

## **ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people**

**Country: Sweden**

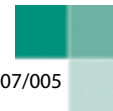
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The information contained in this report was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in May 2010.

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the Thematic report on the implementation of EU Equality of educational and training opportunities in European countries with reference to equality for young disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation on equality of educational and training opportunities for young people, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective in education and training, and provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.

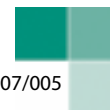


## Section 1: Executive summary and conclusions

The Swedish educational system has over a long period had an inclusive education for all as the most important goal. The vast majority of students are enrolled in regular schools. At the compulsory level 98.6% of all pupils are in regular schools and at the upper secondary educational level the corresponding figure is 97.6% (see below for details of the education system in Sweden). For students with disabilities the focus is on inclusion and most attend regular schools. In 2009/10 there are 27,453 students attending special education at different levels of the educational system (Swedish Official Statistics, 2009/10) Most of these schools are located in the same premises as regular schools.

The support system for students with disabilities is comprehensive. It includes a higher teacher - student ratio, involving support such as sign language interpretation, help with reading, note-taking, proof-reading, and personal assistants. Certain technical aids are provided, for example specially equipped rooms, extended time for exams, alternative exams, mentors or other individualised support measures, talking books and books in Braille.

Although policy is geared to inclusion, the current tendency is that the number of students in non- inclusive environments is increasing. For students with learning disabilities, there has been a substantial increase in the number of students enrolled in schools for this category of student over the last 10 years. There is also an increase in the number of students that are taught in special units within regular schools. The most important reason for this is that the support system is closely linked to the type of educational setting and special schools have substantially more resources per student with special needs than regular schools, especially regarding the teacher ratio.



## Section 2: Legal and policy context

The basic principle guiding all Swedish education from child care to transition period is “a school for all”- access to an equivalent education for all. The Swedish Education Act (1985:1100) stipulates that all children and young people must have access to equal quality of education, irrespective of gender, their geographical place of residence and their social and financial situations<sup>1</sup>. All pupils who are in need of extra support are entitled to that support and schools have a special responsibility for those pupils having difficulties reaching the goals of education. What that extra support can embrace is not stated in the education act, since pupils in need of special support should not be treated or defined as a group that is any different from other pupils and their rights are not stated separately. Disability is not highlighted in the Education Act, but in the curriculum it is emphasized that every school has a special responsibility for pupils with disabilities.

The Education Act also states that the teacher should take each individual’s needs, circumstances, experience and thinking as the starting point for education.

Central and local authorities are jointly responsible for Swedish schools. The Government has set up general objectives in the Education Act, curricula and course programmes and ensures compliance. The municipalities run the schools in accordance with the national objectives. The municipalities distribute resources and organize education such that students are able to achieve national goals.

The municipalities must provide children, adolescents and young adults with various disabilities with an education equal to that received by others in the community.

Sweden has nine years of compulsory schooling from the age seven to sixteen and education throughout the state school system is free of charge. Parents do not usually incur any costs for teaching materials, school meals, health care or school transport. “Compulsory schooling” includes compulsory comprehensive school, the Sami school, the school for the deaf and hearing- impaired (so called special schools) and compulsory school for children with learning disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Most children with hearing impairments and nearly all visually impaired pupils are taught in compulsory schools.<sup>3</sup> For those pupils attending special schools the state is the entity responsible. It is the Ministry of education that is responsible for the educational system and the Ministry of Social Affairs that is responsible for support system like technical aids, personal assistance.<sup>4</sup> Special schools offer a 10-year programme and are to provide education that is equivalent, as far as possible, to that given compulsory schools.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.riksdagen.se/webbnav/index.aspx?nid=3911&bet=1985:1100>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2653>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.inclusion-europe.org/documents/CNS%20Volume%203.pdf> pp.364-398

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/15/38/1532b277.pdf>

In the proposal for a “New Education Act”,<sup>5</sup> developed by the Minister of Education, (which is being considered by Parliament at the time of writing) it is proposed that the registration of children with intellectual disabilities in special schools should be tightened up, and some of the support to children with learning disabilities will instead be directed to the compulsory schools.

