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Every year, more than 10,000 people from outside Europe are granted permits to work in Sweden.

## WORKING IN SWEDEN:

# THE PATH TO WORKING LIFE IN SWEDEN

There are many reasons for coming to Sweden to work. The Swedish labour market is renowned for combining innovation, generous work benefits and job security, and the governing labour migration rules also make it easy for people outside the EU to obtain Swedish work permits. This is how to do it.

Swedish businesses are constantly on the lookout for new expertise. New rules were introduced in 2008 to attract labour to industries/sectors that have difficulties finding enough skilled workers. This reform makes it easier for non-Europeans to move to Sweden to work.

Under the new rules, you can find a job, get an offer of employment and be granted a Swedish work permit while still outside Sweden.

### Finding a job

Job vacancies in Sweden are often advertised on employment portals, such as [eures.europa.eu](http://eures.europa.eu), [\[gen.se\]\(http://gen.se\), \[Monster.se\]\(http://Monster.se\), \[Jobbsafari.se\]\(http://Jobbsafari.se\) and \[Stepstone.se\]\(http://Stepstone.se\). Another way of looking for work is to make direct contact with the company you are interested in working for. Most companies advertise vacant positions on their websites.](http://Arbetsformedlin-</a></p>
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### Applying for a job

People who are not citizens of the EU/EEA can qualify for a work permit only if the job they are seeking has been advertised on the EURES website, or equivalent, for at least ten days. If you find a job advertisement outside EURES, you can ask the employer to advertise the position on EURES so that you can

apply in the approved way.

To apply for a job in Sweden, you should send in your Curriculum Vitae (CV) and a personal letter. Your CV should be about one page long and list your work experience, studies, any awards, special skills, personal information and references. It should briefly describe who you are and what experience you have. The personal letter should describe why you are the right person for the job. Depending on your country of citizenship, you may need a visa to travel to Sweden for an interview. Contact the nearest Swedish embassy or consulate to find out whether you need an entry visa. ■

## GOOD TO KNOW

### REGULATED OCCUPATIONS

Some occupations require a licence or registration if you are to practise them in Sweden. A list of all such regulated occupations is available on the website of the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet).

[www.uhr.se](http://www.uhr.se)

### EU/EEA CITIZENS

As an EU/EEA citizen, you are entitled to work in Sweden without a work permit. If you want to stay longer than three months, however, you must register your right of residence with the Swedish Migration Board. On entering Sweden, you need a valid passport or identity document proving your citizenship.

### DID YOU KNOW?

It is your employer who is responsible for ensuring that the tax deducted from your wage is paid to the state. This means that the employer pays both income tax on your wages/salary and social insurance contributions. Each person is taxed individually, including married couples.

### DRIVING LICENCE

Driving licences from most countries outside the EU are valid in Sweden for a year, if they meet international requirements. After the first year, you have to apply for a Swedish driving licence.

[www.transportstyrelsen.se](http://www.transportstyrelsen.se)



PHOTO: JESPER MOLIN/BILDKAVITSE

### DO YOU HAVE A PET?

To bring a pet to Sweden, you have to apply for a permit from the Board of Agriculture. The EU requires dogs and cats to be vaccinated against rabies, to carry microchip identification and to have a passport.

[www.jordbruksverket.se](http://www.jordbruksverket.se)



PHOTO: HENRIK TRYGG

The path to a job in Sweden begins with an offer of employment.

## NOT AN EU/EEA CITIZEN? THEN YOU NEED A WORK PERMIT

If you plan to work in Sweden but are not a citizen of the EU/EEA, the Nordic countries or Switzerland, you need a work permit. Once you have received an offer of employment, you can begin applying for a permit by getting in touch with the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket).

The waiting time for a decision from the Swedish Migration Board varies. Work permits are valid for a maximum two years but can be renewed. After four years in Sweden, you can apply for a permanent residence permit.

