earned goes to municipal tax. The tax rate varies from municipality to municipality. In the year 2000, it ranged from kr 26.50 in the "cheapest" municipality to kr 33.12 in the "most expensive".

Government grants, **statsbidrag**, are money received from the state. Municipalities with low income and high expenses may receive more grant money than municipalities with better finances.



Photo: Jonas Lemberg / Pressens Bild

Municipalities need tax money to provide services for their residents. Each person's income tax return shows how much he or she must pay.

Fees, **avgifterna**, are the money you pay to the municipality for services such as electricity and day nursery care. These fees are often **subsidised**, **subventionerade**, meaning they are somewhat lower than the actual cost of providing the service, so that those with little money can make use of municipal services.

Government

A municipality is governed by politicians from various parties, who serve in a group known as the **municipal council**, **kommunfullmäktige**. The municipal council meets approximately once a month. Meetings are open to the public, so you can go and listen if you want to. Spectators are not entitled to participate in the discussions, however. Council meetings are sometimes broadcast on local radio or television.

Large municipalities usually have several **municipal commissioners**, **kommunalråd**, in their employ. Other municipal politicians are active in their free time.

Between council meetings, a smaller group known as the **municipal executive board**, **kommunstyrelsen**, has political responsibility. The council is the equivalent of parliament at the municipal level, while the municipal executive board is the equivalent of the government.

Municipal residents decide which politicians will serve on the municipal council by voting in a **municipal election**, **kommunalvalet**. These elections are held every four years, at the same time as the parliamentary and county council elections. EU citizens residing in Sweden are entitled to vote in Swedish municipal and county council elections. If you come from a country outside the EU, you are entitled to vote in municipal and county council elections if you have a residence permit and have lived in Sweden for at least three years.



Photo: Lennart Isaksson / Pressens Bild

It is important to exercise your right to vote. Election volunteers line the route to the polling station, offering their parties' ballots.

A couple of weeks before the election, everyone who is entitled to vote receives an **elector's registration card**, **röstkort**, in the mail. This card is proof that you are entitled to vote and indicates when and where the election will be held.

Municipal elections

Since Swedish municipalities deal with such a wide range of issues, the municipal election is a very important one. By voting in the municipal election, you affect both the local tax rate and the level of service the municipality provides to its residents.

Prior to the election, you can find out what the politicians of the various parties want to do locally in newspapers and information fliers. You can meet politicians at political meetings or at their party offices. If you are a member of an association, you can propose to the association's board

that it organise a special meeting before the election. You can invite politicians who may be assisted by interpreters if necessary.

Besides the municipal council, municipal politicians are organised in other, smaller groups that hold meetings of their own. There is usually one group in charge of school and pre-schools, another that plans new buildings and streets, a third that deals with issues relating to the elderly and the **functionally disabled**, **funktionshindrade***, and so on. These groups are known as **boards**, **nämnder**, or **executive committees**, **styrelser**; examples are the local housing committee and local board of education. In larger municipalities, there may be **kommundelsnämnder** or **stadsdelsnämnder**, **neighbourhood councils**, which handle municipal duties within a particular neighbourhood or part of a municipality.

public transport: a form of collective transport in which people travel with other people, e.g. bus, underground or train.

County councils

County councils deal with issues that are too big and too expensive for an individual municipality to handle alone. A county council corresponds geographically to a county – see the chapter on Democracy. The difference is that counties are governed by county administrative boards, which are state-level authorities, while county councils are governed by politicians elected in general elections.

The most important duty of the county councils is **health and medical care**, **hälso- och sjukvården**. The county councils are in charge of most hospitals and healthcare centres. They are also responsible for dental care for children and young people, for certain educational programmes and for some **public transport**, **kollektivtrafik***. County councils usually manage country bus services, while the municipalities manage the city bus services.

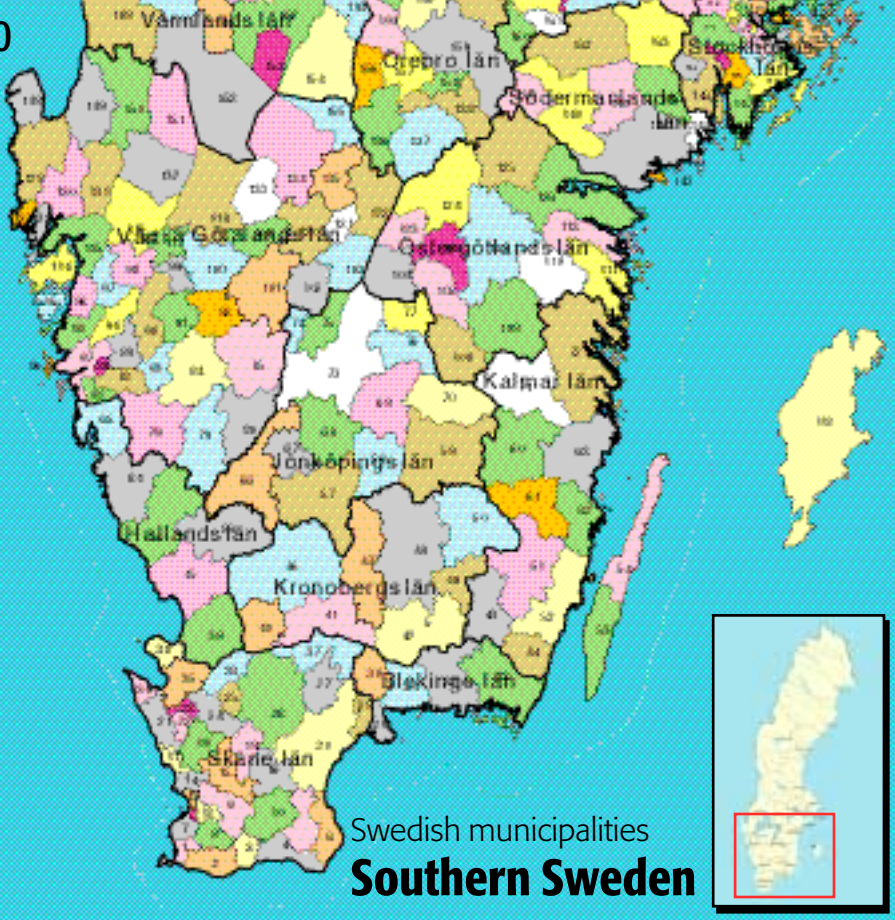


Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Caring for the sick costs too much money for each municipality to build up a separate system. Instead, health service is provided by the county councils, which serve larger geographical areas.

GOOD TO KNOW:

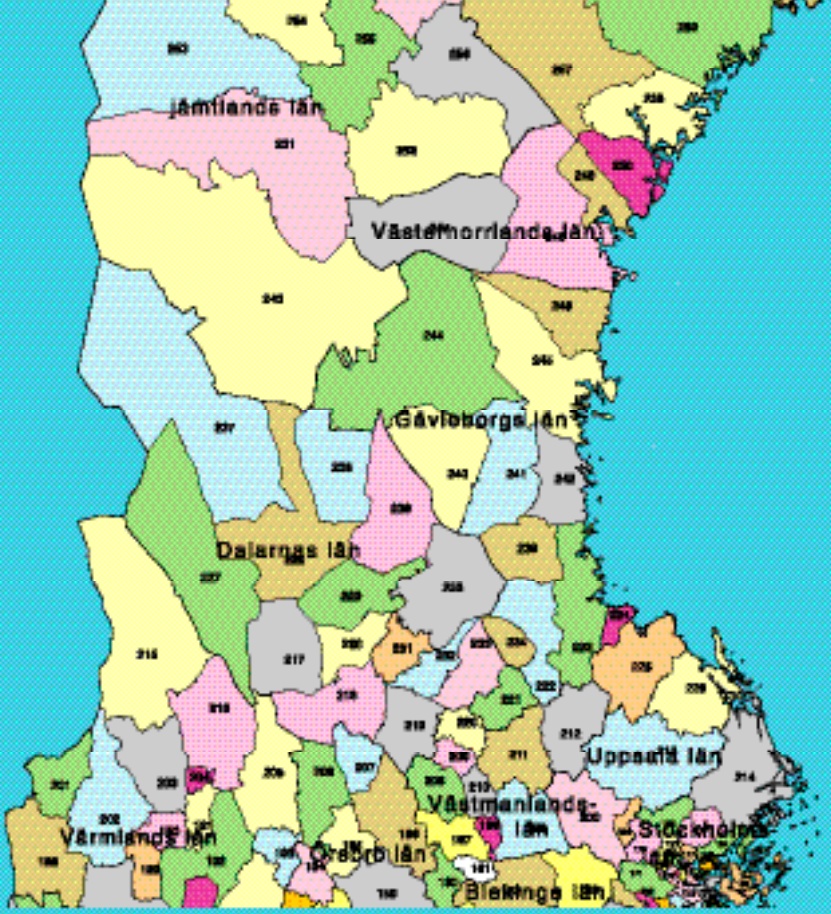
- You can find a wide range of information on your municipality in the Green Pages of the telephone directory. Many municipalities also operate their own information offices, which help residents find answers to their questions. These are sometimes called medborgarkontor – "citizens' advice bureaux".
- If you wish to talk to a municipal official, you should make an appointment. If you will need an interpreter, let the official know when you make the appointment.
- If you have had a residence permit and lived in Sweden for at least three years, you are entitled to vote in both municipal and county council elections. You should receive an elector's registration card well in advance of the election. If you have not received an elector's registration card, you can contact the Skattemyndigheten, or Tax Authority (see the Pink Pages of the telephone directory), to find out what the problem is.
- Most municipalities now have their own site on the Internet. You can find them at www.kommunensnamn.se. If the name of the municipality includes an å, ä or ö, replace it with a or o; examples are www.malmo.se and www.boras.se for the municipalities of Malmö and Borås.



Swedish municipalities

Southern Sweden

1 Vellinge	22 Bjuv	43 Grästorp	64 Varberg	85 Uddevalla	106 Mjölby	127 Solenta	148 Stiftstad
2 Trelleborg	23 Åstorp	44 Tibro	65 Kungsbacka	86 Orkelljunga	107 Linköping	128 Lycksele	149 Oskarshamn
3 Skurup	24 Klippan	45 Hällefors	66 Gislaved	87 Göteborg	108 Ydre	129 Timrå	150 Bengtsfors
4 Ystad	25 Perstorp	46 Ljungby	67 Gnosjö	88 Partille	109 Kinda	130 Munkedal	151 Arvidsjaur
5 Tomelilla	26 Helsingborg	47 Alvesta	68 Vaggeryd	89 Lerum	110 Åtvidaberg	131 Filipstads	152 Gällivare
6 Simrishamn	27 Östra Göinge	48 Växjö	69 Nässjö	90 Alingsås	111 Valdemarsvik	132 Mellerud	153 Hammarö
7 Malmö	28 Bromölla	49 Lessebo	70 Eksjö	91 Vårgårda	112 Gotland	133 Götene	154 Kiltelehamn
8 Svedala	29 Sölvesborg	50 Uppvidinge	71 Vimmerby	92 Herrljunga	113 Söderköping	134 Mariestad	155 Gullspång
9 Lund	30 Olofström	51 Nybro	72 Värnamo	93 Kungälv	114 Orust	135 Tidaholm	156 Degerfors
10 Staffanstorp	31 Karlskrona	52 Kalmar	73 Jönköping	94 Ale	115 Uddevalla	136 Lack	157 Lekeberg
11 Götlo	32 Ronneby	53 Mörbylånga	74 Mullsjö	95 Tjörn	116 Vissestorp	137 Askersund	158 Kumla
12 Burlö	33 Karlskrona	54 Borgholm	75 Habo	96 Stenungsund	117 Grästorp	138 Hallsberg	159 Örebro
13 Lomma	34 Höganäs	55 Falkenberg	76 Aneby	97 Lilla Edet	118 Lidköping	139 Vingåker	160 Arboga
14 Kävlinge	35 Ängelholm	56 Hylte	77 Tranås	98 Trollhättan	119 Skara	140 Katrineholm	161 Kungsör
15 Burlö	36 Örkelljunga	57 Värnamo	78 Mark	99 Essunga	120 Skövde	141 Flen	162 Eskilstuna
16 Höör	37 Lby	58 Sävsjö	79 Svenljunga	100 Vara	121 Tibro	142 Nyköping	163 Strängnäs
17 Landskrona	38 Bjärtad	59 Vellanda	80 Tranemo	101 Falköping	122 Karlskrona	143 Oxelösund	
18 Burlö	39 Lidköm	60 Hultsfred	81 Mönsterås	102 Tidaholm	123 Vadstena	144 Trosa	
19 Höör	40 Mellerydd	61 Högsby	82 Hörvdla	103 Hjo	124 Motala	145 Gnesta	
20 Kristianstad	41 Älmhult	62 Mönsterås	83 Boxholm	104 Töreboda	125 Finspång	146 Södertälje	
21 Helsingborg	42 Tingsryd	63 Oskarshamn	84 Borås	105 Karlsborg	126 Norrköping	147 Nynäshamn	

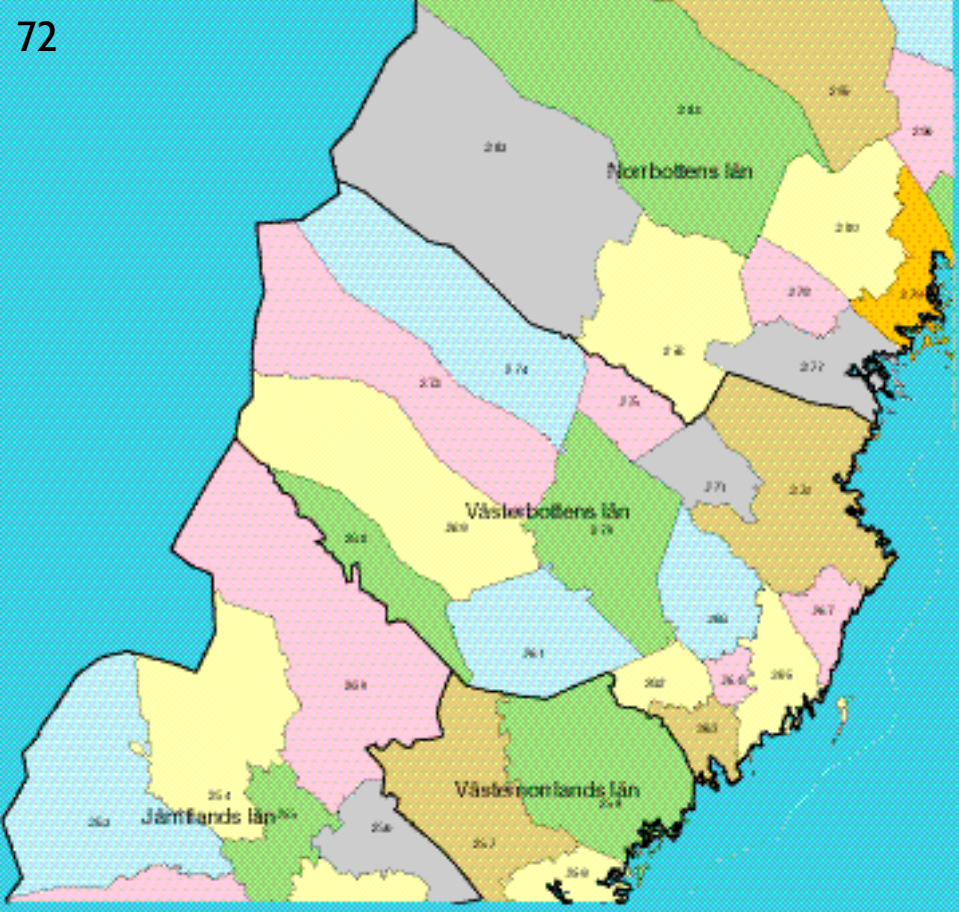


Swedish municipalities

Central Sweden



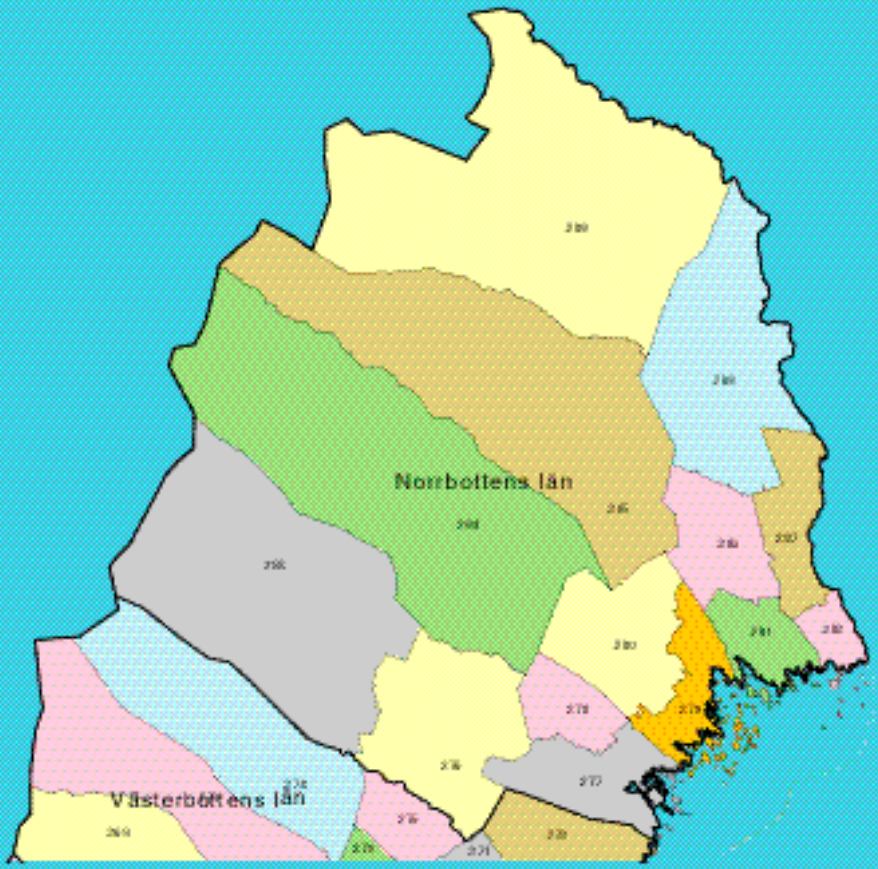
188	Åtvidaberg	204	Munkfors	220	Norberg	236	Östhammar
189	Grums	205	Filipstad	221	Avesta	237	Älvkarleby
190	Kil	206	Hällefors	222	Sandviken	238	Österfärnebo
191	Forshaga	207	Ljusnarsberg	223	Gävle	239	Ockelbo
192	Karlstad	208	Sidmokambeg	224	Älvkarleby	240	Ovanåker
193	Storfors	209	Degerfors	225	Tierp	241	Söderhamn
194	Karlskoga	210	Sandhammar	226	Östhammar	242	Söderhamn
195	Nora	211	Sala	227	Heby	243	Hälsingtuna
196	Lindesberg	212	Heby	228	Mora	244	Ljusdal
197	Kloten	213	Uppsala	229	Leksand	245	Hudiksvall
198	Hallsberg/Hammar	214	Norrtälje	230	Gagnef	246	Nordanstig
199	Västerås	215	Tierp	231	Rättvik	247	Ånge
200	Enköping	216	Hagfors	232	Siljan	248	Sundsvall
201	Eda	217	Venabro	233	Hedemora	249	Timrå
202	Arvika	218	Ludvika	234	Hofors	250	Härnösand
203	Sunne	219	Smedjebacken	235	Falun	251	Sorg
						252	Kiljoke



Swedish municipalities

Northern Sweden

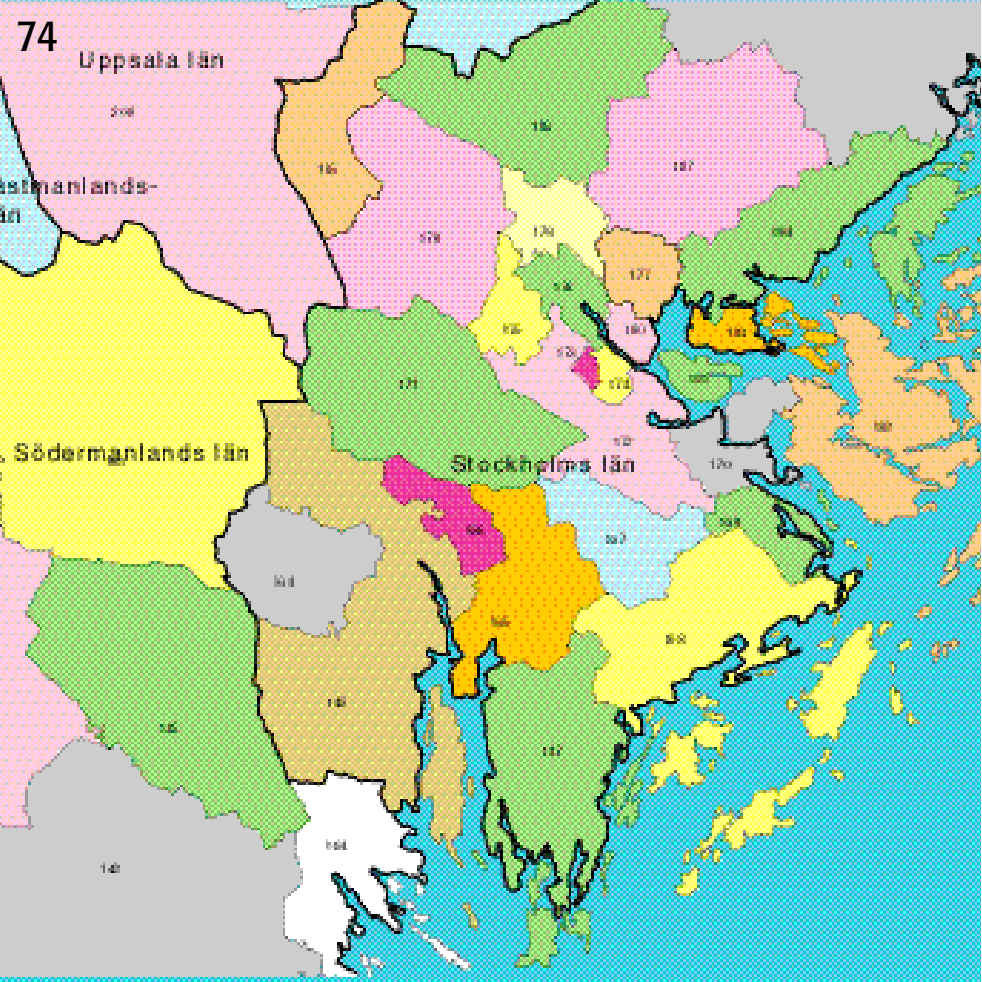




Swedish municipalities

The far north of Sweden





Swedish municipalities

Stockholm county





Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Moving into a new flat. Starting a new household demands both time and a great deal of thought.

Your Initial Period in Sweden

A fresh start in a new country

If you have just received your residence permit, you have a lot to think about. A personal identification number, an ID card and a census registration certificate are some of the papers you will need in Sweden. Excellent help is provided during the introductory period; you can read about it at the end of this chapter.



The three crowns that top Stockholm City Hall have been a Swedish national symbol since the 1330s.

Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Once you have been granted a residence permit, the next step into Swedish society is to be **registered in the census rolls**, **folkbokförd**. You will then receive unique **personal identification number**, **personnummer***. The number consists of ten digits: your year, month and date of birth, and four additional digits. The last four digits distinguish you from others born on the same date. It is a good idea to memorise your personal identification number, as public authorities, banks and other organisations will often ask for it.

To be registered in the census rolls, bring your passport and residence permit to the Tax Authority or local tax office (see the Pink Pages of the telephone directory). After a week or two, you will receive a document in the mail containing your personal identification number.

ID-kort: card with a photograph proving a person's identity (showing who you are).

Census registration certificates and identification

Another important document is a **census registration certificate**, which you need to get an **ID card**, **ID-kort***, extended residence permit or passport. To get a census registration certificate, call at or ring the local tax office. You should always tell the tax office staff why you need the certificate, since certificates are made out differently depending on the purpose they are to be used for.

You can get an ID card through a post office or bank. Bring a document indicating your personal identification number, a photograph and a census registration certificate for ID. You should also bring along a friend or relative who already has an ID and can confirm that you are the person referred to by the documentation.

The next step is to register with the **Social Insurance Office, Försäkringskassan**. You must be registered with the Insurance Office to receive sickness benefits if you fall ill or parent's allowance if you have a child. For more information on this topic, see the chapter on Money.

Home furnishing loans

If you are a refugee or close relative of a refugee, you may be entitled to borrow money for necessary furnishings. This is known as a **home furnishing loan, hemutrustningslån**. How much you may borrow depends on how many people there are in your family, what furnishings you have and how much money you have. The Centrala Studiestödsnämnden (CSN, or National Board of Student Aid), administers home furnishing loans. You can ask your **refugee co-ordinator, flyktingsamordnare***, to provide information on the CSN. Information is available in many languages.

flyktingsamordnare: A person employed by the municipality to provide help for refugees living in the area.

Language instruction

Instruction in the Swedish language for new arrivals who are 16 or over is provided in all municipalities. It is often called Swedish for Immigrants, or SFI. In some cities, the municipal adult education school, Komvux, provides instruction; elsewhere, it is provided through other organisations and companies.

For children and youth, there are special preparatory classes in schools and pre-schools. In these classes, children study both Swedish and the most important school sub-

jects. Once the children have learned enough to keep up with ordinary instruction, they are transferred to regular classes.

Children and young people who speak a language other than Swedish at home receive instruction at school in their **native language**, **modersmål**. They may also receive **guidance**, **studiehandledning***, in their native language. Municipalities are required to arrange such instruction and guidance counselling if the expense is not too great. It is therefore generally possible to do so if there are enough children in an area who speak a given native language. It may be difficult in the case of unusual languages, however.

studie-handledning: help with homework and other schoolwork.

A good knowledge of one's native language has been shown to be an important basis both for learning Swedish and succeeding with other subjects. Good native language skills may also be valuable on the labour market. *You can find more information on children and young people in the chapters on Child care and Schools and education.*

Introductory period

New arrivals often need an **introduction**, **introduktion**, to help them become part of Swedish society as quickly as possible. The state supplies grant money to municipalities to provide introductions to refugees and their immediate family. Some municipalities also provide an introduction for new arrivals who are not refugees.

The introduction should be based on the individual's own needs and background, including his or her education and profession. It always includes instruction in the Swedish language and information on Swedish society.

Swedish instruction is intended to be flexible and easily adaptable to the needs of different people or groups. It should be combined with practical experience, so that new arrivals have a chance to learn the everyday language skills

needed at a place of work. Instruction may thus be provided in a variety of forms, depending on who you are and the nature of your opportunities and needs.

If you have a profession, the municipality will help you find a practical training position so you can develop the skills and make the contacts you need to get started in Sweden as quickly as possible. If you do not have a profession, the municipality will give you the opportunity to get the training needed to begin working.



Photo: Anders Alm

New arrivals should be able to support themselves. This is one of the most important objectives of the introductory period. Here, a north Swedish country house in Luleå is renovated by recent immigrants, who are getting a quick start in working life.

Some municipalities pay **introductory benefits**, **introduktionsersättning**, during this period, while others provide **income support**, **försörjningsstöd**. The introductory period is ordinarily two years, but can be extended if there are special grounds for doing so.

The objective of the introduction is to give new arrivals the ability to support themselves and feel themselves a part of Swedish society. This goal is important both for Sweden and for you as a new arrival. You and your municipality therefore share the responsibility for ensuring that the introduction is a success. The municipality is responsible for providing instruction in the Swedish language and putting you in touch with the labour market, while you yourself are responsible for using the introductory period in a way that will provide maximum benefit to you.

If you would like to learn more about how the introduc-

tion is organised in your municipality, contact the person in charge of local introductions. The website of the Integration Board also provides information on what various municipalities can offer. *See Good to know.*

Interpreters

Even if you have learned quite a bit of Swedish, there may be occasions during your initial period in Sweden when you need the help of an interpreter. This might be the case when you visit the healthcare services or a municipal department, and you are entitled to an interpreter if you need one.

It is up to the authority in question to engage and pay for an interpreter. When scheduling a visit to a doctor or municipal official, for example, you should always state whether you will need an interpreter. If you know a professional interpreter whom you trust, you may request that he or she be hired to help you. Interpreters are tested in various ways before they receive interpreting jobs, and certified interpreters have **special identification**, **legitimation***. It is important for the interpreter to have sufficient experience to prevent misunderstandings that could cause problems for you. Interpreters are under an oath of confidentiality.

legitimation: a certificate proving that someone is entitled to pursue a certain trade or profession. Such identification may also consist of a document or card bearing the photograph and pers. id. no. of the holder so as to prove the holder's identity.

GOOD TO KNOW

- The Integration Board can provide information on the objectives of the introduction, how it is organised in different municipalities, etc., on its site at www.integrationsverket.se. Click on "Start i Sverige".



Photo: John Dowland

A home of one's own – more than just four walls and a roof over your head. Many look for housing in pretty surroundings, close to work and schools. The downside of the housing market is long housing queues in the major cities and high prices in attractive areas.

Finding a Good Home

Renting a flat, buying a house

Approximately half of Sweden's residents live in rental accommodation owned by a landlord. Others have bought a house or a flat in a tenant-owner association. In this chapter, we discuss the rules that apply when you rent a flat or house, and other types of housing in Sweden.

Some municipalities have a local housing authority that helps people find housing. There are also private housing agencies. The law specifies how much a housing agency may charge. You can ask the municipality's **consumer advisory service**, **konsumentrådgivare***, or refugee co-ordinator what rules apply so as to make sure you do not pay too much.

konsument-rådgivare: person employed by a municipality to provide advice on purchases and sales.

fastighetsägare: owner of a building.

You can also check the newspaper for housing advertisements, or you can contact **landlords**, **fastighetsägare***, directly. Landlords often have their own queues for people wanting a flat. You can find landlords in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under the heading Bostadsföretag.

Easier in smaller cities

It is easier to find housing in the smaller cities than in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. Rents and prices of houses, terraced houses and tenant-owner flats are also significantly lower there.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Small cities and towns offer many advantages compared with major cities. Cheaper housing and a better labour market are a couple of examples.

One disadvantage of living in a large city is that the population of many suburbs consists of more new arrivals than Swedes, and there are few Swedish students in the schools, making it more difficult for children to learn Swedish. It also takes longer for newly arrived families to familiarise themselves with Swedish society.

Finding work is often easier in a smaller city, too. In Sweden as a whole, 70 per

cent of all immigrants are employed, but the figure drops to some 30 per cent in the big city areas where many immigrants live. The net result is that you should think long and hard about where you want to live. Even if you have relatives or friends in one of the large cities, there is no guarantee that it can provide the best future for you and your family.

Key money

If you have found a rental flat that suits you, you should not pay more than the rent either to the landlord or to the previous **tenant**, **hyresgästen***. Demanding payment – **key money**, **svarta pengar** – for a rental unit is illegal. The departing tenant may want payment for things he or she leaves behind, however. This is legal as long as the amount is reasonable, but you are not obliged to buy the items if you do not want them.

Landlords, **hyresvärdar**, may make various demands of prospective tenants. They may want to see a reference from a previous landlord or someone else who can vouch for your being a good tenant. They may also want to know the size of your or your family's income. If you do not have a regular source of income, you may be able to arrange for a **guarantor**, **borgensman** – a friend or relative who will pledge to pay the rent if you should encounter difficulties.