All young people in Sweden who have finished compulsory school are entitled to three years of upper secondary education. Upper secondary education comprises regular upper secondary school, one special school for deaf or hard of hearing students, four schools for students with mobility disabilities and a number of secondary schools for young people with learning disabilities. These special upper secondary schools are run by the municipalities with economic support from the state.

National disability policy emphasises the opportunity for pupils with functional disabilities, in the same way as other pupils, to live with or close to their parents and to attend a school close to home.<sup>6</sup>

All pupils have the right to choose their school- either municipal or independent- as long as it can be demonstrated that the school meets the pupils’ educational needs<sup>7</sup>. Alongside the state school system are independent schools, open to all. Those schools must be approved by the National Agency for Education<sup>8</sup>. Education at independent schools must have the same objectives as municipal schools but might, for example, have a religious or educational profile that differs from that of municipal schools. Pupils can however be denied access to independent schools “with exceptions of such children that would cause considerable organisational or financial difficulties for the independent school to admit”.<sup>9</sup>

Municipal adult education consists of adult comprehensive education, upper secondary adult education and supplementary education together with adult education for mentally disabled students (Law 1992:598).

The Equal Treatment of Student in Universities Act (2001:1286) – came into force in Sweden in 2002. It states that no student at a university or other higher education institution may be discriminated against or otherwise treated differently on the grounds of origin, sex, sexual orientation, or disability.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, from these briefly presented facts, it can be stated that the Swedish educational school system to a large extent is founded on a struggle for an inclusive education.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/14/23/68/25bd4959.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Prop. 1999/2000:79 Från patient till medborgare (Government bill 1999/2000:79 From patient to citizen)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/15/38/1532b277.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/190>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/15/38/1532b277.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Equal Treatment of Students at Universities Act.pdf](http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Equal%20Treatment%20of%20Students%20at%20Universities%20Act.pdf)

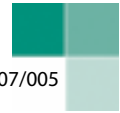
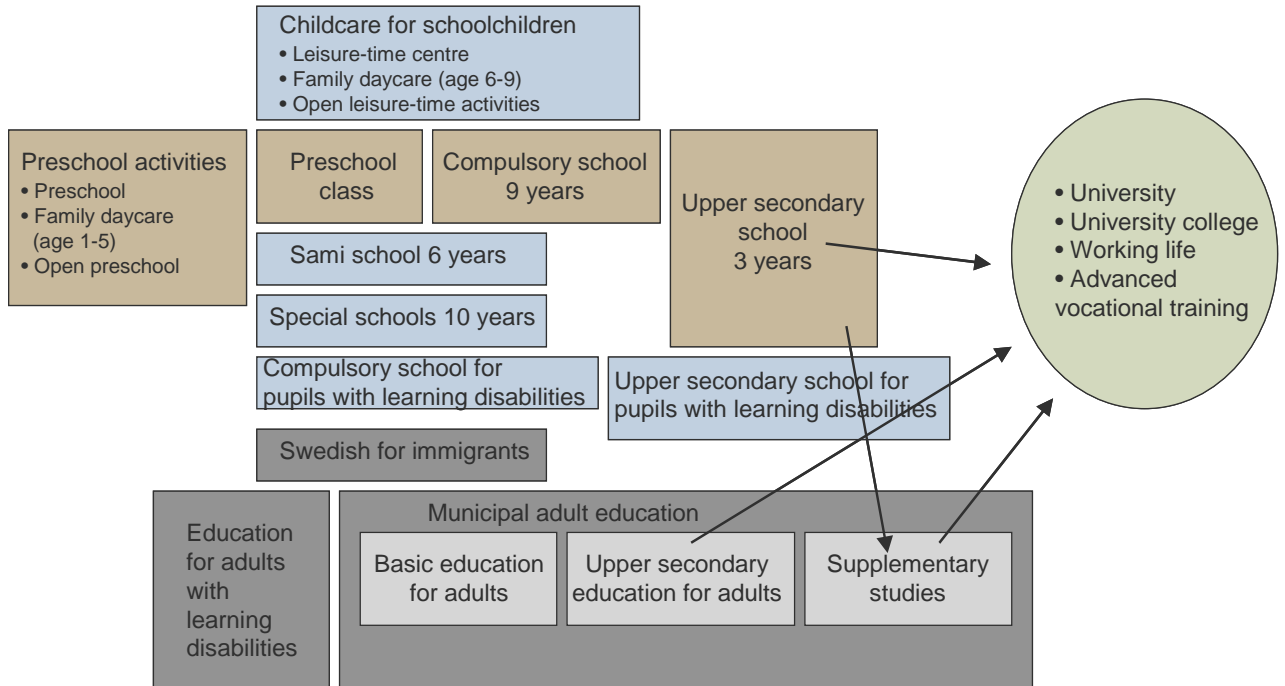
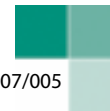


