

# Skills anticipation in Sweden

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## Table of contents



Summary

Overview of the Swedish approach

Description

Aims

Legal framework

Governance

The role of stakeholders

Target groups

Funding and resources

Methods and tools

Skills assessment

Skills forecasts

Skills foresight

Other skills anticipation activities

Dissemination and use

Use of skills anticipation in policy

Target groups' uses of skills anticipation outputs

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## Summary

The approach to skills anticipation in Sweden benefits from the country's long history of skills assessment and forecasting. The amount of data available is extensive and updates are frequent. There are a number of different skills anticipation activities being undertaken in Sweden:

- Skills assessments (assessing how various drivers of change will affect future skills demand on national and sectoral level);
- Skills forecasting (the Trends and Forecasts [*Trender och prognoser*] series of occupational projections);
- Surveys of employers (to gauge their current level of skills demand and the extent to which they are experiencing skill shortages).

The skills anticipation programmes are decentralised among three government institutions. The national statistics office, [Statistics Sweden](#) (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*, hereafter SCB), produces medium- and long-term forecasts, while the public employment service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*, hereafter PES) is responsible for short-term projections. In addition, the [National Institute of Economic Research](#) (*Konjunkturinstitutet*, hereafter NIER) produces infrequent in-depth research on specific topics.

While the three institutions do work together to some extent, each produces its own independent projections and analyses. The results of these exercises are published in various publications, most of which are available online. In addition, some of the results are fed into online databanks. The most notable of these is the Job Compass application, which is hosted by the PES.

The participation of stakeholders in skills anticipation activity is extensive. Both Statistics Sweden and the PES retain close contact with employers' confederations, trade unions, educational institutions and employers themselves. These connections generate additional qualitative information on the current state of the labour market, which is then used to augment the results of quantitative forecasts. The most notable examples of these stakeholder connections are the sector councils and the panel of experts, both of which are administered by the PES.

The results of the skills assessment exercises in Sweden are utilised by various government agencies and public institutions. Policymakers normally take notice of the forecasts and assessments when formulating long-run plans for the economy, particularly with regard to shaping the education system. The results of skills anticipation exercises are used to determine which new kinds of educational and training programmes should be offered, and how to augment existing programmes. The PES also makes extensive use of the information when formulating new programmes for the unemployed. Furthermore

extensive use of the information when formulating new programmes for the unemployed. Furthermore, local authorities and institutions also use the forecasts, most notably local education providers and the local branches of the PES.

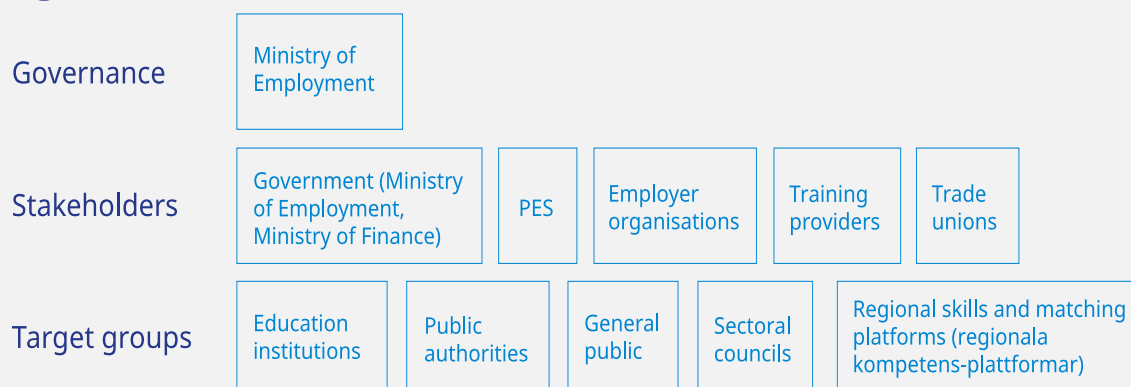
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## Overview of the Swedish approach