If a landlord or **tenant-owner building society**, **bostadsrättsförening*** says "no" even though you have adequate finances or have secured a guarantor, and vacant flats are available, it may be a case of **discrimination**, **diskriminering***. In Sweden, it is illegal to refuse to rent someone a flat on grounds of skin colour, religious creed or country of origin. Anyone who does is breaking the law and can be reported to the police. You can also contact the refugee coordinator, consumer advisory service or Ombudsman

hyresvärd: a person who rents out accommodation

hyresgäst: person who rents a flat or house

bostadsrättsförening: an association of people who each own a flat in a building or group of buildings

diskriminering: treating someone worse than others because of his or her race, culture, creed, etc.

against Ethnic Discrimination for advice. *The address of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO) can be found in the pages at the end of this book.*

Leases

If you and a landlord have agreed you can rent a flat, you should receive a written contract, a **lease, hyreskontrakt**. This will indicate what the rent is and what it includes.

You must pay the rent for the following month no later than the last weekday of the current month. It is important to pay on time, otherwise you risk being **evicted, bli vräkt** – forced to vacate the flat.

Before you move in, you should inspect the flat carefully and see if there are any problems the landlord should correct. Does the refrigerator work? Do the radiators work? Are the doors and floors intact?

The landlord should write an **inspection report, besiktningsprotokoll,** when the previous tenant moves out. This lists any damage that may have been done to the flat. It is important to make sure that an inspection report is written up, otherwise you may be liable for damage caused by the previous tenant.

Different landlords have different rules for the **maintenance, underhåll**, of flats – the work that must be done to keep the flat in good condition, such as putting up new wallpaper. Landlords are not entitled to raise the rent for normal maintenance jobs. If you cannot agree, you can approach the Tenants' Union for advice. *See under Good to know at the end of this chapter.*

If you want to save money or make a few quick changes to your flat, you can paint or wallpaper yourself. Landlords do not generally mind your doing so as long as the job is properly done and you do not choose unusual colours (that might make it difficult to rent the flat to someone else).

You should always get the landlord's permission before making changes to your flat.



Photo: Buccina Studios

The kitchen is often called the soul of the home. The kitchen table has plenty of room for both meals and homework.

Sublets and notice

If relatives or friends will be staying with you for an extended period, you should discuss the matter with the landlord first. Since there is more wear and tear on a flat if more people live there, the landlord may not approve of their moving in. If this kind of thing is discovered later, the landlord can evict a tenant who has had lodgers without permission.

Subleasing, **att hyra i andra hand**, means renting a flat on which someone else holds the lease. To do so, you must first obtain the landlord's permission.

Whether you want to sublet your flat to someone else or sublease someone else's flat, it is important to draw up a contract specifying both the rental period and the **period of notice**, **uppsägningstid***. This enables the sublessor to be sure he or she will be entitled to occupy the flat throughout the period agreed upon, and you can be sure of getting the flat back when the sublessor moves out.

If you want to move, you must inform your landlord by giving notice at least three months before you intend to move out. These three months are counted as of the beginning the upcoming month. It is a good idea to sub-

mit notice in writing and save a copy – then you can be sure there will not be any misunderstanding.

You cannot specify who will move into your flat after you; that is up to the landlord. You can trade your flat for another, however, as long as the landlord approves the new tenant.

Regulations

There should be written regulations stipulating the rules applying to a rental building. However, if there are no written rules, there are usually unwritten rules that evolve among the people living in the building and that may vary from area to area. Often, tenants agree that their neighbours should not play music or watch television at high volume after 10 p.m., that balconies should not be used for grilling or beating carpets, that lifts, stairwells and play areas should be kept tidy, and that the laundry room should be used only by the person whose turn is up or who has reserved a particular time.

uppsägningstid: how far in advance a landlord must notify a tenant that he must move out, or a tenant must inform the landlord that he wants to move.

Unwritten rules are more difficult to follow than written regulations, since you cannot actually read and refer to them. The best advice is to see what your neighbours do and ask someone if you are unsure.

Co-operative flats

A multi-unit building may also be a **tenant-owner association**, **bostadsrättslägenhet**, in which the residents have bought their flats. Some free-standing and terraced houses are also set up as co-operative units. Vacant co-operative flats can be located through newspaper advertisements or **real-estate agents**, **mäklare**, companies that help people buy and sell real property.

If you want to buy a co-operative flat, you should first agree on a price with the current owner. You must also be

approved by the tenant-owner association and make a **down payment**, **insats***, to join the association.

You will not have to pay rent, but every month you pay a **fee**, **avgift**, to the association. The fee goes towards the loan on the building, and towards repairs and insurance. In some cases, the fee may be as high as the rent on a rental flat.

insats: money paid to join an association, which is repaid later when you leave the association.

It can be expensive to buy a co-operative flat, and even more expensive to buy a free-standing or terraced house. Most people have to borrow money from a bank to make the purchase. It is important to calculate whether you can actually afford to buy the property so that you are not forced to move out after just a year or two. The bank or real-estate agent can help you with the figures.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

To rent or to buy? In any case, good neighbours are always an asset.

In any case, it is a good idea to go through a real-estate agent if you want to buy a house or flat. The agent is expected to be **impartial**, **opartisk***, and to ensure that the transaction is carried out correctly, so no-one is taken advantage of. A real-estate agent can also help the buyer find a **surveyor**, **besiktningsman**, a person who is an expert on buildings and can check the house or flat

before the purchase goes through. It is difficult to get compensation for faults discovered afterwards, so you should check a house or flat thoroughly before buying

GOOD TO KNOW:

opartisk: not taking the side of either party in a discussion.

- If you have an ordinary lease, you are entitled to keep your flat for as long as you like, so long as you pay the rent on time, look after the flat properly and do not disturb the neighbours.
- The person moving out of a flat must always clean it. If the landlord is not satisfied, he may employ a cleaning firm to do the job and you will be required to pay the bill. You can thus save money by cleaning carefully before you move out
- **Hyregästföreningen**, the Tenants' Union, is a local association for people who live in rental accommodation. If you are a member, they may be able to help you if get into a dispute with your landlord. The staff can provide answers to simple questions even if you are not a member. The association is listed under Hyresgästföreningen in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory or can be found on the Internet at www.hyresgasterna.se.
- **Hyresnämnden**, the Rent and Leasehold Tribunal, is a state authority charged with mediating in disputes between tenants and landlords. There are Rent and Leasehold Tribunals in twelve locations around the country. The local Tribunal is listed under Hyresnämnden in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory. They can also provide advice in conflicts between landlord and tenant.

- It is important to have a **householder's comprehensive insurance policy**, **hemförsäkring.** Without insurance, you will receive no compensation if the property in your home is stolen or damaged in a fire or other accident, regardless of how the accident occurred. You can purchase a policy through an insurance company, which can be found in the Yellow Pages under försäkringsbolag.
- Every year, approximately 100 people die in fires in Sweden. The Swedish Fire Protection Association arranges free half-day courses on fire risks in flats, how to reduce the risks, and what to do if a fire should break out. If you are a member of an association, you can call 08-783 72 00 and arrange for a course to be given for you and other members. The Swedish Fire Protection Association has local offices throughout Sweden, and in 2000 arranged some 100 courses for immigrant associations.
- You may have to pay a separate bill for the electricity you use at home. Cable television may also cost extra over and above your rent.
- If you want to install a parabolic dish on your balcony, you must obtain the landlord's permission first.
- The Integration Board has published several brochures on introductory programmes and where to live for people who have applied for a Swedish residence permit. These brochures are available in Bosnian, Persian, Sorani and many other languages on the Integration Board's website at www.integrationsverket.se. Click on Start i Sverige.

Your new neighbours



Human dignity gets a mangling

Mark Olson

Many believe in judgement day. A day of reckoning at the end of time when the good and the evil are sent their separate ways. The good receive angel's wings and blessings, while the rest get horns and endless heat.

Anyone who has ever lived in a Swedish rental flat knows where the final judgement will be handed down – in the laundry room. In front of the drier. For this is where sinners are revealed. It takes about 30 seconds for your doom to be sealed.

Swedish morality is simple and direct on this point: a good person cleans the lint filter on the drier.

The filter collects lint from the clothing in the drier. Lint is like our old sins – a grey, diffuse, unappetising tangle. The only difference is that sins are caught by the filter of conscience. Lint is caught by the lint filter.

I know lint filters get no mention in the Bible, the Koran, the Abhidharma or the Mahabharata. To the best of my knowledge, there were no driers in the time of the prophets. But the moral code of the laundry room has deep roots in most religions:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The Golden Rule appears in many sacred writings, though the wording may vary. It also appears on a sign in my building's laundry room:

"Leave the laundry room in the condition you would like to find it."

And it is etched in letters of fire on my neighbour's outraged visage.

"And what is this?" he asks with burning fury.

I look down at the lint filter. My neighbour holds it up for inspection: the entire surface is covered with the lint of sin. My lint, and it's still there. Foul grey lint. I cringe with shame, searching for words to fend off the judgement I know is coming.

"I...uhm...must have forgotten..." I mumble.

"Forgotten?!" says my neighbour.

His accusation stings. I feel as if the sky may fall on me. My good name is at stake here. My cheeks redden.

I break out in a sweat. The neighbour just stares at me and my lint.

Maybe I could assure him that I usually clean the lint filter. That I try to lead a good life, give to charity, am honest and forthright and help children and pensioners whenever I can, that I feed the birds in the courtyard, pay my taxes, always think the best of the people I meet...

It's odd that the laundry room makes as big a difference as it does in Sweden.

But I know these are no more than excuses and evasions. My neighbour waves the fluffy evidence in my face.

"Well?"

It's odd, actually, that the laundry room makes as big a difference as it does in Sweden. But in many housing areas, the laundry room is the only place where neighbours see one another. Otherwise, we live our family lives in our flats. We welcome our relatives and friends across the threshold, but only rarely do we invite our neighbours in for coffee, a party or a bit of socialising.

Instead, we meet in the cold light of the laundry room, amid humming machinery and piles of damp clothing and sheets. Maybe friendship can flower in the laundry room. Maybe pure Swedish wool can be mixed with Egyptian cotton, white mixed with colours. Maybe a glorious song can rise up from cheerful neighbours gathered round the laundry mangle. Maybe my neighbour and I can become the best of friends once the centrifuge winds down, look upon one another in all our common humanity.

"Well?" he repeats in the voice of doom.

Suddenly I catch a glimpse of his watch. I nearly faint. It's only three! I've booked the laundry room until four – I have a whole hour left. The neighbour got the time wrong, came an hour too early. I have a full hour, 60 minutes, to exonerate myself as a human being, to save my good name. To clean the lint filter of the drier.

A Swedish author, August Strindberg, once wrote: It is not in our virtues but in our faults that our humanity resides. That's a sign that should be put up in every Swedish laundry room.

Mark Olson is a journalist from the USA. He is one of the editors of the Swedish Integration Board's magazine Integration i Fokus.

A job you enjoy. Employers usually look for people with specialised skills. Educational and competency requirements have grown tougher in recent decades.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Finding a Good Job

The Swedish labour market

This chapter begins with a general discussion of the Swedish labour market. This is followed by sections on the Employment Office, employment, unemployment benefits and starting a company.

The regulations we discuss here are the ones effective in spring 2001, when the book was written. New regulations may have taken effect since then; information on any changes can be obtained from the Employment Office and other places.

Many of the regulations governing the **Swedish labour market**, **arbetsmarknaden***, originated in the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, several important agreements were established between **employers**, **arbetsgivare***, and the **labour unions**, **fackförbund***. Labour unions have historically been stronger in Sweden than in many other countries and have had close ties to the government over long periods of time.

The Swedish labour market

Some of the conditions applying to the labour market are governed by law. Others have been agreed on by employers' organisations and the labour unions through **collective bargaining**, **förhandlingar***. The main employers' organisation is now called the **Confederation of Swedish Enterprise**, **Svenskt Näringsliv**, previously known as **SAF**. The main labour organisations are the **Swedish Trade Union Confederation**, **LO** for blue-collar workers, the **Confederation of Professional Employees**, **TCO**, for white-collar workers and the **Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations**, **SACO**, for professionals.

By law, ordinary working hours may encompass a maximum of 40 hours per week. The law also stipulates that all part-time employees are entitled to 25 days' paid holiday annually, the equivalent of a five-week leave. If you have worked less than a year for your current employer, you are entitled to a shorter holiday in your first year.

The law states that equal work receives equal pay. It is illegal to discriminate against a person on grounds of sex, skin colour, creed or national origin, or to pay lower wages or treat someone less favourably because he or she is of another ethnic background. The law also requires employers to promote ethnic diversity in any way they can.

arbetsmarknad: everything relating to companies and employment. The expression actually means "the market on which labour is bought and sold".

arbetsgivare: those who employ hired personnel.

fackförbund: organisations for people who are employed in various types of jobs, such as the Swedish Metalworkers' Union and the Swedish Commercial Employees' Union.

förhandlingar: discussions on issues such as wages and working hours.

Wages by collective agreement

Sweden has no legally mandated minimum wage. The wages of many employees are set by **collective agreements**, **kollektivavtal***, established between the employers and the labour organisation in charge of that area of labour. Collective agreements also sometimes include agreements on "collective assurance", providing extra protection in the event of a work-related injury or the like.

The major labour organisations include **the National Union of General and the Municipal Workers**, **Kommunalarbetarförbundet**, for workers in the care sector; the **Swedish Metal Workers' Union**, **Metall**, for many industrial workers; and **Swedish Commercial Employees' Union, Handelsanställdas förbund**, for commercial and service employees.

kollektivavtal: an agreement between employers and unions on wages and other issues applicable to large groups of workers, as opposed to an individual agreement, in which wages are determined for each person individually.

Major white-collar labour organisations include the **Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry, SIF**, and the **Swedish Federation of Civil Servants, ST**. Union organisations are listed under the heading **Fackliga organisationer** in the Yellow Pages.

Employment Office

You should register as a jobseeker at **the Employment Office**, **Arbetsförmedlingen**, as soon as you receive a residence permit, even if you have not yet mastered Swedish. Information on your education, previous work experience and the type of employment you are interested in are entered in the Employment Office's database, and you gain access to a variety of services.

The Employment Office has offices in all municipalities. In many larger cities, there are special employment offices for different professional groups, such as technology, industry, care and finance.

You can find out about **positions available**, **lediga platser**,



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

There are employment offices in all municipalities. If you have a residence permit, you can apply as a jobseeker. Looking for work on your own is also a fine approach.

through the Employment Office in various ways: on bulletin boards and in special publications available at the Employment Office itself, and at the Internet address http://www.ams.se. At the Employment Office, there are computers on which you can search their material and the Internet. Vacant positions are also advertised in the newspapers.

Important to be active

The Swedish labour market has changed a great deal in recent decades. There used to be many jobs which you could easily manage without having attended school for very long. Today, industry uses machines instead of people for such work. Many jobs require both education and language skills. This has made it more difficult to get a foothold in the Swedish labour market than it was previously.

There is unemployment even among native Swedes, but unemployment is much higher among those who have been in the country for only a short period. For this reason, it is

In many larger cities, there are special employment offices for particular professional categories, such as technology and industrial workers.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

important to take active steps to look for a job. You cannot always expect the Employment Office to find something for you, because it is not at all certain that they will.

Many available positions at private companies are never advertised; instead, they are filled through personal contacts. You should therefore speak to everyone you know – family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances. Who knows who might tip you off to a job?

Temporary services

Temporary services agencies, **bemanningsföretag**, also known as **staffing** or **recruiting companies**, **uthyrningsföretag**, now employ more and more people. In this way, they too serve as employment offices of a sort. You can find such companies in the Yellow Pages under the heading Rekryteringsföretag or Personaluthyrning.

Temp agencies arrange jobs of various types, including both office and industrial work. Some jobs are very short-term – a month or just a few hours a week – and some are longer term. Temp agencies also employ people, renting out their services to other companies that need staff for a limited time. If you are employed by a temp agency, you often receive a full salary while you are working at a company and a lower salary during periods when your services are not being used. Temp agencies have proved themselves a way into the Swedish labour market for many immigrants.

Programmes

To improve your chances of getting a job, the Employment Office can help with a variety of **programmes**, **program**. While participating in a programme, you generally receive an economic subsidy known as **activity support**, **aktivitetsstöd**.

Here are a few examples of programmes:

- **AMS vocational training courses for the unemployed**, **Arbetsmarknadsutbildning**, are designed to provide participants with new expertise and thus a better chance of getting a job.
- **Datortek** provides participants with training in modern computer technology for a maximum of six months.
- **Practical training positions**, **arbetspraktik**, also last for six months and give participants an opportunity of testing their skills at a place of work.
- **Jobseeker courses**, **jobbsökarkurser**, provide practical advice on matters such as how to write a letter of application to an employer and how to prepare for an **employment interview**, **anställningsintervju***.
- **Employment grants**, **anställningsstöd**, are paid by the Employment Office to employers hiring a person who has been unemployed for a long period of time.
- **Resource work**, **resursarbete**, is a type of position lasting a maximum of six months within the public sector (e.g. state, municipalities and county councils).
- **Start-up grants**, **starta eget-bidrag**, may sometimes be available to unemployed persons for a period of six months. More information on starting your own business can be found later in this chapter.

anställnings-intervju: a conversation in which a jobseeker tells a potential employer about himself or herself.

Activity guarantee

An activity guarantee, **aktivitetsgaranti**, is a new way of helping people who have been unemployed for a long period and have attained no results through previous programmes. An Employment Office staff member and the jobseeker together work out a **plan of action**, **handlingsplan**, considering what would be best for the individual in question. For instance, education at compulsory school or upper-secondary school level for a maximum of six months might be a suitable alternative.

The municipalities are responsible for unemployed young people under 20 years of age who are not attending upper-secondary school – the authorities are expected to arrange special courses or provide them with appropriate practical training positions. Some municipalities have voluntarily taken on similar responsibility for unemployed young people between the ages of 20 and 24.



The municipalities arrange practice positions and courses for unemployed people under 20 years of age.

Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

If you get a job in a city other than the one you currently live in, the Employment Office can provide a **moving expense grant**, **flyttningsbidrag**, to help defray your initial travel and moving expenses and help get you on your feet in the new city.

Employment

There are a variety of types of employment. **Permanent tenure**, **tillsvidareanställning**, or a **permanent position**, **fast arbete**, is the most secure form of employment. The advantage of permanent tenure is that you can count on having work for a long time to come. Your job will not end until you want to quit or you receive notice. Employees may be given notice only under certain conditions. See more below under notice of dismissal.

tidsbegränsad: applicable for a limited period.

Temporary, **tidsbegränsade***, positions are growing more and more common. Some of the forms of temporary employment include:

- **replacement posts**, **vikariat**, where a person is temporarily hired to replace someone who is sick, on parental or study leave, or who is otherwise absent.
- **practical training**, **praktikarbete**, positions in which a person studying for a profession or particular type of job receives occupational training.
- **project employment**, **projektarbete**, in which one or more people are employed to carry out a specified, limited task.
- **temporary appointments**, **visstidsanställning**, which are effective for a specified period of time.
- **trial employment**, **provanställning**, in which the employer hires a person on a trial basis for a maximum of six months. Two weeks before the end of the period, the employer must notify the employee of whether or not the position will become permanent; otherwise, it becomes permanent automatically.

When you are hired, you should receive an **employment contract**, **anställningsavtal**, or **agreement stating**, **anställningskontrakt**, the rules applicable to wages, working hours, etc. If there is a local trade union branch at your place of work, you can check with the union representative whether

The employment contract spells out the rules governing wages, working hours, etc.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

your contract is consistent with the terms agreed upon by the union and the employer. If there is not a local union branch, check the Yellow Pages under Fackliga organisationer.

You can join a union even if there is not a local branch at your place of work. The union can provide you with counselling on issues relating to wages, risks in the working environment and other workplace problems. By joining a union, you also become a member of its **unemployment benefit fund**, **arbetslöshetskassa***. *More information on unemployment benefit funds can be found later in this chapter*.

arbetslöshetskassa: a type of insurance company that provides money for a certain period to those who have been employed but lost their job.

Paying tax

The salary you and your employer agree on is known as your **gross salary**, **bruttolön**. The employer deducts a certain percentage of your gross salary to pay tax. The money you actually receive is your **net salary**, **nettolön**.

If you are **working illegally, or "black"**, **arbeta svart**, your employer is not paying tax or the **social welfare charges**, **sociala avgifter**, that go towards your health insurance and future pension. Illegal employees cost employers less and, if you are unemployed, it may seem tempting to you, too. But working "black" is risky. You get no sick pay or sickness benefits if you are ill, you receive no compensation if you are injured on the job or lose your job, and you receive no pension for the period during which you were illegally employed.

Major problems also result when "black" employment is discovered. Working illegally while receiving benefits from the **Social Insurance Office**, **Försäkringskassan**, is a crime, as is failing to declare your earnings. You may be required to pay a fine and then pay the tax your employer has failed to pay. Your employer may be sentenced to a fine or prison and may also have to pay a penalty fee.

Overtime, inconvenient working hours, flexitime, notice

If your employer wants you to work more than your normal hours, the extra hours are called **overtime**, **övertid**. Overtime must not exceed a total of 50 hours per month. You must either receive extra payment for your overtime or be permitted to take time off corresponding to your overtime hours. Such free time is called **compensatory leave**, **kompledigt**.

Inconvenient working hours, **obekväm arbetstid**, are hours scheduled in the evening, at night and at the weekend. You must be paid extra for inconvenient working hours.

Flexitime, **flextid**, means that you do not have to come and go at exact hours. You might, for example, be permitted to come anywhere between 7 and 9 in the morning and leave between 4 and 6 in the afternoon. The hours you are present are recorded on your **time card**, **stämpelkort***, or the like so that your employer can see you have worked the correct number of hours.

stämpelkort: card that you insert in a machine when you come to work and when you leave so as to record the amount of time you spend on the job.

If you are sick, you receive no benefits on the first day, which is known as the **qualifying period**, **karensdag**. After that, you receive **sick pay**, **sjuklön**, from your employer for the first 14 days. If you are sick longer, you receive **sickness benefits**, **sjukpenning**, from the Social Insurance Office. The amount of your sickness benefits depends on your salary. You should therefore report your salary to the Social

Insurance Office as soon as you start a job. *For more information on sickness benefits, see the chapter on Money.*

If you wish to quit your job, you must provide notice, usually a month in advance. The time between giving notice and quitting is the **period of notice**, **uppsägningstid**. The company may also give notice to an employee if there is not enough work or insufficient money, or if the employee has not been doing the job properly. In such circumstances, too, a certain period of notice is applicable.

If you receive notice of dismissal and are a union member, you can ask your union representative whether notice has been given in accordance with the rules. You can also approach the union for help in getting the best possible terms of dismissal.

Unemployment benefits

Unemployment benefits are the money to which an unemployed person may be entitled for a certain, limited period of time. As of this writing, benefits are payable for 300 days. To receive unemployment benefits, you must have worked or studied full-time for a certain number of months during the past year.

As the rules governing unemployment benefits are very complicated, we cannot go into them in detail. Instead, we will summarise their main points.

There are two types of unemployment benefits, a **basic allowance**, **grundbelopp**, and **income-based compensation**, **inkomstrelaterad ersättning**. The basic allowance is paid by a special unemployment benefit fund called the **Alfa-kassan**. **Unemployment benefit funds**, **a-kassor**, may be compared to an insurance company that pays benefits in a given field of labour.

Income-based compensation is higher than the basic allowance, "income-based" meaning simply that the

amount payable will depend on how much you earned when you were employed.

To receive income-based compensation, you must have been a member of an unemployment benefit fund for at least 12 months. If you join a union, you become a member of its unemployment benefit fund. You can also choose only to join the unemployment benefit fund serving your professional area.

Which unemployment benefit fund you join depends, then, on your profession. If you start working in a different industry – a restaurant instead of a shop, for example – you usually have to switch unemployment benefit funds, too. Another option is to join the Alfa unemployment benefit fund. Besides paying the basic allowance, as mentioned above, the Alfa unemployment benefit fund is the only one you can join regardless of your union and profession.

If the Employment Office finds a position that might suit you, you are generally obliged to take it. Otherwise, your unemployment benefits may be discontinued.

The Employment Office can provide more information on unemployment benefits and unemployment benefit funds.

bokföring: how a company accounts for its purchases, sales, rent and other financial transactions.

Your own business

Starting a business of their own is a dream for many people. More immigrants than Swedes start companies when they are unemployed, and, today, one out of every five new companies in Sweden was founded by a person with a foreign background.

There is much to take into consideration if you want to start a company. You should take a hard look at everything that is required for the company to succeed. Can you get a loan to get started? Do you know the rules applicable to **bookkeeping**, **bokföring***, and payment of taxes and social

If you want to start your own business, you can get help from organisations such as IFS, Nyföretagarcentrum and Almi företagspartner.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

welfare charges? How will you **market**, **marknadsföra***, your company? Who will your customers and **competitors**, **konkurrenter*** be, and what must you do to be better than the competition?

marknadsföra sig: to promote a company.

konkurrent: another person or company who sells the same thing as you do.

You also need to know what permits are required. For example, in Sweden shops need a permit from the fire brigade, cafeterias and groceries need a permit from the environmental and health care authorities, and special permits are required for trading in open-air markets and serving alcoholic beverages.

Help getting started

If you would like to discuss your business idea with knowledgeable people, you can get help from the Internationella Företagarföreningen i Sweden (IFS), which has offices in seventeen Swedish cities. You can also get help from Nyföretagarcentrum and Almi företagspartner. These two organisations exist to help people with new businesses. Both have offices at many locations in Sweden. You can find them in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory.

If you are unemployed, you may be eligible for a start-up grant from the Employment Office, who will ask an independent expert to evaluate your business idea before deciding whether to give you a grant.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- The Employment Office's customer service department employs specially trained personnel who can answer questions both on general rules and on what applies specifically to you as a jobseeker. Their toll-free customer service telephone number is 020-21 26 00.
- It is a good idea to ask the person who registers you with the Employment Office to read you the "search words" entered in the database along with your name. Search words describe you, your expertise and your experience: "speaks French", "has done gardening work", "care sector experience", etc. The search words make it easier for the Employment Office staff to link available positions to jobseekers. It is therefore important to ensure they are correct.
- On the Employment Office's website, you will find a Vacancies Bank, listing positions available, a Jobseekers Bank, where you can enter your own particulars, and, under Yrken A–Ö, a description of various professions and occupations. The site address is www.ams.se. Another database of available positions can be found at www.stepstone.se.
- Validation entails evaluation of vocational training and skills acquired in other countries to permit easier comparison with Swedish vocational training and skills. A variety of validation trials are currently being carried out to make it easier for people with a foreign background to enter the Swedish labour market.
- Employers often like to see references – names of people who know you and will vouch for your performance. If you have been employed in Sweden,

previous employers are appropriate references. Otherwise, you might ask your Swedish teacher, a neighbour or someone from your own country to serve as a reference.

- When you receive your wages, you also receive a salary specification, a document showing how much you have worked and what you have been paid. The salary specification should indicate that the employer has deducted approximately 30 per cent in preliminary tax. If not, you have been working illegally. Employers must also pay social welfare charges, but these are not shown on your salary specification.
- If you believe an employer has discriminated against you because of your ethnic origin or for some other reason, first contact your union. If you are not a union member or do not receive the help you need, you can take the matter up with the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO), which has an office in Stockholm. The Internet address is www.do.se. Some cities also have "anti-discrimination agencies" with special counsellors who handle such issues.
- It is important to apply for jobs even at places where you believe you may be discriminated against. Only if you have been refused a job that you should properly have received can the anti-discrimination law be applied to your advantage.
- The major union organisations LO, TCO and SACO have Internet sites at www.lo.se, www.tco.se and www.saco.se. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprises, the employers' organisation, has a website at www.svensktnaringsliv.se. All webpages have links to the associations included in the organisation.
- Almi Företagspartner, which provides assistance for new companies, has a website at www.almi.se. The Internationella Företagarföreningen i Sverige provides information in several languages on its site at www.ifs.a.se.



Fotoillustration: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Making the best economic decision is not always easy. An enormous range of products of all types is available. Advertising fliers with new offers come in the mail every week..

How Much Does It Cost?

Money and day-to-day finances

In this chapter, we have brought together a variety of information, rules and tips relating to finances. The initial sections are about purchases, loans and insurance. There are a lot of things to bear in mind if you want to get the most for your money.

Later sections concern taxes and some of the things your taxes are used for: pensions, child allowances, etc.

It is often said that Sweden is a land of high taxes, and it's true that taxes are higher in Sweden than in many other countries. Although they complain about high taxes, however, most Swedes want to preserve the things their taxes finance: healthcare and the basic economic security that mean that no-one in the country need be truly badly off.

Purchases

The everyday item we purchase most often is **food**, **livsmedel**. A concept you will often see when shopping for food is the **best before date**, **bäst-före-datum**. This is the date until which you can expect the food to remain fresh if stored properly. Food items that spoil quickly such as mince or milk often also have a **use before date**, **sista förbrukningsdag** – the last date on which you can be sure the food is good to eat.

Unit price, **jämförpris**, is another word you will often see in groceries. This indicates the price per kilo, litre or unit of the food item, enabling you to compare it with other brands. Most grocery items also have information on ingredients on the label. Clothing and furniture often have labels indicating what they are made of. They may also have



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Save your receipts when you shop. That makes it much easier to exchange goods or correct problems if a product is defective.

labels with care instructions, showing, for example, the temperature you should use to wash an article of clothing, or how to remove a stain from a sofa.

If you are not sure whether something you are buying will suit you, you can ask to take it on a **sale or return basis**, **öppet köp**. If so, you may return the item after a day or two, provided you have not used it, and ask for your money back.

Shops that do not permit customers to buy on a sale or return basis will sometimes give the customer the right to exchange the item for something else in the shop. If they do not have anything you want at the time, you receive a **credit note**, **tillgodokvitto**, that you can use to buy something later. Foodstuffs and flowers may not be exchanged, nor as a general rule may underwear or bathing suits. Packages that have been opened may not be exchanged.

To be permitted to exchange something, you must have saved the receipt for the item you bought. It is also important to have the receipt in case you discover the item is defective. If a new pair of shoes falls apart after a week, you can bring the shoes and the receipt back to the store. The shop either has to repair the shoes, return your money or give you a new pair of shoes. See Good to know about what to do if you disagree.

You can **lodge a complaint**, **reklamera**, and return an item if it was defective from the start, like the shoes in the example above. Some goods, such as watches and VCRs, usually come with a **warranty**, **garanti**, valid for one or two years. The warranty is a guarantee from the shop that it will repair the watch or VCR at its own cost if it stops working before the guarantee period is over.

Home selling, **hemförsäljning**, includes door-to-door sales and telephone sales. It is a good idea to think twice about whether you really need the thing being sold or are

simply being swept along because the salesperson seems so convincing. If you decide to buy but change your mind within two weeks, the sale can be cancelled. Those two weeks are called **contract respite weeks**, **ångerveckor**.

Another way of buying things is by **mail order**, **postorder**. You order products from a catalogue and pay when you pick up the package at the post office. Here, too, you are entitled to change your mind within two weeks of the date when you received the package. You do not have to pay for the product if you send it back within two weeks, but you do have to pay transport costs.

Card purchases and loans

Many people have cards of various types that can be used to make payments or withdraw money.

A **cash dispenser card**, **uttagskort**, is linked to a bank account and is used only to withdraw money from cash dispensers.

A **bank card**, **bankkort**, can be used like a cash dispenser card, but can also be used for payments. When you pay with a bank card, the money is withdrawn directly from the money you have in the bank.

A **debit card**, **betalkort**, is also used for payments. The difference between it and a bank card is that the money is not withdrawn immediately. Instead, the amount you spend is added up and withdrawn from your account once each month, when you will also receive a statement itemising all your purchases. Debit cards are usually more expensive than bank cards.