Figure 1, An overview-The Swedish education system (National Agency for Special Needs Issues, 2008, p. 2.





### Section 3: Evidence of outcomes and progress towards inclusion

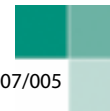
No groups are excluded in the Swedish education system and Sweden has chosen not to categorize pupils according to different disabilities. The National Agency for Education has taken the view that a relational approach to disability and inclusive processes in education is difficult to reconcile with regular monitoring of the school situations of students with disabilities. A follow-up that requires categorical assessments of pupils has not been considered desirable (The National Agency for Education, 2007). The reasons behind this are that an approach with categorization from for example “disability” can contradict the ideal of a school for all and lead to placing pupils into specific groups, it risks contributing to a static group way of thinking about pupils who have individual needs, it can provide excuses for lowered ambitions and lack of results, it can appear that individual characteristics are more interesting than the educational system’s ability to adapt to diversity, and that pupils’ deficits are the focus instead of their strengths. Therefore, there are no available comprehensive national statistics on pupils with different specific disabilities in the educational school system (ibid, 2007). Hence, the statistics in Sweden cover only the number of students in special schools and in schools for students with severe learning disabilities.

This has been criticized by the UN-commission for investigating the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>11</sup> since the specific situation of pupils with disabilities needs to be highlighted in order to acknowledge that proper support is offered to this group of students. However, the reason for the Swedish approach is the policy that young pupils should not be categorized according to classification systems that are not reliable due to arbitrary interpretations from people using the classification system. The Scandinavian relational approach to disability emphasizes that a disability is not a characteristic of an individual person; it is a relationship between the person and the environment, it is relative and situational.

Since the Swedish school system is based on the principles of inclusion, the vast majority of pupils are enrolled in regular compulsory schools. 98.6 per cent of all pupils in years 1 to 9 attended regular compulsory school during the academic year of 2009/10. Of those who attended regular compulsory schools, about 1.2% were taught in “separate units” (i.e. 9,790 pupils). The majority of those who did not attend mainstream compulsory school attended compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities. Only 500 pupils attended a special school for the deaf or hard of hearing in 2009/10 (Swedish official Statistics). Most hearing-impaired pupils and almost all vision-impaired and physically disabled pupils receive their education in regular compulsory schools. To provide good education for pupils with severe impairments is a challenge. In 2008 two national special schools for visually impaired pupils with additional functional disabilities or severe speech and language impairments were re-established.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC-C-SWE-CO-4.pdf>



Active co-operation between these schools and the pupils' home municipalities is required. Part of the education is supposed to be carried out in a compulsory school or compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities.

Regarding upper secondary education 97.6% of all students are enrolled in regular upper secondary schools.

When the Swedish School Inspectorate (2009, 2010) set the scope on the specific situation for pupils with disabilities in the education system it showed that principals and schools had an inclusive approach to providing all students with equal opportunities for education. However, there is a lack of clearly formulated and effective strategies for equal participation of pupils with disabilities by school principals etc., and those strategies identified are also not anchored among the staff/teachers' etc. It is stated that despite good intentions there exist obvious difficulties with adapting learning environments to individual needs. Some of the examples given show deficiencies in the capacity to use technical aids, provide physical accessibility and include pupils with disabilities in all school activities. Schools are in general better at diagnosing pupils' difficulties than actually giving competent support (ibid).

