

Living and working in Sweden

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Practical Help for
post docs, PhD
students and
others

-

From getting a
personal number
to buying a house

3rd of May 2019 is the date this document was finalized.

We therefore suggest to be careful with some information's as legislations may have changed. We also asked you to keep this in mind when following hyperlinks in the text. In case the link is not working you may find help using the words in the http address.

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Why this guide

The authors themselves went from getting a personal number to buying a house. Along the way the discussions and information exchanges (and rumours) with fellow foreigners and Swedish colleagues about how to organize your work and your personal life have never stopped. We hope that this document will make it easier to immediately start working and living in Sweden and avoids a lot of frustrations.

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1. Registration, tax office, state health insurance

1.1. Immigration office [Migrationsverket]

1.1.1. EU-citizens

As an EU citizen you do not need to register yourself anymore at Migrationsverket (in person), which makes the registration process a lot easier. However, it is better if you register yourself [online](#) as this saves time and you get your personal number quicker. If you do not register yourself, Skatteverket will register you automatically during your personal number application.

Also if you as an EU citizen have children in Sweden you do not need to register them at Migrationsverket any longer; this is also done automatically. Additionally as an EU citizen, it is important to register at your embassy that you are living abroad, for emergencies, election information etc.

1.1.2. Non-EU citizens

You have to apply for a working permit and a Visa **before entering Sweden** and you need to renew your visa/permit in good time as it can take a long time to get approved. You need to make an appointment at Migrationsverket and register yourself as soon as you enter Sweden and apply for a migration ID card. It is best to book an appointment via their [homepage](#), which you can do as soon as your visa has been approved, and you know your arrival date in Sweden.

Children that are born in Sweden are not automatically Swedish/EU citizens, and if you are non-EU citizen parents you need to register your children at Migrationsverket as this is not done automatically as for EU citizens (yet, may change in the future).

1.1.3. Work permit

Only non-EU citizens need to apply for a work permit. Step-by-step information on how to apply can be found [here](#).

1.1.4. Permanent residency

Everyone who has been working in Sweden and paying taxes for at least 5 years can apply for permanent residency. For EU citizens the process is quite easy and fast, as you just need to send in your tax declarations from the past five years together with the application form.

As a non EU citizen, it can take some time to get it approved as additional factors are also checked and you can be denied; check the homepage of Migrationsverket for more details and to get help with the application.

Keep in mind that a permanent residency is not a citizenship application (you keep your original citizenship) but if you apply for permanent residency you have the right to all social benefits, are allowed to vote (locally and regional; national votes are still

in your country) and have the right to permanently stay in Sweden. This applies for both EU and non-EU citizens.

1.2. Tax office [Skatteverket]

1.2.1. Personal number

Getting a personal number is the first and most important thing you should do when you arrive in Sweden. You need to go to Skatteverket, in person, and register yourself and apply for a personal number [personnummer]. **Without this number you, more or less, do not exist in Sweden.** To apply you need to provide certain documents like passport, work contract etc. A list and a guide how to apply can be found [here](#).

If you are staying in Sweden for at least a year, you are entitled to a Swedish personal number. It can take between 2 and 10 weeks before you receive it in your mail, so if you will be moving around the first few weeks/months, use the address of a friend, colleague or your boss. Getting a temporary personal number until the permanent one arrives is an option, but this can take up to 6 weeks, so in most cases it is not worth it.

Be aware that you will not be able to receive your salary until you have received your personal number (no worries, you will get all your money for sure). The department may give you a dummy number so you can get at least a cheque (the bank will need time to order the cash as there is no cash in Swedish banks). Additionally, without a personal number you will not be able to apply for anything like: insurances, bank account, etc. as you do not exist in the Swedish system! If you have no health insurance, you cannot apply for a day care/school space or child support [barnbidrag].

As a non EU citizen you can apply for a personal number when you get the migration ID card in the mail (from Migrationsverket).

In short:

- You need to go to Skatteverket **in person** and apply for a personal number (no appointment needed but try to get there early as the queue could be quite long and you will have to wait some time otherwise)
- You will need:
 - Employment contract (one page certificate of employment)
 - Passport
 - Migration ID Card (only non EU)
 - Swedish address

Once you have your personal number everything will be very easy. You can apply for an ID card (see below), and other documents like [population registration certificate](#) [personbevis], which you will need at different occasions.

1.2.2. ID-card

Once you have received your personal number, you need to apply for a [Swedish ID-card](#). This card will contain your picture and biometrics (Swedish citizens have their drivers licence for identification). You will need an ID-card to be able to open a bank account and to pick up parcels.

In order to apply for an ID card you need to make an appointment and provide certain documents. See [here](#) for details.

It costs 400 SEK to apply for a Swedish ID card and the payment needs to be made in advance (Skatteverket needs to have registered your transfer). The payment has to be made by bank transfer (international bank transfer: Forex (costs 50 SEK and is by far the simplest) or ask someone with a Swedish bank account to make the transfer for you). Regardless of how you pay, make sure you put your **personal number in the message** section of the transfer and **bring the receipt** to your appointment (tip: when you apply for your personal number ask for an ID card application form).

It usually takes about 2-4 weeks. You will receive a text message and a letter in the mail containing your pin numbers (keep these safe somewhere) and a note telling you to come and collect your card. Go back to the Skatteverket office and pick up your card (and bring the tear-off section of the letter). No appointment needed.