To apply for a work permit, you need your future employer to make an official offer of employment in writing and have it approved by an appropriate trade union. Once the document has been approved, it should be returned to you. You should then send the offer of employment, signed by both the employer and a trade union representative, to the Swedish Migration Board together with your application for a Swedish work permit. An application fee is charged whether you apply on the internet or in person. Apart from that fee, there are no other costs for a Swedish work permit.

The following documents are the minimum requirement:

- A written offer of employment, completed and signed by the employer and a trade union representative
- A valid passport
- Copies of relevant documents for each family member accompanying you.

The Swedish Migration Board will inform you as soon as they reach a decision.

### If you have a family

Under Swedish law, accompanying partners and children are also taken into consideration. If your job is for longer than six months, all members of your immediate family may be granted work and residence permits for the period for which you have been granted a work permit.

The opportunity to live, work and study here means that your family can participate in Swedish community life from the start. Your immediate family is defined as your spouse or cohabiting partner, and any unmarried children you may have up to the age of 21. When applying for a residence permit for your family, you need to enclose the following documents:

- A valid passport for each family member
- A birth certificate for each accompanying child
- A marriage certificate for you and your spouse or a document showing that you are cohabiting as partners. ■



## AT WORK IN SWEDEN

### INFORMAL WORKPLACES

Swedish workplace culture tends to be informal. This applies both to clothing and to forms of address – employees call both each other and their bosses by their first names.

### FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

In Sweden, people feel it is healthy to find a balance between work and private life. Flexible working hours are an example of this. At many offices, leaving early to collect a child from preschool is considered acceptable behaviour, as long as the employee makes up the lost time on another occasion.

### SEK 80

The average meal at a lunch restaurant in Sweden costs SEK 80 (EUR 9.25/ USD 11.95). The meal usually includes bread, a drink, salad and coffee.

PHOTO: BILDARKIVET.SE



### THE COFFEE BREAK

A unique feature of Swedish working life is the coffee break (fika). It gives employees and their bosses an opportunity to meet on equal terms and talk informally.

### REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

When you arrive in Sweden, you and all the members of your family must have the following documents with you:

- A valid passport and ID card from your country of origin
- A valid work and residence permit
- A driving licence (if you have one)
- A marriage certificate or a registered partnership certificate for an accompanying partner
- A birth certificate for each accompanying child.



PHOTO: BILDARKIVET.SE

Your work permit also covers family members. Your children can attend school free of charge and are entitled to language tuition in their mother tongue.

## SETTLING IN SWEDEN

Once you have obtained a job and a work permit, it's time to plan your move to Sweden. You have to find accommodation and plan schooling for any children you may have. On arrival, there are practical matters to deal with, such as registering with the authorities and acquiring a personal identity number (personnummer) and a bank account.

One of the first things you need to arrange before moving to Sweden is a place to live. To obtain your own rental contract, you need both a Swedish personal identity number and proof that your income is enough to cover the rent.

In cities and large towns, people have to wait a long time – often several years – to get a rental contract of their own. So you should expect to rent an apartment on a subletting contract (andrahandskontrakt) to start with. It is important that you have a formal agreement, and a subletting contract always has to be approved by the landlord.

An apartment that you buy to live in is called an owner-occupied apartment (bostadsrätt). Besides the purchase sum for the flat, you pay a monthly charge to cover repairs and maintenance, renovations, and other shared costs for the building itself. If you buy a house, however, you will most likely have full right of ownership to both the building and the land it stands on. A real estate agent can help you find and buy a house or apartment. Some employers help their employees find a place to live during their period of employment.

### Schooling

If you have a child who will be starting school in Sweden, you can find a sum-

marised description of the Swedish education system on the website of the National Agency for Education. As soon as you know where in Sweden you and your family will be living, you can start to look for nearby schools. For information about how to choose a school, contact the municipality you will be moving to. Your children can attend school free of charge and are entitled to language tuition in their mother tongue.

