

Requirements of skills as condition for permanent residence permit



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Summary

In line with its terms of reference, the Inquiry proposes introducing requirements of Swedish language skills and knowledge of Swedish society as conditions for being granted a permanent residence permit. The Inquiry proposes that these skills and knowledge be demonstrated through one specially designed test including two components: one on the Swedish language and the other on Swedish society. The Inquiry suggests that these proposals enter into force on 1 July 2027 and should be regulated in the Aliens Act (2005:716) and the Aliens Ordinance (2006:97). A summary of the Inquiry's proposals follows below.

Permanent residence permits to require Swedish language skills and knowledge of Swedish society

Language and knowledge requirements for individuals between the age of 18 and retirement age

The Inquiry proposes introducing requirements of Swedish language skills and knowledge of Swedish society as conditions for being granted a permanent residence permit. The Inquiry proposes that the language and knowledge requirements for a permanent residence permit apply to individuals who are over 18 years of age but do not have the right to receive an income-based old-age pension, a guarantee pension or income support for older people under the Social Insurance Code. However, the requirements do not apply to aliens who are to be granted a permanent residence permit in accordance with Chapter 5, Section 2 of the Aliens Act (quota refugees), or when an application for a permanent residence permit is to be submitted by someone other than the alien.

Exemptions from the language and knowledge requirements on special grounds

The Inquiry proposes the possibility of granting exemptions, on special grounds, from the requirements to demonstrate Swedish language skills and knowledge of Swedish society to individuals who cannot be expected to demonstrate Swedish language skills or knowledge of Swedish society. When assessing whether there are special grounds, consideration should be given to whether the alien has a serious physical or mental disability or cannot be expected to demonstrate such skills and knowledge due to special personal circumstances. Proof of the disability or personal circumstances should also be required, e.g. through submission of a special medical certificate issued for this purpose.

The assessment of whether there are special grounds for exemption should be carried out within the scope of the Swedish Migration Agency's examination of the application for a permanent residence permit.

A two-part test: one on the Swedish language and the other on Swedish society

A two-part digital test

The Inquiry proposes that one specially designed test comprising two separate components be prepared for permanent residence permit applicants: one component on the Swedish language and the other on Swedish society. Both parts should be taken digitally.

Swedish language test – content and level

The Inquiry proposes that the Swedish language component should test listening skills at A2 level according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR).

Knowledge of Swedish society test – content and level

The Inquiry proposes that the focus of the Swedish society component should be to test basic knowledge needed to live and work in Swedish society. The test should be based on an adapted material based on the material *About Sweden* on the website Informationsverige.se. The material on the website is used by the civic orientation provided by the municipalities under the Act on Civic Orientation for Certain Newly Arrived Immigrants (2013:156). It should test the following areas:

- Coming to Sweden.
- Living in Sweden.
- Supporting yourself and developing in Sweden.
- The rights and obligations of the individual.
- Starting a family and living with children in Sweden.
- Having influence in Sweden.
- Caring for your health in Sweden.
- Growing old in Sweden.

The Inquiry further proposes that the test be drafted in Swedish at a linguistic level equivalent to CEFR level A2, as far as possible. A special glossary of terminology used by government agencies and authorities and similar vocabulary that does not fit into the scope of CEFR level A2 should also be created.

Practicalities of the language and knowledge tests for permanent residence permits

Test dates and fees

The Inquiry proposes that language and knowledge tests be offered regularly throughout the year. The exact frequency should be determined by the Swedish Council for Higher Education after consultation with the Swedish Transport Administration. It is proposed that the fee for the test be set at SEK 700 per examination participant,

component and occasion. For a participant taking both the Swedish language and the Swedish society tests on the same occasion, the fee is SEK 1400. However, the Inquiry proposes that stateless persons and those who have been granted refugee status or a travel document by a Swedish authority should not have to pay any fee.

Adaptations of the tests

The Inquiry proposes that adaptations of the tests be allowed for individuals with disabilities that necessitate them. Adaptations based on other personal circumstances should also be possible. Adapting the tests could, for example, involve offering a time extension or providing text in an enlarged format or printed on paper.

Test results

The Inquiry proposes that once the Swedish language and Swedish society tests for a permanent residence permit have been passed, those results should be valid indefinitely. The Swedish Council for Higher Education should be responsible for issuing the results. It is proposed that separate results be awarded for each component so that the results of the Swedish language and Swedish society parts are presented separately. Separate results means that individuals can choose to re-take the component or components they did not pass.

Division of responsibility

Swedish Migration Agency

As a result of the Inquiry's proposal to require Swedish language skills and knowledge of Swedish society, the Swedish Migration Agency's handling of cases concerning permanent residence permits will involve assessing whether the language and knowledge requirements have been fulfilled, or alternatively assessing whether there are special grounds to grant an exemption from the requirements.

Swedish Council for Higher Education

The Inquiry proposes that the Swedish Council for Higher Education should have the overall responsibility for the language and knowledge tests for permanent residence permits. The Inquiry also proposes that the Swedish Council for Higher Education should be responsible for issuing test results, and for any decisions not to issue test results to a participant or to exclude a participant due to cheating. It is proposed that decisions in the latter two instances be appealable to a general administrative court. The Inquiry also proposes that the Swedish Council for Higher Education should be responsible for continuously producing and developing the tests on Swedish language skills and knowledge of Swedish society, and continuously developing assessment criteria and instructions for correcting the tests. The Swedish Council for Higher Education should also be responsible for a website containing information, preparatory material and exercises for the tests. The Inquiry also proposes that the Swedish Council for Higher Education coordinate the involvement of the relevant government agencies.

Swedish Transport Administration

The Inquiry proposes that the Swedish Transport Administration should be responsible for implementing the Swedish language and knowledge of Swedish society tests for a permanent residence permit. The test should be taken digitally in a technical system managed by the Swedish Transport Administration.