1.2.3. Pension

The pension system is arranged from the state and there is nothing to worry about. There is the option to speculate with 2% of your pension. If you don't want to do that the state will do it for you. Otherwise there is nothing to take care of, the money automatically will be paid by your employer. If you have retired in another country the years you have been working in Sweden will be accounted for via money transfer. This will have to be organized in the country you have retired in.

1.2.4. Taxes, tax reduction

Taxes in Sweden are automatically taken from your salary (~33%). Every year, Skatteverket then checks how much tax you paid compared to how much you should have paid. Around February of the following year, you will receive a letter [kontrolluppgift]. This is a copy of what has been sent from your employer to the tax office. It is your responsibility to make sure that it is correct and you need to contact your employer if it is not. Around March, you will have to declare your taxes. You will receive your tax declaration via mail in form of a large yellow form, which is already prefilled with your data.

Deducted can be:

- Days spent abroad for work (conference or collaborations) for which you did not receive a daily allowance, meaning you paid with your personal money for the conference

- Commuting: By car, only if public transport would take at least 2 hours more than with driving
- Housing costs, if you bought a house/apartment and have a loan (done automatically by the bank)
- If you have employed someone, cleaning help/handyman etc.

Signing the tax declaration can be done via SMS; Skatteverket app, telephone, online or by sending the declaration form back (how to is explained on the declaration).

Foreign skilled workers arriving in Sweden for the first time to work for less than 5 years can apply for a [tax reduction](#). If granted, this reduction will be applied for the first 3 years of living in Sweden. However, you must be able to prove that you possess a work skill that cannot be found in Sweden and is essential for the job and, as we understand it, you must leave the country after the 5 years (the status is evaluated every second year). A letter of support from your employer stating this will help. However, what we have been told, very few postdocs have been successful in their application. Note that your application for tax reduction must be received no later than 3 months after you begin working in Sweden. We have no experience with this so please carefully read the instruction on the web and ask around, especially regarding how this could affect parental, sick leave or unemployment money (we suspect you will not get anything as you did not pay taxes; but please check yourself).

1.3. State health insurance [Försäkringskassan]

As soon as you have your personal number you are covered by the Swedish social security system but you have to register at Försäkringskassan once to activate your “account”, by filling in a form and sending it (you get the form at Skatteverket and you can also leave it there). If coming from an EU country, you will have to show that you are no longer covered by that country and that you are not receiving any benefits from them.

It can take up to 10 months (!) to be registered at Försäkringskassan, so please do so as soon as you have a personal number.

During registration, you can also apply for the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) [here](#). This card will be useful when travelling inside the EU, as you will not have to pay medical bills up front if you get sick or have an accident. If you have children they also need on themselves.

Among other things, Försäkringskassan covers you if you need to go on parental leave (see section below) or long-term sick leave. Be aware that if you are on a stipend, you will not be paying taxes and will not get any benefits from Försäkringskassan in case of parental or sick leave.

Even though you are covered by the Swedish social security you will still have to pay small amounts for medical visits (~150 SEK) and pay for your own prescription drugs. If the sum of medical visits and prescription drugs reaches 1.000 SEK for the current

year you will receive a [frikort] that will allow you to receive free medical care and prescription drugs until the end of the year.

SLU and Stockholm University (and other Universities/Institutes) will refund you all costs of medical visits and prescription drugs, as long as they are part of the [Högkostna] (this will be written on your receipt if it is the case). Again, this is only for salary-holders, not stipend-holders.

1.3.1. Where to go if you are sick [Vårdcentralen]

Every district has its own [Vårdcentralen (VC)]. You can go to any you like, but it makes sense to go to the one that is responsible for your area. There may be several you can choose from even within your area. Most things will be treated there. If you have children you have to register them at a [Barnvårdcentralen (BVC)] where you have your yearly check-ups of your child. Most of the time the BVC is at located in the same building as the VC but you have to check, as small VCs sometimes don't have everything. Additionally as a woman you have to register with a midwife [Barnmorskemottagning]. This is where you go for reproductive health and contraception and if you are pregnant.

1.3.2. Dentist [Tandläkare]

The dentist is not covered by the Försäkringskassan. If you are prone to have problems it may be good to get an extra insurance. You can go to any dentist (public [Folk tandvården] or private ones), prices are all the same. One check-up is around 650 SEK. Be careful, private dentists may contact you for a new appointment next year, which you have to actively cancel. Otherwise they may charge you as you missed the appointment.

1.3.3. Emergency [akuten]

The emergency unit is at the hospital. It is called [Akutmottagningen]. Although it is for emergencies (e.g. serious injuries like broken bones). If you need to see a Doctor and don't have an appointment you can go to so called [Närakuten]. However, be prepared to wait and **always call 1177 before**, see below. **In case of an acute emergency call 112!**

1.3.4. Online portal and health hotline 1177

1177 is the first number you call, if you are not feeling well and think it could be an emergency but are not 100% sure. They will give advice over the phone and if necessary send you to the hospital/doctor. Then you do not need to wait so long as you are already registered.

They also have an [online portal](#) where you can follow up on your health journal, check your prescriptions, book appointments and register at the different health care centres. To login you need your personal number and a BankID (see below).