# Skills anticipation in Sweden

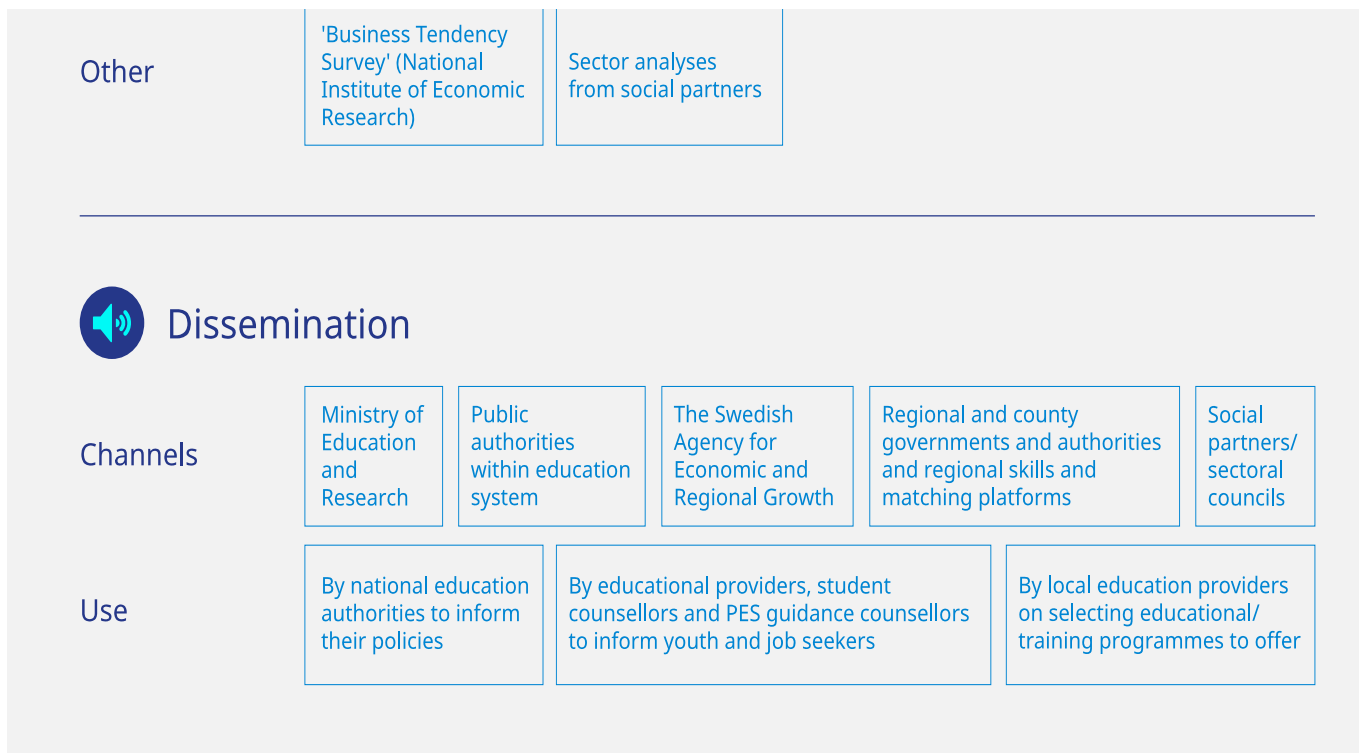


### Key actors



### Types of skills anticipation





## Description

The core of skills anticipation in Sweden is based around the work of three government institutions: the national statistics office, Statistics Sweden (SCB), the PES and the NIER. Each of these institutions conducts its own research and analysis independently and then publishes the results. SCB publishes its Trends and Forecasts report every three years and the results from its [Labour Markets Tendency Surveys](#) (*Arbetskraftsbarometern*) annually. PES publishes its [Where are the Jobs?](#) (*Var finns jobben?*) and [Labour Market Outlooks](#) (*Arbetsmarknadsutsikterna*) reports twice a year. Additionally, it also publishes weekly and monthly labour market statistics, available both in terms of national and regional data. The NIER publishes monthly results from its Business Tendency Survey (*Företagsbarometern*) as part of its larger [Economic Tendency Survey](#) (*Konjunkturbarometern*). Furthermore, the NIER also publishes a more extensive quarterly version of its Business Tendency Survey.

Individually, none of these publications provides a holistic analysis of skills anticipation. However, in 2007 a government inquiry found that the publications complement each other well. (1) thus, when combined, they provide a comprehensive estimate of the current and future demand and supply for skills.

In addition, there are numerous organisations that produce their own forecasts and reports, many of which focus on specific sectors or occupations. The most notable of these organisations is the [Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations](#) (*Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation*) and the [Confederation of Swedish Enterprise](#) (*Svenskt Näringsliv*). Although these organisations produce their own forecasts, most of them also work closely with SCB and the PES, assisting in the collection of data.