In recently published research there is evidence that the trend towards segregated schooling is increasing. There has been a sharp increase in enrollment to special schools for pupils with intellectual disabilities (The National Agency for Education, 2006)<sup>12, 13</sup>; there are more pupils with motor disabilities attending separate educational solutions now than in the 1970's (Paulsson, 2009<sup>14</sup>); more special classes for pupils with ADHD in the last five years (Karlsson, 2007<sup>15</sup>; Ljusberg, 2009<sup>16</sup>), more pupils who have been diagnosed with dyslexia. In a dissertation by Isaksson (2009<sup>17</sup>) it is shown that support measures in inclusive schooling mainly consist of individual aid activities outside the classroom in segregated practices that have less individualized orientations. The trend is thus towards an increased categorization and separation of specific groups of students based on their individual ability to function, despite the fact that at the same time there has been a clear ambition for inclusion (see Jerlinder, 2010). Students in need of special support are defined by the school's available resources and a diagnosis seems to give priority to support efforts (Isaksson, 2009). Medical diagnoses appear to becoming increasingly important to justify as a basis for ensuring support work in schools. Isaksson, however, points out the paradox of seeking diagnosis in school while schools provide less support based on student's specific needs (ibid.).

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<sup>12</sup> The National Agency for Education (2006) *Kommunens särskola – elevökning och variation i andel elever mottagna i särskolan* (Municipal school for pupils with severe learning disabilities). Stockholm. Fritzes.

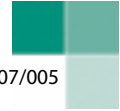
<sup>13</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/1704>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.skane.rbu.se/files/Server/Sarskild\\_sarskiljd\\_avskild\\_slutrapport](http://www.skane.rbu.se/files/Server/Sarskild_sarskiljd_avskild_slutrapport)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.skolporten.com/art.aspx?typ=art&id=a0a20000004yx4eae>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:200409/FULLTEXT01>

<sup>17</sup> <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:240757/FULLTEXT01>



In Sweden today there are about 60 institutions of higher education and about 300 000 students are presently enrolled in undergraduate studies. In higher education the number of students with disabilities is increasing, from 2001 to 2007 the number of students with disabilities has doubled.<sup>18</sup>

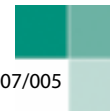
In 2009, 5970 students received support due to disabilities and an additional 1475 received counselling due to disabilities<sup>19</sup>. The by far largest group of students who received support were students with dyslexia or reading and writing difficulties (61%) and the second largest group were students with cognitive problems (16%).

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.handisam.se/Tpl/StatisticsPage\\_1413.aspx?indikatorid=40](http://www.handisam.se/Tpl/StatisticsPage_1413.aspx?indikatorid=40)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.studeramedfunktionshinder.nu/statistik.htm>





#### Section 4: Types of support for students and trainees

In teacher training programmes introduced in 2001<sup>20</sup>, all teachers have some training in Special Needs Education (SNE). It is not stated what that might involve. Disability issues are not specifically included in the general curriculum of university training for school teachers. There are possibilities to specialise in SNE within the basic teacher training program. However, teachers are indicating that they do not have sufficient knowledge and proper training for teaching pupils with disabilities in compulsory schooling (Jerlinder et.al. 2010), and the Swedish School Inspectorate has made particular comments on teachers' lack of competence in relation to the impact of disabilities on learning abilities in compulsory as well as in upper secondary schooling (Swedish School Inspectorate 2009; 2010)<sup>21</sup><sup>22</sup>.

In the proposal for the new teacher training program (which is expected to start 2011/2012)<sup>23</sup> the ambition is that some training in Special Educational Needs should be compulsory for all new teachers. In the new teacher training program, education for Specialist teachers is reinforced. Such a teacher works with individual pupils or groups of pupils with special educational needs. Their role has changed over the last ten years from working as teachers for specific children, to taking more of a consulting function for classes as a whole, to going back to practical co-operative work and in some programs some specialist education in specific disabilities is offered.