Credit cards, **kreditkort**, are cards (bank cards, debit cards or other types) that are linked to a line of credit – that is, an opportunity to borrow money. When you pay with a credit card, you are borrowing money from the card issuer or bank. Credit cards are generally regarded as an expen-



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Many use bank cards of various types to withdraw money.

sive way of borrowing money, and one you should be careful of. Other ways of borrowing money are buying something by **instalments**, **avbetalning***, or **taking a loan**, **ta lån**. It is important to look at all the costs if you are considering whether you can afford loans like these. They may be very expensive: a television that costs 4,000 kronor if you pay cash may cost almost 6,000 kronor with interest if you pay by instalments. Banks usually say that if you can't afford to save some money every month, you can't afford to borrow.

There is also good reason for thinking twice before **standing surety**, **gå i borgen**, for someone. Standing surety for someone means accepting responsibility for someone else's loan. If he or she cannot repay the loan, you will be held liable to repay it instead.

avbetalning: payment for something spread over a period of time – once a month, for example – with interest.

påminnelse: an extra notification that something must be done.

Official non-payment notice

To avoid penalty fees, it is important to pay all your bills on time. You usually only receive one **reminder**, **påminnelse***, about an unpaid invoice. If you miss the reminder, the landlord or company will often contact a **debt collection agency**, **inkassobyrå**, a company that specialises in collecting unpaid debts.

If you cannot pay your entire debt at once, you should contact the person to whom you owe the money as quickly as possible to see whether you can reach some form of agreement. Otherwise, the **debt enforcement service**, **kronofogdemyndigheten**, will proceed to issue an order to

pay, ordering you to pay the amount you owe plus various additional fees. For more information on the debt enforcement service, see the chapter on Law and order.

At that point, if you do not pay within 10 days, the debt enforcement service collects the money by garnishing your wages or by seizing your car or some other valuable as compensation for the debt. You also receive an **official non-payment notice, betalningsanmärkning**. This is something to be avoided, since landlords and banks keep track of who has received official non-payment notices. If you have been given an official non-payment notice, it thus becomes more difficult to rent a flat or take a bank loan.

Insurance

Home insurance, **hemförsäkring**, covers all the things in your home. If you do not have home insurance, you will receive no compensation if your residence is damaged by a fire, or if something is stolen. Home insurance policies also often include **travel coverage**, **reseskydd**, that is applicable if you travel abroad for no more than 45 days, **legal expenses coverage**, **rättsskydd**, which provides compensation for expenses associated with certain legal issues, and **coverage against assault**, **överfallsskydd**, in case you are assaulted and the person who has done the damage is unable to compensate you.

Ask your insurance company representative exactly what your home insurance covers and does not cover. There may, for example, be different compensation rules for things you have in your flat and things you keep in your car, in the attic or in the cellar.

One of the purposes of Sweden's taxes is to guarantee everyone a certain minimum standard of living, even if you fall ill or experience other problems. Nevertheless, many people take out insurance policies so as to get more than



Photo: Sofie Nordström / Pressens Bild

Pension insurance gives you more money to live on when you grow older.

the guaranteed minimum in the event that anything should happen.

Personal accident insurance, **olycksfallsförsäkring**, for example, provides you with benefits if you should have an accident that results in disability. It also compensates you for certain expenses you would otherwise have to pay yourself, such as patient fees at the hospital and treatment by a physiotherapist.

Pension insurance, **pensionsförsäkring**, gives you more money to live on when you grow old. Private **health insurance**, **sjukförsäkring**, gives you more to live on if you fall ill, and **life insurance**, **livförsäkring**, gives the rest of your family money if you should die. There are also special **children's insurance policies**, **barnförsäkringar**, that provide extra benefits for children who have long-term illnesses or accidents.

Taxes

The most conspicuous tax is **income tax**, **inkomstskatten**, which is deducted from the money you earn through work. Certain benefits paid from the Insurance Office, such as parents' allowance and sickness benefits, are considered income for these purposes and are also taxed. *For more information on parents' allowance and sickness benefits, see the end of this chapter.*

If you are employed, your employer must deduct tax before paying your wages. The amount deducted is called **preliminary tax**, **preliminärskatt**, since it is an advance, approximate payment that may not exactly correspond to the final tax.

The authorities calculate your final tax with the help of your **tax return**, **självdeklaration**. This is a form containing a variety of information on your finances. In the spring, you file a tax return for the previous year. By autumn, the tax authorities have checked all the returns and send out tax assessments. You can then see whether you paid too much tax the year before and will get a refund or perhaps have to pay more.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

All adults with an income must file a tax return.

Most people can use the simplified tax form, which is completed in advance by the tax authorities and simply needs to be signed after you check the correctness of the information.

All adults who have an income, a house or personal assets must file a tax return every year. Most people receive a **simplified tax return**, **förenklad självdeklaration**, by post in which the tax authorities have already filled in the relevant information. All you have to do is check that it is correct and sign the form.

If you are self-employed, and in certain other cases,

you must submit a more detailed **special tax return**, **särskild självdeklaration**, that you fill in yourself. If you are self-employed, you must also declare your **VAT**, **moms**, a tax that is levied on goods and services. If you are considering starting your own company, you can learn everything you need to know about VAT and corporate tax returns at one of the Employment Office's starting-up courses. *For more information, see the chapter on Work.*

In calculating your preliminary tax, the tax authorities assume that you earn the same amount every month and that you do not have any **deductions**, **avdrag***, to make on your tax return. If you do not work all year or have large deductions for interest paid on loans or the like, it may be a good idea to request a **tax adjustment**, **jämkning***. To do so, you provide an account of your current finances so that the tax authorities can calculate your preliminary tax more accurately. This will ensure you of more money after tax each month of the year instead of having to wait for the excess tax to be refunded later on.

avdrag: amounts subtracted from the income you declare on your tax return.

jämkning: revision of the tax to be deducted from someone's wages.

If you are not satisfied with a decision of the tax authorities, you can request **reconsideration**, **omprövning**. All such requests must be made in writing.

In addition to income tax and VAT, there are taxes on wealth, property, inheritances, gifts and capital gains. Additional taxes are levied on goods such as alcohol, tobacco and petrol.

Old-age pension

Sweden's pension system is a security system intended to ensure that those who have passed the age of retirement have something to live on.

Under the pension system introduced in 1999, the size of your pension is determined by how much you have worked and how much you have earned during your years

in Sweden. Other items such as sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, parents' allowance, study periods, child-rearing and **compulsory military service**, **värnplikt***, are also factored in in various ways. *Sickness benefits and parents' allowance are discussed later in this chapter. Unemployment benefits are discussed in the chapter on Work.*

The new pension system applies to people born in 1938 or later. People born between 1938 and 1953 receive pensions according to both the new system and the former system. Here we will only discuss the new system.

värnplikt: military service carried out by many young men and some young women over 18 years of age.

There are three types of national pension: income-based pension, premium pension and guarantee pension.

The income-based pension, **inkomstpensionen**, is the most important component of your pension. Its size depends on how much you have earned and how much tax you have paid in Sweden. Every year, you receive notification from the Insurance Office of how large your future income-based pension can be expected to be.

fonder: If you place money in a unit trust, the trust will manage the money by buying shares in companies and other assets. If the value of the shares goes up, you receive more money when you eventually sell your investment units.

The premium pension, **premiepensionen**, is also based on how much you have earned and paid in tax; it is a small portion of your pension which you are allowed to place in **unit trusts**, **fonder***. If you do not select a trust, your premium pension funds are placed with a state unit trust company. The size of your premium pension depends on how well your unit trusts manage the money you place with them.

The guarantee pension, **garantipensionen**, supports those who have received a low income or none at all. It is intended as a guarantee that all elderly people receive a certain minimum sum to live on every month. To receive the full amount, you must have lived in Sweden for at least 40 years before retiring. If you have lived here for less than 40 years, the guarantee pension will be correspondingly lower. People regarded as refugees under the terms of the Geneva Convention, however, receive the amount to which

they would have been entitled if they had been living in Sweden for 40 years.

Some people also receive an extra pension negotiated between employers and employees. This is called an **occupational pension**, **tjänstepension**, or **contract pension**, **avtalspension**. Many people also pay for private pension insurance, as discussed earlier.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

The pension system provides security to those who have reached the age of retirement. Many people choose to work several extra years after the age of 65 to secure a higher pension.

People who are over 65 when they come to Sweden are not eligible for an old-age pension. They may, however, be eligible for **income support**, **försörjningsstöd**, which is provided to people with no source of income. *More information is provided later in this chapter.*

The guarantee pension is paid from the age of 65. You can begin taking out the income-related and premium pension any time after the age of 61, but you receive a lower pension than you would have if you had worked until the age of 65. By the same token, you receive a higher pension if you continue working after the age of 65.

Housing allowance

Housing allowance, **bostadsbidrag**, may be granted to young people between the ages of 18 and 29 and to families with children. How much you receive depends on how much you earn and own, how many children you have, how much you pay for your accommodation, and how large it is. Applications for a housing allowance should be sent in to the Insurance Office.

If you receive a housing allowance, you must notify the Insurance Office of all changes in your finances or household, e.g. if the size of your salary changes, if you have more children or if relatives move in with you. Such changes may affect your housing allowance. If you have received too much money, you may be required to pay some of it back.

Pensioners may be entitled to a special grant known as a **municipal housing supplementary allowance**, **bostadstillägg**.

Child allowance

Parents receive a **child allowance**, **barnbidrag**, for children up to 16 years of age. Child allowances are paid monthly and you do not need to apply. Families with many children receive a special supplementary allowance.

Young people aged between 16 and 20 who are attending upper-secondary school receive a **student grant**, **studiebidrag**. Families with low income can apply for an additional supplement to the student grant.

Parents are liable to support their children until they have reached the age of 18. Parents are liable to support children who are still attending compulsory school or upper-secondary school up to the age of 21.

Students wishing to continue their education after upper-secondary school are eligible for **study assistance**, **studiestöd**. Study assistance consists of two components, a grant and a loan. Student loans are available for up to 12 terms of study. *For more information, see the chapter on Schools and education.*



Photo: Teri Dixon

Child allowance is paid once a month for children up to 16 years of age.

Sick pay, sickness benefits and temporary disability pensions

If you are gainfully employed and fall ill, you receive no benefits for the first day, which is known as the **qualifying day**, **karensdag**. You then receive **sick pay**, **sjuklön**, from your employer for two weeks. You can be absent from work due to illness for up to a week without consulting a physician. If you need to be absent longer, you must obtain a **medical certificate**, **läkarintyg**.

If you are ill for more than two weeks, you receive **sickness benefits**, **sjukpenning**, from the Insurance Office. If your illness prevents you from working full-time but you can still work part of the day, you may be eligible for quarter, half or three-quarter sickness benefits. It is up to your physician to evaluate the extent of your sick-listing.

Unemployed persons receive sickness benefits as of the day after the qualifying day.

If you fall ill for a longer period, you may be eligible for a **temporary disability allowance**, **sjukbidrag**. Temporary disability allowances may be granted to people who have a long-term illness but will probably be able to start working again later on. A person who will never be able to work again due to an illness or functional disability may be entitled to a **disability pension**, **förtidspension**.

A special committee, the social insurance committee, determines who is entitled to temporary disability allowances and disability pensions.

Parents' allowance

Parents' allowance, **föräldrapenning**, is available to parents so that they can stay at home with their children for a certain period. It is paid out over a total of 450 days, which can be taken out until the child is eight years old. Thirty days are reserved for the parent who does not take out the



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

With the aid of parents' allowance, fathers and mothers can afford to stay at home with their child for a total of 450 days.

other days. If the mother takes 420 days, for example, the other 30 are reserved for the father, who may not transfer his own days to the mother.

The amount payable in parents' allowance is partially determined by how much the parent earned before having the child. Those with no income receive a minimum amount called the **guarantee level, garantinivå**, which was 60 kronor per day in spring 2001.

Rather than taking out the full parents' allowance, you can withdraw three quarters, half or one quarter of the parents' allowance and work part-time if your child can be cared for while you are working. This enables the allowance days to be extended over a longer period.

A **temporary parents' allowance**, **tillfällig föräldrapenning**, is available to parents to care for a child under 12 when the child, or the person who normally looks after for the child, is sick, or when they need to go to the **child healthcare centre**, **barnavårdscentralen**. Fathers are also eligible for a temporary parents' allowance for 10 days in conjunction with the birth of a child.

The Insurance Office can answer all questions on sickness benefits, temporary disability allowance and parents' allowance.

Income support

Income support, **försörjningsstöd**, previously known as **socialbidrag**, or "social security", is available to the unemployed or persons whose earned income is extremely small and who lack sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, activity support or other means of supporting themselves, and who do not have other assets such as money or shares. Income support is not granted automatically; it is considered on an individual basis.

Whenever the need for help arises, you can apply for income support at the social services office of the municipality where you live. Make an appointment in advance and bring along the appropriate documentation of your finances – pay slips, bank statements, rent bills, housing allowance statements, etc. You can receive support not only for housing and personal expenses but also for other costs, such as medical care, dentistry and glasses.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- **The National Food Administration**, **Livsmedelsverket**, has a website with a wide range of information on labelling of food, food and health, vegetarian food, food for pregnant women, etc. You can find it at www.slv.se; information is also available in English.
- If you are dissatisfied with a product that was not of the quality promised, you should first contact the shop directly. If that does not yield results, you can contact the **consumer counsellor**, **konsumentrådgivaren**, in your municipality, if there is one. You can also contact the National Board for Consumer Complaints, Box 174, 101 23 Stockholm, telephone 08-783 17 00, www.arn.se.

- Help and advice on insurance issues are available at the **Consumers' Insurance Bureau**, **Konsumenternas försäkringsbyrå**, Klara Norra Kyrkogata 33, 111 22 Stockholm, telephone 08-22 58 00, www.kofb.se.
- Your municipal consumer counsellor or consumer advisory office can usually provide information on goods such as refrigerators, freezers, televisions and cars: tests comparing different brands and tips to help you get a good buy. Such information can also be found in the magazines Råd och Rön and Vår Bostad, which can be found at libraries and on the Internet at www.rr.kov.se and www.varbostad.se. The Swedish Consumer Agency's website is at www.konsumentverket.se
- If you want a tradesman to work on your house or car, make sure to ask for a **price estimate**, **kostnadsförslag**, first. This is an approximate estimate of what the work will cost so you know what to expect.
- Do you need to cut expenses? Here are a few tips from consumer advisors:

  There are often sales after Christmas and during the summer, and sometimes at other times, too. If you can wait to make a purchase, you can ask the shop when it will be holding its next sale.

  Always check unit prices at shops. Special discount prices are not always the lowest. Buy large packages of items you use frequently – they are usually cheapest.

  If you have many debts, it sometimes pays to ask a bank to convert them into a single new loan, which may cost you less.
- One way of ensuring that recurrent bills (for housing, electricity, telephone, etc.) are always paid on time is to arrange for them to be paid by **autogiro**. The money is then drawn from your bank account at the correct time. Talk to your bank about autogiro payments.

- If you need money quickly and have a valuable item that you can do without for a while, you can go to a **pawnshop**, **pantbank**. A pawnshop will lend you money in return for allowing it to hold property such as a VCR, watch or jewellery as security. You can find pawnshops under the heading Pantbank in the Yellow Pages.
- If you are employed by a large company, you may not need to take out life insurance and accident insurance on your own. **Group insurance policies**, **gruppförsäkringar**, that are a little cheaper are often available. Check with your labour union.
- You can check with your school or day nursery to see what types of insurance policies are available for children in your municipality. Some municipalities have policies that cover children during the day, while others have policies that cover children during their leisure time, too.
- If you received wages, sickness benefits, parents' allowance or other income in Sweden but did not receive a tax return form in the mail the following year, an error may have been made. Contact your local tax office and find out whether you have been forgotten.
- The National Tax Board has a website at www.rsv.se with information in both Swedish and English on VAT, preliminary tax, tax rates in different municipalities, etc.
- More information on pensions is available at a special website, www.pension.nu. You can also ask questions by telephone on 020-61 65 70.
- The Insurance Office provides a range of good information on child allowance, parents' allowance, sickness benefits, etc., on its website. Some information is available in easy Swedish and other languages.

Your new neighbours



Photo: Peter Hellström

An umbrella

Hanna Wallensteen

"You silly old bushman!" she wanted to shout. "I'm not like you. It just looks that way." But of course she didn't do it. How would that look, standing there on the slushy pavement, accusing a complete stranger of being a bushman? Absolutely mad, that's how.

She snuffled at the skies. Late autumn draped down under the streetlights, fogging the view. This was completely ridiculous. For some nasty reason, the damp slunk down and dragged at her thick ponytail. Ponytail...ponypuff was more like it. Afro hair doesn't like being forced into a tail. She opened her umbrella.

"You don't speak Swahili?" he asked.

"No, no," she said in Swedish, "just Swedish."

"I'm sorry, I don't understand Swedish. You speak English?"

She really ought to feel sorry for him. She really ought to feel sorry for everyone who didn't come from Sweden. Weren't people always asking her if she was glad she'd been allowed to come here? What would have become of her, an orphan, abandoned, if she had stayed in Africa? And now here she was, face to face with a full-blown savage with his curls teased up in an enormous do. Oh dear. He'd probably come straight from war and disaster. She should be nice to him.

"I am adopted from Ethiopia," she said in prim schoolgirl English.

You come from a beautiful people. You're not Swedish, you know. You're an African woman!

The man's face lit up.

"Oh! So you are from Africa too?!" His voice was much too loud, his gestures much too big. People started to turn away. Embarrassing. For her part, she had made a commitment to the minute details. Like breakfast. Crispbread with cheese, preferably with a fresh vegetable for the vitamins' sake. A light bite – not too much, not too little – every morning. Rinse out your cup, wash

your hands, no elbows on the table. Cherry-red lips? Never! Bicycle helmet on, seatbelt fastened. Hum a Swedish folk song now and then. Bad to smoke, bad to swear. And boasting's never right, you know.

"You should be proud!" he said. "You should go back! You know Africa is beautiful! You should seek your roots!" Images remembered from CNN: dying trees. Dehydrated livestock. Starving human bodies. Children with rifles. Why would she want to go there?

"You should be proud!" he said. "You have to go back! You must know your language, your origin. You come from a beautiful people, you know. You're not Swedish, you're an African woman!"

Pea soup, Santa Lucia, the right of common access, that tricky "sj" sound, Papa, Mama, baby sister... Her roots were here. Her dreams and memories were Swedish. Her thoughts and feelings were in the Swedish language. That was where she belonged. Pea soup, Lucia, common access, "sj", Papa, Mama, baby sister.

"It was nice meeting you, sister!" He politely shook her hand and continued on his way. Sister? The heavens opened. She watched him ineffectually shielding his head with a give-away newspaper. It looked ridiculous.

"You silly old bushman, you need an umbrella!" she shouted. Ten people turned on the pavements to stare. He turned around and waved. Embarrassed, she ploughed through the slush to where he was standing, and with a damp woollen mitten, pressed her umbrella into his hand.

The big man with the big hairdo stood planted under the floral-pattern umbrella in surprise, watching the confused figure disappear into the distance. Cold crystals danced in her wake under the streetlights. She almost slipped on the crowded pavement. Finally all he could see was a tiny pearl necklace of sleet glittering in her proud African hair.

"Swedish African," he muttered to himself under the bluebells and cowslips. "Very Swedish African."

Hanna Wallensteen, born in 1971, was adopted by a Swedish family and brought from Ethiopia to Sweden when she was six months old. She works as an actress and teacher for the educational company Vardagens Dramatik in Stockholm. She has a BA in psychology and training in theatre and drama. She has toured Sweden with her own theatrical production, *Veta sin plats* ("Know your Place").

Sunday breakfast. Weekends are when couples and families see one another most.



Photo: John Dowland

Our Nearest and Dearest

On living together. Families, couples and relatives.

Families have many faces in Sweden. The most common family unit consists of a mother, father and children. Many parents are married, while others live together as sambor, a word compounded from the Swedish words for "live together". Many families consist of just one parent and children, or two adults without children. Nowadays, two adults of the same sex can live together in a registered partnership. Swedish law distinguishes between these types of relationships. More information on these topics can be found later in this chapter.

The majority of families see each other most on Saturdays and Sundays. During the rest of the week, the children go to school and spend time at recreation centres or day nurseries, while their parents are away at work. Often, a member or members of the family may be away at various evening activities. The children may be involved with music or sports, and the parents may go to courses or association meetings. For many families, weekends are their only days together. That is when they can get out into the country or see friends and relatives. Many people who work full-time during the week do their laundry and cleaning on the weekend.

Families are important for most people in Sweden, even if the family members live in different cities. On major holidays such as Christmas and Easter, families often meet, as they do on birthdays and special occasions, such as christenings, graduations or funerals. Some families see each other often, others more seldom. Elderly people are often helped by their children and grandchildren, but they can also get help with cooking, cleaning and the like from the municipal home help service.

Men and women

People who love each other often choose to live together simply because they are in love. Not so long ago, there were other reasons that were sometimes more important. For women, financial or social security might be an important consideration. Men might need someone to manage the household and help with work on the farm. It was also important to have children, perhaps to take over the family farm and eventually take care of their aged parents.

This pattern has changed a great deal in the past century, just as society itself has evolved. It is no longer particularly common for a couple to have shared work, such as

a farm or business. Most work separately. They share their relationship, their children and their home.

Swedish views of the body and of sex have also changed. In the beginning of the twentieth century, women wore full-length skirts. Today, people dress lightly during the summer, and most are no longer bothered by semi-nude bodies, whether male or female.

Today, sex before marriage is not unusual. It is not accepted by everyone, but it is nevertheless common. Use of contraceptives is a matter of course. Young people can get help with contraception at **youth counselling centres**, **Ungdomshälsan**. Adults can receive counselling on such matters at **maternity clinics**, **mödrahälsovården**, or **women's healthcare centres**, **kvinnohälsan**, or at the nearest general healthcare centre. Sexual intercourse with persons under the age of 15 is prohibited.

Early in their schooling, children learn how babies come into the world, how their bodies work, and that contraceptives are generally available. They also receive instruction on venereal diseases such as chlamydia and HIV and how to protect themselves against such diseases. In the school curriculum, this is called personal relationship instruction. Information is also available from the **National Swedish Association for Sexual Information**, the **RFSU**, and the **Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights**, the **RFSL**. *You can find their addresses and telephone numbers at the end of this chapter*.

jämställdhet: Women and men shall enjoy equal opportunity in education, work and family life.

Today, **equality between the sexes**, **jämställdhet***, is considered such an important issue in Sweden that it is covered by special legislation. According to the Equal Rights Act, men and women have equal rights and obligations. They must be afforded equal opportunities to hold a job that provides financial independence, and they have equal rights and opportunities to care for their home and children and

participate in political, union and other civic activities. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, JämO, is charged with seeing that the Equal Rights Act is adhered to. If you suspect a violation of the Equal Rights Act, report it to your labour union, which can make a report to JämO. You can also contact JämO directly. *Their address and telephone number can be found at the end of this chapter*.

Children

It is not easy for children to speak up for themselves, which is why the state has established a close-meshed safety net for them. Their health is regularly checked at pre-natal clinics even while they are still in the womb, and once they are born their parents take them for regular visits to the child health centre or the children's clinic of the local healthcare centre, where nurses and physicians follow their development. You can also contact the healthcare centre if you have questions. *For more information, see the chapter on Care and support.*

Sweden is a signatory of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under this convention, all decision-makers dealing with cases involving children are expected to listen to the child and to put the best interests of the child first.



Photo: Geoff Manasse

The best interests of children must come first according to the UN's Convention on the Rights of Children. Sweden is a signatory of the convention.

Even if parents want the best for their children, families sometimes encounter problems which they find it difficult to manage on their own. Pre-schools

and schools often employ the services of psychologists and school welfare officers, whom you may consult if you wish. The municipality also provides **family counselling**, **familjerådgivning**.

Children in vulnerable situations who feel they have no-one to turn to can call **the Swedish Society for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Community, BRIS**, which also has telephone hotlines for adults. Here, you can talk to a person who is bound by an **oath of confidentiality**, **tystnadsplikt**, meaning that he or she cannot pass on what you have said to other people. At BRIS, you can ask for advice and remain anonymous.

The foundation of all Swedish legislation relating to children is respect for children. One such law prohibits all parents and adults from beating, threatening or harassing children. Children have an ombudsman of their own, **BO**, who is charged with representing children's interests in society. *You can find their addresses and telephone numbers at the end of this chapter*.

Marriage

To get married in Sweden, you must be at least 18 years old, you may not already be married to someone else, and you may not be a close relative of the person you are marrying. **Full brothers and sisters**, **helsyskon** – siblings with the same mother and father – are not permitted to marry. Nor may a father and daughter or mother and son marry. Unlike many other countries, Sweden does permit cousins to marry. Half brothers and sisters, who share one parent, may request permission to marry from the **county administrative board**, **länsstyrelsen**, as may people under the age of 18. Application forms are available from the county administrative board. Certain other rules – on age restrictions, for example – may apply to non-Swedish citizens. Information

can be obtained from the county administrative board.

It costs nothing to get married in the Church of Sweden if you are a church member and one member of the couple is census registered in the parish where the wedding is to be held. Otherwise, you will have to pay a fee, which varies from parish to parish. Information on weddings in other religious communities is available from the communities themselves. *A list of religious communities active in Sweden can be found in an appendix at the end of the book.*



Photo: John Dowland

There are many ways of living together. It may be a good idea to understand the legal differences between marriage, partnership and cohabitation.

You can also choose a **civil wedding**, **borgerligt bröllop**, entirely free of religious elements. Civil ceremonies are free of charge. There are people who officiate at civil ceremonies in every municipality; you can contact them through the municipality or district court.

Some countries accept only one form of marriage for their citizens. If you are a foreign citizen, you can contact either your embassy or the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs to find out what type of marriage your country requires.

If you get married outside Sweden, the marriage is recognised in Sweden only if it is valid in the country in which you were married. Swedish civil weddings can also be held at certain Swedish embassies abroad. The **Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, **Utrikesdepartementet (UD)**, can provide information. Swedish Church weddings are held at the

pastorsexpedition: local office of the Church of Sweden.

Church of Sweden's congregations abroad. For details, ask at the **parish registrar's office**, **pastorsexpeditionen***.

Once they are married, a man and woman together make decisions regarding the disposal of their property and debts. Both are equally entitled to the family's joint assets.

Partnership

If two men or two women wish to live together under conditions resembling marriage, they may enter into a registered partnership. The ceremony is similar to that of an ordinary civil wedding, and information is available from the municipality or the district court. In some congregations, the couple may also receive the official blessing of their church.

To register a partnership, one of the parties must be a Swedish citizen resident in this country. Most of the legal provisions applicable to marriage also apply to partnership.

As of this writing, homosexual couples may not adopt children or have joint custody of minor children.

Sweden has an ombudsman, **HomO**, charged with the prevention of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in any sector of Swedish public life. *The address and telephone number are listed at the end of this chapter*.

Common-law spouses

When two people live together without being married, they are termed "sambor". This is extremely common in Sweden. A special law – the Act on Consensual Unions – is applicable to such relationships. Most legislation and regulations treat common-law and married spouses in the same way. In both cases, the man and woman share a **maintenance liability (financial responsibility)**, **underhållsskyldighet**, for any children they may have had together. But there are also important differences, especially regarding

the distribution of property in the event of a divorce. Common-law spouses do not automatically inherit one another's belongings. Children, however, inherit property from both their parents regardless of whether they are married, cohabiting or living apart. The mother automatically becomes the sole **guardian**, **vårdnadshavare**, of children born in a consensual union, which means that the children must live with their mother if the parents separate. Common-law spouses can also be granted **joint custody**, **gemensam vårdnad**, by applying to the municipal social welfare committee. This enables both parents to continue sharing responsibility for their children's upbringing.



Photo: Fredrik Funck / Pressens Bild

Many couples choose to live together without marrying. A special law sets out the legal status of such relationships.

Common-law spouses are not allowed to adopt children.

Divorce

Looking around at your neighbours in Sweden, you will soon discover that many are divorced. Some may live with a new partner. Divorced and unmarried parents and their children are fully accepted in Sweden. Still, deciding to get divorced is no easy matter.

Not all family problems have to lead to divorce. If you feel you need help in discussing your situation, you can contact a **family counselling** officer, **familjerådgivning**. This service is free of charge and is available through the municipality or county council. All contacts with the family counselling service are voluntary. Applicants are protect-

When a relationship is in crisis, it may be a good idea to talk to a neutral person. Municipalities and county councils provide family counselling free of charge.



Photo: John Dowland

ed by a guarantee of confidentiality. The telephone number is in the directory. In some cities and towns, there are also church-run family counselling agencies.

In legal language, a divorce is called a **decree absolute**, **äktenskapsskillnad**, or dissolution of marriage, and is issued by a district court.

In the case of foreign citizens, special rules may sometimes apply to dissolution of marriage.

If both the man and woman wish to divorce, they file a joint petition for divorce at the district court. The decision will normally come through within a few weeks.

If only one party wishes to divorce and the couple cannot reach agreement, the party wishing to divorce can file alone. In such cases, you can approach a lawyer and receive help with the costs under the **Legal Aid Act**, **rättshjälp**. *For more information, see the chapter on Law and order.*

If you have children under 16, you will have to wait at least six months, and no more than one year, for the divorce to be registered. This is termed a **reconciliation period**, **betänketid**. During this period, the parents should seek to find the best possible solutions for their children. In

Sweden, efforts are made to award joint custody wherever possible.

The parents may move apart during the reconciliation period if they so wish. Once the reconciliation period is over, they must file for a decree absolute, which will make the divorce final. Such decrees will always grant joint custody of the children unless one of the parents has requested otherwise.

Sometimes parents are unable to agree on joint custody. Municipal social services then step in to help with **co-operative discussions**, **samarbetssamtal**. Most parents choose joint custody, since they want to take equal responsibility for the children and spend as much time with them as possible. Even if one of the parents receives sole custody, the other has both the right and the obligation to visit the children. This is known as the **right of access**, **umgängesrätt**, and usually entails that the children meet the other parent on certain weekends, major holidays and during some of the school holidays. Custody and the right of access are governed by the terms of the decree made by the district court. The law also requires the court to take the children's own wishes into consideration, depending on their age and level of maturity.

If children suffer poor treatment at the hands of one of the parents, the parent may lose the right to see his or her children.

The parent not living with the children is obliged to pay maintenance contributions, **underhållsbidrag**, for the children until they are 18 years old. If a child is over eighteen and still attending upper-secondary school, the parent continues to have a maintenance liability until the child has finished upper-secondary school or turned 21, whichever comes first.

Death and funerals

Every culture has its own ways of mourning the dead and its own funeral ceremonies. A variety of types of ceremonies may be performed, but certain regulations pertaining to deaths must be followed. Deaths must be reported to the local tax authority, which handles the national population registration. A physician must sign the death certificate. If the death occurred at a hospital, the hospital itself provides the death certificate. If a person dies at home, a physician can come and issue a death certificate. If this is impossible, the police must be summoned. Sometimes, the deceased must be subjected to a post-mortem examination to determine the cause of death. Some families may object to a post-mortem. If there is no suspicion that a crime has been committed in conjunction with the death, the authorities try to take the wishes of the family into consideration.

In Sweden, it is possible to **donate organs**, **donera organ**, and tissue for transplantation to another person. The



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

The ceremonies associated with death and funerals vary from culture to culture. In Sweden, you can choose from a variety of types of ceremonies. Certain regulations are applicable to all deaths, however.