There is also a coordinated approach to anticipating skill needs at the regional level. [The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth](#) (*Tillväxtverket*) is responsible for supporting regional platforms relating to skills. The platforms match regional vocational education provision to skills demand. The regional governments usually chair the platforms, which are based on regional partnerships that include

regional governments usually chair the platforms, which are based on regional partnerships that include industry, the public sector and education providers. (2)

## Aims

The data provided by the three institutions are intended for use by government agencies, jobseekers, education/training providers and labour market intermediaries. The forecasts and assessments influence mainly decisions on the provision of new educational programmes. The data collected by the PES have also been used extensively by the agency in deciding which types of labour market training programmes to provide and support.

## Legal framework

There is a little statutory regulation regarding skills anticipation. SCB, the PES and the NIER each have certain roles and obligations as determined by law or their ministries, but none are exclusively tasked with skills anticipation. Swedish law does however, guarantee that everyone is entitled to free educational and vocational guidance. The data gathered by the skills anticipation activities are used by the individuals and institutions which provide this guidance.

## Governance

Skills anticipation is the responsibility of the three main institutions mentioned above. Each of them falls under the jurisdiction of a different government ministry:

- SCB and the NIER are subordinated to the [Ministry of Finance](#) (*Finansdepartementet*)
- The PES is subordinate to the [Ministry of Employment](#) (*Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet*).

SCB is responsible for long-term skill forecasting while the work of the NIER and PES is mainly short-term.

## The role of stakeholders

Social partnership has a long history in Swedish policymaking. The main stakeholders are employers, trade unions, representatives of education and training institutions and various third-party organisations with an interest in skills.

Within Sweden there is a long-held tradition of close collaboration between government institutions and various organisations within the labour market. Numerous social partners provide data and support to the skills assessment processes. This is instrumental to a coordinated approach to skills anticipation. The most notable examples of this are the sector councils and the occupational expert council. In addition to providing inputs to the skills analysis, these councils also discuss possible challenges identified as a result of the data as well as how to respond to them.

These same partners are then also involved in the creation of new policies and laws, either through direct collaboration with the governmental bodies in question or through independent appraisals. The most notable stakeholder organisations are the [Swedish Federation of Business Owners](#) (*Företagarna*),

the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise and the two largest trade unions, [Unionen](#) and the [Swedish Trade Union Confederation](#) (*Landsorganisationen*).

Another example of the role of stakeholders is the [Labour Market Council](#) (*Arbetsmarknadsråd*), which is composed of representatives from various stakeholders in the labour market. The council is managed by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education and takes part in formulating and commenting upon policy within the agency.

## Target groups

The data produced by SCB and the PES and NIER are intended for use by official government bodies, academics and the public. All results are published on each institution's website. In addition, the PES also makes its data available through the [Job Compass](#) (*Yrkeskompassen*) tool, which is hosted on the agency's website. The tool offers users the opportunity to look up the demand for specific occupations on a country basis as well as by regions.

## Funding and resources

There seems to be no specific budget dedicated exclusively to skill anticipation exercises. SCB and the PES and NIER are all wholly funded and run by the Swedish government. The Ministry of Finance allocates each institution a yearly operating budget. This budget is decided by officials within the ministry based upon past expenditures and future responsibilities. It is then later amended by the [Swedish parliament](#) (*Sveriges Riksdag*), which then makes the final decision whether to accept the budget.

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## Methods and tools

There are various tools used in undertaking skills anticipation in Sweden.

## Skills assessment

The history of Swedish skills assessments reaches as far back as the late 1950s, when the results of the first Labour Markets Tendency Surveys were published. Today, SCB routinely publishes the results from the surveys in a yearly report. (3) This report contains short-term skills assessments for selected qualification groups; the most recent reports cover around 70 groups. The assessment is based on a questionnaire which is sent to a sample of Swedish firms. It asks these employers to gauge the current supply of job applicants with specific educational qualifications, and also to estimate their recruitment needs in the coming few years. The focus of the reports is national, although SCB can conduct regional assessments should the need arise.