1.3.5. Long term sickness

If you are sick for longer than a week you need a doctor's certificate [läkare intyg]. In case you have a more serious sickness and need to stay home longer (longer than two weeks) you need to register your sick leave at Försäkringskassan [online](#). You can get up to 180 days of sickness benefits from Försäkringskassan (80% of your normal income). It is important, that you register yourself at Försäkringskassan as you will not receive sick leave benefits automatically. Your employer will not register your sick leave, they just stop paying your salary. However, your employer will pay your benefit up until the first two weeks of you being sick (except the first day of sickness, which is not compensated). Contrary to a PhD student (where the time you are sick will extend your contract) sick leave will not change your employment time.

2. Bank account, insurance, employment

2.1. Getting a bank account

Banks are usually only open weekdays from 10-15. You will need a Swedish ID card before you can open a full Swedish bank account with online banking, a debit card, and Swish (see below). It was possible previously to get a basic account before receiving a personal number or Swedish ID card. However, the system has become very restrictive and we know of a case where it was hard to get an account with ID card but no income. Nevertheless, we advise to just try several banks and see what they say.

There are several banks available. Some require you to make an appointment to open an account, while others will open an account for you right away. We recommend one of the bigger banks in Sweden (Swedbank, SEB, Nordea or Handelsbanken) as they are better in the bank ratings. When you open an account ask for internet banking, BankID and Swish and if they can help you set that up (see below).

2.2. Insurances

The Swedish social security covers most of your health costs, but it is a good idea to sign up for other insurances. Mostly people use one insurance company for all insurances as they offer discounts if you do so.

2.2.1. Home insurance

Most rental contracts will request that you get home insurance in order to rent. There are lots of home insurance [Hemförsäkring] companies available and they all offer the basic package covering your personal belongings in the home. A full insurance, [Allrisk], will also cover your belongings outside the home in case of theft or accidents (dropping your mobile phone, getting your bike stolen...). However, they all have a [självrisk] of approximately 1500 SEK meaning they cover only costs above that amount. Home insurance covers all people living in the apartment that are registered at Skatteverket. Don't hesitate to call the companies if you are struggling to figure things out in Swedish on their website.

If you buy a flat with a monthly fee [avgift] it is worth checking whether homeowner's insurance is included in the fee, as it sometimes is. However, be sure to read the fine print and understand what is covered, and buy supplemental insurance if necessary. If you rent an apartment your landlord will tell you if you need on. If a home insurance is required this will be stated in your contract.

2.2.2. Extra health insurance

As written before your basic health insurance is covered with Försäkringskassan but it is a good idea to get an additional health and accident insurance [sjukdomar och olycksfall] for you (and your children). Getting an additional dental insurance [tandvårdsförsäkring] might also be a good idea.

2.2.3. Life insurance

You may think that this is too much, but if you are getting a loan for buying a flat or a house you will need a life insurance. This is especially important if you are buying together with your partner as your insurance should be as high as half of the loan so the partner can pay back the bank. Most banks require this anyways as a security for your loan.

2.3. Your type of employment

It is essential for you to be aware that **your salary will not be paid to you until you have a Swedish personal number, which can take up to 10 weeks**. At this point, you can choose to have your salary paid to a foreign bank account, to the account of a friend or colleague or receive checks, until you are able to open your own Swedish bank account (more on this in the respective sections). It is not unusual for some postdocs to have to wait ~2-3 months before receiving their salary. However, all outstanding salaries will be paid in full.

As part of your contract you are entitled to up to 31 days of holidays, depending on your age. For each day of holiday taken, you will receive full pay + 145 SEK holiday allowance. You have to take at least 20 days of holiday per year. If you have leftover holidays, they will automatically be transferred to the following year. However, you cannot transfer more than 10 days a year. Additionally you are entitled to take four subsequent weeks of holidays in summer (this duration cannot be denied). Try to spend all your accumulated holidays before your contract ends, as they will not be paid out once your employment has ended. If you not manage to spend all you can book vacation for previous days to at least get the holiday allowance. Furthermore, there are also half days in Sweden meaning you only have to work 6 hours. These half days apply for all contract holders (researcher included) [jämfördhet och lika behandling] but if you take this day off it counts as a full day of holiday.

Please note that all this only applies for employees on a full salary, not stipend-holders. If you are a stipend holder the minimum holiday number is 25 days plus the red days (national Holidays) and weekends.

3. Language lessons, union, unemployment

3.1. Learning Swedish

In Sweden, nearly everyone speaks English very well. This makes it very easy to get by - any business you need to do, you can easily do in English (and in case you have a sensitive meeting with an agency/authority you can request a translator, this is your right and you do not pay anything). You can also read news in English at [The Local](#).

However, as convenient as this might be, it is a double-edged sword because it does make it harder to learn Swedish and feel the need for it. And although watching movies in original tone in the cinemas/on TV is great (only programs for children are dubbed) not understanding the language means you are not part of this society.

The government offers free language courses (Swedish for Immigrants [Svenska för invandrare (SFI)]. We found this site for [registration](#) in Uppsala, which is strangely only in Swedish. They can be quite crowded and whether you are enjoying the course and learn a lot will depend quite a lot on the teacher. There are also plenty of private language schools (which you have to pay for: e.g. at Folkuniversitetet). To get started on your own it is a good idea to start with programs in easy Swedish [lätt svenska]: watch Swedish [news on SVT](#); listen and read articles on [8sidor](#) (available also as app); listen to Klartext on [radio P4](#); use learning apps for audio conversational lessons like duolingo (free) or Pimsler (payable pro version seems good). SAOL is a good app to check declinations of words.