There are also programmes of Special Needs Education that train specialists to work as consultants to teachers. They co-operate with school boards to ensure good educational environments and the support necessary for an equal education. To qualify for this programme one has to have finished a teacher training program and to have completed at least three years of experience of teaching.

Although the number of teachers for special needs education has increased, due to a lack of support for special needs issues a post-secondary training programme for teachers of special needs education has been re-established.

Support of education is available through a local comprehensive student health team with expertise and knowledge of various disabilities: through the Special Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, county councils' rehabilitation team for children with various disabilities. The support is, after an assessment, free of charge for the pupil.

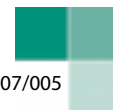
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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/sweden/national-overview/teacher-training-basic-and-specialist-teacher-training>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.skolinspektionen.se/funktionsnedsattning2009>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.skolinspektionen.se/sv/Kvalitetsgranskning/Genomforda-kvalitetsgranskningar/Skolsituationen-for-elever-med-funktionsnedsattning-i-gymnasieskolan/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/13/93/30/100696be.pdf>



Aids used in Municipal Adult Education should be provided free of charge to pupils, unless regulations issued by the Government deem it otherwise<sup>24</sup>. Such grants for aids are distributed by the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools<sup>25</sup>.

At all universities and institutions of higher education there is a contact person/ coordinator, working with issues relating to educational support for students with disabilities. Examples of often available services are sign language interpreting, help with reading, note-taking, proofreading, personal assistants, certain technical aids for example in specially equipped rooms, extended time for exams, alternative exams, mentors or other individualised support measures, talking books and books in Braille.

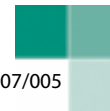
There are more women than men with disabilities that have contact with the coordinators <sup>26</sup>(ibid).

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/15/38/1532b277.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.spsm.se/Startpage/Funding/>

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.studeramedfunktionshinder.nu/pdfs/statistics\\_2009\\_1993.pdf](http://www.studeramedfunktionshinder.nu/pdfs/statistics_2009_1993.pdf)



## Section 4a: Financial support

Local authorities are bound by law to provide a number of basic services among which the provision of education and child care takes a major part. Municipalities are free to use collected taxes and state funding for whatever services and systems are judged to be best for the respective areas. Many municipalities delegate budgets directly to individual schools. An amount of money is granted and follows each pupil to whatever school they choose, either municipal or independent. A school that receives grants from the municipality is not entitled to collect school fees. In 2008 the cost for pre-school, compulsory and upper-secondary schooling was 162.2 billion Swedish crowns (about 16.8 billion EURO). This compared with the costs of pre-school (for all children), compulsory and upper-secondary separate schooling for pupils with intellectual disabilities of 55 billion Swedish crowns (about € 5.7 billion).

The cost per child in ordinary compulsory school was 80,900 Swedish Crowns compared to the cost per child in special compulsory school for children with learning disabilities of 310,100 Swedish Crowns, i.e. nearly four times higher.<sup>27</sup>

So called “Independent schools” (i.e. non- public run but publicly funded schools) have become an important part of the Swedish education system. All children and parents should have the possibility to choose which school the child shall attend, including independent schools. Independent schools receive funding on the same grounds as municipal schools.<sup>28</sup> An increase in the number of independent schools has caused the Government to initiate new legal provisions to secure a fair and reasonable financing system. Independent schools are controversial for mainly two reasons. Some of them are making substantial profits for shareholders although they are based on public funding. The second reason is that faith based schools contribute to segregation and exclusion and this is contrary to the general goals of Swedish education policy.

The Swedish School Inspectorate<sup>29</sup> states that resource distributions generally work flexibly and take account of pupils with disabilities within compulsory schooling (Swedish School Inspectorate, 2009). However, necessary adaptations in equipment and to the environment tend to take long time to put in place and by the time they are implemented, pupils with disabilities are restricted in their equal access to the education (ibid, 2010).

