2019 OECD Skills Strategy: Sweden

Since its launch in 2012, the OECD Skills Strategy has provided countries with a strategic and comprehensive approach to assessing their skills challenges and opportunities. The 2019 OECD Skills Strategy incorporates lessons learned from applying the OECD Skills Strategy framework in eleven countries, including new evidence about the implications of so-called megatrends, such as globalisation, digitalisation, population ageing or migration. It also accounts for new evidence about skills policies that work under the proper governance arrangements, including effective co-ordination and accountability mechanisms, efficient funding from different sources and information systems. This document describes the key findings for Sweden.

Sweden’s skills performance

The Skills Strategy Dashboard provides a snapshot of Sweden’s comparative skills performance. Sweden is a top performer in most of the Dashboard’s indicators. Sweden has a highly educated population and despite certain challenges, the Swedish education system is highly efficient. Enrolment in early childhood and care (ECEC) is nearly universal for children between the ages of 2 and 5, and after years of declining performance in PISA scores, the

Notes: Indicators are selected, aggregated and normalised in a way to ensure that a higher value and being among the “Top 20%” reflects better performance. Colours in the dashboard represent the quintile position of the country in the ranking, with dark grey indicating performance at the bottom, and dark blue indicating performance at the top of the ranking. The “x” indicates insufficient or no available data for the underlying indicators, and dotted circles indicate missing data for at least one underlying indicator. Only OECD sources have been used (see OECD (2019) for overview).

1. For Belgium (Flanders), United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland), a combination of regional (PISA and PIAAC) and national data have been used.

Note on Israel: The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.
latest results show a curbing in the trend. Scores in mathematics and reading improved significantly in the last round, but are still lower than scores in 2003.

Sweden also does a comparatively good job of developing the skills of its adults.Average PIAAC scores in both literacy and numeracy are significantly above OECD average. Moreover, only 6.4% of the adult population report no prior experience with computers or lack basic computer skills. In contrast, 44% of the population score at the highest levels in in technology-rich environment in PIAAC and there is a strong culture of adult education in Sweden, which is encouraging in light of the expected change in the skills need in labour markets. Sweden also has one of the smallest gender gaps in earnings in among OECD countries and tertiary-educated adults enjoy high employment. Despite Sweden’s success in many areas, there still room for improvement. First, the gap in skills proficiency scores between advantaged and disadvantaged students in Sweden is increasing and is wider than the OECD average. PISA results show, for example, that while in 2006 a socio-economically advantaged student scored 37 points higher in science than a disadvantaged student, the difference had increased to 44 points in 2015. Reversing this trend will require systematic efforts to improve the governance and funding of the education system and to strengthen the quality of teaching, especially in remote areas and in schools with high share of immigrants. Sweden has taken important steps to deal with some of these challenges. Initiatives like the “Teacher Salary Boost” programme and new efforts to better integrate immigrants certainly go in the right direction.

Second, Sweden can improve the alignment of its adults’ skills with labour market needs. Roughly 40% of employers report hiring difficulties and there is evidence of mismatches in the labour market. For example, 25% of foreign-born adults in Sweden with a university level qualification work in a job requiring only an upper secondary degree or lower compared to 7% among native-born adults.

Finally, Sweden could also improve the intensity of skills use. Skills use at work is not improving in Sweden. Therefore, the adoption of high-performance workplace practices, which are found to stimulate skills use in the workplace, should be further encouraged. Sweden could benefit from a renewal of its strategic vision for the future to ensure that all of its people have the skills to respond to the challenges and opportunities of a complex and rapidly changing world. A whole-of-government approach is needed to achieve this aim.

### Key recommendations for improving the performance of countries’ skills system

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<th>Using skills effectively in work and society: Making the most of everyone’s potential</th>
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<td>• Making each stage of learning a foundation for success in the next</td>
<td>• Make full use of everyone’s skills</td>
<td>• Promoting co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration across the whole of government</td>
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<td>• Enabling policies to support learning in adulthood</td>
<td>• Making the most of migrants’ skills</td>
<td>• Engaging stakeholders throughout the policy cycle</td>
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<td>• Supporting teachers to become lifelong learners</td>
<td>• Activating skills to build more inclusive and cohesive societies</td>
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<td>• Financing adult learning</td>
<td>• Making intensive use of skills in work</td>
<td>• Aligning and co-ordinating financing arrangements</td>
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<td>• Harnessing the power of technology as a tool for learning</td>
<td>• Aligning skills with the needs of the economy and society</td>
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### Further reading


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