3.2. Unions and organizations

3.2.1. Organizations

The newly formed SLU postdocs association ([SUPA](#)) provides support for foreign postdocs settling in Sweden for the first time. Uppsala is well known for its Nations, something like a fraternity. As a student (also PhD student) you can register at one and enjoy their parties and benefits (some provide housing). As a post doc you will not get access, however we have heard of exceptions.

3.2.2. Unions

Unions serve to protect worker's rights. When you become a member, you not only receive benefits such as income insurance, you also get support if you become unemployed and your rights are being infringed upon. In Sweden, most staff are members of unions. The unions you can join depend on your field and employment. The two most relevant unions for academics are [SULF](#) and [Naturvetarna](#). SULF covers all academics, while Naturvetarna covers all types of jobs within the field of Life Science. It is even possible to get a joint membership with these two unions for a reduced price. However, other unions might also be relevant depending on your field of work. Both these unions and many others are under the umbrella of [SACO-S](#)

(Swedish only; [SLU representative](#)), which gathers academics from all fields in Sweden.

3.3. Becoming unemployed

Everyone working and paying taxes in Sweden is covered by basic unemployment insurance. In order to apply for benefits when you become unemployed, you first need to register with the unemployment office [[Arbetsförmedlingen](#)]. The basic unemployment insurance covers people who are not a member of an unemployment insurance fund. Basic insurance is only ~8000 SEK per month and is based on how much you have worked. If you do not have permanent residency in Sweden, this will be only paid out for a very short time. Therefore it is a good idea to get unemployment insurance [a-kassan] (see below for further detail).

Regardless if you have unemployment insurance or not, you need to register by going to the unemployment office (you can start online registration at home or do it there). It is best to be there the first day of your unemployment as this day will count as starting day for your unemployment money (and you will not have a gap in your employment record, which may be important for your retirement fund). Usually if you make it clear that you are looking for new employment yourself (minimum of 2 applications per month), you only have to register in their online portal and describe what you are doing (any further education, which grants you apply for (careful when listing "writing Formas proposal" twice as it may not count for the next month although you work more than a month on it)).

To make sure to get money if you become unemployed at the end of your contract, you need to sign up for an unemployment insurance fund **at least 12 months before the end of your contract**. The relevant insurance fund for academics is "[Akademikernas a-kassa](#)". Membership is 110 SEK per month. A-Kassan will then provide you with 80% of your previous income or max 20.000 SEK before taxes for around one year. We strongly recommend you to register yourself at a-kassan! The unemployment benefits from them can then be supplemented through an income insurance from your union, if you choose to join one (see part about "Unions").

As an employee at SLU (please check with your employer if you are not) and if you have been a member of a-kassa for one year, you can also arrange a meeting with [Trygghetsstiftelsen](#). On top of the a-kassa money they will further compensate you and offer opportunities for courses that increase your chances of finding new employment. You can either join their courses (e.g. how to rewrite your academic CV to an industry CV) or ask for support for courses of your choosing. For the latter you need to make a strong case that it is a "job-related" step (e.g.: taking a Swedish course at Folkuniversitetet was granted in one case).

4. Housing, partner, children

4.1. Finding accommodation and types of contracts

It can be extremely tough to find a place to rent in Sweden, especially in the cities. In general people in Sweden tend to buy rather than rent (we heard that approximately 30% are renting and 70% owning an apartment/house), hence the rental market is quite small and crowded. This is particularly a problem for people arriving around September, as this is the time all the students are moving, too.

If you are coming to Sweden for a 2 year period (usual period for a postdoc contract) and have no experience of the Swedish housing market you will most likely aim to get a rental contract. However, we strongly encourage you to also read the buying section below, as it is quite easy to get a loan from a bank to buy property, even if you are on a 2 year postdoc contract.

4.1.1. Where to find your first accommodation

There is a lot of turnover of postdocs and researcher who go abroad for some time and would like to find a person for their flat. One of the most effective ways (besides bothering everybody on Facebook, Twitter...) is therefore asking your future boss to send an email, or better forward your (short, precise, and friendly) email, to University mailing lists. You should encourage your future boss to make use of the abundance of email lists at the University.

Another common way to find accommodation is through the website [Blocket](#). People looking to rent out their accommodation will advertise on this site. This website is only in Swedish and some advertisements will only be in Swedish, but don't hesitate to contact them anyway, as everyone in Sweden speaks English. Most advertisements receive hundreds of applications, so if you are not one of the first 10 or 20, you will most likely not receive any response. We recommend posting an advertisement with a picture and a description of yourself, stating that you are looking for accommodation. Make sure you mention the duration of your contract so that it is clear that you have a stable income. People will usually contact you for more details or directly offer you their place. Putting an advertisement costs 145 SEK and can be paid by credit card. Most of the apartments advertised on Blocket are furnished and include utilities.

Beware of scams! Do not pay any deposit or rent before actually signing a contract on which the **landlord's personal number and address is written**. If possible, ask your future boss or a colleague to visit the place to make sure all is in order.

It is also important to note that two types of rental contracts exist: First and Second hand. Find more information below.