National Board of Health and Welfare maintains a registry of people who have issued a statement consenting to or opposing removal of their organs used for transplantation. You can fill in a **donor card**, **donationskort**, indicating what your wishes are. If you have not reported that you object to donation, the healthcare system assumes that you consent. Close relatives may, however, prevent the health services from taking organs if the deceased has not registered as a donor. *For more information, see the brochure "Kan någon annan få dina njurar när du dör?", which is available at pharmacies. The brochure is available in several languages.*

In Sweden, a funeral fee is paid through the income tax system. For members of the Church of Sweden, the funeral fee is included in the church fee, which is also paid along with income tax. The funeral fee is used to pay for a grave site, cremation, interment and premises for a non-sectarian funeral. This applies to all people, regardless of religious affiliation.

You can also hold a religious or other ceremony: a funeral within the Church of Sweden, a funeral according to the traditions of another religious community, a civil funeral or interment without a ceremony. If you belong to the Church of Sweden, a church funeral is free of charge.

Even if the ceremony is held according to the traditions of another religion, the deceased may be buried at a cemetery belonging to the Church of Sweden. In some cities, other religious communities have their own cemeteries. The Swedish authorities try to accommodate the wishes of other communities within the limits of the law and possibility.

The dead are often cremated in Sweden, after which an urn containing the ashes is interred at a cemetery. Rather than having a grave, you can request that the ashes be

buried or spread at a memorial grove. These are found at many cemeteries. The regulations governing the burial or spreading of ashes vary from place to place. Coffin burial is less common today.

For help with a funeral, you can contact an **undertaker**, **begravningsbyrå**. It is important to discuss your wishes and the costs associated with the ceremony. There are usually various alternatives, but the services of an undertaker typically cost about 15,000 kronor. This includes grave clothes, a coffin, flower arrangements, advertising, transport of the deceased and some type of gathering after the funeral.

Relatives may wish to arrange the funeral themselves. Contact the parish registrar's office that serves as the local office of the Church of Sweden. They can tell you what needs to be done in conjunction with a funeral.

If you wish to bury a deceased relative in your home country, a transport service is available, although the cost may be very high. For more information, contact your country's embassy.

Within three months of a death, an **estate inventory**, **bouppteckning**, must be drawn up listing all of the deceased's assets and liabilities. The estate inventory must be submitted to the tax authority. If the deceased's assets are small, an **estate statement**, **dödsboanmälan**, will suffice. Ask the tax authority what rules apply in your particular case.

GOOD TO KNOW

- BRIS help telephone for children up to 18 years of age: 0200-230 230. Language: Swedish only.
- BRIS adult telephone – on children 077-150 50 50. Language: Swedish only.
- Youth healthcare: see Ungdomsmottagningen or Ungdomshälsan in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory

- Maternity care and women's healthcare: see Mödravården or Kvinnohälsan in the Blue Pages of the telephone directory.
- RFSU, National Swedish Association for Sexual Information, 08-692 07 00, www.rfsu.se
- RFSL, Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights, 08-736 02 13, www.rfsl.se
- HomO, Ombudsman against Discrimination because of Sexual Orientation, 08-55 60 95 25, www.homo.se
- JämO, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, 08-440 10 60, www.jamombud.se
- BO, the Children's Ombudsman, 08-692 29 50, www.bo.se
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Utrikesdepartementet, tel. 08-405 10 00



Photo: Paul Hansen / Pressens Bild

Being a single parent is very common in Sweden; it has been a long time since single parenthood was considered anything unusual.

All children are entitled to care when their parents are working or studying.



Photo: Scott T. Baxter

A Safe Place for Children

Day nurseries, open pre-schools and recreation centres

All children between one and twelve years of age are entitled to supervision and care while their parents are working or studying. The public sector is responsible for child care and must provide children with security and education. Here we discuss the types of child care available in Sweden.

Different types of child care are available for children of different ages. The youngest children are cared for at pre-schools, sometimes called dagis or day nurseries, and family day nurseries. Children who are at home with their parents can go to **open pre-schools**, **öppna förskolor***. Slightly older children attending pre-school or school classes are provided with child care at recreation centres or family day nursery. These are intended as a complement to the schools and provide children with meaningful leisure time and support in their development. **Open leisure activities**, **öppen fritidsverksamhet***, are available to children between ten and twelve years of age.

öppen förskola: premises with trained personnel where stay-at-home parents can take their children.

öppen fritidsverksamhet: premises with adult staff where schoolchildren between ten and twelve can come after school. They can buy snacks and there are also games and toys.

kooperativ: jointly owned and operated by several people.

pedagogik: the method used for teaching other people. The phrase is also used in the sense of "science of education and upbringing".

Young children

Pre-schools have trained personnel and are usually open year round. At family day nurseries, one adult takes several children into his or her home and keeps them occupied during the day. They are known as child-minders or "day mothers". Both pre-schools and family day nurseries try to adapt their hours of opening to meet the needs of parents and children.

Most pre-schools are municipally run, with a staff employed by the municipality. There are also **parental co-operative**, **föräldrakooperativa***, pre-schools, which are owned and operated by parents with grant money from the municipality, and **staff co-operative**, **personalkooperativa**, pre-schools, which are owned and operated by the staff, also with grant money from the municipality. Some pre-schools employ special **teaching methods**, **pedagogik***. Others have a religious affiliation. At some pre-schools, a language other than Swedish is spoken; some childminders know other languages, too. Some municipalities have pre-schools where the children learn several languages.

Contact the municipality to find out whether child care is available in your native language.

Responsibility for ensuring that pre-schools follow the curriculum and maintain acceptable quality always rests with the municipality. The **National Agency for Education**, **Skolverket**, is the government authority in charge of child care and schools.

Parents who are at home with their children during the day can accompany their children to an open pre-school. Parents who work or study are also welcome whenever they can spare the time. Childminders often bring their groups to open pre-schools, too. The parents and childminders take part in activities along with the staff. This gives children and parents who are otherwise at home a chance to meet.

Schoolchildren

Once children are six years old, they are permitted to start in a pre-school class. *For more information, see the chapter on Schools and Education*. Child care for schoolchildren is available both before and after the pre-school class for children who need it. A recreation centre is often associated with a school. From fourth to sixth grade, some schoolchildren have access to open recreational centres. These have less staff than ordinary recreation centres, and children do not have to be registered to participate. Some children attend a family day nursery after school.

Applying for a place

If you would like your child to have a place in pre-school or child care activities, you must **apply**, **anmäla**, well in advance to ensure that your child can receive care close to your home or school. It typically takes three to four months for a child to be assigned a place. Submit your application to the municipality.

As of 1 July 2001, children over one year of age whose



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Many children spend a few hours at a leisure centre after school.

parents are unemployed are also entitled to attend pre-school for at least three hours daily, or 15 hours per week. Starting on 1 January 2002, the same rules will apply to children whose parents are on parental leave – that is, children with a new baby brother or sister. The rules were changed because it is considered valuable for children to be together and to benefit from the teaching methods of the child care system.

Previously, **fees**, **avgifterna**, for child care and care of schoolchildren varied widely from municipality to municipality. As of 1 January 2002, however, there will be a **fee ceiling**, **maxtaxa***, in most municipalities. Municipalities with a fee ceiling receive special funding from the state.

maxtaxa: The fee ceiling entails that the cost of child care for each child may not exceed a certain amount. The fee ceiling is the same in all the municipalities in which it is effective.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Lunch at a day nursery is a teaching opportunity, too – an excellent time to practise setting the table, waiting your turn and eating different kinds of food.

Starting in 2003, all four and five year olds will be entitled to attend a free public pre-school, just as six year olds are today.

Educational content

At pre-schools and recreation centres, the children are usually allowed to play freely some of the time. Every day there are also organised activities such as group games, exercise or dancing, outings and work on shared projects. There are usually plenty of books for children to read on their own or that can be read aloud by an adult. There is typically a quiet corner for those who want to be alone for a while, and there are both indoor and outdoor toys.

Meals are important. Eating together is enjoyable and affords an opportunity to practise waiting your turn, conversing and getting used to different types of food. At most pre-schools, the children help set and clear the table, and a couple of children at a time can help prepare the food.

As in the schools, **democratic values**, **demokratiska värderingar**, constitute the foundation of the child care system. Children are thus sometimes permitted to take part in making decisions; they learn to respect one another, to take other viewpoints into consideration and to understand human differences as a natural part of life. All children should feel secure and be able to develop on the basis of their own particular talents.

Pre-school co-operates with parents, who have an important role to play in child care. After all, they know their children best. When a child starts at a pre-school or family day nursery, the parents come along until the child feels comfortable. The introductory period usually takes a couple of weeks for the youngest children and somewhat less for older children. If you have children attending a pre-school or recreation centre, you will be invited to come in for a **child development discussion**, **utvecklingssamtal**. This is your opportunity to discuss your child's progress with the school staff. It is also a good time to ask about things you may wonder about.

Many parents also take the opportunity to talk to the staff when they pick up their children in the afternoon. The important thing is to work together to make sure that the children enjoy the best possible conditions. Sometimes the staff can help parents, and sometime parents can help the staff.

GOOD TO KNOW

- **The pre-school curriculum**, **Läroplan för förskolan**, can be found at www.skolverket.se. You can also read the curriculum at libraries or your child's pre-school.
- **The Education Act**, **Skollagen**, can be found at the same Internet address

Everyone is entitled to an education. According to the Education Act, the primary mission of the schools is to give students knowledge and the ability to use it.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

A School for All

Nine-year compulsory school and upper-secondary school

In Sweden, schools and education are available to all. This chapter is about the Swedish school system, the values that underpin it and how the system is structured. The next chapter provides insight into university education, other educational programmes and student finances

The Swedish school system

Pursuant to the Education Act, everyone in Sweden is entitled to an education. The Act also specifies the basic rules all schools must follow. The primary mission of the

schools is to give students knowledge and an ability to use it. The schools should work together with the home, helping students grow up to be responsible adults. Certain students need special help, and the schools must take their needs into consideration.

Certain important words recur again and again in the Education Act; they define the type of school to which all students are entitled. Students deserve a school stressing democratic values and respect for the integrity of the individual. Schools should emphasise respect for our common environment. Other important words include **equality**, **jämställdhet***, between the sexes and taking a stand against bullying and racist behaviour.

jämställdhet: Women and men must have equal opportunities to pursue education, work and family life. The Swedish Equal Rights Act was passed in 1980. For more information, see the chapter on Families and social life.

Young children in Sweden are offered **pre-school activities**, **förskoleverksamhet**. Parents should apply to their municipality if they need a place at pre-school. Child care is also available for older children attending school. *For more information, see the chapter on Child care.*

In Sweden, school attendance is compulsory; children between 7 and 16 years of age must attend. Instruction is free of charge. The school year begins in August and ends in early June. The period from August to December is the **autumn term**, **höstterminen**, and the period from January to June the **spring term**, **vårterminen**. Between the autumn and spring comes the Christmas holiday, and there is a summer holiday between school years.

For their first nine years, children attend **nine-year compulsory school**, **grundskolan**. Students then move on to **upper-secondary school**, **gymnasieskolan**, which lasts three years. The upper-secondary schools offer a variety of **programmes**, **program**. Both academic and vocational programmes are available. *For more information, see the section on Upper-secondary school.*

A wide range of higher education alternatives is available

to those who have completed upper-secondary school. Instruction at **universities**, **universitet**, and other **institutions of higher learning**, **högskolor**, is free. *More information on post-secondary education can be found in the next chapter*.

Most compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools are municipally run. There are also independent schools. Some independent schools are much like the municipal schools, while others employ special pedagogy. Some have a religious affiliation. Independent schools receive municipal grant money.

Various types of language instruction are available to students with a native language other than Swedish. Students attending a Swedish class may take part in special instruction in their native language. They can also receive study guidance in their own language if necessary. At some schools, whole classes receive instruction in a language other than Swedish, and other schools provide instruction only in certain languages. Contact your municipality for more information on what is available where you live.

It costs nothing to attend a nine-year compulsory school



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Children with a native language other than Swedish can receive a variety of types of instruction, depending on the municipality.

or upper-secondary school. Most schools serve **school lunch**, **skollunch**, free of charge. Students with special dietary needs are served food that meets their requirements. If your child has special dietary needs, speak with the kitchen staff. School menus are often listed in the local newspaper. Students are usually given a menu they can take home with them, too.

Students who live far from their school are entitled to free **school transportation**, **skolskjuts**. The rules governing how far you must live from school to be entitled to transportation vary from municipality to municipality. Children's age also affects their eligibility for transportation. Sometimes children use regular train or bus lines; in other cases there is a special bus or taxi.

Nine-year compulsory school

Children in Sweden must start school no later than the year of their seventh birthday. Those who wish may start earlier. Six year olds usually attend an affiliated **pre-school**, **förskoleklass**, where they can prepare for compulsory school. It is up to the parents to decide whether their children will attend a pre-school class, but all children are entitled to attend.

Almost 99 per cent of all children between the ages of 7 and 16 attend ordinary nine-year compulsory schools. The rest attend **schools for the intellectually handicapped**, **särskola**, or **special schools**, **specialskola**. *More information on these topics can be found later in this chapter*.

All compulsory schools follow a common **curriculum**, **läroplan**, which describes what students must learn. The curriculum also sets forth the outlook on people and other values that should inform the work of the schools. It serves to guarantee that all students have access to the same basic knowledge, no matter where they live. The school cur-



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

The school curriculum emphasises responsibility, solidarity, conflict management and respect.

riculum is a frequent topic of discussion in Sweden. Parents, teachers, children and politicians often voice their opinion on the curriculum and make proposals as to how it could be changed.

The schools should help students take responsibility and develop a feeling of solidarity with others. They should teach students to reject persecution and harassment of individuals and groups. The schools should engage students in discussions of why conflicts arise and how they can be resolved.

Respect for the values and ideas of others should be in evidence both in and out of the classroom, among students, teachers and others who work in the schools.

Schools should encourage conversations between teachers and students. A few decades ago, students had to address their teachers as Sir or Miss if they wanted their attention. Today they are often on a first-name basis with teachers.

There is a **syllabus**, **kursplan**, for every individual subject. This specifies the knowledge and skills students should have when they finish compulsory school. Students and teachers together decide on its content and the approach they will take.

The school and the family

At the beginning of this chapter, we said that schools must cooperate with the home. That means that you, the parent, can have a say in how the school is run. Every term, parents are called in for a **developmental conversation**, **utvecklingssamtal**, at which you and your child meet the **teacher**, **klassläraren**, or **mentor**, **mentorn**. The teacher has a special responsibility for monitoring your child's schooling and development. Together, you discuss how your child is getting along, and the child can himself or herself talk about how things are at school. You also discuss the goals you wish to set for upcoming schoolwork. If the student is having trouble at school, it is important to take up the matter for discussion with the teacher. Parents with a native language other than Swedish are entitled to an interpreter during developmental conversations.

Parents usually want more contact with the school than just an occasional developmental conversation. At any time during the school year, you can contact the school administration or teachers to supply information or discuss matters of importance. If your child is afraid of something or someone at the school, for example, it is important that the teachers know about it. That makes it easier to give your child the best help possible. If your child is having trouble in a particular subject – physical education, for example – you might speak both to the main class teacher and to the physical education teacher. You may be able to solve some aspects of the problem through a joint conversation.

During the early school years, many teachers send out a **weekly newsletter**, **veckobrev**, to the families of the children telling them something of what the class has been doing during the week and informing the parents of upcoming events, such as field days, educational visits or outings. Once the children get older, many schools stop sending out



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Students can contact the school nurse or physician if they have health problems.

weekly newsletters. Certain classes may send out monthly newsletters and special notices before events such as parents' meetings. Older students are expected themselves to be able to tell their parents what is going on at school.

Your child will be examined by a physician several times during his or her first nine years at school. Special **school medical officers**, **skolläkare**, are affiliated to the schools. At every school there is usually a **school nurse**, **skolsköterska**, who weighs and measures the children and carries out hearing and eye tests. Students can contact the school nurse about health problems. They can also go to the school nurse if they fall ill at school. Many schools also have a **school social worker**, **skolkurator**, and a **school psychologist**, **skolpsykolog**, whom students can contact if they have problems.

Parents may also feel the need to discuss the school and their children with other parents. Most schools have a **parents' association**, **föräldraförening**, whose board is in contact with the school administration. The parents of the children in each class usually meet with the class teacher or mentors a couple of times per year. Joint meetings are sometimes arranged for the parents of all the children at the school. If parents want to change something at the school, it is important that the parents' association can function properly. Many schools have special parents' councils where a few parents, a few teachers and the head-

master meet. This creates channels for discussion with the school administration and school politicians.

Grades

In the nine-year compulsory schools, grades are not given until the end of the autumn term of the eighth year. After that, students are graded at the end of every term, the last set of grades being given when they reach the end of the compulsory school age. The final grades are called a leaving certificate.

There are three grades: **G – pass**, **godkänd**, **VG – pass with distinction**, **Väl Godkänd**, and **MVG – pass with great distinction**, **Mycket Väl Godkänd**. For a passing grade of G, students must achieve the goals of the syllabus for the subject in question. There are national standards for VG and MVG. If the student has not done well enough to receive a passing grade, no grade is given in that particular subject.

In many municipalities, there is a **preparatory class**, **förberedelseklasser**, in which children learn Swedish. Once they can handle the language well enough, they transfer to the regular classes.

Upper-secondary school

Almost all students who complete compulsory school continue on to upper-secondary school. It is up to students to decide, often in consultation with teachers and parents, which upper-secondary school programme suits them best. Students apply in writing, listing the programme they want most as their first choice, but also listing a second and third choice. If there are more applicants than places in a programme, grades determine who gets in. Most students – approximately 80 per cent – get into their first choice. There are both municipal and independent schools. Certain **adult education associations**, **studieförbund***, such as Folkuniversitetet, also offer upper-secondary programmes.

studieförbund: Organisation providing elective educational and hobby activities for children or adults. There is a list of Swedish adult education associations at the end of this book.

nationella program: Upper-secondary school programmes that are the same nation-wide.

behörighet: The right to apply for a particular educational programme. You are eligible if you fulfil the formal requirements as regards knowledge, grades, etc.

There are 17 **national programmes**, **nationella program***, that include all three classes. The national programmes provide a broad-based general education and lead to **eligibility**, **behörighet***, to study at a university or other institution of higher learning. Certain **core subjects**, **kärnämnen**, are included in all programmes. These are Swedish, English, mathematics, sports and health, social studies, religion, natural history and aesthetics. In addition to the core subjects, every programme includes required subjects, **subjects specific to the particular programme**, **karaktärsämnen**, and **student electives**, **elevens individuella val**, subjects that students may sometimes choose themselves.

To start a national programme, a student must receive passing marks in Swedish, English and mathematics.

The national programmes, in alphabetical order, are:

- Agricultural programme
- Arts programme
- Business and administration programme
- Child and recreation programme
- Construction programme
- Electrical engineering programme
- Energy programme
- Food programme
- Handicraft programme
- Healthcare programme
- Hotel, restaurant and catering programme
- Industry programme
- Media programme
- Natural science programme
- Social science programme
- Technical programme
- Vehicle engineering programme

Most national programmes have **national guidelines**, **nationella inriktningar**, meaning they are essentially the same nation-wide.

Upper-secondary schools offer a range of **courses**, **kurser**, each of which provides a certain number of **points**, **poäng**. For every course, there should be a **syllabus**, **kursplan**, explaining its purpose and objectives.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Almost all students continue on to upper-secondary school after completing compulsory school.

A municipality can establish **specially designed programmes**, **specialutformade program**, which are non-national. These must include the eight core subjects but may otherwise be locally designed. It is also possible for students to pursue an **individual programme**, **individuella program**, with its own curriculum. There are individual programmes with introductory courses for immigrants.

Yet another type of upper-secondary programme has nation-wide recruiting areas. These are special programmes that are available in just one place; anyone from the entire country may apply. Examples include glassblowing, sawmill technology, rescue services, aeronautics and tourism. A list of programmes with nation-wide recruiting areas and where they are located can be found on the website of the **National Agency for Education**, **Skolverket**. *The address is listed at the end of this chapter.*

There are also **sports schools**, **idrottsgymnasier**, with nation-wide recruiting areas, where upper-secondary studies are combined with training in sports such as orienteering, soccer or skiing.

Finances

Parents in Sweden receive a child allowance for children up to 16 years of age. *See the chapter on Money.* When they are no longer eligible for a child allowance, upper-secondary school students receive a **student grant**, **studiebidrag**, which is paid 9 months out of the year. As of 2001, the student grant amounts to 950 kronor per month. Upper-secondary school students who study far from their parents' home – in another municipality, for example – may be eligible for **board supplement**, **inackorderingstillägg**, from their home municipality. The distance between the parental home and the school determines the amount of the board supplement. The money is paid by the **National Board of Student Aid**, **CSN, Centrala studiestödsnämnden**.

Grades

The upper-secondary school grading scale is: **IG** – **fail**, **Icke Godkänd**, **G** – **pass**,**Godkänd**, **VG** – **pass with distinction**, **Väl Godkänd**, and **MVG** – **pass with great distinction**, **Mycket Väl Godkänd**. At this writing (2001), grades are given for every course and special project completed. Upon completing upper-secondary school, the student receives a leaving certificate showing all of his or her grades in all courses included in the study programme over the past three years. The leaving certificate is the basis for acceptance to programmes and courses at universities and other institutions of higher learning. *This system may be changed. See Good to know.*



Photo: Gunnar Stattin / Pressens Bild

Upper-secondary school ends with a graduation celebration. Many graduates wear a white student cap on speech day.

The **studentexamen** was the old school leaving exam. The name is not formally used any longer, but students are still said to **ta studenten** when they complete upper-secondary school. On graduation day, students who have completed upper-secondary school usually wear special white caps. Their families and relatives gather in the schoolyard to greet the graduates as they leave school, class by class, singing a special graduation song. Graduates receive flowers and presents, and are usually driven home in decorated cars or in carriages decked with birch branches and pulled by horses or tractors. Once home, families serve food and drink to relatives and friends. The graduates also usually have a party together, sometimes with dancing, to which teachers are also invited.

Schools for the intellectually handicapped

There are also schools for children and young people who cannot attend an ordinary nine-year compulsory school owing to a **developmental disability**, **utvecklingsstörning***. Approximately one percent of children between 7 and 15 attend schools for the intellectually handicapped.

utvecklingsstörning : A failure of a person's intellectual capacity and ability to learn and understand to develop normally.

Some students attend a school for the intellectually handicapped for a while then switch to a compulsory school, or vice versa.

Students who have graduated from a school for the intellectually handicapped may continue at an **upper-secondary school for the intellectually handicapped**, **gymnasiesärskolan**. **Särvux** provides education for developmentally disabled adults. Such students receive instruction for just a few hours a week.

Special schools

There are also special schools for students with visual defects, hearing impairments, speech impediments and the like.

Komvux

Komvux is a Swedish abbreviation for **municipal adult education**, **kommunal vuxenutbildning**, where programmes provide study opportunities for adults with inadequate compulsory school or upper-secondary school education and students can improve their education according to an individual **study plan**, **studieplan**. It is also possible to attend a complete upper-secondary school programme at Komvux. Many young people attend Komvux to improve their upper-secondary school grades and gain the opportunity to apply for educational programmes they would otherwise be ineligible for. Komvux issues grades just like compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools.

Swedish for immigrants

Adults who have recently arrived in Sweden are offered an opportunity of learning Swedish. The basic Swedish for immigrants instruction is abbreviated **SFI**. The municipal authorities are responsible for providing instruction in Swedish, which may be organised in a variety of different ways; sometimes courses are provided by an adult education association or an education company Once you have completed your SFI courses and been approved, you may continue studying Swedish in a municipal adult education programme, which offers courses in **SAS** – Swedish as a Second Language – at both basic adult education and upper-secondary levels.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- www.skolverket.se
- The grading system is a topic of frequent discussion. As this book was being written, the government was considering a new proposal that would stop upper-secondary schools from giving grades for each individual course. Instead, students would receive an overall grade for each subject. By the time you read this, the system may have been changed. Your school can tell you what rules currently apply.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

There are many courses of study available to those wishing to continue after upper-secondary school.

Learning More

Folk high schools and universities

There are many educational opportunities available after upper-secondary school in Sweden. In this chapter we present the post-secondary programmes which are either state financed or free of charge for the student.

For persons who prefer a freer plan of study a folk high school may be an attractive choice. Studies there also help students gain eligibility for university studies.

Folk high schools

There are almost 150 **folk high schools**, **folkhögskolor**, in Sweden. Many are run by associations, **popular movements**, **folkrörelser***, or county councils. There you can take both short courses and longer courses lasting a term or more. Many folk high schools offer courses especially for immigrants. Courses often include Swedish, social studies, computer science and other topics that may be needed by those wishing to continue on to higher education. *See Good to know at the end of this chapter.*

folkrörelser: large organisations with many members throughout the country.

Both adults and young people attend folk high schools. The education provided at folk high schools is freer than that provided at ordinary schools, giving groups and individuals more scope for deciding how to structure their studies.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Many folk high schools offer courses in special topics. Here, felting is on the schedule.

Folk high schools often have boarding facilities; students live at school. Instruction is free, but you pay for food and housing.

Many folk high schools have a special focus, such as music, theatre or religious activities. There are also general study programmes which correspond to upper-secondary school studies and lead to eligibility for continued studies at an institution of higher learning. *More information on eligibility and institutions of higher learning can be found later in this chapter.*

Post-secondary education

The remainder of this chapter concerns **post-secondary**, **eftergymnasial**, education – the programmes available to those who have completed upper-secondary school. We discuss only education that is funded by taxes and is free of charge. There are also many private educational programmes for which you must pay, where you can study anything from massage therapy to acting. Such programmes can be found through newspaper advertisements or under the heading **Utbildning** in the Yellow Pages.

Counselling on careers, educational programmes and applications is available from **educational advisers**, **studievägledare**, or **study and vocational guidance officers**, **syo-konsulent**, who work at both upper-secondary schools and at universities and other institutions of higher learning. There is also a great deal of useful information on the Internet. See Good to know.

KY and YTH

KY stands for **qualified vocational training**, **Kvalificerad Yrkesutbildning**, and **YTH** for **post-secondary vocational training**, **Yrkesteknisk Högskoleutbildning**. Both are available in many vocational categories – industry, commerce, construction, etc.

KY programmes are between one and three years long in duration, one third of this time consisting of practical experience at various workplaces. KY programmes are the most practically oriented post-secondary programmes.

YTH is for people with an upper-secondary education or the equivalent who have worked for at least four years in a given profession. You may also be admitted to YTH if you do not have an upper-secondary education but do have six years of professional experience behind you. YTH programmes are usually three terms long.

Higher education

Higher education generally refers to studies at both "university colleges" and universities. There are more university colleges than universities in Sweden. The difference is that university colleges provide only a basic degree, while you can do **research**, **forskning**, and pursue a post-graduate degree at the universities.

A basic degree requires at least two years of study and usually more. There are both general study degrees without any particular professional focus and other degrees that lead to occupational qualifications. If you take an occupationally oriented degree, your studies are mapped out from the start. Most occupationally oriented degrees require at least three years of study. Doctors, architects, nurses, fire engineers, dentists and pharmacists are examples of professionals who must complete an occupationally oriented degree.

If you do not wish to study for a particular profession and want to choose your courses yourself, you earn a general degree. The most common is a fil kand, approximately the equivalent of a bachelor's degree; it requires 120 course points, corresponding to three years of study.

Some university courses are now taught **at a distance**, **på distans**. Students live in their home towns and keep in touch with instructors by telephone and e-mail. Several times a term they get together for reviews and exams.

The percentage of upper-secondary school graduates with foreign backgrounds who go on to higher education is lower than the percentage of Swedish-born youth that continues at this level. For this reason, both the state and the universities encourage young people with foreign backgrounds to continue their education. The National Agency for Higher Education has published a brochure on Swedish higher education that is available in Albanian,

Arabic, Persian, Somalian and several other languages. See Good to know.

For young people who are unsure whether they want to or are able to pursue higher education, an **introduction**, **introduktion**, may be a good idea. Several university colleges currently provide a one or two term introduction to studies. If the introduction takes two terms, it is sometimes termed a "foundation year". Students learn more about higher education, receive training in efficient study skills and get used to working at university level.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Both the state and the universities are encouraging more students with foreign backgrounds to continue on to institutions of higher learning.

Eligibility

Higher studies always require **basic eligibility**, **grundläggande behörighet**. **Eligibility for course admission**, **särskild behörighet**, is usually required, too, and depends on the nature of the programme you are applying for.

You have basic eligibility if you graduated from upper-secondary school with adequate grades. You may also be eligible if you received an education abroad corresponding to Swedish upper-secondary school and have an adequate grasp of Swedish. A third way of attaining basic eligibility is through work. People over 25 who have worked for four years and have Swedish and English skills corresponding to upper-secondary school level are also eligible under the "25:4" rule.

Post-secondary students are eligible for state student aid consisting of a loan and a grant.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

If you are applying as a "25:4" candidate, you have to take the **national university aptitude test**, **högskoleprovet**, which is given twice a year. If you are applying on the basis of your upper-secondary school grades, you are not required to take the aptitude test. It may be a good idea to do so anyway, however, as good test results improve your chances of acceptance. The National Agency for Higher Education provides information on the national university aptitude test. See Good to know.

auktoriserad: Officially approved as having passed a special examination or completed a special course of studies.

Foreign upper-secondary school education is evaluated by another public authority, the Verket för högskoleservice, abbreviated VHS. You may, however, apply to university without having your educational background evaluated if you have your records translated into Swedish by an **authorised**, **auktoriserad***, translator. Foreign university educations are evaluated by the National Agency for Higher Education.

For admission to complete educational programmes that

last several years, you apply to the VHS. If you only want to take a single course, you may apply directly to the university or university college you are interested in.

The number of applicants for different programmes varies. Programmes for which there are many applicants relative to the number of places available, such as those in medicine and computer engineering, require good grades or excellent results in the national university aptitude test. The educational advisers at the schools and universities can provide you with information on how easy or difficult it is to gain admission to such programmes.

Study assistance

Higher education students may be eligible for state-sponsored **study assistance**, **studiestöd**, as are students in KY and YTH programmes at folk high schools or Komvux.

Study assistance is made up of two components, a grant and a loan. The grant is given freely, but the loan must be repaid. You may receive study assistance for a maximum of 240 weeks, which corresponds to six years of full-time study. You must complete a minimum number of course points every term to continue receiving assistance.

Special rules apply to those who are not Swedish citizens. The rules differ depending on whether you are a refugee, an immigrant or the child of immigrants. More information is available on the The National Board of Student Aid website or from the educational advisers at the schools and universities.

The National Board of Student Aid (CSN) makes decisions on study assistance. The CSN has 24 local offices nation-wide, but are often difficult to reach by telephone. It may thus be better to check the Internet or consult an educational adviser.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- Information on folk high schools and their courses is available by telephone on 08-796 00 50 or on the Internet at www.fin.fhsk.se. You can find courses intended especially for immigrants by clicking on långa kurser.
- The study and vocational guide Syoguiden, at www.syoguiden.com , provides a great deal of information on educational programmes, scholarships, professions and working in Sweden and abroad.
- Information on KY and YTH programmes can be found at www.ky.gov.se and www.yth.nu, respectively.
- The Verket för högskoleservice, VHS, has an Internet site at www.vhs.se. It provides information on how upper-secondary education from countries other than Sweden is evaluated.
- The National Agency for Higher Education's search page at www.studera.nu provides information on the national university aptitude test, student loans, professions and all programmes, introductory terms and courses at all university colleges and universities. The Agency has also published a brochure on higher education in Sweden in several languages. You can order the brochure by telephone on 08-795 23 10 or download it from www.studera.nu/svenskahogskolan.
- Information on evaluation of foreign higher education programmes can be found at www.hsv.se. Click on Naric.
- The website of the National Board of Student Aid can be found at www.csn.se.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

A helping hand to get you through the day.