The *Where are the Jobs?* and Labour Market Outlooks reports, which are routinely published by the PES, also include skills assessments. The *Where are the Jobs?* report is published bi-annually and provides

regular short-term skills assessments on a national as well as regional level. (4) It is based on regional and local labour data collected by PES. The PES also augments the assessments with informal data collected by caseworkers through on-going dialogues with stakeholders in the labour market. Additionally, several sector councils also contribute to the report, which provides information on 200 selected occupational categories. The short-term outlook for each category is reported in the form of a shortage index (*Bristindex*) which takes a value between 1 and 5. The higher the value of the index, the higher the estimated short-term labour shortage in that specific category. In addition, the report also includes an analysis of the possible shortages and excesses of skills in the labour market over the next five to ten years. Before the results are published, they are reviewed by an occupational expert council, comprised of stakeholders and representatives from the SCB forecasting department.

The Labour Market Outlooks report is also published bi-annually.(5) As opposed to the *Where are the Jobs?* report, which only has a regional and national focus, the Labour Market Outlook report also takes a global perspective. The report looks at the Swedish labour market in terms of both national and global trends, developments and forecasts. It analyses different industries and provides an economic outlook for the next two years. Estimates of skill shortages and surpluses are a part of this analysis, although the projections are not disaggregated to the same level as those in the *Where are the Jobs?* report.

As noted above, assessment exercises are also undertaken at a regional level via the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

## Skills forecasts

SCB has published long-term skills forecasts since the early 1970s. These are part of the agency's 'Trends and Forecasts' reports, which are published every third year (most recently in 2014). (6) The methodology behind the forecasts is based on cohort analysis and econometric estimations. The future supply of skills is projected using demographic and educational forecasts and knowledge of imminent changes to the educational system. To estimate skills demand the model applies sectoral and occupational forecasts to an econometric model of economic growth. Paired together, skills supply and demand projections provide detailed labour market forecasts with a horizon of 20–25 years. Data are available by occupation, education level and sector. The published results have mostly been on the national level, but in recent years SCB has begun producing similar projections at the regional level upon request.

## Skills foresight

There do not appear to be any regular skills foresight activities undertaken in Sweden. The NIER, however, does occasionally publish working papers and research related to skills anticipation and assessment.

## Other skills anticipation activities

The NIER conducts a monthly survey among more than 6,000 businesses to develop regular assessments of the Swedish economy. The results of these surveys are published monthly as the *Business Tendency Survey* which feeds into the larger *Economic Tendency Survey*. Additionally, the NIFR

Business Tendency Survey, which feeds into the larger Economic Tendency Survey. Additionally, the firm also publishes a quarterly version of the Business Tendency Survey, which is both more extensive and more detailed since it covers a larger sample of firms. The purpose of these surveys is to provide policymakers and stakeholders with qualitative indicators of current outcomes and expectations, some of which may not show up in more traditional quantitative data until much later. The firms involved in these surveys are questioned on employment strategies and possible labour shortages, among other things. The answers received are used to compute a national estimate of the share of firms currently facing labour shortages.

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## Dissemination and use

### Use of skills anticipation in policy

The main users of SCB's skills forecasts are:

- [The Ministry of Education and Research](#) (*Utbildningsdepartementet*)
- [The National Agency for Education](#) (*Skolverket*)
- [The Swedish Higher Education Authority](#) (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*)
- The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

These institutions also regularly use other skills assessments, as can be seen by various references throughout their policy documents. Additionally, the results are often shared and discussed between ministries on an ad-hoc basis in regard to specific policy issues. Another frequent user is the [Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#) (*Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan*).

Moreover, local education providers have routinely utilised skills assessments and forecasts when making decisions on which educational or training programmes to offer. For example, three regions (Skåne, Västra Götalandsregionen and Östergötland) have recently planned an in-depth analysis of the local labour situation of engineers and nurses to produce forecasts for educational planning.

### Target groups' uses of skills anticipation outputs

The target groups for the skills anticipation exercises are: young people (making the transition from school to work or choosing which courses to study), jobseekers, employers, and researchers. The information is usually provided through some sort of intermediary. Educational providers and student counsellors use the data to advise students on which programmes to enrol in. Guidance counsellors at the PES also make extensive use of data to guide jobseekers and set up appropriate training programmes.

The PES also hosts the Job Compass on its website, which provides users with easily accessible data on



the shortage index by region and occupation.

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(1) Swedish Government (2007).

(2) Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (2016).

(3) For the most recent Labour Market Tendency Survey report, see Statistics Sweden (2015).

(4) For the most recent Where are the Jobs? report, see Public Employment Service (2016c).

(5) For the most recent Labour Market Outlooks report, see Public Employment Service (2016c).

(6) For the latest Trends and Forecasts report, see Statistics Sweden (2014).

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