4.1.2. State subsidised renting [Hyresrätt] and first hand contract

First hand rental contracts can be obtained either directly from the owner of an apartment, through private advertisement, or after putting your name down on a list with Uppsala Housing.

It is quite common to put your name on a list for a rental apartment with [Uppsala Housing queue](#). This is called "queuing" for an apartment. This can be done even before you move to Sweden. It costs ~300 SEK per year to queue for an apartment and you will automatically be taken off the queue if you forget to pay. As you queue, you will accumulate points (the longer you are in the queue, the more points you will have). When apartments become available, they will be advertised. People who are interested in the apartment register their interest and whoever has the most points gets the apartment. Once you have obtained an apartment through this system, you can stay as long as you want. These apartments are unfurnished and most do not include utilities.

Other organizations that may offer a place to rent are [Uppsala studentkår](#) (it is possible to post your own ad), [Ultunastudentbostader](#), [Stena Fastigheter](#) (only available if you have your personal number), and [Uppsalahem](#) (only available if you have your personal number). There is an additional list on "Living in Uppsala" that can be sent to you on request; please check that yourself if needed.

4.1.3. Second hand contract [Andrahandskontrakter]

Second hand rentals are the most common. These are rented out by people who themselves are renting from Uppsala Housing. In Sweden, most rental apartments are part of a housing association and have their own committee [Styrelsen]. This means everyone who lives in an apartment in that housing association can be elected to be part of this committee. Although the owner (e.g. Uppsala hem, HSB etc.) owns the house, decisions regarding constructions and other things have to be approved by this committee. This also means that if an owner wants to rent out his place (to you/your family), he/she will have to apply for permission from the housing committee. **By law every person renting from a private person has the right to buy the apartment/house after 2 years renting.** This law was aimed at helping people to obtain property, but instead resulted in people getting kicked out after 2 years at the latest (we had friends that moved 5 times in 5 years in Stockholm). Exceptions are if you sign a paragraph in your contract that you will never intent to buy. In such a case, you will get a new contract every year (mostly with an increase in rent based on the current market price). However, such agreements also have to be approved by the housing committee, just as the right to rent out at all.

4.1.4. Buying/selling

If you are planning to buy, hemnet.se and booli.se are the main real estate websites. You can find listings and get information on open houses/showings [visning].

As mentioned it is very common to own, rather than rent. The monthly costs can sometimes even be cheaper than renting. Getting a loan from the bank is relatively

easy as long as you can provide at least a 15% deposit and show a fixed income for a number of years, although banks sometimes will not consider applications from postdocs and PhD students because the duration of their contracts are seen as too short. If the bank rejects your application or advises you not to apply for this reason, try a different bank. You can check online how much you can loan [räkna bolån]. The home buying process is simple in Sweden. No real estate agent necessary for buyers. You just show up at a visning, and tell the seller's agent that you are interested in buying. Then, everyone who is interested is invited to present their offers, which is usually done via SMS. To participate in a so called bidding [budgivning] you need a valid loan certificate [lånlöfte] which you can get from a bank. We would recommend applying for a loan certificate before attending any visnings, as you will not be able to bid on property without one and bidding mostly start right after the last visning.

4.2. Children

4.2.1. Financial support for parents, parental leave [föräldrapenning]

You are entitled to parental benefit if you have payed taxes in Sweden for at least a year. Parental benefit will be roughly 80% of your net income. If you are taking parental leave, you need to register this in advance, at least one month before you plan to go on parental leave (telling your employer as early as you feel comfortable is advised). Check also the rules your employer has, as sometimes they want you to register time of absence up to 3 months in advance.

Standard routine on how to apply for parental leave at Försäkringskassan:

- If you are pregnant you need to go to the Barnmorskemottagning and get a certificate of maternity (this needs to be send to Försäkringskassan). This is also where you have to go for all pregnancy check-ups and to get ultrasound appointment or register for additional tests
- After your pregnancy is registered at Försäkringskassan, your partner can register at Försäkringskassan as well. This is important for the ten extra leave days you get for the birth of your child/children [tio dagar]
- Register parental leave [anmäl föräldrapenning]
- After registering, you then can apply for parental leave [register/ansök om]. All this is done online [here](#).

You and your partner are in total entitled to 450 days of parental leave benefit. However, at least 90 days need to be taken by each parent, but it is strongly encouraged and recommended that the parental leave is shared 50/50. You also get equality contributions [jämsällningsbidrag] if the other partner takes more than these 90 days. This means for each day over these 90 days you will get around 50 to 100 SEK per day more. You do not need to take out all the days at once, you can save some and use them until your child turns 8 years old (very useful so you can take holidays the same time your children are off school/preschool). Keep in mind that there is only a certain number of parental leave days you are allowed to take after your child turns 6 years. So make sure to check how many days you need to

spend before your child's 6th birthday (and who has to take how many) before as the government changes this info quite often!

If you already have children, check if you are entitled to parental benefit, as depending on the age of your children and where you are coming from you can be entitled to parental benefit in Sweden. Additionally, check with your home country/where you have lived before whether you can take any parental benefit with you.

The time you spend on parental leave will extend your contract, as the days are added at the end. This applies for all contracts but only if you get a salary and not a stipend. If you have a stipend, check if you are able to take parental leave. There are stipends (e.g. Wenner Gren) that pay out 3 months of parental leave.