[www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se) ■

### ! Your initial period in Sweden

During your first few days in Sweden, you should make a point of registering with the Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket) and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan), and of opening a Swedish bank account.

- **The Tax Agency** issues personal identity numbers/co-ordination numbers and ID cards.
- To receive pay from your employer, you need a Swedish **bank account**.
- You must be registered with the **Social Insurance Agency** in order to receive compensation when you are on sick leave or parental leave.

## GOOD TO KNOW

There are several Swedish laws governing the rights of working people. Here are some of them:

### THE WORK ENVIRONMENT ACT

The Work Environment Act is designed to prevent accidents at the workplace and to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of employees. It is the employer who has the main responsibility for the work environment.



Safety at work is regulated by the Work Environment Act.

### THE EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT

The right to a safe and stable job is regulated among other provisions by the Employment Protection Act, under which employers are forbidden to terminate a person's employment without just cause. Both period of notice and order of selection for dismissal are regulated by this law.

### THE DISCRIMINATION ACT

The Discrimination Act prohibits differential treatment on grounds of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. Discrimination at work may involve harassment or unfair treatment in connection with wage-setting, working conditions or promotion.

SEK 1 (Swedish krona) =  
USD 0.15 or EUR 0.11

## RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

Everyone who lives in Sweden is entitled to certain statutory rights and benefits that are financed largely via the Swedish tax system. Rights for employees are based on laws, collective agreements and employment contracts.

The Swedish welfare state – often referred to abroad as the Swedish model – is a social and economic system guided by the principles of full employment, equal pay for equal work, and universal welfare for the community as a whole. Wages are on a par with those in other industrialised countries, and people in Sweden generally enjoy a high standard of living. Sweden is always ranked high in international welfare indexes.

### Individual rights

Health care is available to everyone who lives in Sweden and never costs more than SEK 1,100 over a twelve-month period (2012 figure). Maternity care is free, and health care is also free for children up to the age of 18. An extra subsidy covers any costs for medicines exceeding SEK 2,200 during a given year.

Dental visits are free of charge up until the year the child turns 19. Adults can also receive financial assistance for high-cost procedures.

Employees who fall ill normally receive sick pay from their employers for the first 14 days, amounting to 80 per cent of their regular pay.

Education is free of charge from the age of six up to and including university level.

Everyone who is a registered resident of Sweden is covered by a pension system consisting of an income pension calculated on the basis of lifetime earnings, and a guaranteed pension for people with little or no income pension (if they have lived in Sweden at least three years). Even if you stop working in Sweden and move to another country, you are entitled to your Swedish pension when you reach retirement age.

### Rights for employees

All employees in Sweden have at least five weeks paid holiday per year and are entitled to paid sick leave.

The Swedish parental-leave scheme also allows parents to stay home from work to look after their young children for a total of 480 days per child. Parents who share this entitlement equally also qualify for a 'gender equality bonus'.

If you become unemployed and belong to an unemployment fund, you are entitled to a certain amount of unemployment benefits, based on the income from your previous job. ■

## USEFUL LINKS

- [www.av.se](http://www.av.se) The Swedish Work Environment Authority
- [www.ec.europa.eu/eures/](http://www.ec.europa.eu/eures/) The EURES job database
- [www.forsakringskassan.se](http://www.forsakringskassan.se) The Swedish Social Insurance Agency
- [www.migrationsverket.se](http://www.migrationsverket.se) The Swedish Migration Board
- [www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3696](http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3696) List of Swedish embassies and consulates
- [www.safeatwork.se](http://www.safeatwork.se) A guide to safety at work by The Swedish Work Environment Authority
- [www.skatteverket.se](http://www.skatteverket.se) The Swedish Tax Agency
- [www.tullverket.se](http://www.tullverket.se) Swedish Customs
- [www.workinginsweden.se](http://www.workinginsweden.se) The Swedish Institute guide to working in Sweden

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