The Golden Years

Support and service for the elderly

As people grow older, they begin to need special services and help. The municipalities are responsible for providing such services, which are referred to collectively as geriatric care, or old people's services. Many municipalities have special services for old people with foreign backgrounds. They may have homes for the aged with multilingual personnel, for example. The local social welfare office can tell you whether there is one in your municipality. More information on homes for the aged can be found later in this chapter.

Most elderly people want to keep living at home as long as possible. Municipalities provide **home help service**, **hemtjänst**, to enable them to do so. Special municipal employees visit the homes of elderly people who have difficulty managing on their own. Home help service personnel may do jobs such as putting breakfast or an evening meal on the table, washing up, cleaning and shopping. If you are sick, they can help you get up in the morning, go to bed at night and take your medicines.

If it is hard for you to cook for yourself, you can have prepared food delivered to your home. This service is provided subject to a **means test**, **behovsprövad**, meaning that the municipality evaluates your need for the service to see if you are entitled to help.

Home help service personnel are generally trained nursing assistants, and can thus provide basic healthcare. If you have major home healthcare needs, a **visiting nurse**, **distriktssköterska**, can come to your home.

You can be given an emergency medical alarm if you are afraid you might fall and not be able to get back up by yourself. The alarm is a little device that you wear like a wristwatch. When you press a button on the alarm, a signal goes out to the home help service, who will send someone to help you as quickly as possible.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

The home help service enables people to live at home as long as possible.

You pay a fee for the various things included in your home help service. Fees are decided on by the politicians of the municipality where you

live and usually depend on your income and on how much help you receive. Those with low income and no savings usually pay the lowest fees.

Getting home help service

If you realise that you need home help service, you should contact the municipality. A representative will come to your home and discuss the type of help you need. The choices available to you depend on your finances and needs and on how much help the municipality considers you require.

The municipal home help service department has a heavy work load, for the number of elderly people in Sweden is on the rise. Often, you thus need to take an active part in securing help with the services to which you are entitled. It may be a good idea to call the municipal officials if you feel it is taking too long to get a service you have been promised.

avlösning : when someone takes over tasks you usually perform to allow you to rest or do something else.

Help from the family

Families do a lot for their older relatives in Sweden, too. Adult children help their parents, and the elderly often help one another. In many cases, an elderly person who falls ill is cared for by his or her spouse. There are associations of people who provide care for their relatives and get together to give one another tips and encouragement.

Even if an elderly couple has home help service, caring for a sick partner demands a lot of time and energy. The care provider can get **relief, avlösning***, by allowing someone else to care for the sick family member during certain hours. The sick person might be able to spend time at a **day-centre**, **dagcenter**, a few days a week, or stay at a **temporary residential centre**, **korttidsboende***, during certain weeks. If the sick person cannot leave home, municipal personnel can come over and give the relative a break.

korttidsboende: a nursing home where you stay for just a few days or a couple of weeks rather than a longer period



You pay an income-based fee for the tasks performed by the home help service.

Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

If it is difficult for you to take a bus or use **public transport**, **kollektivtrafik**, you may be entitled to **färdtjänst**, a transportation service for sick or disabled persons. This entitles you to take a taxi or specially adapted vehicle for a low fee. It is up to the municipal authorities to decide who is entitled to färdtjänst.

Round-the-clock care

If you need more help, you can move to a **special home**, **särskilt boende**, of some type. There are **nursing homes**, **sjukhem**, **homes for the aged**, **ålderdomshem**, **group homes and service flats**, **gruppboende och servicehus**. At such homes, residents can be served all their meals, and they have access to healthcare round the clock. Generally, each resident has his or her own room with a shower and toilet. In blocks of service flats, all residents have their own flat.

Most special homes are excellent. There have been some exceptions, however, where extremely poor care has been provided. If you think that conditions are poor, you should contact the municipal social welfare office or the county administrative board so the authorities can take action to put things right.

The fee charged for a special home is usually based on the resident's income. People with a good pension or savings pay more than people with a low pension. Municipali-

ties are not permitted to charge more than the services cost to provide, however. Nor may the total charges be so high that the resident does not have a certain amount of money left per month.

The rules governing pensions are not discussed here; see the chapter on Money. Here, we will simply point out that you must have lived in Sweden for a certain number of years to receive a full guarantee pension. If you have been here for a shorter period, your pension will be accordingly lower. Special rules apply to refugees and people from countries with which Sweden has entered into a social security agreement. The Social Insurance Office can answer questions about which rules apply to you.

GOOD TO KNOW

- The Swedish Pensioners' National Organisation (Pensionärarnas Riksorganisation, PRO) and the Swedish Association of Senior Citizens (Sveriges Pensionärsförbund, SPF) are organisations committed to getting politicians to provide better conditions for pensioners. They sometimes arrange meetings for all pensioners living in a particular area. Ask the municipality whether these national organisations or other pensioners' organisations are active where you live.
- If you have trouble walking, hearing or seeing, there are many technical aids available that you can rent or buy at subsidised prices. Examples include walkers, hearing aids, telephone amplifiers and special magnifying glasses.
- The larger national immigrants' associations often have special sections committed to improving old people's services for their compatriots in Sweden. The addresses of the national organisations can be found in the pages at the back of this book.

Healthcare is one element of Sweden's social safety net.

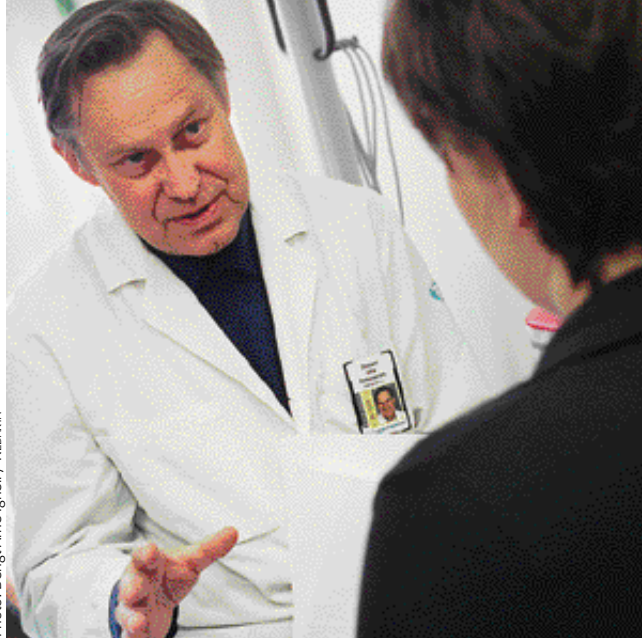


Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

To Your Health

Types of healthcare and support

Sweden's "social safety net" has gradually taken shape through the course of the twentieth century. It constitutes society's response to protecting those who are sick, functionally disabled or unemployed, or who are having other problems, and whose families cannot solve the problems on their own.

This chapter opens with a section of general information on the healthcare system, followed by sections on maternity care, children's healthcare and sexual issues. These are followed by sections on dental care, psychiatric care and disabilities. The closing sections deal with substance abuse, domestic problems and economic problems.

Where to go for healthcare

In Sweden, healthcare is provided by healthcare centres and hospitals operated by the county councils and by private physicians and hospitals. Patients who do not require overnight care are treated by healthcare centres and private physicians.

Hospitals provide specialist care and in-patient care. Healthcare centres and hospitals can be found in the Blue Pages of the telephone directory, and private physicians are listed in the Yellow Pages under the heading **Läkare**.

mottagning : a centre providing patients with medical and healthcare treatment.

Generally speaking, you should contact a healthcare centre if you fall ill during the daytime hours. It's best to call first and speak with the nurse in charge of the **clinic**, **mottagningen***. The nurse will be able to tell you whether you should see a doctor or a **district nurse**, **distriktssköterska**, and when you should come. If you are so ill that you are unable to leave your home, someone from the healthcare centre can make a house call. If a doctor at the healthcare centre feels that you require specialist care at a hospital, he or she will arrange for the appropriate treatment. You will be given a **referral**, **remiss**, a certificate indicating that you need a hospital appointment.

Certain hospital wards also have open clinics, which you may visit without a referral from a healthcare centre. If you are unsure what to do, contact a healthcare centre first.

If you fall ill when the healthcare centre is closed, there are places you can call for advice and consultation. These are often called jourcentraler, "emergency centres", and their telephone numbers can be found in the Blue Pages of the telephone directory.

If you or a family member has a serious accident or a sudden serious illness, you can call the emergency telephone number, 112. The same number is used throughout the country. If you do not speak Swedish well, it may be a

good idea to ask a neighbour for help in placing the call. You will be asked for your name and address. Be sure to give all the details of the situation.

The emergency telephone staff will judge whether you can drive or take a taxi to the hospital or need to be picked up by an ambulance. Ambulances are usually reserved for very serious cases – an example would be a situation in which the patient needs heart treatment during the transport.

It is important to understand what the doctor and other personnel are saying. It is better to ask one too many questions than one too few. If you need an interpreter, be sure to say so in advance. The healthcare system is obliged to provide interpreters for all those who need them. Such help can usually be provided even in emergency situations – there are interpreters who can work over the telephone, for example. If it is impossible to arrange to have an interpreter, try to enlist the help of a friend or relative, not just a child.

Primary care

The primary care system serves the health needs of the people living in a given area, such as a municipality. If a patient requires several different types of care, primary care personnel coordinate the treatment that will be required. The primary care system is also charged with providing preventive care, intended to prevent illness, and oversees the outpatient care provided by healthcare centres.

The primary care system encompasses maternity care, child healthcare and home healthcare, which are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. **Physiotherapy**, **sjukgymnastik**, and **occupational therapy**, **arbetsterapi**, are also sometimes provided within the system. Physiotherapists help people retrain their bodies following an illness or injury, and occupational therapists provide patients with

training to help them deal with work or other everyday tasks.

District nurses are also part of the primary care system. They give **vaccinations**, **vaccinationer***, tend wounds, etc., at their offices at the healthcare centres.

The district nurse and other healthcare personnel may also provide **home healthcare**, **hemsjukvård**, making house calls to people who have long-term illnesses or **functional disabilities**, **funktionshindrade**, but are not hospitalised.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Physiotherapy is a way of returning the body to health after an illness.

vaccinationer: a vaccination provides protection against a particular disease.

The right to choose

You are entitled to choose the healthcare centre and doctor you wish to consult. If you see a doctor you like, you can ask to have him or her as your personal physician. You will then be added to his or her patient rolls. If you require hospital care, you are entitled to choose the hospital where you will be treated. There are sometimes long waiting lists for certain operations. If you need such a procedure, you can ask your physician if the waiting list is shorter at a hospital in another city.

Health and medical care is provided subject to your approval. If you wish, you may thus refuse or discontinue a treatment or a course of medicine. However, if you

decline a treatment that a physician considers necessary, responsibility for your health is transferred from the physician to you personally.

Physicians record information on your illnesses and the treatment you receive in your **medical records**, **journal**, or case book. You may read your medical records if you wish and can receive a copy for a small fee. If you feel the information in the case book is inaccurate, you may ask your physician to correct it.

Everyone working in the healthcare system, including interpreters, is bound by an **obligation to maintain confidentiality**, **tystnadsplikt**. They are not permitted to discuss patients with people not directly involved in healthcare unless the patient has given his or her approval.

Patients' advisory committees and patients' associations

If you are not satisfied with the treatment you receive, you should first speak to the healthcare personnel involved to see if there has been a misunderstanding. If that does not help, you may contact the **patientnämnden**, or patients' advisory committee, previously known as the **förtroendenämnden**. This is a group charged with ensuring that contacts between patients and healthcare personnel function as smoothly as possible. They can tell you what rules apply and help you contact the right people to deal with your case.

Patients' associations, **patientföreningar**, exist to help people with a particular disease or disability. If you have diabetes, for example, you can meet other diabetes sufferers and learn more about dealing with your condition through the **Svenska diabetesförbundet**. There are patients' associations for a wide range of illnesses. Pharmacies can provide you with a list of them.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Doctors record information on illnesses and treatments in their patients' medical case books.

Expenses

Most healthcare is funded by taxes, but patients are required to pay a **patient fee**, **patientavgift**. Every county council decides what fee will be charged in its own particular region. It usually costs more to go to a hospital casualty ward than it does to go to a healthcare centre. Some care, such as that provided for children and pregnant women, is entirely free of charge. In certain cases, other rules may apply to people who do not have a permanent residence permit. *See page 232.*

If you wish to consult a private physician, you should first ask whether he or she is affiliated with the Social Insurance Office. If so, the consultation will cost no more than a visit to a county council physician. If the physician is not affiliated with the Social Insurance Office, however, it will be much more expensive.

Remember to call if you are unable to keep an appointment. If you do not cancel your appointment, you may have to pay the fee even though you did not come.

The first time you pay a patient fee, make sure you get a **"high-cost card"**, **högkostnadskort**, on which all your payments are entered. If you pay a certain minimum sum within a twelve-month period, you will receive **free pass**,

frikort. If you have a free pass, all additional care during the remainder of the period is free of charge. Always bring the high-cost card with you when you visit a physician, healthcare centre or hospital, so the patient fee you pay can be recorded.

There is another high-cost card for prescription medicines, a green plastic card on which data on medicine purchases is stored. If you reach a certain total within a twelve-month period, you receive free medicine during the remainder of the period.

Hospital care never costs more than a certain amount per day. The maximum amount as of this writing *(autumn 2001)* is 80 kronor per day. The amount you pay depends on your income or pension. You will be billed after you are discharged from the hospital.

Vaccinations and medical certificates are not covered by the healthcare system. They cost more, and the costs are not entered on your high-cost card.

In some cases, you can be compensated for trips to a healthcare centre or hospital. Be sure to get a receipt for the trip, and show it to the physician.

Sickness benefits and temporary disability allowances are discussed elsewhere in this book; *see the chapter on Money*.

Health and medical care for women

There are two special check-ups for women. One is the **vaginal smear**, **cellprov**, or **Pap test**, **cytologprov**, which is intended to discover cervical cancer early enough to permit easy treatment. The other is **mammography**, **mammografi**, intended to discover breast cancer. Both screening procedures are risk-free and painless. The county councils send out notices to women to come in for screening.

Women who think they may be **pregnant**, **gravid**, can buy a pregnancy test at the chemist's. These tests are easy to

administer but are not 100 per cent reliable. A more reliable method is to contact a **maternity clinic**, **mödravården**, and ask them to do the test instead. Maternity clinics are usually situated at the same place as ordinary healthcare centres.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Almost all women have their children in hospital. Fathers are often present when the baby is delivered.

Pregnant women receive free check-ups at maternity clinics, and the father-to-be is welcome to come along, too. When you go in for a check-up, you will usually see a **midwife**, **barnmorska**, a specially trained nurse. The midwife carries out various tests to confirm that the **foetus**, **fostret***, and the expectant mother are doing well.

foster: a child in its mother's womb.

Maternity clinics often give courses for parents-to-be. These provide information on topics such as nursing, caring for a newborn and **pain relief**, **smärtlindring**, during **delivery**, **förlossningen**. There are a variety of techniques of alleviating the pain of giving birth. All maternity wards provide pain relief.

In Sweden, almost all children are born in hospital. The father or a friend or relative is usually present during delivery. Fathers can spend much of the day at the maternity ward after the baby is born. The **maternity ward**, or **BB**, is where mothers and newborns stay before going home.

Women with heavy work have the right to be transferred to easier tasks while they are pregnant. If a physician feels that a woman should not work at all during the last two months of pregnancy, she may be eligible for **pregnancy benefits**, **havandeskapspenning**, instead. These are a form of sickness benefits lasting up to 50 days; you apply to the Social Insurance Office.

Your taxes fund a parent's allowance that allows parents to stay at home with their children for a certain period. *For more information, see the chapter on Money.*

Health and medical care for children

After the parents of a newborn have been at home for a few days, a midwife from the **children's healthcare centre**, **BVC**, generally comes to their home to check up on the child. After this initial house call, parents take their child to the healthcare centre themselves for developmental checks. Children's healthcare centres sometimes offer courses for new parents.

Children's healthcare centres monitor children's vision, height and weight regularly until they reach school age. Children are also vaccinated against certain diseases. If you want your child to be given other vaccinations – if you plan to travel abroad, for example – you generally have to go to a private vaccination centre and pay whatever they charge. The check-ups and vaccinations provided by children's healthcare centres are always free.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Children's healthcare centres check children's weight, height and vision regularly until they begin school.

Once children start school, school nurses and physicians provide the necessary healthcare. They keep regular hours and provide check-ups and certain vaccinations.

If a child must be hospitalised, it is often possible for one of the parents to stay there, too, so the sick child does not have to be alone.

Contraceptives and abortion

Contraceptives protect against undesired pregnancies, and condoms also protect against venereal disease. You can buy condoms at pharmacies and elsewhere, but birth-control pills, IUDs and diaphragms for women must be prescribed after an examination. Young women can approach their school medical officer or **youth clinic**, **ungdomsmottagningen**, if there is one nearby; if they are a little older, they can go to a maternity clinic. If you are not sure, ask your healthcare centre whom to contact.

receptfritt: available without a prescription, a special note from a physician.

"Morning after pills" can be used after unprotected sex. They prevent sexual intercourse from resulting in pregnancy. As the name implies, they should be taken the day after intercourse. Morning after pills are **non-prescription drugs**, **receptfritt***, sold at pharmacies and available from youth health centres.

If you are at least 25 years old, you can choose to be sterilised. If you do so, you cannot have children. Sterilisation is a relatively simple operation. Your healthcare or maternity care centre can provide more information on how it is done.

It is legal to have an **abortion**, **abort***, in Sweden. It is up to the woman to decide whether to abort a foetus. Women who are unsure can schedule a counselling session at a maternity care centre to discuss the decision. If a woman decides to have an abortion, the maternity care centre can make the arrangements. Generally speaking, it is not nec-

abort: a procedure to remove a foetus.

essary to spend the night in hospital; you can go home the same day.

If you have decided to have an abortion, it is best to do so as early as possible. Most abortions are performed before the twelfth week of pregnancy. Abortions are permitted until the end of the eighteenth week of pregnancy. Later-term abortions, which are extremely rare, must be approved by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

Sexuality

If you have questions about sexuality and homosexuality, you can speak to the school nurse, a counsellor at a youth clinic or your physician at the healthcare centre. You can also contact the National Swedish Association for Sexual Information (RFSU) or the Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights (RFSL).

The RFSL is an organisation for homosexual and bisexual people and has 32 local offices nation-wide. Its representatives can provide information on Swedish rules and regulations. Under Swedish law, it is illegal to discriminate against homosexuals, and two homosexuals can enter into



Photo: DigitalVision

The teenage years are a confusing time when young people begin to enter the adult world. Issues of body, soul and sexuality take on great significance.

a registered partnership and live together as if they were married. *The telephone numbers of the RFSU and the RFSL are listed in the Good to know section at the end of this chapter.*

Circumcision

All forms of female **circumcision**, **omskärelse***, also known as **genital mutilation**, **könsstympning**, are prohibited in Sweden; it is a crime that may be punishable by imprisonment, even if the person being circumcised accepts the procedure. The most severe genital mutilation is punishable by imprisonment for between two and ten years. Conspiracy to carry out genital mutilation abroad, or to have it carried out abroad by others, is also prohibited.

Circumcision of boys is not actually prohibited, but under new legislation may only be carried out by a doctor or a person with special authorisation. The child may not be more than two months old and must be given an **anaesthetic**, **smärtlindring**, by a doctor or nurse. In most cases, you must bear the full cost of circumcision yourself.

omskärelse: removal of parts of the sexual organ.

smärtlindring: medicine or other substance for the prevention of pain.

Venereal disease

If you believe you have a **venereal disease**, **könssjukdom**, you are obliged to contact a healthcare centre, a youth clinic or the dermatological clinic at the nearest hospital. Treatment is free of charge.

Chlamydia is the most common venereal disease. It should always be treated, as an infection can make it difficult for a woman to become pregnant later in life.

HIV/AIDS is the most dangerous venereal disease. The disease is called HIV in its early stages, following infection with the human immunodeficiency virus. Most people are infected by unprotected sexual intercourse, but the virus is also transmitted by needles and blood. The full-blown disease, which can take years to incubate, is called AIDS.

All hospitals, most healthcare centres and many private gynaecologists can carry out HIV tests. In some cities, there are special HIV clinics; they are listed in the Blue Pages of the telephone directory. An HIV test is an ordinary blood test. It is administered free of charge, and you do not have to give your name.

If you know you are HIV positive, you must use a condom or make sure your partner uses a condom. You are under an obligation to tell your partner that you are infected. Not informing a sexual partner that you are HIV positive is a serious crime under Sweden's infectious diseases act, which is intended to prevent the spread of dangerous diseases.

Mental disorders

Disorders affecting your feelings, thoughts and mood are termed **psychiatric**, **psykiska**. They are treated by the mental healthcare system. Treatment often consists of a combination of talking therapy and medication.

If you or someone in your family has a psychiatric problem, you can begin by discussing it with your regular healthcare centre physician. He or she can help you find the right treatment. You can also contact your industrial health service, if there is one at your place of work.

In many cities and towns, there are outpatient psychiatric clinics where you can talk to a psychologist or psychiatrist, a physician specialising in psychiatry. If you require additional care, you can be admitted to a hospital psychiatric ward or receive care at home. If you receive home care, both the county council and the municipality can provide additional support.

Children and young people can contact the school health service, a youth clinic or a **BUP** or **PBU** youth psychiatric clinic. You can find the nearest BUP or PBU clinic in the

Blue Pages of the telephone directory or by calling the county council's telephone number. There are special clinics for young people with **eating disorders**, **ätstörningar**, such as anorexia (self-starvation) and bulimia (binge eating followed by self-induced vomiting).



Photo: Scott T. Baxter

Not all illnesses affect the body. Sometimes, it is our feelings and emotions that require care.

People who have experienced war and torture often have psychiatric symptoms such as sleeping problems, nightmares and anxiety long afterwards. Many county councils have specially trained personnel who can help people who have gone through such traumatic experiences. The Red Cross and other organisations also operate special centres. The refugee coordinator in your municipality is familiar with the resources available where you live.

Dental care

Children and young people under 20 years of age receive free dental care from the **National Dental Service**, **Folktandvården**. Notification is sent out when it is time for a check-up. People over 20 have to pay for dental care. The state partially subsidises basic dental care, such as check-ups and fillings, so the patient does not pay the full cost of treatment.

Like a doctor's appointment, you must cancel a dental

It may make economic sense to see a dentist once a year. It is cheaper to repair small cavities than large ones.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

appointment if you find you will be unable to come, otherwise you will still have to pay. This also applies to children's dental care.

Dentists are allowed to set their own prices, and it is thus worthwhile to shop around. All dentists are required to keep a list of prices at their office so you can see what it will cost for a check-up or filling.

Other major work, such as crowns and bridges, is covered by rules differing from those relating to basic dental care. Always ask your dentist what the proposed work is going to cost.

Many people feel dental care is expensive. Nevertheless, it is usually a good idea to get a check-up once a year. If you wait longer than that, cavities and other problems can grow much worse and be more expensive to rectify.

Elderly people and the functionally disabled are entitled to less expensive dental care in some cases.

Functional disabilities

Conditions such as deafness, blindness and physical or developmental disabilities are referred to as **functional disabilities**, **funktionshinder**, or **handicaps**, **handikapp**. Children with functional disabilities often attend ordinary pre-schools and schools, and sometimes receive help from a remedial teacher and a personal assistant. There are spe-

cial schools for children with certain functional disabilities.

Parents of sick children or children with functional disabilities may be eligible for a **care allowance**, **vårdbidrag**, to finance home care of the child. Full, half, or one-quarter allowances are available depending on how much care is required. In many cities and towns, parents may receive relief, with someone else taking charge of care for a while so the parents can take a break.

People over 16 years of age can apply to the Social Insurance Office for a **disability benefit**, **handikappersättning**, to cover the extra expenses resulting from their disability. If you have a functional disability, you can apply for färdtjänst, a transportation service for disabled persons, for personal assistance and interpreting, and for technical aids such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, **talking books**, **talböcker***, and **text telephones**, **texttelefoner***. In all of these cases, municipal or healthcare personnel evaluate your need before approving or rejecting the application.

talbok: a book read aloud and recorded on tape.

texttelefon: a telephone combined with a computer monitor.

Functionally disabled people may be able to receive a grant to fund certain alterations of their flat. Remodelling the bathroom to make it wheelchair-accessible is an example of such an alteration. Many municipalities have special flats for the functionally disabled.

Social services

Collectively, the social welfare services and financial aid provided by municipalities constitute the social services. These are administered by the **social welfare office**, **socialförvaltning**, referred to colloquially as **socialen**. Some services, such as child care and geriatric care, are available to all, regardless of their economic circumstances. Others are **means-tested**, **behovsprövad**; the social service makes an enquiry to see whether the person or family is entitled to the help in question.

Municipal social service personnel are generally bound to maintain confidentiality. If they suspect criminal activity, an exception is made – if, for example, a child has been beaten or **sexually molested**, **sexuella övergrepp***. In such cases, the staff member is no longer bound by confidentiality and is expected to report his or her suspicions.

sexuella övergrepp: a sexual act carried out without a party's consent.

The social services include pre-schools, recreation centres, service flats, the home help service and more, which are discussed elsewhere in this book. It also includes **income support**, **försörjningsstöd**, previously known as **social allowance**, **socialbidrag**, which is provided to those without wages or other income. Income support is means-tested, and the social services always carry out an **enquiry**, **utredning***, to determine whether the applicant is eligible for financial aid. Income support is not intended to be a long-term solution; it is a temporary stopgap. *See the chapter on Money.*

You can get temporary help in a crisis from the social welfare service, which is part of the municipality's social services.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Family problems

If a couple are experiencing difficulties in their relationship, they can contact a **family guidance counsellor**, **familjerådgivare**, for help in discussing their problems. Municipalities often have a family counselling department, and family guidance counsellors can also be found through the Church of Sweden, the county councils and private consultants. Look under the heading Familjerådgivning in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory.

It is not the mission of family guidance counsellors to keep families together regardless of the circumstances. In some cases, the parties are so far apart that divorce is the best solution for all involved. In such situations, the family guidance counsellor tries to help the spouses divorce with a minimum of rancour.

utredning : an investigation carried out by a public authority.

Assault is against the law, and that holds true within the family, too. It is illegal to beat your wife, husband or children. Battered women can seek help and advice from **women's crisis centres**, **kvinnojourerna**, or from a special emergency telephone service for women with a native language other than Swedish. There are also men's crisis centres for men who need someone to talk to. Children can seek help from the school nurse or the child protection organisation BRIS. *See the Good to know section at the end of the chapter.*

Children at risk

In Sweden, childbeating is regarded as such a serious crime that even outsiders should intervene. If you suspect that a neighbour is beating his or her children, you should try to talk to someone about it – with the neighbour or with the social services, the school or the children's health care centre.

Children can run into a difficult situation for any num-

ber of reasons. Sometimes the problems are very serious indeed: sexual abuse, childbeating or parents who abuse alcohol and drugs. Sometimes problems arise because the parents are sick or **depressed**, **deprimerade***, and cannot take adequate responsibility for their children.

Where possible, the social services always try to avoid breaking up families. Instead, they do their best to get families back on track by providing an **assistant caseworker**, **kontaktperson***, or **contact family**, **kontaktfamilj***, holding support discussions and providing other forms of help.

However, it is sometimes necessary to separate children from their families. The social services first check to see whether the child can stay with a relative. If not, they try to find a **foster home**, **familjehem**, a family that will care for the child for a certain period. In any case, the objective is to keep the child in contact with his or her real family as much as possible the whole time.

depression: a condition in which the sufferer is constantly downcast and has little energy.

kontaktperson, kontaktfamilj: people who agree to meet with and help people who are experiencing problems.

Substance abuse

The social services are obliged to provide help to young people and adults who abuse drugs and alcohol. They can arrange contact through an assistant caseworker, support conversations, or care in a family or **treatment centre**, **behandlingshem**. Some treatment centres primarily deal with young people. Municipalities, county councils, churches and associations often have special clinics for substance abusers. Such care is usually provided on a voluntary basis, but people who represent a danger to themselves or others may be committed to compulsory care.

If you or someone you know needs help with a substance abuse problem, contact the social services, your doctor or the district nurse at your healthcare centre. You are entitled to an interpreter if you need one.

If you suspect your child has begun using drugs, you can

contact the social services for advice and information. You may remain anonymous if you like. You can also contact Föräldraföreningen mot narkotika, an anti-drug organisation for parents. Check the Pink Pages of the telephone directory to see if there is a local chapter where you live; otherwise, you can contact the national organisation in Stockholm – see Good to know. The Föräldraföreningen mot narkotika has brochures about drugs and the various signs that a young person may be developing a drug problem.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Help is available for young people who have drug abuse problems.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- In the Blue Pages of the telephone directory, you can find advice about how to deal with burns, choking and other emergencies. There is also a list of telephone numbers you can call for advice and information. It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the Blue Pages now so you can find information quickly if a family member is sick or injured.
- Many county councils provide new patients with a **patient's card**, **patientbricka**, when they first come in contact with the healthcare system. This is a plastic card imprinted with your name, address and personal identification number. Always have it with you when consulting the healthcare service.

- Chemist's shops in greater Stockholm can provide you with a list of doctors and dentists in the area – **Läkare och tandläkare i Stockholms län 2001**. This also lists the doctors and dentists who speak foreign languages.
- A list of patients' associations can be found at www.medicallink.se/links – click on Föreningar.
- If someone in your family has eaten or drunk something that may be poisonous, call the Giftinformationscentralen, the poison centre at Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm, telephone 08-33 12 31. They are open round the clock and can tell you what to do. You can also call 112. This is the emergency service, who will put you in touch with Giftinformationscentralen.
- Doctors can now **transplant**, **transplantera**, parts of a recently deceased body to help a living patient recover. Organ donation, as the giving of organs from one person to another is called, is now possible with hearts, livers, kidneys and corneas. A deceased person's organs may not be transplanted unless he or she consented to organ donation while still alive. For this reason, it is a good idea to share your views on this issue with your family. Pharmacies can provide a brochure on organ donation.
- Information on sexual issues is provided by the National Swedish Association for Sexual Information (RFSU) www.rfsu.se, telephone 08-692 07 00. Information on homosexuality is available from the Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights (RFSL), www.rfsl.se, telephone 08-736 02 13.
- The National Association for Social and Mental Health (RSMH), is an organisation for psychiatric patients and others interested in psychiatric care. Information is available in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory, at www.rsmh.se and by telephone on 08-772 33 60.

- Organisations for the functionally disabled are listed at www.funka.nu – click on Organisationer.
- The Social Insurance Office provides excellent information on sickness benefits, help for the functionally disabled, etc. on its website. The address is www.fk.se. The information is also available in English, easy Swedish and several other languages.
- **Shelters for battered women**, **Kvinnojourer**, can be found in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory or by contacting the National Organisation for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden (ROKS). ROKS has a website at www.roks.se and can be reached at 08-442 99 30. Women's shelters provide temporary housing for women who feel threatened by their spouses.
- **Women who speak a language other than Swedish** can call a special hotline for advice and support in a wide range of languages. The number to dial is 020-520 10 10. It is toll-free and will not show up as a call to a **women's shelter** on your telephone bill.



Photo: Linda Wikström / Pressens Bild

Daily life in Sweden. New arrivals in Eriksberg. For this family the move is the first step to a new life.