4.2.2. Day care and school

You need to register your children in the queue for a day care [dagis] spot. Therefore it is helpful to have a BankID as you then can do all this online. The child also needs a personal number. If you live in Uppsala you can register with ebarnungdom [here](#).

If you have been in the queue for 4 months without being offered a day care spot you are then entitled to one. However, that does not mean that you will get the spot in a day care of your choosing. Rather a spot is allocated to you and could mean a long commute. You do not have to accept this spot, though you might lose your place in the queue and have to start all over (not sure about the last part). Additionally, in Uppsala, you are not guaranteed that all your children are placed at the same day care. You can however choose to refuse a spot and stay in the queue. If you would like to change day care, you have to register with ebarnungdom and get a place in the queue again. The best time to start day care is in August/September as the school year starts and there will be many free spots available.

Opening hours of a regular day care are from 7 to 17 o'clock. The amount you have to pay for the care of your child/children depends on your combined income but is not higher than roughly 1500 SEK/ month and child. Meals are included. If you or your partner is unemployed or on parental leave, the time your child is allowed to stay at day care depends on the municipality [kommun], but is at least 15 hours by law (Uppsala municipality: 20 hours, Stockholm municipality: 40 hours).

Vaccinations (e.g. measles, rubella, polio) are not mandatory in Sweden but some municipalities make it a requirement to be accepted in a day care. If your children are not vaccinated, they can be denied for more than the minimum care but of course they have to go to school/day care (children from the age of three need to go to preschool [förskola] at least for 15 hours a week and of course your child needs to go to school!).

4.2.3. My child is sick

If your child is sick, you can apply for sick leave benefit so you can stay at home and take care of your child. Both parents have 16 days each to spend per child per year. This sounds like a lot, but having small children you can spend these days quite quickly as day cares have very strict rules in regards to sick children. For example, if your children have a fever they have to spend one day without fever at home before being allowed at day care again. If they have a stomach problem/ have to throw up, they need to stay at home for at least 3 days. If you have small children you do not need a doctor's certificate, but if your child is going to school you need a doctor's certificate the first day they need to spend at home.

You apply for child sick leave benefit directly at Försäkringskassan. It is called VAB dagar. You can apply online. You should also register with your employer that you have sick children at home (see Primula). They stop paying your salary as they know you get compensated from Försäkringskassan. You will not have a [karensdag] (i.e. if you are sick you do not get compensation for the first day, but with VABing you get the first day also) if you need to stay home with your children.

5. Telephone, car, apps, money

5.1. Swedish mobile number

In Sweden, you can easily purchase a sim card for pre-payment as soon as you arrive. As long as your phone is not sim-locked, you will not have to buy a new phone (also many phones allow 2 sim cards by using the SD card slot). When using pre-payment, you simply buy and top up your credit in a shop, online, or with the app of the phone company (need to make an account). If you prefer getting a subscription the phone company will need proof of your job and salary if you have not been in the country for at least one tax year. However, it is more common to just get credit. Prices are reasonable and unless you are in the middle of nowhere you will have a fast mobile network. It is important to get a Swedish mobile number as many services will require it.

5.2. Car

5.2.1. Drivers licence

If you have a valid driver's license from any EU/EEA country, it will also be valid in Sweden for as long as it is valid in your home country. If your license is from outside the EU/EEA, you will have to enquire into its validity on a case per case basis at [Transportsyrelsen](#).

If you are from outside the EU/EEA or Japan you need to get a Swedish driver's license within your first year in Sweden. If you are in Sweden for a temporary period, e.g. a fixed PhD or postdoc contract, etc., you can apply for the transport authority to validate your foreign driver's license during that specific time frame. To do this, you have to mail them a physical letter explaining that you are in the country for a limited amount of time, and requesting that they recognize your license from your

home country until then. However, be aware that the end date will be the end date of your employment contract, so if you extend your PhD or postdoc, your license is not automatically extended. Also, if your license from your own country expires before the end date of your contract you are not allowed to use it any longer.

Fines for wrong parking and speeding are very high in Sweden. At a certain income level fines are calculated from your income, which we find is fair as it is a punishment and should hurt.

5.2.2. Bringing a car

If your car is registered in your European home country you can drive it in Sweden. However, usually your primary address needs to be registered in that country. Recommended is that after one continuous year driving your car in Sweden one should register the car in Sweden. If you take the car to your home country, e.g. for a prolonged vacation, the year starts again once you are back in Sweden. If you have a foreign number plate don not panic when you get a 900 SEK parking ticket at Arlanda airport for example. Contrary to the Swedish police companies cannot charge you as they are not allowed to access foreign state agencies. To be clear: we do not encourage not paying for parking, but here public private partnerships are not paying off to the state.

5.2.3. Importing a car

The web site at Transportsryrelsen is not fully in English and describes [how to import a car to Sweden](#).

Be advised that you are only allowed to drive the car for 1 week before having to take on a temporary registration with a Swedish insurance company, even if you are still covered by the insurance company in your home country.

5.2.4. Buying a car

You can buy a car without a personal number, however you can't register your car until you have a personal number, and you're not allowed to drive your car unless it's registered. While you wait for your personal number, you could ask a friend or colleague to register your car in their name. It is simple to transfer ownership after you have received your personal number.

5.3. Sweden is a digital country

Sweden is quite modern and it is amazing how fast new technologies become the standard. One example is Swish (paying with your phone), which allows cashless payments even for small amounts; e.g. pay back your friends for the shared dinner, paying at flea markets, phone bills and many more.