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/3534/a/19817>

<sup>28</sup> The grant to the independent compulsory schools shall be determined with regard to the school's provision of education and the pupil's needs on the same basis as applied by the municipality in the allocation of resources to its own schools ( Education Act , Chapter 9, section 6)

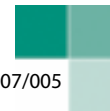
<sup>29</sup> <http://www.skolinspektionen.se/PageFiles/1854/SwedishSchoolsInspectorate2009.pdf?epslanguage=en>



The forms of support that reach the greatest number of people are aid for young students at upper secondary school (grants only) and student grants and student loans for post-secondary students<sup>30</sup>. Within the post-secondary student aid system there is a possibility of receiving supplementary loans and loans for additional costs.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.studeramedfunktionshinder.nu/english/statistics.htm>



## Section 4b: Personal assistance, equipment and adaptations

The support system for people with disabilities has been described in the ANED reports “Report on the social inclusion and social protection of disabled people in European countries – Sweden” (Berth Danermark & Jamie Bolling), “Report on the implementation of policies supporting independent living for disabled people – Sweden” (Peter Anderberg) and Eligibility for disability benefits and entitlements in European countries (Berth Danermark)<sup>31</sup>

When it comes to adaptations, compensating for pupils’ disabilities can be taken into consideration in relation to grading. If there are specific reasons for this, the teacher may, when awarding grades, disregard single goals that the pupil should have attained by the end of the 9th school year (the 10th year in special schools). Specific reasons include a functional disorder or other similar personal conditions that are not temporary and constitute an immediate obstacle for the pupil in attaining a certain goal.

It is of great importance that pupils who have been ill for a long time have access to education. Pupils in compulsory school who frequently miss school due to illness or who are ill for an extended period of time are entitled to education at a hospital or equivalent, in their home or another convenient location. This education shall correspond as far as possible to regular classroom education and is only given with the consent of a physician.

The national adult education system gives adults with disabilities an opportunity to supplement their education. In 2009/10 5,386 people with disabilities were enrolled in some kind of adult learning. Primarily those who have received the least education are given an opportunity to strengthen their position in working, cultural and political life through education. Adult education is carried out as municipal adult education – basic adult education, upper-secondary adult education and supplementary education- and adult education for persons with severe learning disabilities. In addition, the Government supports liberal adult education that is supposed to give priority to activities that aim at bridging educational gaps and is geared towards educationally, socially and culturally disadvantaged people. Particularly important target groups are people of foreign descent, physically or mentally disabled people and those who are unemployed. (National agency of education, 2008) <sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.disability-europe.net/en/countries/Sweden>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/190>



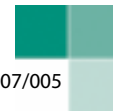
## Section 5: Evidence of good practice

This example is taken from a case study by Jerlinder and Danermark (2010), (see also Jerlinder, 2010). The aim of the case study was to illustrate the teaching situation in Physical Education and how it could occur for a child with a physical impairment. The participants in this case study were a 10-year-old –boy with a physical impairment (MMC), his parents, (two) PE teachers, a personal assistant and classmates (without disabilities). Data were collected through interviews and systematic observation of PE lessons.

All participants in this case study of participation and social recognition in PE were agreed on the success of this particular instance of inclusive PE teaching. The success of this case is discussed in terms of socioeconomic and cultural factors. To study equality in educational settings and in the educational system both individual prerequisites and sociological structures need to be addressed. In this particular case the necessary organizational support actions and personal resources were considered. A personal assistant was employed to support the child with a physical disability during school hours. The school environment was physically accessible, the boy had for example a separate dressing room where he, with support from his assistant, could change his clothes etc. before and after PE-lessons, use the toilet, take a shower etc. The two PE teachers were committed to teaching a pupil with physical disabilities in inclusive settings in the best possible ways. The boy's classmates were familiar with the boy and vice versa and his inclusion in activities from the start was an important factor here.

The boy himself expressed his thoughts on his inclusive PE schooling: "I always participate in everything!" He did not always perform the same tasks as other pupils, but he considered himself to be participating anyway. His experience and idea of participation did not consider the concept of inclusion to mean doing exactly the same as everybody else in every aspect.

This re-distribution of resources (after having identified specific needs), social recognition and an inclusive approach are stated as being factors behind the success of inclusion shown in this case study.



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