



”Protect people, not jobs”

Opinion piece by Minister for Education Anna Ekström and Minister for Employment and Gender Equality Eva Nordmark.

Throughout the world, working life is transforming. Countries that aspire to compete the global market have to keep pace with rapid developments. As a consequence of accelerating digital transformation, automation and the transition to climate neutrality, existing jobs will change, some will disappear and many new ones will be created. In order for Sweden to continue to spearhead technological innovation and the transition to climate neutrality, working adults need to be equipped with more knowledge and given significantly greater opportunity for upskilling and reskilling for new jobs.

In close consultation with the social partners, the Swedish Government is now preparing the greatest freedom and security reform package for the labour market in modern times. In 2022 the Swedish Government will introduce an entirely new career transition scheme as part of a larger package aimed at enhancing employment security, career transition opportunities and employment protection in the labour market.

Everyone in Sweden who has worked for more than eight years will be given the opportunity to study for up to one year with student finance (grants and loans) providing at least 80 per cent of their previous income up to a maximum amount. This ceiling is set at a generous level so that 81 per cent of those who are expected to study will be able to receive the maximum amount of the grant. In addition to this government support, those with a higher income will often be entitled to benefits negotiated under collective agreements, making it attractive for them to study.

Sweden has a long-standing tradition of the social partners negotiating the rules of the labour market. This uniquely successful model has resulted in very few days lost in industrial action, strong adaptability and real wage growth. Our reform represents the next step in the Swedish model and is based on the proposals negotiated between trade unions and employers. The

fact that the social partners and the Government are able to provide this career transition and social security system for Swedish wage earners, is a testament to the strength of the Swedish model.

The career transition scheme will play an important role for ordinary employees. The industrial workers who want to be employed in the new battery factory or green steel production, will be able to learn the necessary skills to make it possible. The assistant nurses who want to enhance their knowledge and skills and specialise in, for example, dementia care, will be able to do so. The engineers who feel they need to learn more about artificial intelligence or machine learning will have a great opportunity pursuing that.

Those who will especially benefit from this reform are people in mid-life, with children, mortgages and fixed expenses who did not previously view reskilling and education as a viable alternative, despite the desire or need.

Thanks to the Swedish model based on strong partners who take responsibility via collective agreements, we will build the world's best career transition system.

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