- Systerjouren Somaya is a shelter for Muslim women. The telephone number is 08-760 96 11.
- In Stockholm, Göteborg, Lund and Gävle, there are special psychologists' and social workers' offices for men experiencing psychological problems, having problems with violence or otherwise undergoing a crisis. Manscentrum i Stockholm is a men's crisis centre; their telephone number is 08-643 11 83 and their website can be found at www.manscentrum.se. The website also lists the addresses of other men's centres.
- In Örnsköldsvik, Borlänge, Stockholm and several other locations, there are men's centres operated by laymen. You can call to discuss family problems, custody disputes, divorces, etc. The Stockholm centre can be reached at 08-30 30 20 and has a website at http://Stockholm.mansjouren.org.
- The Swedish Society for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Community (BRIS), has a telephone hotline for children and young people up to 18 years of age. The toll-free number is 0200-230 230. They operate another hotline number for adults who are



Photo: Magnus Hallgren / Pressens Bild

Daily life in Sweden. Iranian women demonstrate outside their country's embassy on Lidingö in Stockholm.

concerned about their children; the number is 077-150 50 50. BRIS's website can be found at www.bris.se.

- Two associations that provide support for abusers of alcohol are Länkarna, telephone 08-18 96 88, and Alcoholics Anonymous (Anonyma Alkoholister), telephone 08-720 38 42. Check the Pink Pages of the telephone directory to see if there is a local chapter where you live.
- Föräldraföreningen mot narkotika (FMN), an anti-drug organisation for parents, can be reached at 08-642 06 50. Simon is an immigrant organisation against drugs. The telephone number is 08-28 12 86.
- The larger municipalities have a social emergency service that can respond to major family problems that arise in the evening or at the weekend. To contact the social emergency service, dial the emergency number, 112, and ask for Socialjouren.
- The Red Cross's homepage, www.redcross.se, lists the telephone numbers and addresses of Red Cross centres for refugees who have been tortured or injured in war.



Photo: Eduardo Valenzuela

Daily life in Sweden. Smooth moves and footwork. At the Rinkeby International Boxing Club, young boxers develop strength and respect. Sports provide important social training according to coach Gheorghe Iliuta.

Freedom of religion guarantees everyone the right to their own beliefs and the freedom to practise their religion.

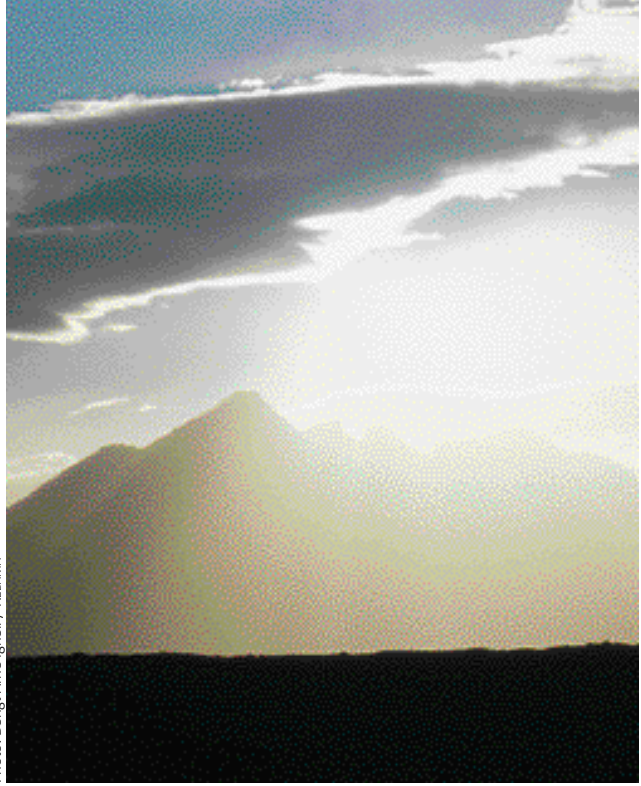


Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Churches and Faith

Religion in today's Sweden

We all have a sense of right and wrong, and beliefs about how people should live their lives, both individually and collectively. Often these ideas are based on faith, whether they spring from our own particular beliefs or a belief system shared by many. This chapter concerns the religions represented in Sweden. Since Sweden has had Christian traditions for 1000 years, much of the chapter is devoted to the various branches of Christianity.

Sweden enjoys freedom of religion; a variety of religions may be practised. A broad spectrum of religions from every part of the globe is represented here. In addition to many **Christian**, **kristna**, churches, there are **Jewish**, **judiska**, congregations, **Muslim**, **muslimska**, congregations of various types, **Hindu**, **hinduiska**, and **Buddhist**, **buddhistiska**, communities, and practitioners of the Bahá'í faith and Sikhism. Some residents of Sweden practise religions other than those listed above, but have not organised congregations.

A brief history of Swedish religion

Until the eleventh century, the people of what is now Sweden believed in the **Æsir**, **asagudar**. The Æsir included Thor, the god of thunder; Freyr, the god of fertility and good harvest; and Odin, who was wise and all-seeing. Christianity came to Sweden in the eleventh century, and many churches were built during the early Middle Ages. Until then, Sweden had been made up of relatively small areas ruled by minor kings. During this period, these kings were united in a single realm and began to cooperate with the church. Kings and other wealthy men donated land for monasteries and churches.

Sweden was now a Christian country under the religious leadership of the Pope in Rome. During the sixteenth century, Gustav Vasa brought the Reformation to Sweden, breaking with the Pope. The monasteries were shut down and their riches confiscated by the state. The Church of Sweden became an evangelical Lutheran church which, together with the state, exercised a great deal of influence on the conditions under which people lived. Often, the church sided with power. The Swedish Church was in charge of national registration right up to the end of the twentieth century, recording births and deaths, changes of address, and marriages. The Church took a part in the

conscription of soldiers for Sweden's wars, especially during the seventeenth century. *For more information, see the chapter on History.*

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many independent churches gained a foothold in Sweden, in opposition to the powerful state church. Various groups of Christians, prevented from expressing their belief as they saw fit, established congregations of their own. The first independent Christian congregations were referred to as free churches. Some, such as the Salvation Army, founded in England by William Booth, were established in other countries, then came to Sweden. Almost 500,000 people are currently members of Sweden's free churches.

luthersk-evangelisk emphasising the four Gospels of the New Testament and adhering to the doctrine of Martin Luther. In the early sixteenth century, Luther broke with the Catholic Church, marking the beginning of the Reformation.

The Church of Sweden today

As of 1st January, 2000, Sweden no longer has an official state church. Until then, all Swedes were members of the **Church of Sweden**, **Svenska kyrkan**, from birth. In 2000, church and state went their separate ways, however, and the Church of Sweden became an **independent Evangelical Lutheran**, **fristående luthersk-evangelisk***, church. The Church of Sweden has over 7 million members. Judging by their numbers, you might imagine that most people attend church on Sunday and are otherwise active believers. This is not the case. Many Swedes who consider themselves Christians are not active in their parish church. Nevertheless, the 2,500 **parishes**, **församlingarna**, are the core of the Church of Sweden's operations; they are where the church's active members come together. Even people who do not regularly attend church often baptise their children, hold church wedding ceremonies and bury their dead with a church ceremony. Church members pay a church membership fee. *For more information, see the chapter on Families and social life.*



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Approximately 75 per cent of all children born in Sweden are baptised into the Church of Sweden.

Each parish consists of a geographically defined area, usually with its own church and sometimes with several. Within the parish, vicars, lay workers, musicians, children's group leaders and others participate in services, choral singing, meetings for children, young people and pensioners, and a variety of other activities. The lay workers are responsible for many of the church's social functions. Churches often take practical social responsibility for refugees and others. A local parish office is known as a pastorsexpedition.

Some 75 per cent of all children born in Sweden are **baptised**, **döpta**, in the Church of Sweden and thus become members. When children reach their teens, they are **confirmed**, **konfirmerade**. This involves a period of **instruction**, **undervisning**, on Christianity and faith. **Conversations**, **samtal**, and discussions on human relations, both private and social, and about right and wrong, are another important element. The ceremony of confirmation, an active profession of Christian faith, is held after the period is over. After going through the programme of instruction, the young person may also opt not to be confirmed.

Approximately 20,000 people belong to the **Evangelical National Missionary Society** , **Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen (EFS)**, an independent organisation within the Church of Sweden. The EFS's emphasis is on the Christian mission – reviving faith in God – and on everyday Christian living. *If you would like to learn more, contact your local parish office. See also the chapter on Family and social life.*

The free churches today

The are great differences between the various free churches. Among the best known are the **Salvation Army**, **Frälsningsarmén**, the **Pentecostal Movement**, **Pingströrelsen**, and the **Swedish Missionary Society**, **Svenska Missionsförbundet**. Salvation Army members often wear uniforms, and can be seen on the streets, singing the songs that have become the group's trademark. The Salvation Army often runs soup kitchens for the homeless, and operates Myrorna, a chain of shops that accept donated goods and sell them at low cost. Myrorna can be found in many Swedish cities.



Photo: Lars Epstein / Pressens Bild

Salvation Army members are often seen on the streets, collecting money to support their programmes for people in need.

The Pentecostal Movement is Sweden's largest free church, with 90,000 members. Its characteristic feature is an emphasis on personal apprehension of the presence of God. During their services, which are sometimes referred to as "salvation meetings", it is not unusual for people to approach

the preacher and "give themselves to Jesus" or "be saved".

The Swedish Missionary Society, with 67,000 members, strives for interaction and cooperation between churches. Their ultimate goal is ecumenical unity – the unification of all churches. The Swedish Missionary Society views churches and local congregations as provisional structures, useful until unity can be achieved.

Other free churches in Sweden include the **Seventh-Day Adventists**, **Sjundedags Adventistsamfundet**, the **Methodists**, **Metodistkyrkan**, the **Baptists**, **Baptistsamfundet**, the **Alliansmissionen** and **InterAct**, **Nybygget-Kristen samverkan**. There are also many smaller free churches active in locations throughout Sweden. Some Estonian, Finnish, Iranian, Chinese and Korean immigrants have brought their churches with them. Some have established special sections within Sweden's free churches, while others have established their own congregations.

Catholic, orthodox and eastern Christians

There are many other Christian churches in Sweden besides the Church of Sweden and the Swedish free churches. The largest is the **Roman Catholic Church**, with 165,000 members. These include many immigrants from the rest of Europe and Latin America, and mass is held in both Polish and Spanish. The Roman Catholic Church has a bishop in Sweden. The supreme leader of the Catholic church is the Pope, whose seat is in the Vatican City in Rome.

The **orthodox and eastern Christian churches** have some 100,000 members in Sweden, most of them immigrants from Turkey and the countries of the Middle East and Africa. Long before these modern-day immigrants arrived, the **Russian Orthodox Church** was established here in the seventeenth century. The **Estonian**, **Serbian**, **Macedonian**,

and **Greek Orthodox** churches came to Sweden later, and the **Rumanian** and **Bulgarian Orthodox** churches later still. The largest eastern church in Sweden is the **Syrian Orthodox Church**, whose members come from Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Other eastern churches represented here are the **Armenian Apostolic Church**, and the **Ethiopian, Coptic** and **Eritrean Orthodox Churches**. Many Assyrians are members of the **Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East**, also known as the **Assyrian Church of the East**.

Cooperative efforts

There is much contact and cooperation between diverse Christian groups in Sweden, including both Swedish groups and those associated with churches abroad. Interchurch cooperative efforts are termed **ecumenical**, **ekumenik**. Four religious families meet in the Christian Council of Sweden, which brings together 25 member churches. The four families are Lutheran, Catholic, free churches and Eastern Orthodox. The Eastern Orthodox churches work together through the ecumenical council of the Orthodox and Eastern churches (OÖKER). The Church of Sweden now cooperates with Muslim and Jewish groups, too.

Judaism

The first Jews came to Sweden in the eighteenth century. Many came here during the nineteenth-century pogroms in Russia and eastern Europe. Following the Second World War, survivors arrived from the Nazi concentration camps, and since then, most Jewish immigrants have come from eastern Europe. Today, some 20,000 Jews live in Sweden. The country's Jewish communities have a central council in Stockholm.

Islam



Photo: Krister Hansson / Pressens Bild

The Malmö mosque, an attractive building that sparked protests when it was being planned. Now it is an everyday element of the Malmö cityscape.

Islam is a growing religion in Sweden, for many people have immigrated from Islamic countries. In twenty years, the number of Muslims in the country has increased from 10,000 to 250,000. Muslim congregations and associations are especially common in southern central Sweden. Both **Shiite** and **Sunni Muslims** live here. There are several national Muslim organisations in Sweden. Other Islamic movements in Sweden include the **Ahmadiyya** and **Ismaili** communities.

Hinduism

Most of the Hindus in Sweden come from India, Southeast Asia and East Africa. They number some 6,000 and have no permanent organisation. There are only a couple of Hindu temples in Sweden, but Hindus often meet at the premises of the Hare Krishna movement in several cities and towns around the country. Krishna is a Hindu god, and Hare Krishna is western adaptation of bhakti, which means a spirit of loving devotion to god.

Buddhism

The first Buddhists in Sweden were Swedes who had discovered and begun to practise Buddhism. The first Swedish Buddhist groups were established in 1950. Currently there are an estimated 12,000 Buddhists in Sweden, most of them immigrants from Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Tibet. There are several Buddhist associations and a Buddhist coordinating council.

Bahá'í

There are just under 1,000 Bahá'ís in Sweden, who are distributed all round the country. Contact the Nationella Bahá'ísamfundet – the national Bahá'í organisation – for the location of the nearest house of worship.

Sikhism

Sikhism originated in Punjab, India. There are only about 800 Sikhs in Sweden. The men wear their hair long, tucked up under large turbans. There is a Sikh congregation in Stockholm.

In addition to the sectarian religious organisations, there are groups that promote dialogue and understanding between religions. One such organisation is Abrahams barn för religiös and kulturell samexistens, which emphasises the similarities between Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Others include the Network for Friendship and Tolerance between People of Different Faiths, Nätverket för vänskap and tolerans mellan människor av olika tro, the Nordic centre for dialogue between religions, Stiftelsen Nordiskt center för interreligiös dialog, and the Multi Faith Rådgivningen, which takes an interest in family issues within the major religions.

If you can read Swedish, you can find more information on religions in Sweden in the book "Gud har 99 namn", a guide to religiously diverse Sweden published by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR). This was the primary source of the information included in this chapter.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- A list of addresses of various religious communities can be found at the end of this book.



Photo: Marco Gustafsson/ Pressens Bild

The offices of the Supreme Court at Munkbron 1, Stockholm.

Law and Order

Sweden's efforts to promote justice

In the chapter on law and order, we will discuss Swedish laws and the Swedish view of **rights**, **rättigheter***, and **obligations**, **skyldigheter***. We discuss different types of legal cases and how they are handled and outline the help available in legal issues.

rättigheter: what a resident of a certain country is entitled to do or receive.

skyldigheter: what the resident of a certain country is required to do.

In Sweden as elsewhere, the law lays down both rights and obligations and stipulates what is prohibited. It is the job of the **courts**, **domstolarna**, to apply the law and determine who is right in a conflict. If a crime has been committed, the courts can both pass judgement and sentence the guilty party.

Every person in Sweden is entitled to have important issues tried in a court of law. You are also entitled to a public **trial**, **rättegång***, before an **impartial**, **opartisk***, court. The courts are independent of both the government and public authorities.

rättegång: procedure by which a matter is handled in court.

opartisk: not taking a position for or against a particular person or issue.

etniskt ursprung: the ethnic group to which a person belongs; the expression often also encompasses nationality, religion, race and skin colour.

sexuell läggning: sexual interest in people of one's own or the opposite sex.

fridlyst: A plant or animal protected by law as it is very rare.

Rights

Certain rights are so important that they are embodied in the Swedish **constitution**, **grundlag**. These include freedom of the press and freedom of speech, which guarantee all people the right to express their opinions. Other legislation states that no-one may receive worse treatment on grounds of their sex, religion, **ethnic origins**, **etniskt ursprung***, or **sexual orientation**, **sexuell läggning***. *See also the chapters on Democracy, Family and social life and Work.*

The **right of common access**, **allemansrätten**, is an important precept in Sweden. You have the right to move freely through the countryside under certain conditions. You must be careful when making fires, you may not chop down trees or otherwise harm the natural environment, and you may not enter the area round someone's house or camp or stay in a caravan on someone else's land for more than one night without asking the landowner for permission. With that said, however, you may otherwise hike freely through the forest and pick wild flowers – provided they are not **protected**, **fridlysta*** – berries and mushrooms, no matter who owns the land.

Hunting and fishing are ***not*** covered by the right of com-

mon access. Fishing with a fishing rod is permitted in the country's five largest lakes and along the coast, but otherwise you must have the permission of the owner of the fishing grounds. Hunting of all wild animals and birds is in principle prohibited. However, some species may be hunted during certain limited seasons. For more information, contact the county administrative board.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

The right of common access entitles everyone to pick mushrooms, no matter who owns the land.

Prohibitions

All countries have laws against crimes such as theft, fraud, assault and battery, and murder. The definitions of these crimes vary from country to country, however, and so, too, does the seriousness with which various acts are regarded.

Swedish law takes a tough stance against cheating on taxes and subsidies. This is considered fraud. Punishing children and other family members by striking them is considered assault and battery. Killing is always prohibited, even for the state: there is no capital punishment in Sweden.

By comparison with other countries, **drunk driving**, **rattfylleri***, and drug offences are dealt with severely in Sweden. Marijuana, hashish and kat are classed as narcotics.

rattfylleri: driving a car or other vehicle while intoxicated.

The police

The most important task of the Swedish police is to ensure that people can feel safe in their everyday lives. The police control the traffic and keep the peace and take action if, for example, someone is found driving so fast or is so drunk that he or she may cause damage. The police may **arrest**,

anhållas: to be held by the police pending an investigation into a suspected crime. A person may only be held in temporary custody for three days. After this period, he or she must either be released or committed for trial. If someone is to be held for more than three days, the matter is referred for a decision by a court.

gripa, people suspected of having committed a crime but may not detain them for more than a few hours. If suspects are to be held longer, they must be detained in temporary **custody**, **anhållas***, by a prosecutor *(see next section)*.

To **report a crime**, **polisanmälan**, such as a theft, you must notify the police. To qualify for compensation under a home insurance policy, you must be able to produce a document showing that you have reported the matter to the police.

You must also approach the police to obtain **authorisation**, **polistillstånd**, for certain special activities. If, for example, you wish to arrange a concert, dancing, a market, or a meeting in which many people will be taking part, you must first obtain the permission of the police. This also applies if you wish to serve alcoholic beverages at a restaurant or a party open to the general public.

Criminal cases

When a case is tried in court, a trial is arranged at which both sides have the opportunity of expressing their views. There are two types of trials: **civil cases**, **tvistemål**, which are discussed later in this chapter, and **criminal cases**, **brottmål**. A criminal case is a trial of one or more people who are suspected of having broken a law. The suspect is termed the **defendant**, **åtalade**. The **prosecutor**, **åklagaren**, represents the state and advocates punishment for the alleged crime.

The defendant is entitled to enlist the aid of a **defence counsel**, **försvarare**, a specialist with legal training. In some cases, a publicly appointed defence counsel represents the defendant. Public defence counsels are paid by the state, but the defendant may be required to repay the cost of defence if he or she is convicted.

After the trial, the court determines whether the defendant should be punished. The court is also empowered to order the defendant to pay **damages**, **skadestånd**, a monetary compensation payable to the person injured by the crime.

The mildest punishment is a **fine, böter** – the payment of money. The next step up the sentencing scale is a **suspended sentence**, **villkorlig dom**. The person convicted is permitted to go free but is given a two-year trial period. If he or she breaks the law again during that period, the punishment is usually immediate imprisonment.

Probation, **skyddstillsyn**, is a type of suspended sentence with a trial period of three years. A person sentenced to probation is assigned a **probation officer**, **övervakare**, who is charged with keeping in touch with the offender.

stämning: an accusation against another party submitted for consideration by a court.

Special correctional treatment, **särskild vård**, is applicable primarily to young people and criminals who are mentally ill; they may be placed in some form of treatment under the auspices of the youth welfare service or psychiatric healthcare system.

The most severe penalty in Sweden is **imprisonment**, **fängelse**. Prison sentences are generally between two weeks and ten years, but the court may sentence an offender to life imprisonment in extreme cases.

Short prison sentences may sometimes be served at home. The offender is fitted with an **electronic ankle bracelet**, **elektronisk fotboja** – a monitoring device – and is not permitted to leave home without the approval of the correctional service.

A foreign national convicted of a serious crime may be sentenced to deportation from Sweden, even if he or she holds a residence permit and has a family here.

Civil cases

A second type of trial is held in civil cases. Such cases involve disputes, or situations in which two or more parties are unable to agree and need the help of the court to determine who is right. Civil cases generally involve money or family issues such as divorces and custody of children.

A civil case is initiated when one party files a **complaint**, **stämning***, against the other party. Such applications are submitted to a **district court**, **tingsrätten***, which is the court that will consider the case.

kronofogden: an authority charged with collecting money from those who have not paid their debts.

The district court usually starts by encouraging the parties to agree to settle the dispute. The court helps the parties establish a binding **agreement**, **avtal**; this is known as reaching a **settlement**, **förlikning**.

If the parties are so far apart that settlement is impossible, the district court reviews all material presented by the parties and then issues its judgement.

The court charges an application fee of several hundred kronor to consider a dispute. The court's work on civil cases is otherwise provided free of charge. The expense involved is generally that of retaining a lawyer, a legal specialist. You may be granted legal aid to help defray such expenses; this is discussed later in this chapter. Legal aid does not cover your opponent's expenses, however, which you may be required to pay if you lose the case.

Enforcement service

If someone owes you money and refuses to pay, one option is to initiate a civil case. There is an easier approach to the problem, though. You can apply to the **enforcement service**, **kronofogden***, and request them to issue an injunction to pay. If an injunction is issued, the enforcement service undertakes to collect the debt. They charge a fee of several hundred kronor for this service.

The enforcement service also collects debts for the state



and for municipalities – unpaid taxes, unpaid student loans, parking fines, etc. In some cases, the money may be taken from the debtor's wages, sickness benefits or unemployment benefits.

In some cases, enforcement service personnel are permitted to enter the debtor's home and seize furniture or other valuables as compensation for the debt. The enforcement service can also help a landlord evict tenants who have not paid their rent or have otherwise failed to abide by the rental contract.

Courts

There are three types of court in Sweden: general courts, administrative courts and special courts. **General courts**, **allmänna domstolar**, handle criminal and civil cases. They also make decisions on other issues of some types, such as the right to adopt or to change your name.

General administrative courts handle cases involving relations between public authorities and private people. If you are not satisfied with the decision of an authority, you

may lodge an appeal against the decision with a higher authority or an administrative court and ask to have the decision reviewed.

The administrative courts often handle cases involving taxes, allowances, driving licences, placement of children in a foster home and placement of substance abusers in treatment centres.

Decisions of both general and administrative courts may be appealed against if either party considers the decision to be incorrect. An appeal is a request to retry the case in a higher court. *See the drawing illustrating the structure of the courts and how to lodge an appeal.*

In these courts, the decision-makers are not solely legally trained judges. In addition to judges, the courts are often made up of **jurors**, **nämndemän**, who have no legal training and are in court as representatives of the public. The judges and jurors discuss the case, then issue their **judgement**, **dom**.

Special courts handle cases that require specialised background knowledge. One such court is the **Labour Court**, **Arbetsdomstolen**, which handles disputes between employers and employees. Another is the **Market Court**, **Marknadsdomstolen**, which deals with issues involving the responsibility of companies for their services and products. Yet another is the **Rent and Leasehold Tribunal**, **Hyresnämnden**, which handles disputes between tenants and landlords. There are Rent and Leasehold Tribunals in twelve Swedish cities.

Legal aid

If you need to consult a legal expert, the **Legal Aid Act**, **rättshjälp**, guarantees you up to two hours' consultation at a limited price. The remaining expense is covered by state tax money. Such consultation may concern questions relating to inheritance, divorce, hire-purchase agreements and the like, or how to handle contacts with a court or

other public authority.

If you have home insurance, it will often cover some legal expenses. You may also be eligible for legal aid if a dispute in which you are involved is tried in court. The amount covered by legal aid and the amount you must pay yourself depends on your financial situation. Legal aid never covers the expenses of the opposite party, however, which you may be required to pay if you lose a civil case.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

If you are the victim of a crime, you can apply for damage compensation from the Criminal Victim Compensation and Support Authority.

If you suspect that you have been mistreated on grounds of your ethnic origins, sex, sexual orientation or functional disability, you may be able to obtain free legal advice from one of the ombudsmen charged with dealing with such issues. *See the chapter on Democracy.*

Victims of crime

If you have been the victim of a crime, you may be eligible for damage compensation from the state if the perpetrator is unable to pay damages. You can be compensated both for bodily injury and for damage to clothing, glasses, and the like. To receive such **criminal injuries compensation**, **brottsskadeersättning**, you apply to the Criminal Victim Compensation and Support Authority – *see Good to know*.

A woman who is being beaten by her spouse can seek protection at a **women's shelter**, **kvinnojour** – *see the chapter entitled To your health*. A man who persecutes and threatens his wife may also be placed under a **restraining order**, **besöksförbud**, prohibiting him from contacting her. If he does so nevertheless, he may be fined or imprisoned.

In some cases, a woman may feel that the threat is so great

that she must seek protection by moving to another city. If you find yourself in such a situation, you should first contact the local tax office where you are registered. The tax office can ensure that a special remark is entered along with your name and personal identification number at all public authorities. This remark will prevent any authority from revealing your new address, no matter who requests it.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- If you do not speak Swedish well, you should request an interpreter whenever you have to contact the police, courts or lawyers.
- The National Courts Administration, telephone 036-15 53 00 and Internet address www.dom.se, can provide information on courts and legal aid. There is also a separate National Legal Aid Authority, telephone 060-13 46 00.
- People from other countries have sometimes had bad experience of the police. Most Swedes, on the other hand, take a positive view of the police. It is the job of the police to help the people living here; you should never be afraid to ask them for help.
- The European Court of Human Rights may try certain special cases involving a potential threat to human rights. For more information, contact the office of the European Commission in Stockholm, telephone 08-562 444 11 and Internet address www.eukomm.se, where a legal expert will consider whether your case might be taken up by the European Court.
- The Criminal Victim Compensation and Support Authority can be reached on 090-16 57 10. The website is at www.brottsoffermyndigheten.se.
- Victims of burglary, assault or rape often feel depressed and worried long after the event. If you need to discuss such feelings, you can contact the centres for crime victims that have been set up in many cities. The national organisation of centres for crime victims can be reached on 08-550 106 or on the web at www.boj.se.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

As more cars have taken to the roads, the demands made on drivers have grown tougher.

On the Road

Taking to the Swedish roads by car

In Sweden as in many other countries, motor traffic has increased greatly in recent decades. For this reason, to help prevent accidents and keep the environmental impact of motor traffic to an absolute minimum, the demands made of drivers have also grown much tougher. This chapter concerns Swedish traffic regulations, the requirements you must meet in order to obtain a driving licence and drive a car, and road traffic other than motor vehicles

Traffic regulations

Swedish traffic regulations are much like those of other countries. The basic rule is to be careful and show consid-

eration for other road users with a view to avoiding accidents. It is also important to be familiar with traffic regulations. In Sweden, it is your obligation to know these regulations. It may therefore be punishable to break a rule even if you did not know it existed.

Here are a few special regulations that apply in Sweden:

- All cars must have their lights on, even during the day.
- Everyone in the car must wear a safety belt – front seat and back – including children. Children under six years of age must sit on a special cushion or child's safety seat. Inexpensive second-hand seats are available.
- It is prohibited to drive after drinking wine, beer or spirits. Doing so may be punishable by a fine or imprisonment, and you may be required to surrender your driving licence, too. It is also prohibited to drive after taking drugs and certain medicines. Most medicines that affect your ability to operate a car show a red triangle on the package.
- There are **speed limits**, **hastighetsbegränsningar**, on all Swedish roads. The maximum speed in built-up areas is generally 50 km per hour. On roads outside the city, the speed limit is 70 km, 90 km or 110 km per hour.
- At pedestrian crossings – specially marked places where people may cross the street – drivers are required to stop and give way to people wishing to cross.
- In most cities, drivers are not permitted to **idle their engines**, **tomgång**, for more than one or a few minutes if the car is not moving. This regulation is intended to help keep the air clean and protect public health.

Driving licences

In order to operate a car, lorry or motorcycle, you must be at least 18 years old and have a valid driving licence. For driving a bus, the minimum age is 21.

To operate a class 1 moped, you must be at least 16 and have a driving licence or special driver's certificate (särskilt förarbevis). Such mopeds can do as much as 45 km per hour and must be registered. *For more information on registration, see the section on registration, tax and inspection later in this chapter.* Class 1 mopeds are often referred to as "EU mopeds". The new, very small cars are subject to the same regulations as EU mopeds.



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Driving schools provide instruction to those wishing to secure a Swedish driving licence.

The only requirement for driving a class 2 moped, which has a top speed of 25–30 km per hour, is that you are at least 15 years old.

If you have a driving licence issued in an another EEA country (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Germany, France, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Ireland or Austria), you may use your own national driving licence throughout the period of validity indicated on the licence. You may also exchange it for a Swedish driving licence without taking a test. Licences can be exchanged at the county administrative board. In some cases, driving licences issued in Switzerland or Japan may also be similarly exchanged.

If you come from a country other than those listed above, different rules apply. You may only use your licence for one year after you are **entered in the national population register**, **folkbokförd**. After that, you must get a Swedish driving licence.

To receive a driving licence, you must pass a written test on traffic regulations and the Highway Code and pass a driving test. If a translation of the written test is not available in a language you know, the National Road Administration can arrange for an interpreter.

There are **driving schools**, **trafikskolor**, that provide instruction for those wishing to obtain a driving licence. Check the Yellow Pages under trafikskolor.

In order to practise driving, you must have a **learner's permit**, **körkortstillstånd**. You can practise either privately or at a driving school. If you practise privately, an approved "teacher" must accompany you. Under certain conditions, you may begin practising as early as 16 years of age. The police or the county administrative board can provide more information on the applicable rules.

registrerad: in this case, means that a car and its owner have been entered in the authorities' lists.

Registration, tax and inspection

If you import a car from abroad, it must be **registered**, **registrerad***, in Sweden. Registration is handled by the customs authorities if the car comes from outside the EU; otherwise it is handled by **Bilprovningen**, the Swedish Motor Vehicle Inspection Co. Bilprovningen registers and inspects cars and other vehicles. They are listed under Bilprovningen in the Pink Pages of the telephone directory. Cars imported from abroad must be inspected by Bilprovningen in conjunction with registration.

If you buy a car in Sweden, you must report the purchase to the registry of the National Road Administration. If you buy a car from a dealer, the dealer will usually help you with registration. Once the car is registered, you will receive a registration certificate indicating that you are the owner.

The registration rules apply not only to cars but also to other vehicles, such as motorcycles and EU mopeds.

Everyone who owns a registered vehicle must pay **motor**



Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Vehicle inspection. All cars must be inspected by Bilprovningen once a year. A car may be operated on Swedish roads only if it passes the inspection. Bilprovningen can ban the car from the roads if it has serious defects. The purpose of inspection is to improve traffic safety.

vehicle tax, **fordonsskatt**. When you pay the tax, you receive a tax sticker that you affix to the number plate at the rear of the vehicle. The sticker is visible proof that you have paid the tax.

For all motor vehicles, including mopeds, you must carry **third party liability insurance**, **trafikförsäkring**. If you hit another car, the liability insurance covers any damage to the other car and its passengers. To secure third party liability insurance, contact an insurance company. You can also purchase supplementary insurance that covers various types of damage to your own car and provides compensation if your car is stolen.

miljökrav: regulations limiting emissions of various substances constituting a hazard to the environment.