It can be quite hard to balance maintaining a reasonable digital footprint and using everyday applications. However, data are transparent to everyone. So of course the state does know everything about you, but the state is for the people and most

information that is collected can be easily accessed by you. It is therefore easy to find things online, like the new plans for construction sites or the criminal statistics for your neighbourhood. If you have the personal number of a person you can look up what he/she pays in taxes (and know the income). But of course he/she gets a notification (from [UC]) about who has made inquiries (just like you will be notified when companies make inquiries about you). Companies also make use these data, for example hitta, where you will find every Swedish citizen as well as information about where he/she lives (with the general prices of houses in the area; who else is living in the house...).

5.3.1. *No paper*

Although some contracts and tax letters which you may still want to file in your folder, most of the letters you receive will be obsolete as you can easily access, check, and update everything on the web. This includes all state agencies as well as private companies like your insurance company (but of course you need BankID for all of it).¹

5.3.2. *No cash*

Paying with cash will become obsolete in Sweden very soon. In an increasing number of places only payment with credit card (or Swish) is allowed (please note: sometimes when paying at a restaurant the machine asks the amount first (for tipping purposes), then your pin number).

5.3.3. *BankID and Swish*

BankID is the most important app in Sweden. It is your identity (i.e. personal number) in digital form. The app is used to confirm your identity, when for example making bank transactions, and is connected to your telephone number, personal number, and your bank account. You need an own bank account to apply for BankID.

With BankID on your phone you will be able to perform (at least) the following tasks:

- paying someone with your mobile phone using Swish
- declare your taxes with 3 clicks (can also be done with SMS) using the Skatteverket app
- access your bank account and make transactions (you will also get a small device with a code from your bank to do this, but using BankID is a lot more convenient if you have granted BankID the permissions at your bank)
- login to all governmental agencies (most importantly Försäkringskassan, but also Arbetsförmedlingen, a-kassa and others) and private companies you use (e.g. your insurance company, your real estate agency)

On your computer usually a website will ask you for your personal number, then a BankID pop up appears and you need to open the BankID app on your phone. The BankID app will ask you for a code (which you set up yourself before using the BankID app for the first time) and then authenticates access logins on websites. On your phone other apps will usually open BankID for authentication.

Although one can buy an external card with a cord to connect to your computer, we do not recommend to use this (outdated) system as we know at least one application where this is not working anymore.

Setting up BankID and Swish will enable you to easily do all things on the fly. For example using your mobile phone you can top up your UL account at any time (or VL account, etc. depending on where you are) to buy a bus ticket. You can just open the UL app that will let you use the Swish app which will in turn use the BankID app to verify your purchase. Or you are calling a customer service and you can type in your personal number and verify yourself with BankID during the call so the person helping you is sure it is you.

5.3.4. Small apps and shop guides

Apps

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Hemnet | buying a flat/house (nearly all flats/houses are listed here) |
| PostNord | get notifications of packages (use mobile BankID instead of showing ID-card) |
| EasyPark | one of the main apps for paying parking |
| SMHI | Swedish weather |
| Skatteverket | taxes |
| Swish | cashless paying |
| Kivra | get regular mail only electronically |
| UL | pay bus tickets in Uppsala |
| SL | pay SL train tickets |
| SJ | pay SJ train tickets |
| Blocket | Swedish ebay |
| Hitta | find your friends address |

Common shops

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Apotea.se | prescription free medicine |
| Systembolaget | alcohol shop (except low alcohol drinks alcohol can only be bought by this national distribution system) |
| NetOnNet | outlet for electronics |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Bildemo | changing car tires |
| Biltema | car stuff and other things |
| Alina systems | repairing your computer |
| IKEA | not so many furniture shops in Sweden besides expensive designer shops |
| Bauhaus | the largest shop if you built something |
| MAX | the Swedish McDonalds |

6. Routines at SLU Uppsala and at the Department of Ecology

Welcome to the Department of Ecology! Within the Ecology Centre we have two departments: Department of Ecology (including the off-campus Grimsö Wildlife Research Station) and the Department of Crop Production Ecology.

6.1. Account, key card and key(s)

6.1.1. Your SLU account

You will receive an account for SLU and you can use it for all the applications (the name of the account cannot be changed). Keep in mind that you may have to add "ad/" in front of your account name. Using VPN (with the server addresses: off campus: "vpn-uppsala.slu.se" on the campus: "vpn-local-uppsala.slu.se") you will have the IP address to access journals and use the space on the server (every department has servers space that can be used by the employees). You can also connect your phone, see instructions [here](#) and [here](#). Approximately once a year you will be asked to change your password. You should do this on campus connected via cable. If you are at home you will have to access the outlook [web app](#) in order to change the password, which may be complicated as you may have to call the IT-department.

A general trick to increase your computer's booting speed is to switch off your WiFi when starting your computer (if it's not on the cable) as it will always try to connect to the server if you have saved the WiFi password. It is also a good idea to set up eduroam as you will easily get internet access at other universities and it may be the better connection at your current spot on the campus compared to "SLU" (you can also access via the "SLU-Guest" account, but you will always be asked for log in details).