Cars and other motor vehicles over three years old must be **inspected**, **besiktigas**, to ensure that the vehicle is safe to drive and meets current **environmental requirements**, **miljökrav***.

Inspections are carried out by Bilprovningen, who will notify you when your car is due for inspection. You must have the car inspected during the period specified in the

letter, otherwise you may not continue driving it. Call and ask for an appointment at least one month in advance. There is often a long queue.

Other vehicles

There are many other ways of getting from place to place. Swedish cities often have special bicycle tracks where cyclists need not deal with motor traffic. Cities are generally served by many local bus routes. If you take the bus frequently, it is less expensive to buy a monthly pass or other discount ticket rather than buy a separate ticket for each trip.

For longer trips, you can choose to travel by air, train or bus. A wide range of discount tickets is available that can cut the cost of your trip – ask at a railway station, bus station or travel agency, or check on the Internet.

GOOD TO KNOW

- The National Road Administration is in charge of issues relating to road traffic, vehicle registration and driving licences. Their website at www.vv.se has information in many languages.
- The locations of Bilprovningen are listed on its website at www.bilprovningen.se. You can also book a time for an inspection over the Internet.
- Intercity train and bus timetables can be found at www.tagplus.se. Click on andra trafikföretag for links to a wide range of bus companies, ferries, international trains, etc.



Photo: Peter Hoelstad / Pressens Bild

Your leisure time is the time when you are not working or studying – time when you can choose activities of your own or simply relax.

"What Do You Do in Your Leisure Time?"

An ordinary question with some extraordinary answers

"Culture" can mean a lot of things. Art, music, theatre, film, dance and literature are always considered culture, but many of the things we do ourselves are culture, too. When you sing a traditional song to your children, you are passing on your cultural heritage. Dancing, cooking and storytelling are culture too. Reading a book or writing a story, painting a picture or going to see an artist's work are cultural activities. Some people feel that sport is culture, too.

In this chapter, we will take a look at some of the cultural and leisure activities available in Sweden.

A municipality's range of culture and leisure offerings is often coordinated by a joint political committee. *See the chapter on Democracy.* This committee is in charge of **libraries**, **bibliotek**, **museums**, **museer**, and **sports facilities**, **idrottsanläggningar**. The municipalities also cooperate with sports and cultural associations.

The time you spend doing things other than working or going to school is your **leisure time**, **fritid**. "What do you do in your leisure time?" is a question Swedes commonly ask when they are getting to know someone new. Many answer that they like to get out into the countryside, go fishing, walk their dog or simply stroll about. Other common responses are that they commit some of their leisure time to an association, or that they exercise or take part in sports, or spend time with their children. Over half a million people spend some of their leisure time singing in a choir.

Some people enjoy learning new things in their leisure time. They may take part in a **study circle**, **studiecirkel**, arranged by one of the **adult education associations**, **studieförbund**, or take evening courses at the university.

Associations

You can find out about associations of various types by contacting your local municipal office. They usually have lists of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the associations registered with the municipality. Most associations are registered, since many are eligible for municipal grants to support their activities. You may very well be able to find an association or club that matches your interests.

A variety of sports associations are active in most municipalities, including gymnastics and exercise clubs, riding clubs, orienteering clubs, ski clubs (at least in the northern parts of the country, where there is snow throughout the winter) and many others. Team sports are popular in



Photo: Lars Epstein / Pressens Bild

One way of getting some exercise is to get together in the kitchen like these women in Rinkeby.

Sweden, especially soccer and ice hockey. You can either participate in sports yourself or go to games and matches as a fan; there are plenty of opportunities for both, for children, young people and adults alike.

If you would like to learn more about the place where you live, you can get information through the **local history society**, **hembygdsförening**. Such societies do research on local history, write articles on life in the past and document current events for posterity. There are also many immigrant associations where people get together to preserve the culture of their home country and pass it on to their children.

Libraries

All Swedish municipalities must have a library. Most have one main library and one or more branch libraries. To ensure that even those who live far from the library can

borrow books, some municipalities also operate bookmobiles that make regular, scheduled visits. The bookmobile does not carry a huge range of books, but you can order the ones you want to borrow and the bookmobile will bring them to you.

There is no charge for borrowing books from the public library. You are usually allowed to keep them for two to three weeks, and a small fee is charged if you do not return them on time. Libraries stock talking books and Braille books for the visually impaired. At most libraries, you can also borrow books on tape, video films and CDs. Sometimes a small fee is charged for films and CDs. Some books, films and cassettes in foreign languages are also available.

Libraries have special children's departments that arrange story hours and other activities. They employ children's librarians who are specialists in children's literature. The best-known Swedish children's author is Astrid Lindgren, whose vast production includes books on Pippi Longstocking and the mischievous Emil.

Another important part of the library is the **periodicals department**, **tidnings- och tidskriftsavdelningen**, which stocks



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / REDAKTA

You can borrow books from the library at no charge. Cassette books, CDs and videos are often available too. Some libraries have computers that visitors can use.

newspapers and magazines both from various parts of Sweden and from other countries. You can usually borrow back issues of magazines.

If you are trying to find a particular book or magazine, you can search the library's **catalogues**, **kataloger**, which are now usually electronic. Computers are available to visitors for this purpose. If you do not know how to use a computer, ask someone who works at the library. The library staff are usually good at finding appropriate choices even if you are not looking for a particular book.

The library is something of a magnet for cultural life in most cities and towns. Current cultural events are usually advertised there.

Art and museums

Every county has a **county museum**, **länsmuseum**, which usually has history and art departments and stages temporary exhibitions. Larger cities have separate art and other museums, including those devoted to topics such as technology and history. Most of Sweden's national museums are in Stockholm, such as the **Nationalmuseum** and **Moderna Museet**, the museum of modern art. You can also view art at other museums, galleries and exhibition rooms. Many small exhibitions are mounted around the country, especially during the summer months. *For addresses, look under the headings Museer and Gallerier in the Yellow Pages.*

Music

Länsmusiken, the county musical association found in all counties, usually has a symphony orchestra and several smaller ensembles that perform at various venues and give school concerts. Most municipalities operate a **municipal music school**, **kommunal musikskola**, where compulsory school and upper-secondary school students can learn to

There are many young music groups and solo artists in Sweden.



Photo: Jessica Gow / Pressens Bild

play instruments. Many music schools have their own orchestras and choirs. Churches also organise a variety of musical activities and events.

There are many young music groups in Sweden. In the late twentieth century, Swedish pop and rock music grew into an important export industry. Several groups, such as ABBA and Roxette, gained followings around the world. Swedish groups are currently very popular in Japan. Some Swedish musicians are better known there than they are at home.

Swedish youth music incorporates many musical elements from abroad. Music groups are a common feature of immigrant areas, and their music reflects the conditions young people experience there. Among the most popular groups in recent years are the Latin Kings, Doktor Alban, the rapper Feven and the singer Markoolio.

Theatre

Almost every county has its own **county theatre**, **länsteater**, which has its own stage and puts on plays elsewhere as well. County theatres put on shows for both adults and children and sometimes appear at schools.

The National Touring Theatre, **Riksteatern,** serves all of Sweden. They have a number of plays in production and tour nation-wide. This allows even those who do not live in large cities to go to the theatre. For many people living in the country, Riksteatern is their local theatre.

As in other countries, Sweden's national theatres are situated in the capital city. They are the **Royal Swedish Opera**, **Kungliga Operan**, and the **Royal Dramatic Theatre**, **Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern**, often simply called **Dramaten**. Occasionally, they make guest appearances elsewhere in the country.

In addition to the national theatres, county theatres and the touring theatre, there are **private theatres**, **privatteatrar**, primarily in the major cities, and **independent theatre troupes**, **fria teatergrupper**. The private theatres specialise primarily in comedy and light musicals, while the independent troupes present a varied repertoire. Children's plays are often put on by independent troupes. Many such troupes are state-subsidised.

Film

You can see **cinematic films**, **biograffilm**, in most municipalities. Films are not always shown at cinemas; sometimes they are shown at assembly halls of various types, such as community centres, club premises and the like. Although many films are made in Sweden, foreign films, especially American, account for most cinematic fare. Many people usually watch films on television or video.

People in many countries are familiar with the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. He is the man behind many of Sweden's best-known films, and was the leading figure in Swedish cinema for decades. Swedish film is much more than just Bergman, however. Roy Andersson, Reza Bagher, Susanne Bier and Lukas Moodyson are just a few of the

directors currently at work. Lasse Hallström is now making movies in the USA. One film that has garnered very positive notices is Det nya landet (The New Country), directed by Geir Hansteen Jörgensen, which follows two refugees on a summertime journey through Sweden. Englishman Colin Nutley has depicted Sweden and the Swedes in a range of films, including Änglagård (House of Angels).

Many **short subjects**, **kortfilm**, and **documentaries**, **dokumentärfilm**, are produced in Sweden, too. Some are intended for television. **Film clubs**, **filmklubbar**, show many films not generally screened at ordinary cinemas – the major cities have special cinemas showing films of this type. Film festivals are another place where such films can be seen. The best known is Göteborgs filmfestival.

The **Swedish Film Institute**, **Svenska Filminstitutet**, is Sweden's central film agency. Filmmakers can apply to the Institute for financial support. The Film Institute also helps distribute high-quality Swedish films for both adults and children, and runs a film-ordering service.

Festivals

Music festivals and music weeks, theatre, poetry and many other festivals are arranged throughout Sweden, especially in the summer. One of the best known is the Falun folk music festival, which attracts musicians from around the world. The same province, Dalarna, has for many years been home to Musik vid Siljan, an annual week of music. The provinces of Dalarna and Hälsingland are especially known for their folk music. Every summer, both provinces host a number of **folk musicians' gatherings**, **spelmansstämmor**. The best known are those in Delsbo, Hälsingland, and Bingsjö, Dalarna.

Many cities hold a special summer festival. Multicultural festivals are also growing increasingly popular, bringing



Photo: Pontus Lundahl / Pressens Bild

The Hultsfred rock festival in Småland attracts several thousand young people every summer.

together people of various nationalities to enjoy one another's music, dance and theatre.

The Hultsfred rock festival attracts thousands of young people every year. Many smaller festivals are held, too.

Good places to find what you are looking for are the library or a **tourist office**, **turistbyrå**. **Calendars of events**, **evenemangskalendrar**, are usually published in daily newspapers or special brochures. If you are interested in learning more about Sweden's literary, art or architectural history, again, the library is the place to find out what is available. Such subjects are typically also included in the course programmes of the adult education associations.

Adult education associations

Adult education associations account for a great deal of the leisure activities that take place in Sweden. The largest are the Workers' Educational Association (ABF), Folkuniversitetet, the Swedish Federation for Study Promotion (Studiefrämjandet), the Adult Educational Association (Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan), the Educational Asso-

ciation of the Citizens' School (Medborgarskolan), the Salaried Employees' Educational Association (TBV), the Swedish Sports Movement's Educational Association (SISU), the Adult Education of the Temperance Movement (NBV), the Swedish Ecclesiastical Educational Association (SKS) and the Educational Association of the Free Churches (FS).

The adult education associations provide courses of varying scope with far-ranging content. The most common course structure is the study circle, in which you study a subject together with a group that meets once a week. Many people study languages this way. Many subjects, both theoretical and practical, are available, such as ceramics and furniture-making. Before each term, the associations publish course catalogues and advertise in the daily press.

GOOD TO KNOW

- To find adult education associations in your area, check under the heading Studieförbund in the Yellow Pages or look up the individual associations by name in the Pink Pages. Many have websites, such as www.folkuniversitetet.se and www.abf.se.
- Libraries are listed by municipality in the Green Pages of the telephone directory. Museums, theatres, etc. are listed by name in the Pink Pages. You can also check the Yellow Pages under Bibliotek (libraries), Museer (museums), Teatrar (theatres) and Biografer (cinemas).
- The mailing address of the Swedish Film Institute is Svenska Filminstitutet, Box 27126, 102 52 Stockholm. The street address is Borgvägen 1-5; telephone, 08-665 11 00; Internet, www.sfi.se.

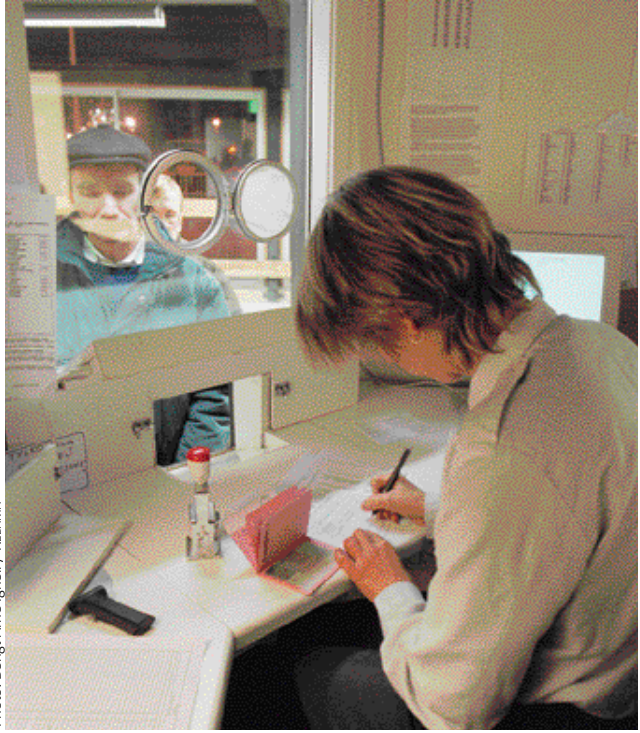


Photo: Bengt Arne Ignell / Redakta

Passport control is one gateway to Sweden.

Residence Permits and Citizenship

On temporary and permanent residence in Sweden

Residence permits, passports and citizenship are important issues for may people coming to Sweden from other countries. Here, we provide a summary of the basic regulations currently applicable. For complete information, contact the Migration Board.

Permanent residence permits

A permanent residence permit entitles its bearer to live and work in Sweden. This entitlement remains effective for as long as you live here, and the permit itself never needs to be renewed. However, every three years, you must renew the permit **certificate**, **beviset** – the document attesting to the fact that you have a residence permit. About three months before it is time to renew your permit certificate, the Migration Board will send you a letter with instructions on what to do.

If you have moved abroad when the time comes up to renew the certificate, your permanent residence permit will be revoked. You can travel abroad temporarily without putting your permit at risk, however. Simply remember to renew your certificate if it expires while you are out of the country. Even if you still have a residence permit, you may run into problems at the border control if your permit certificate has expired.



Every three years, permanent residence permit certificates must be renewed.

Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

Children of two foreign citizens must also have a residence permit. If you are married to another foreign national and have children, you should apply to the Migration Board for residence permits for the children.

If you are convicted of a serious crime, you will be deported. If

your residence permit has been granted on false grounds, you may also lose your permit and thus your right to live in Sweden.

Residence permits

There are temporary residence permits, too. Ordinary **residence permits**, **uppehållstillstånd**, **UT**, are granted to foreign students who are studying in Sweden. **Work and residence permits**, **uppehålls- och arbetstillstånd**, **UAT**, are provided for researchers and others who come to Sweden to work for a limited period.

Visiting Sweden

If you are coming to Sweden for less than three months, you do not need a residence permit. You may need a visa, however, which is usually valid for three months. A visa valid in another EU country that is a signatory to the Schengen Agreement is also valid in Sweden. *More information on the Schengen Agreement can be found later in this chapter.* Besides having a passport and visa, you must also be able to show how you will support yourself financially during your stay in Sweden and how you intend to pay for your departure.

Cases involving relatives

Cases involving relatives or next-of-kin, **anknytningsfall**, are those involving a foreign national wishing to move here to join a close relative with a permanent residence permit or Swedish citizenship. A close relative is:

- a parent or child under 18 years of age
- a spouse or partner over 18 years of age
- a fiancé, fiancée or partner over 18 years of age

A relative wishing to apply for a residence permit must submit an application at a Swedish embassy or consulate

abroad. The relative will be summoned to the embassy or consulate for an **interview**, **intervju***, after which the application will generally be forwarded to the Migration Board in Sweden. The relative in Sweden will also be interviewed before the Migration Board makes its decision on a residence permit. It may take a long time for the decision to be made.

If the people involved have lived together previously, a permanent residence permit is usually granted immediately. If it is a new relationship, however, the Migration Board usually only grants a temporary residence permit to start with.

If the Migration Board rejects a residence permit application, an **appeal**, **beslutet överklagas***, against the decision may be lodged with the Aliens' Appeals Board. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Migration Board in Norrköping within three weeks of notice of the decision. If the relative in Sweden holds a **power of attorney**, **fullmakt***, authorising him or her to speak on behalf of the applicant, he or she may formulate the appeal and send in the appeal document.

intervju: a conversation in which one person asks questions and the other provides answers.

överklaga: complaint submitted to a higher authority in the hope of overturning a previous decision.

fullmakt: a document giving someone else the right to carry out certain tasks on your behalf. You must sign the power of attorney, and two witnesses – people who saw you sign the document – must also sign their names along with their addresses and telephone numbers.

Passports

A foreign citizen in Sweden may hold a national passport issued in his or her native country, a **travel document**, **resedokument**, or an **alien's passport**, **främlingspass**. The latter two documents are issued by the Migration Board. Travel documents are supplied to convention refugees, and alien's passports to others who have no national passport and are unable to obtain one.

If you have become a Swedish citizen, you may apply for a Swedish passport. Contact the police to do so.

Sweden is a signatory of the Schengen Agreement, which encompasses all EU countries except for Great Britain and

Ireland. Norway and Island, which are not EU member states, have also signed the agreement. Anyone who is a citizen of or holds a residence permit in any of the countries that have signed the Schengen Agreement may travel within the Schengen area for up to three months without a passport or visa. You are, however, required to have an identity card indicating your nationality.



Photo: Henrik Montgomery / Pressens Bild

If you are a citizen of a country that has signed the Schengen Agreement or have a residence permit in a Schengen country, you may travel within the Schengen area for up to three months without a passport or visa.

As of spring 2001, Sweden does not issue identity cards indicating the bearer's nationality. All travellers coming from Sweden must therefore have a passport. If you have an alien's passport or travel document indicating that your nationality has not been confirmed, you should contact the embassy of the country you wish to visit to find out whether you will be permitted to enter.

Citizenship

The current Swedish citizenship act took effect on 1 July 2001. Under this act, there are five ways of becoming a Swedish citizen:

- by birth
- by adoption
- by legitimisation
- by naturalisation (application)
- by report

The citizenship of the parents determines the citizenship of the child. For example, a child with a Swedish mother automatically becomes a Swedish citizen at birth.



Photo: Mark Olson

Birth

The citizenship of the parents determines the citizenship of their children. Children with a Swedish mother are always granted Swedish citizenship at birth. This also applies to children with a Swedish father if the child is born outside Sweden. Children with a Swedish father who is married to their foreign mother are granted Swedish citizenship regardless of where they are born.

Adoption

Children under twelve years of age who are adopted by a Swedish citizen are generally granted Swedish citizenship automatically.

Legitimisation

If a foreign woman has a child by a Swedish man abroad, the child is not granted Swedish citizenship if the parents are not married. If the parents marry before the child's eighteenth birthday, the child becomes a Swedish citizen by legitimisation.

Naturalisation (application)

Naturalisation is the most common way for adult non-Nordic citizens to become Swedish citizens.

To become a naturalised Swedish citizen, you must meet the following requirements:

- **You must be able to confirm your identity** either by means of a passport issued in your native country or by some other identification document, bearing your photograph, issued by a **competent**, **behörig*** authority in your native country. The Migration Board does not generally accept a driving licence or certificate of birth, baptism or marriage.

  In some cases, a close relative – your husband or wife, your parents, child or sibling – may confirm your identity. The Migration Board is also entitled to grant **special dispensation**, **ge dispens**, – i.e. disregard the requirement of identity confirmation – if you have lived in Sweden for at least eight years.
- **You must be at least 18 years of age**.
- **You must have a permanent residence permit**. Exceptions to this rule are citizens of other Nordic countries and, in some cases, of EEA countries.

  Previously, you were also required to renounce your former citizenship. Under the new law, this is no longer a requirement for Swedish citizenship. The issue of single or dual citizenship is therefore subject to the laws of your previous country.

behörig: empowered to take action – in this case, to issue identification papers.

Naturalisation is the most common way for adult non-Nordic citizens to gain Sweden citizenship.



Photo: Staffan Gustavsson / Redakta

- **You must have lived in Sweden for a certain period**, generally five years. For citizens of Nordic countries, people who are married to a Swedish citizen, stateless people and refugees, the period is shorter.
- **You must have managed your affairs properly in Sweden**. If you have committed a crime or have unpaid debts for taxes, fines or maintenance, it may take longer to become a Swedish citizen.

Report

A report is a form of simplified application. A report may be submitted for children with a Swedish father who are born abroad, stateless children and citizens of other Nordic countries.

Yes or no

If the Migration Board approves your application for citizenship, you will receive **proof of citizenship**, **medborgarskapsbevis**. If the Migration Board rejects your application, you will receive a decision explaining the grounds. An appeal against the decision may be lodged with the Aliens' Appeals Board in Stockholm for naturalisation applications, and to the county administrative court for citizenship reports.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Information on all these regulations can be found on the Migration Board's website. Printable application forms can be found there, too. the address is www.migrationsverket.se.
- If you send your passport or other original documents to the Migration Board, make sure you ask the post office to send them in a **registered letter**. It is more expensive, but will make it easier for the post office to trace the letter if it should be lost in the mail.
- If you are applying for Swedish citizenship, you will need a census registration certificate. You can order a census registration certificate directly from the National Tax Board's website at www.rsv.se – click on Folkbokföring and Beställning av personbevis. Remember to indicate the purpose of the census registration certificate: application for citizenship.

Your new neighbours



Photo: Ingmar Jernberg

Shame and shared humanity

Jasenko Selimovic

It was over. For me, anyway. A year of almost indescribable degradation was over. For war is not about shells, snipers, mines and armies. War is about degradation. About scrounging for food like a stray dog, living in darkness like a rat, drinking water from the radiator and being happy that there is any water at all. About being pushed to the very edge of the acceptable and the moral. About a diminishment of oneself and one's human dignity. How could the world just watch it happen? How could you watch it happen?

Why did you let me lose everything? Literally everything. Why didn't you march down to the nearest street corner and shout out that this must not be permitted to happen? That would have been enough.

As I walked from the aircraft to passport control, I wondered if other people would ever dare look me in the eye. I felt the whole world owed me something. An apology, a shameful expression, a turning away of the head. I needed your bad conscience to convince me that you were capable of caring about anything at all. That you were still capable of shame. For shame would be proof of your humanity.

Passport control. He wanted me to feel frightened and uncertain. Was that why he was sitting behind opaque black mirrored glass? In any case, he didn't seem to feel he owed me anything at all. Business or pleasure? I tried not to be more unpleasant than usual. Nor more pleasant either. He wasn't worth the effort. Pleasure, you could say. But he let me pass anyway. Pressed the button and opened the door. I didn't know what to feel.

My family was waiting. God, how they have changed. Mother can barely walk.

And my sister is crying. For the first time in my life, the whole family is there to meet me. Is it because everything is different this time? Is it because we're refugees now? Is this the way it is?

I spent the days eating. I was physically disgusted by the enormous

volumes of food I saw in the shops, by the abundance, by the luxury. But I didn't stop eating.

Simple food. Fish balls and bread. Sausages and boiled potatoes. Water. I didn't need more. Luxury is relative. But I ate all the time. Just to be on the safe side. And while I ate, I made sure to get some tinned goods. They are good to have just in case; they last a long time. In case.

She, with her illness, was sentenced to death; I, in my flight, to life.

The problem was cars. Nice cars. Volvos, Audis, Mercedes. The late models.

The whistling of their engines sounded like shells flying in, when they are going to hit nearby. But not dead on. Because the one that's on target doesn't make a sound. That's what's so dangerous about shells. You never hear the one that kills you. Now, every time a car drove by and I heard its whistling, I rolled over in my sleep, unconscious and listless, right out under the bed. To protect myself. I would keep sleeping there till I woke up and went back to bed. And when the next car drove by – out I rolled again.

I had missed lights. Streetlights. Lights shining when darkness has fallen.

After a year in the dark, the fact that the streetlight was shining made me feel safe. For me, it meant: no shells. Because shells break streetlights.

Sarajevo in the darkness is one of my worst wartime images. Every night, I asked Mother to walk along Drottninggatan with me. It had so much light, so many people. It felt safe. All the display windows were lit up. I never saw what the lights shone on, but the fact that they shone meant there was something in the windows. I liked walking there. It was a safe street.

Every evening, we walked along the street. Among the other lost strangers on Drottninggatan, we looked like two strangers graced with a direction, a goal, a meaning. We felt close to that street, to the simplicity of walking, to each other. Both of us had our reasons. She, with her illness, was sentenced to death; I, in my flight, to life. And we didn't sentimentalise it. She looked at things she would be leaving behind: dresses, shoes, ordinary things in the display windows. I looked at the people passing by. At what awaited me. Their faces. The Lithuanian philosopher Levinas writes of the faces of others in his books. Does

Shame and shared humanity continued

he mean what I am thinking of now?

Does he mean this question that presents itself with such urgency: will that man with the bag help me if I need it again? And what will she do? Her, in the red coat. What will they do? Which will be like Kemo, like Alen, like Vernesa? Which will be my executioner?

I looked at their faces and wondered.

Was what I saw in the war the truth about people? A possible truth?

Was what I saw in the war the truth about people? A possible truth? I was certain it wasn't a nightmare, it was too real for that. It felt more like life here was a dream. A state of slumber, before the necessary rest of dreams enshrouded me. And beyond that?

Beneath the veneer? In waking reality? I didn't want to think about that. There was no time for it. I wanted to enjoy the light while it was there.

After a few days, someone said I had to report to the police, apply for asylum, try to get a residence permit. On television, they talked about how immigrants had to adapt, integrate, be educated. But the words were coming from another world.

Not mine.

I think that person, the one who could care about that, died in Sarajevo. It was just that nobody had noticed.

Jasenko Selimovic came to Sweden in the last days of 1992. He is currently working as artistic director of Göteborgs Stadsteater.
This article is an extract from an upcoming book.

A fresh start in Sweden

An introduction for new arrivals

The Swedish Integration Board has top-level responsibility for ensuring that the government's integration policy objectives and approach are implemented in various social sectors. The Board is also charged with working actively to stimulate integration processes in society. In particular, it checks up on the municipal introductory programmes for refugees and newly arrived immigrants, reporting the results to the municipalities and public authorities. The introduction is intended to complement overall policy.

This document describes **the national objectives for introduction**. The Integration Board shall base its review and evaluation of the introductory programmes on these objectives. Every municipality and public authority should carry out its own review and evaluation based on the objectives.

Overall objective

The introductory programme for refugees and other newly arrived immigrants shall provide individuals with the means to support themselves and take an active part in Swedish society.

Introduction objectives

Following completion of the introduction, a new arrival should be established in Swedish working life and social life. This requires both general and specific knowledge and experience of:

- Swedish society
- Swedish working life
- the Swedish language

The knowledge shall be related to the individual's competency, life situation and potential to support himself or herself.

Specific introductory objectives

- Adult immigrants shall have a knowledge of Swedish social conditions and working life, and of the freedoms, rights and obligations associated with citizenship.
- Adult immigrants shall have a sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language to communicate in everyday life, at work and in educational situations.
- Newly arrived immigrants shall have early, individually relevant contact with Swedish working life and organisations.
- The individual's education and professional competence shall be evaluated.
- Immigrants of working age who lack education corresponding to Swedish compulsory school shall have begun complementary education/activities based on their individual situation.
- Young people who are at least 16 years of age and are not yet 20 shall be participating in and benefiting from Swedish upper-secondary education.
- Pre-school and school-age children shall be participating in and benefiting from pre-school and school activities.
- Parents shall have established contact with their children's pre-school/school.

- The special needs of children who arrive without an adult guardian shall be met.
- The special needs of the elderly shall be taken into consideration to ensure that they can draw benefit from the services provided by society and can participate in society to the best of their ability.
- Attention shall be given to the health problems of newly arrived immigrants, whether adults or children. Healthcare and/or rehabilitation shall be provided where necessary.
- The special needs of the functionally disabled shall be taken into consideration to ensure that they can draw benefit from the services provided by society and can participate in society to the best of their ability.

Conditions of the introduction

Within the framework of the municipal introductory programme, the municipality and the newly arrived immigrant shall **together design** a personalised introduction. Both the individual and the municipality bear responsibility for the success of the introduction. The introduction must take into consideration the new arrival's education, skills and experience in his or her home country. New arrivals must be given the necessary input to develop a realistic understanding of their possibilities in Sweden. The introduction must therefore fulfil the following criteria:

- An individual introductory plan shall be drawn up together with the new arrival.
- The content, teaching approach and methodology of Swedish language instruction shall be guided primarily by the needs and situation of the individual. This should lead to a diverse range of solutions as regards both content and instructional approach.
- The employment office shall advise the individual to ensure that the introductory programme has a practical orientation as regards working life.
- The employment office shall provide and fund such programmes and support as are possible and may facilitate the individual's entry into the labour market.
- The municipality shall provide an introduction at the place of work as an alternative for people with specialised professional training.
- The municipality and the employment office shall coordinate their efforts and offer those who have difficulty learning Swedish through language study programmes with the opportunity to participate in other employment and language programmes.
- Within the framework of general policy, other public authorities shall provide service to new arrivals that is as good as that provided to other citizens.
- Municipalities, public authorities and other relevant parties shall coordinate their efforts in such a way that is clear to the individual that everyone is working to achieve the jointly established objectives.

Length of introductory period

The introductory period ordinarily lasts no more than two years but can be extended if the needs of the individual so dictate. If the person is employed during the introductory period, the structure and con-

tent of the introduction must be adapted to his or her situation.

Review of the individual's introduction

- Together with the individual, the municipality shall check regularly on the progress of the introduction with the objective of improving and individualising its content.
- Following completion of the introduction, the municipality shall evaluate the results.

Recommendations

The Integration Board recommends that municipalities make use of the opportunities provided under the Introduction Compensation Act (SFS 1992:1068) to ensure the most employment-like conditions possible. Individuals are encouraged to act on their own initiative to improve their self-confidence and reduce the risk of passivation. They must be able to improve their situation by reducing their expenses (by cutting their housing costs, for example) or increasing their income (by working, etc.). Those with additional needs for maintenance support should contact the social services just like other municipal residents.

Review and evaluation of the introduction

The Integration Board has overall responsibility for monitoring introductory activities. Their review and evaluation should report the achievements and effects resulting from introductory activities. When necessary, municipalities and relevant authorities must provide information to the Integration Board on actions they have taken and the results achieved. Feedback must be provided to the municipalities and authorities to permit development of introductory efforts. The Integration Board provides methodological support that can serve as a basis for the municipalities' design of review and evaluation activities.

Other newly arrived immigrants

The Integration Board recommends that the introduction objectives be applied to all newly arrived immigrants, not just those encompassed by the regulation (1990:927) pertaining to state compensation for refugee reception, etc.