6.1.2. Key card and key

You will receive a key card from the indenture (current head: David Back) together with a key for your office. With the card you will have access to other buildings as well, but it will not open every door. Outside the standard working hours you will

need to type in your code. Be careful with the door to the greenhouse as you may trigger the alarm. How to avoid this inconvenience is explained in the gangway to the greenhouses or ask the staff. The office rooms have an Ecology key or a Crop Production Ecology key. Usually you will get the correct key, however you may need to access other parts of the building. In this case you have to ask to get both keys.

6.2. Software and SLU applications

6.2.1. *Primula-your employment*

Primula is the system where you can handle your employment. This includes applying for vacation, handing in travel/course/workshop costs, see a summary of your income, and much more. An example of how to fill in a case may be found [here](#).

6.2.2. *Canvas-teaching/taking courses*

If you participate in a course as student or teacher this is the tool for you to upload/download course material. You will be invited via mail if you are a participant. You can also use the Canvas app to manage your course participation/teaching material (you only have to authenticate once with your SLU account).

6.2.3. *ReachMee – getting an assistant*

This applications if for the hiring process, which will most likely be an assistant in case you are a post doc. Assistants can be employed on an hourly basis for some time. However, if you need an assistant for one month or longer the position has to be announced/advertised officially (just as any other position) using ReachMee. Start early because this may take a while as the head of the department and the human resource department have to approve the announcement. The system provides multiple options for sorting, mailing, and organizing.

6.2.4. *Library, SLUpub*

You can order any publication and you can also order books from the SLU campus library or other libraries in Sweden. For borrowing books you will need a library card, which you will get at the library desk (using your SLU account).

SLUpub is the online tool for registering your work. This includes peer reviewed work, but also reports and any other kind of work. It is important to keep this updated and it is linked to your WoS ResearcherID (which is now merged with Publons) and can be linked to ORCID also.

6.2.5. *CV-page*

It is very advisable to write a short description about your work on your CV-page at the department website. The communications officer will gladly assist with this task.

6.2.6. Printer

If you are connected to the SLU network (also from home via VPN) you will be able to print. Before that you need to set up your account on the printer; instructions on how to do this can be found next to most printers. Scanned material will then be sent to you via mail. For larger posters you have to go to Repro on the campus (with the slu number of the person paying for it).

6.2.7. Room booking

Rooms for meetings can be booked via outlook. You will get a confirmation mail that the room has been successfully booked. If you are not using outlook as your e-mail program the rooms can also be booked via the e-mail web access.

6.2.8. Mailing lists

There are (at least) two important mailing lists. "ekol-alla" is for the whole department (including Grimsö) and "ekol-hus". Be aware which one you use as the administration team (included in "eklo-hus") may not want to be bothered by you sending emails on a very scientific question/topic. Otherwise these lists are used to share/announce interesting things, but also personal things like searching for accommodation. PhD students also have their own list and check the unions section above for a post doc list.

6.2.9. Pinning your publications

Next to Tammsalen you can find a board for each department in the house. You can pin your new publication there, but indicate the publication date. After some time the copy will be taken down.

6.3. Department get-togethers, extra money, traditions

6.3.1. Tamm seminar

The Tamm seminar series takes place most Tuesdays at 13 o' clock in the Tammsalen. Speakers are usually invited guests, new people at the department, or any person in the department who has not had given a talk for a long time and would like to report new findings. The duration is 30 to 40 minutes followed by questions. The organizing team selects the speakers and you (as a post-doc or researcher) can join the team.

6.3.2. Department symposium

Once a year, the department organizes an internal symposium (you can also join the organizing team). This is usually off campus and involves an overnight stay, many interesting talks from your colleagues, and a lot of fun. Usually one external participant will be invited as key note speaker.

6.3.3. *Ecology pub*

The pub is organized by PhD students from both departments in the house. It takes place once a month.

6.3.4. *Lucia, pickled herring lunch*

Every year, one floor at the department will organize Lucia. The celebration includes a traditional lunch and a choir performance.

In the summer Midsummer is celebrated with a herring's lunch, also organized by one floor of the department.

6.3.5. *Publication money, money for sport*

The department has decided to let you handle the money for publications yourself. This means you will get a publication money account (aka 5s-account as it starts with a 5) that you can use for buying equipment, employing an assistant (or yourself at the end of your contract), or participate in conferences/workshops/courses (in agreement with your employer). Published (not "accepted", "early view") publications from the previous year (with department as affiliation) need to be validated in SLUpub in order to count. To be eligible, you need to be employed until the end of May that year as the money will be paid end of April. The amounts vary depending on how many papers were published by the department in the previous year but range around 10000 SEK for co-authorship and 14000 SEK for first authorship.

As an employee of at SLU, you can choose between doing 1 hour of sports a week or getting money for membership cards (no equipment), like the gym or public pool. The normal amount is 1500 SEK per year, but SLU allows you to spend 2000 SEK. The money can be claimed in Primula.

6.3.6. *Stuff for free*

All employees get one fruit a day, which will be delivered in the morning. Once a year, you may find a big box with potatoes, apples or similar in the lunch room. It is also not unusual to find small things (like kitchen boxes) in front of Tammsalen with the sign "Varsågod". These things are all up for grabs. But please think of other people before taking the whole box of goodies.

6.3.7. *Getting help*

In case you need help but you cannot turn to your colleagues or employer, there is an ombudsman on the campus. Although she/he is for PhD students I am certain you will get help or at least get contacts for further assistance.

The end [Fin]