Additional material

A wide range of information and reports can be found on the Integration Board's website at **www.integrationsverket.se**. This information is also available on the website in several different languages

Religious communities in Sweden

Address list subject to change

Anglikanska kyrkan
Church of St.Peter & St.Sigfrid
Strandvägen 76
115 27 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-661 22 23, 663 82 48

Danska evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan
Torild Wulffsgatan 8
413 19 GÖTEBORG
Tel. 031-82 23 09
Fax 031-82 86 15

Etiopisk-ortodoxa kyrkan
Box 16043
103 21 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-733 27 39

Grekisk-ortodoxa kyrkan
Metropoliten Pavlos
Selmedalsvägen 72
129 37 HÄGERSTEN
Tel. 08-646 24 21
Fax 08-97 32 12

Judiska församlingars centralråd i Sverige
Box 7427
103 91 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-679 29 00

Lettiska evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Sverige
c/o Austra Kreslins
Österängsvägen 3 C
182 46 ENEBYBERG
Tel. 08-768 41 91
rev-ieva@algonet.se

Riksförbundet Sveriges unga katoliker, SUK
Box 4007
102 61 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-641 78 15, 702 05 55

Armeniska apostoliska församlingen
Kungsgatan 30A
753 21 UPPSALA
Tel. 018-13 05 03

Estniska evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan
Box 45074
104 30 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-21 32 77, 20 69 78

Finska ortodoxa församlingen i Sverige
Surbrunnsgatan 46
113 48 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-530 307 67

Islamiska Kulturcenterunionen i Sverige (IKUS)
Sveavägen 94, Box 45120
104 30 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-15 98 88
Fax 08-15 68 88

Katolska kyrkan
Katolska biskopsämbetet
Box 4114
102 62 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-643 80 22
Fax 08-702 05 55

Makedonska ortodoxa kyrkan
Hagalundsgatan 5
214 32 MALMÖ
Tel. 040-92 65 14
Fax 08-19 28 02

Rumänska ortodoxa kyrkan
Vanåsgatan 66
216 20 MALMÖ
Tel. 040-15 24 61, 13 46 54

Bulgariska ortodoxa kyrkan
Angel Petronov
Kallforsvägen 23
124 32 BANDHAGEN
Tel. 08-86 78 55

Estniska ortodoxa kyrkan
c/o Nicolai Suursööt
Fridhemsgatan 2
112 40 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-653 50 83

FIFS, Förenade islamiska församlingar i Sverige
Götgatan 103 A
116 62 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-643 63 60, 643 10 04

Koptisk ortodoxa kyrkan i Sverige
Vårgatan 2
126 33 HÄGERSTEN
Tel. 08-645 54 13

Norska kyrkan i Stockholm
Box 4264
102 66 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-644 22 11 Fax 08-694 74 01

Ryska ortodoxa kyrkan
Box 19027
104 32 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-15 63 16

Serbisk-ortodoxa kyrkan
Bägerstavägen 68
120 47 ENSKEDE GÅRD
Tel. 08-722 99 30

Svenska Bahá'ísamfundet
Box 2038
103 11 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-21 51 90
Fax 08-21 51 91

Syrisk-ortodoxa ärkestiftet
Förvaltarvägen 38
151 47 SÖDERTÄLJE
Tel. 08-550 656 44
Fax 08-550 860 86

Österns apostoliska katolska assyriska kyrka c/o W. Yacob
Siriusgatan 114
415 22 GÖTEBORG
Tel. 031-48 79 32

Svenska kyrkan
751 70 UPPSALA

Tyska evangeliska församlingen
Marietorpsallé 23
217 74 MALMÖ
Tel. 040-26 55 45

SMUF, Sveriges muslimska råd
Götgatan 103 A
116 62 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-509 109 00
Fax 08-642 32 20

Ungerska protestantiska församl i Sverige
Zoltan Veress
Ekensbergsvägen 110
117 69 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-744 09 91

National ethnic organisations in Sweden

This information subject to change

Afrosvenskarnas riksförbund
Hammarbyvägen 37 A
120 32 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-702 34 33
Fax 08-702 34 34
asr@stockholm.mail.telia.com

Armeniska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 25106
750 25 UPPSALA
Tel. 018-31 47 94
Fax 018-31 47 94

Assyriska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 6019
151 06 SÖDERTÄLJE
Tel. 08-550 166 83
Fax 08-550 115 93
hujada@algonet.se

Azerbajdzjanska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 50106
104 05 STOCKHOLM

Bangladesh riksförbund
c/o Badrul Mulk
Pilvägen 42, 3 tr.
191 42 Sollentuna
Tel. 08-96 91 22

Bosnien och Hercegovinas kvinno-riksförbund i Sverige
Box 265
54 135 SKÖVDE
Tel. 0500-41 36 20
Fax 0500-41 36 20, 0500-48 14 86

Bosnisk-Hercegovinska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 38046
100 64 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-643 99 66
Fax 08-643 23 20

Casa Chile Svensk-Chilenska vänskapsförbundet
Kungsholmsgatan 12
112 27 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-654 21 60
CASA.CHILE@delta.telenordia.se

Chilenska riksförbundet
Wallingatan 31, nb
111 24 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-20 72 33
Fax 08-21 99 48

Eritreanska riksförbundet i Sverige
Prästgårdsgatan 38 nb
172 35 SUNDBYBERG
Tel. 08-34 27 86
Fax 018-24 51 38

Estniska kommittén
Esternas riksförbund i Sverige
Box 539
101 30 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-21 54 80, 411 59 78
Fax 08-20 70 61

Etiopisk riksförening i Sverige
Box 5046
163 05 SPÅNGA
Tel. 08-650 66 17
Fax 08-740 51 85

Filippinska Kvinnorättsforum
c/o Sheilah Ocampo Kälfors
Älvdalsvägen 181
165 75 HÄSSELBY
Tel. 08-739 16 32
Fax 08-739 16 32
kvinnoratt@beta.telenordia.se

Finlandssvenskarnas riksförbund i Sverige (FRIS)
Bellmansgatan 15 nb
118 47 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-702 01 10
Fax 08-702 90 46
fris.jan.olof@swipnet.se

Gaston Lobos riksförbund
Box 1193
171 23 SOLNA
Tel. 08-735 56 22
Fax 08-735 56 22

Grekiska riksförbundet
Landsvägen 52
172 36 SUNDBYBERG
Tel. 08-627 00 27
Fax 08-627 00 26
grf@sundbyberg.mail.telia.com

Riksföreningen Huelen Chile
Gustavslundsvägen 168 A
167 51 BROMMA
Tel. 08-704 90 68
Fax 08-580 135 01
flora@hem.passagen.se

Immigranternas centralförbund (ICF)
Box 50061
104 05 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-612 39 79
Fax 08-732 39 39
icf@swipnet.se

Immigranternas riksförbund
Katrinedalsgatan 43
504 51 BORÅS
Tel. 033-13 60 70
Fax 033-13 60 75
irf@immi.se

Internationella kvinnoförbundet
Spångatan 7
211 44 Malmö
Tel. 040-30 41 80
Fax 040-21 21 89
ullaherbert@hotmail.com
ikf98@hotmail.com

Irakiska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 82
177 22 JÄRFÄLLA
Tel. 08-580 180 59
Fax 08-580 180 59

Iranska flyktingarnas riksförbund i Sverige
Box 11103
404 23 GÖTEBORG
Tel. 0704-92 03 49
ifrs@hotmail.com

Iranska riksförbundet i Sverige (IRIS)
Box 7033
172 07 SUNDBYBERG
Tel. 08-28 64 24
Fax 08-28 64 24

Isländska riksförbundet
Box 21
150 21 MÖLNBO
Tel. 070-573 15 65, 0340-315 65
Fax 0340-315 65

Italienska riksförbundet
Vegagatan 1
113 29 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-34 57 10
Fax 08-31 92 80
antonella@italr.a.se

Japanska riksförbundet i Sverige
Idrottsvägen 12
192 66 SOLLENTUNA
Tel. 08-754 55 54
Fax 08-754 23 04
shinobu.simon@sbk.stockholm.se

Kommittén för försvaret av iranska kvinnors rättigheter
Box 10035
400 70 GÖTEBORG
Tel. 070-774 40 20
Fax 031-55 49 13
pice@swipnet.se

Kroatiska riksförbundet
Box 65
425 02 HISINGS KÄRRA
Tel. 031-23 62 22
Fax 031-23 82 22
kroatiska.riksforbundet@swipnet.se

Kurdiska föreningarnas råd i Sverige
Fridhemsgatan 44-46
112 40 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-652 43 30
Fax 08-652 43 30

Kurdiska riksförbundet
Box 49090
100 28 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-652 85 85
Fax 08-650 21 20

Lettiska hjälpkommittén, LHK
Wallingatan 26 B
111 24 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-21 44 25
Fax 08-21 44 25
latpalkom@mail.bip.net

Makedoniska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 47037
402 57 GÖTEBORG
Tel. 031-19 62 24
Fax 031-19 62 24
makedonski.sojuz@telia.com

Polska kongressen i Sverige
Box 5025
102 41 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-661 10 06
Fax 021-41 60 25

FAPS, Portugisiska riksförbundet
Torpgatan 21
211 52 MALMÖ
Tel. 040-23 53 96
Fax 040-23 53 96

RIFFI – Riksförbundet internationella föreningar för invandrarkvinnor
Norrtullgatan 45
113 45 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-30 21 89
Fax 08-33 53 23

Riksförbundet för Etiopier i Sverige
Box 12
127 21 SKÄRHOLMEN
Tel. 08-86 20 50, 508 32 301
Fax 08-645 45 98
res@stockholm.mail.telia.com

Riksförbundet polska föreningar i Sverige
Novinagård
Ängahusvägen 22
261 76 ASMUNDTORP
Tel. 0418-43 23 94
Fax 0418-43 23 94
zop.org.polonia@telia.com

Riksorganisationen Internationell Solidaritet
Box 126
177 23 JÄRFÄLLA

Kurdiska unionen
Box 7021
164 07 KISTA

Serbernas riksförbund i Sverige
Bellmansgatan 15,1
118 47 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-462 06 57
Fax 08-462 05 92
ordforande@asjrf.org

Serbiska riksförbundet i Sverige
Scheelegatan 32/3
212 28 MALMÖ
Tel. 040-94 94 32
Fax 040-94 04 12

Slovenska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 237
261 23 LANDSKRONA
Tel. 0457-771 85, 08-7411351
Fax 0457-771 84
budja.bencet@swipnet.se

Somaliska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 191 65
104 320 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-16 69 61
Fax 08-16 69 61
srfs@ebox.tninet.se

Sveriges ingermanländska riksförbund
c/o Inkeri Peterson
Ivarsgårdsgatan 14
434 35 KUNGSBACKA
Tel. 0300-108 50
Fax 0300-108 50
inkeri.peterson@beta.telenordia.se

Sverigeesternas förbund
Box 306
101 26 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-21 66 49
Fax 08-723 19 04
rel@swipnet.se

Sverigefinska riksförbundet
Bellmansgatan 15 nb
118 47 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-615 83 40
Fax 08-615 83 65
info@rskl.se

Spanska riksförbundet
Vegagatan 1 A
113 29 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-34 27 20
Fax 08-31 92 80

Syrianska riksförbundet i Sverige
Box 354
151 24 SÖDERTÄLJE
Tel. 08-550 161 71
Fax 08-550 180 16

Syriska riksförbundet i Sverige
Siktgatan 12
162 50 VÄLLINGBY
Tel. 08-38 38 10, 564 32 660
Fax 08-38 38 15
teodora.abda@sundbyberg.fhsk.se

Turkiska riksförbundet
Alby Centrum
Albyvägen
145 59 Norsborg
Tel. 08-728 00 34, 531 732 05,
531 706 15
Fax 08-728 00 42
turkiskariksforbundet@swipnet.se

Ungerska riksförbundet
Box 17
161 26 BROMMA
Tel. 026-51 98 12
Fax 026-51 98 12

Victor Jara riksföreningen
Box 12294
102 27 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-650 01 99
Fax 08-650 01 99

SIOS – Samarbetsorgan för etniska organisationer i Sverige
Bellmansgatan 15
118 47 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-643 90 60
Fax 08-643 90 68
kansli.sios@swipnet.se

In the event of an accident

Telephone numbers to call in an emergency

In Sweden, the number to call **in a crisis** or in the event of a bad accident is **112**. By calling this number, you can obtain immediate assistance from the fire service, the ambulance service, the rescue service or the police.

If the situation is not critical, there are other numbers you can call directly. For everyone's safety, it is essential to use the 112 emergency number only in the event of a real crisis.

What to do in a crisis

In a real emergency, proceed as follows:

1. Make a quick assessment of the situation.
2. Save humans and animals from direct exposure to danger.
3. Ensure that everyone is safe.
4. Warn others of any impending dangers.
5. Start giving first-aid.

If you can't manage on your own, get help. You can ring the 112 emergency number free of charge from all public telephones.

If you think things can wait, you can call your own local **SOS Alarm** number or ring direct to the appropriate local authority or organisation.

You'll find a list of the local numbers in the first few pages of the telephone directory.

KMunicipal rescue services – fire service
Find the municipality in question in the pages giving local and municipal information, in the Pink Pages, or under "Räddningstjänst" in the Yellow Pages.

Police: See under "Polis" in the Pink Pages or "Polisstationer" in the Yellow Pages.

Doctors: See under "Läkare" in the Health and Medical Care (Hälso- och sjukvård) section of the telephone directory or in the Yellow Pages.

Poison Centre (Giftinformation) 08-33 12 31.

Apotekens läkemedelsupplysning
020-66 77 66

BRIS – Barnens hjälptelefon 020-91 00 91.

If you have access to the Internet, you can find useful help in emergencies at the following sites:

The assistance portal **www.hjalpportalen.nu** lists a variety of useful links. SOS Alarm also has a webpage where you can find information quickly: **www.sosalarm.se**

Index

A

abortion, **abort** 181, 182
activity guarantee, **aktivitetsgaranti** 97–98
activity support, **aktivitetsstöd** 97, 121
Advent, **advent** 46, 52
agitation against a group of the population **hets mot folkgrupp** 39–40
Alcoholics Anonymous **Anonyma alkoholister** 195
Alfa-kassan 102
alien's passport **främlingspass** 234
Aliens' Appeals Board **Utlänningsnämnden** 234, 238
AMS vocational training courses for the unemployed **arbetsmarknadsutbildning** 97
appeal **överklaga** 212, 234
art **konst** 225
Ascension Day **Kristi Himmelsfärdsdag** 48
associations **föreningar** 32–40, 160, 176, 192, 195, 222–223, 230

B

Bahá'í **bahá'í** 204
bank cards **bankkort** 110
best before date **bäst-före-datum** 108
Bronze Age **bronsåldern** 18
Buddhism **buddhism** 204
card purchases **kortköp** 110
care of the elderly **äldreomsorg** 14, 35, 167–171, 188
cash dispenser card **uttagskort** 110
Catholic Church **katolicism** 201, 246
census registration certificate **personbevis** 75–77, 239
Centre Party **centerpartiet** 35, 36, 42
Charles XII **Karl XII** 22, 23
child allowance **barnbidrag** 118, 156
child and youth guidance **PBU** 185
child-care **barnbidrag** 140–145
children's healthcare centre **barnavårdscentral** 120, 129, 180
Children's Ombudsman **Barnombudsmannen/BO** 41–42
Children's Rights in the Community, Swedish Society for the Protection of, **BRIS** 130, 139, 189, 194
Christian Democratic Party **kristdemokraterna, kd** 36
Christmas **jul** 53–56
Church of Sweden **Svenska kyrkan** 131, 197–202, 247
churches and faith **Kyrkor och tro** 196–204
circumcision **omskärelse** 183
citizenship **medborgarskap** 231–239
citizenship, proof of, **medborgarskapsbevis** 238
civil cases **tvistemål** 209–210
cohabitation **sambo** 132–133, 233
collective agreements **kollektivavtal** 94
common access, right of, **allemansrätt** 206
compulsory military service **värnplikt** 116
compulsory school **grundskola** 146–153, 157–158, 243
confidentiality **tystnadsplikt** 130, 176, 188,
constitution **grundlag** 40, 206
consumer complaints **reklamera** 109
Consumer Complaints, National Board for, **Allmänna reklamationsnämnden** 121–122
Consumers' Insurance Bureau **Konsumenternas försäkringsbyrå** 122
contraceptives **preventivmedel** 128, 181
contract pension **avtalspension** 117
contract respite week **ångervecka** 110
counties **län** 34, 131, 192, 225–227
county administrative board **länsstyrelse** 34
county council elections **landstingsfullmäktige** 31–32, 68

county council **landsting** 30, 34, 63, 66–69, 160, 173–192
court **domstol** 135, 206, 208–212, 214
credit card **kreditkort** 110
credit note **tillgodokvitto** 109
criminal cases **brottmål** 208
criminal injuries compensation **brottsskadeesättning** 213
Criminal Victim Compensation and Support Authority **Brottsoffermyndigheten** 213, 214
curriculum **läroplan** 142, 145, 149–150

D

damages **skadestånd** 209
Datortek 97
day nursery **dagis** 30, 64, 140–145
day-centre **dagcenter** 169
death **dödsfall** 135–137
debit card **betalkort** 110
decree absolute **äldreomsorg** 134, 135
defender **försvarare** 208
delivery (birth) **förlossning** 179–180
democracy **demokrati** 10, 14–15, 30, 39, 142, 144, 147
dental care **tandvård** 185–186
development discussion **utvecklingssamtal** 145, 151
disabilities **handikapp** 41, 42, 187–188, 193
Disability Ombudsman **Handikappombudsmannen** 41–42
disability pension **förtidspension** 119
discrimination **diskriminering** 41, 42, 83
district court **tingsrätt** 209–210, 211
district nurse **distriktssköterska** 168, 173, 175
divorce **skilsmässa** 133–135, 189
driving licence **körkort** 215, 216–218
driving school **trafikskola** 218
drunk driving **rattfylleri** 207

E

Easter **påsk** 47–48
Eastern Church **österländska kyrkan** 202
educational associations **studieförbund** 154, 222, 230
elections **val** 30–31
elector's registration card **röstkort** 67
eligibility **behörighet** 154, 160, 161, 163
employment contract **anställningskontrakt** 99
employment interview **anställningsintervju** 97
employment office **arbetsförmedling** 92, 94–98, 103, 105, 115
enforcement service **kronofogden** 112, 210
Equal Opportunities Ombudsman **Jämställdhetsombudsmannen/JämO** 41, 42, 129, 139
equality **jämställdhet** 128–129, 147
estate inventory **bouppteckning** 138
estate statement **dödsboanmälan** 138
EU **EU** 15, 31
eviction **vräkning** 84

F

family counselling **familjerådgivning** 130, 133, 189
family day nursery **familjedaghem** 141
fee ceiling **maxtaxa** 143
festival **festival** 228, 229
film **film** 224, 227, 228, 230
First of May **första maj** 48
flexitime **flextid** 101
folk high schools **folkhögskolor** 159, 160, 165, 166
folkhem 25
free churches **frikyrkor** 38, 198, 200–201
free pass **frikort** 178
freedom of speech **yttrandefrihet** 39, 206
freedom of the press **tryckfrihet** 39–40, 206

functional disabilities **funktionshinder** 41, 186–187
funerals **begravningar** 136–138
förtroendenämnden 176
Föräldraföreningen mot narkotika 179, 191, 195

G
genital mutilation **könsstympning** 183
Good Friday **långfredag** 47–48
government (cabinet) **regering** 32–34
grades **betyg** 153–158
Green Party **miljöpartiet** 37
gross salary **bruttolön** 100
group home **gruppboende** 170
guarantee pension **garantipension** 116–117
guarantor **borgensman** 83, 111
guardian **vårdnadshavare** 133
Gustav Vasa 21–22, 197

H
healthcare and support **vård och stöd** 172–195
healthcare centre **vårdcentral** 173
high-cost card **högkostnadskort** 178
higher education **högskolestudier** 162–166
Hinduism **hinduism** 203
history **historia** 17–28
home furnishing loans **hemutrustningslån** 77
home healthcare **hemsjukvård** 175
home help service **hemtjänst** 64, 168–169
home insurance **hemförsäkring** 89, 112, 212
home sales **hemförsäljning** 110
housing allowance **bostadsbidrag** 118
housing **bostäder** 65, 81–89

I
Ice Age **istid** 18
ID cards **ID-kort** 76–77
identification **legitimation** 80
impartial **opartisk** 33, 88, 206
income support/socialbidrag **försörjningsstöd/socialbidrag** 65–66, 79, 117–119, 121, 189
income tax **inkomstskatt** 114
income tax return **självdeklaration** 114–115
income-based pension **inkomstpension** 116
independent schools **friskolor** 148, 154
inspection **besiktning** 218, 219
inspection report **besiktningsprotokoll** 84
instalment purchases **avbetalning** 111, 212
insurance **försäkringar** 94, 107, 112–114, 123, 219
Insurance Office **Försäkringskassan** 77, 100, 119, 123, 187, 193
interest groups **intresseorganisationer** 38
interpreter **tolk** 80, 174
introduction **introduktion** 64, 78–80, 243, 245
introduction to studies **studieintroduktion** 163
introductory benefits **introduktionsersättning** 79, 245
Islam **islam** 203

J
jobseeker courses **jobbsökarkurs** 97
Judaism **judendom** 202, 204
Labour Court **Arbetsdomstol** 212
labour market **arbetsmarknad** 33, 80, 92–97
labour movement **arbetarrörelsen** 24, 48
labour union **fackförbund** , **fackförening** 24, 38, 93–94, 100
landlord **fastighetsägare**, **hyresvärd** 82
law and order **lag och rätt** 205–214
lawyer **advokat** 134, 210, 214
leases **hyreskontrakt** 84, 88
Left Party **vänsterpartiet** 37
legal aid **rättshjälp** 134, 210, 212, 214

leisure centres **fritidshem** 140–145, 189
Liberal Party **folkpartiet** 36–37, 42
library **bibliotek** 64, 222, 224–225
loans **lån** 110–112
local housing authority **bostadsförmedling** 82
Lucia Day **lucia** 52–53
Länkarna 195
Länsmusiken 226

M
maintenance liability **underhållsskyldighet** 132–133, 135
maintenance **underhållsbidrag** 135
mammography **mammografi** 178–179
Market Court **Marknadsdomstol** 212
marriage **äktenskap** 128, 130–131
mass media **massmedia** 40–41
maternity care **mödravård** 139, 172, 179–182
Maundy Thursday **skärtorsdag** 47
medical certificate **läkarintyg** 119
mental disorders **psykiska besvär** 184, 185
Middle Ages **medeltiden** 15, 20
Midsummer **midsommar** 51
Migration Board **Migrationsverket** 231, 234, 238
ministries **departement** 32
Ministry for Foreign Affairs **Utrikesdepartementet** 131,139
minorities **minoriteter** 15–16
Moderate Party **moderaterna** 37
monarchy **kungadöme** 15, 31
money, finances **pengar, ekonomi** 107–123
motor vehicle tax **fordonsskatt** 219
municipal adult education **Komvux** 77, 158, 165
municipal commissioners **kommunalråd** 66
municipal consumer counsellor **konsumentrådgivare** 82, 121–122
municipal council **kommunfullmäktige** 30, 66, 68
municipal election **kommunalvalet** 31, 66–67
municipal executive board **kommunstyrelse** 66
municipal housing supplementary allowance **bostadstillägg** 118
municipal music school **musikskola, kommunal** 226
municipal tax **kommunalskatt** 65
municipality **kommun** 30, 35, 63–69
museums **museer** 225
music **musik** 226

N
narkotika, Föräldraförening mot 179, 191, 195
National Agency for Education **Skolverket** 142, 145, 155
national day **nationaldag** 49
National Dental Service **Folktandvården** 185
National Food Administration **Livsmedelsverket** 121
national registration **folkbokföring** 76, 239
National Tax Board **Riksskatteverket** 123, 239
national university aptitude test **högskoleprovet** 163, 164–166
native language **modersmål** 78
naturalisation **naturalisation** 235, 237, 238
neighbourhood council **kommundelsnämnd** 68
neighbourhood council **stadsdelsnämnd** 68
New Year **nyår** 46
Nordic countries **Norden** 15
nursing homes **sjukhem** 170

O
occupational pension **tjänstepension** 117
occupational therapy **arbetsterapi** 174–175

official non-payment notice **betalningsanmärkning** 111–112
old people's homes **ålderdomshem** 167, 170
old-age pension **ålderspension** 116, 117
Ombudsman against Discrimination because of Sexual Orientation **HomO** 41, 132, 139
Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination **ombudsmannen mot etnisk diskriminering, DO** 41–42, 83, 106
open leisure activities **öppen fritidsverksamhet**141, 142
open pre-school **öppen förskola** 141
Orthodox Church **ortodoxa kyrkan** 202
own business **eget företag** 103, 115

P

Pap test **cytologprov** 178
parent's allowance **föräldrapenning** 77, 114, 118, 120, 123, 180
parents' association **föräldraförening** 153
parish office **pastorsexpedition** 132, 138, 200
parliament **riksdagen** 15, 26, 30, 32–34, 42
Parliamentary Ombudsman **Justitieombudsmannen** 33, 41, 42
partnership **partnerskap** 132, 183
passport **pass** 234
patient fees **patientavgift** 177
patients' advisory committee **patientnämnd** 176
patients' associations **patientförening** 176, 192
pension **pension** 116–117, 123
permanent employment **tillsvidareanställning** 98
permanent residence permit **permanent uppehållstillstånd** 232–233, 237
personal identification number **personnummer** 76
physiotherapy **sjukbidrag** 174–175
police authorisation **polistillstånd** 208
police **polisen** 136, 207–208, 214, 234
police, approach the **polisanmälan** 208
political parties **politiska partier** 24, 27, 29, 30, 35, 41
popular movements **folkrörelser** 38, 160
post-secondary education **högskola** 148, 154, 160, 163, 164 165
post-secondary **eftergymnasial** 161
practical training positions **arbetspraktik** 97
pregnancy benefits **havandeskapspenning** 180
pregnancy **graviditet** 179–182
preliminary tax **preliminärskatt** 114
premium pension **premiepension** 116, 117
pre-school **förskola** 141–144, 147, 244
Press Ombudsman **pressombudsmannen** 42
primary care **primärvård** 174–175
prison **fängelse** 183, 209, 213, 216
probation officer **övervakare** 209
prosecutor **åklagare** 208
protected **fridlyst** 206
public access to official records, principle of **offentlighetsprincipen** 40
public ombudsmen, **Allmänhetens ombudsmän** 41–42
public sector **offentliga sektorn** 14
public transport **kollektivtrafik** 68

Q

qualifying period **karensdag** 101, 119

R

racial agitation **hets mot folkgrupp** 40
real-estate agent **mäklare** 87, 88
recruiting companies **rekryteringsföretag** 96
referral to physician **remiss, till läkare** 173
refugee coordinator **flyktingsamordnare** 77
relatives, cases involving **anknytningsärenden** 233

religion **religion** 197–204
religious communities **trossamfund** 197–204
Rent and Leasehold Tribunal **Hyresnämnden** 88–89, 212
rental housing **hyresbostäder** 81
replacement posts **vikariat** 99
residence permit **uppehållstillstånd** 69, 76, 94, 209, 231–239
RFSL, Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights 128, 139, 182, 183, 193
RFSU, Swedish Association for Sexual Information 128, 139, 182, 193
right of access **umgängesrätt** 135
right to vote **rösträtt** 30–31, 69
RSMH, National Association for Social and Mental Health 193

S

SACO, Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations 93
sale or return purchases **öppet köp** 109
school lunch **skollunch** 149
school nurse **skolsköterska** 152
school physician **skolläkare** 152
school **skola** 34, 77, 141–142, 146–166
school system **skolsystemet** 146, 147
school transportation **skolskjuts** 149
schoolchildren **skolbarn** 142
schools for the intellectually handicapped **särskola** 149, 158
service flats **servicehus** 64, 170
sexuality **sexualitet** 182, 193
Sfi, Swedish for Immigrants 77, 79, 158
sick pay **sjuklön** 100–101, 119
sickness benefits **sjukpenning** 77, 100, 101, 114, 116, 119, 123, 193
Sikhism **sikhism** 197, 204
social allowance, income support **socialbidrag/försörjningsstöd** 65, 79, 117, 121, 188
Social Democratic Party **socialdemokraterna** 37
social services **socialtjänst** 188–191, 245
specialist care **specialistvård** 173
speed limit **hastighetsbegränsning** 216
spring equinox **vårdagjämning** 48
staffing companies **uthyrningsföretag** 96
start-up grants **studiebidrag** 97
state authorities **statliga myndigheter** 33–34
state subsidies **statsbidrag** 65
statement of opinion **remissvar** 32, 39
Stockholm bloodbath **Stockholms blodbad** 21
Stone Age **stenåldern** 18
Student Aid, National Board of **CSN** 77, 157, 165, 166
student grant **studiebidrag** 118, 156
studentexamen 157
study assistance **studiemedel** 77, 119, 156–157, 165, 166
study circle **studiecirkel** 222, 230
sublets **andrahandshyra** 85
substance abuse **missbruk** 190–191, 195
summer holidays **sommarlov** 49, 147
Swedish Consumer Agency **Konsumentverket** 122
Swedish Integration Board **Integrationsverket** 80, 89, 243–245
Swedish language instruction **svenskundervisning** 77, 79, 158
Swedish Motor Vehicle Inspection Company **Bilprovningen** 218
Swedish Trade Union Confederation **LO** 93
Svenskt Näringsliv 93
syllabus **kursplan** 151, 156

T
tax authority **skattemyndigheten** 76, 69, 115, 123
tax **skatt** 26, 65, 100–101, 114–115
taxes, paying **betala skatt** 100
TCO, Confederation of Professional Employees 93
temporary appointment **visstidsanställning** 99
temporary disability pensions **sjukbidrag** 119
temporary residential centre **korttidsboende** 169
temporary services agencies **bemanningsföretag** 96
tenant-owner building society **bostadsrättsförening** 83, 87
tenant-owner flats **bostadsrätt** 81, 87–88
tenants **hyresgäst** 83–86, 211, 212
Tenants' Union **Hyresgästföreningen** 88
theatre **teater** 227
traffic regulations **trafikregler** 215–220
transportation service for the disabled **färdtjänst** 170, 187
travel document **resedokument** 234
treatment centre **behandlingshem** 190
trial **rättegång** 206

U
undertakers **begravningsbyrå** 138
unemployment benefit fund **arbetslöshetskassa/a-kassa** 100, 102, 103
unemployment benefits **arbetslöshetsersättning** 102–103
Ungdomshälsan 128
unit price **jämförpris** 108
university **universitet** 148, 154, 157, 159–166
upper-secondary school **gymnasieskola** 148, 154–158

V
vaginal smear **cellprov** 178
Vasaloppet 28
venereal diseases **könssjukdomar** 181, 183
Viking era **vikingatiden** 19, 20

W
Walpurgis Night **valborgsmässoafton** 48

Whitsun **pingst** 49
women's healthcare **kvinnohälsa** 128, 139, 178–180
women's shelters **kvinnojour** 189, 193–194, 213

Y
youth clinic **ungdomsmottagning** 128, 139, 181, 182, 183, 185
youth psychiatric clinic, **BUP** 185

Sweden

a pocket guide

Facts, figures and advice
for new residents



Every year, tens of thousands of people move to Sweden. Getting used to a new country can be both exciting and frustrating. Initially, you will spend a great deal of energy learning Swedish. The language's tricky å, ä, ö and sj sounds will keep both your mind and your mouth busy.

Once you begin to feel comfortable with the language, it is only natural to have questions about everyday life in Sweden. How do you find a good job? Is day-care available for your children – and what does it cost? Can your aged father come to Sweden too? Are your grades good enough to get you into a university?

Answers to many questions can be found in this pocket guide – a quick orientation in Swedish society. It is intended to be an asset for all new residents of Sweden. Over 250 pages filled with useful information on the country that will be your new home.

It also contains addresses and tips on finding good, up-to-date information on the web.

The pocket guide is available in several other language versions, including Swedish and easy Swedish.

INTEGRATIONSVERKET