

Postdoctoral Careers in Europe: Sweden





Introduction

Whether you are in the final stages of your doctorate or have just finished, you will probably be planning your next career move. One of the questions you will be asking yourself is whether to stay in your native country or embark on an academic career abroad. If you decide on the latter, Europe will almost certainly be on your shortlist of possible destinations. This eBook is for postdocs interested in starting or continuing their academic career in Sweden.

The birthplace of the Nobel Prize and home to some of the world's oldest universities, Sweden boasts a research-led economy with close links to business and industry.

In this eBook, you will find out about the Sweden higher education system, and gain valuable insights into funding options, career advancement, the job market in each country and practical ways to get a foot in the door.

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Research and Funding

Sweden devotes around 3.4% of GDP to research and development, and leads OECD countries in terms of research intensity and spending, relative to population size (9.5 million). This level of commitment has given Sweden a well-deserved global reputation for research excellence across all disciplines. Furthermore, a strong tradition of promoting collaboration between academia and the private and industrial sector, particularly in science and technology, has significantly added to the success of Swedish research. Public funding amounted to around SEK 33 billion (£3 billion) in 2014, but around 70% of research was funded by the private sector.

Central government is responsible for allocating research budgets, and there are four government bodies covering a multitude of areas: the [Swedish Research Council \(Vetenskapsradet\)](#); [FORMAS](#) (environment and agriculture); [Forte](#) and [VINNOVA](#) (technology, transport, communication). The Swedish Research Council offers a range of grants and fellowships to researchers at all stages of their careers. A number of other major awarding organisations include the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF) and [Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education \(STINT\)](#), which offers funding to international researchers. Many private financiers, such as [the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation](#), also contribute significantly to research.

Career Progression

The Swedish academic career path has two directions: teaching or research. Almost all junior lecturer (adjunct) positions - mainly part-time teaching posts - are tenured or permanent and a doctorate is not required for these positions. A more research-oriented career path starts with a paid PhD or postdoctoral research role (similar to an Assistant Professor), which are generally short-term.

The majority of PhD and postdoctoral positions involve some teaching, and many are funded by the Swedish Research Council, which provides grants for early career researchers across all disciplines. Following a stint as either a junior lecturer or postdoc researcher/Assistant Professor, it is then possible to apply for a permanent Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor (docent) post followed by a Professorship, according to research merit and the ability to win funding. Those who choose a teaching-only route will find it difficult to move up to these higher ranks, as they generally have not completed the research needed to be eligible.

The Higher Education System

Sweden has around 50 state-funded higher education institutions, the oldest and most prestigious being Lund University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Universities are less teacher-led than in some countries, with more emphasis placed on independent and group study. Degrees consist of multidiscipline three-year undergraduate courses and one to two years Master's courses. EU/EEA students are not charged tuition fees, but those from outside the EU pay fees of around 100,000 SEK (around £9000) per year, although the Swedish government offers a number of [scholarships and grants](#) to help with living costs. A PhD takes around four years to complete, and doctoral students are considered to be employees, with most receiving a generous monthly stipend.

Higher education is financed by tax revenue (around 80%) and external public, industry and EU contributions. The [Swedish Higher Education Authority](#) and the [Swedish Council for Higher Education](#), departments of the Ministry of Education and Research, are responsible for allocating funding and regulating universities. However, universities remain separate state entities and have a high degree of autonomy with regards to course content, admissions, grades and budgets.



Salaries

Academic salaries are considered to be generous Sweden, although living costs and income tax are correspondingly high. Like other Scandinavian nations, Swedes enjoy a high quality of life, with state-subsidised top quality healthcare and flexible working conditions. There are also a number of attractive [tax breaks and incentives](#).

Average academic salaries in Sweden (gross monthly salary):

- PhD candidate: SEK 20,300 (£1810)
- Postdoc researcher: SEK 31,000 (£2765)
- Junior Lecturer: SEK 29,900 (£2670)
- Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor: SEK 35,500 (£3165)
- Professor: SEK 48,000 (£4280)

To find out more about living and working in Sweden visit our country profile [here](#).

The Job Market

The Swedish academic job market is very open to hiring international researchers, and the government offers a range of funding options and excellent working conditions for talented postdocs. Jobs and fellowships are advertised via university websites, the Swedish Research Council and through [jobs.ac.uk](#). There is more competition among PhD/postdoctoral positions, with many applicants vying for a small number of permanent positions. The Swedish ‘competence promotion’ system has made it possible to be promoted within one’s own institution, regardless of open positions, which has led to a lack of mobility between universities. Therefore, many postdocs find themselves in temporary or part-time teaching posts while waiting for a permanent job to come up.

There is a particular need to hire talented researchers in STEM subjects, technology, and clinical and health areas in Sweden. For those interested in a career in industry, Sweden is home to a number of large multinationals, such as Volvo and Ericsson, which offer their own tailored postdoctoral training fellowships.



Job Application Process

An online application form, along with a resume/CV and cover letter are the usual requirements for an academic job in Sweden. If your Swedish language skills are lacking, it’s fine to apply in English, as being able to speak English fluently is often an essential specification of the job. You do not need to send a photo with your resume but it’s best to include a full publication list, qualifications in English and names of references.

Don’t be put off if you haven’t heard anything for a couple of weeks; it is customary in Sweden for your application to be scrutinised by a number of committees, and this takes time. If you are short-listed, you will be invited to a round of interviews, the first by phone or video conference if you are not in Sweden. Interviews can be relatively informal, so don’t be surprised if you are asked about your personal and family life - Swedes like to be confident about how you will fit into their team personally as well as professionally.

Application Tips: Competitive behaviour and language can be seen as being arrogant in Sweden, where a dedication to teamwork is deeply ingrained in the working culture. Instead, try to show what you could bring to a research team and how you have collaborated with others in the past.



Work Permit

If you are an EU/EEA citizen, you do not need to apply for a work permit before moving to Sweden, however you will need to register for a residence permit after three months in the country. If you are from outside the European Union, you will need to apply for a work permit prior to relocation, and you must have received an official offer of employment from a Swedish employer. Visit the [Swedish Migration Board](#) for more information.

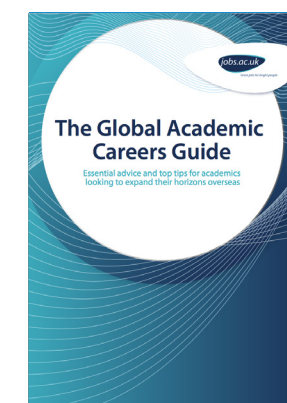
About this ebook

'Postdoctoral Careers in Sweden' has been compiled by jobs.ac.uk as part of the 'Postdoctoral Careers in Europe' series, helping you take your first step into the European academic world.

Europe is one of the most popular destinations for freshly-minted doctorates. Ancient and prestigious universities, excellent funding opportunities and diverse research networks attract thousands of international students, postdocs and academics to Europe each year. Add to this the prevalent use of English as a working language and a commitment to international cooperation in research which is unparalleled worldwide, Europe has much to offer aspiring academics.

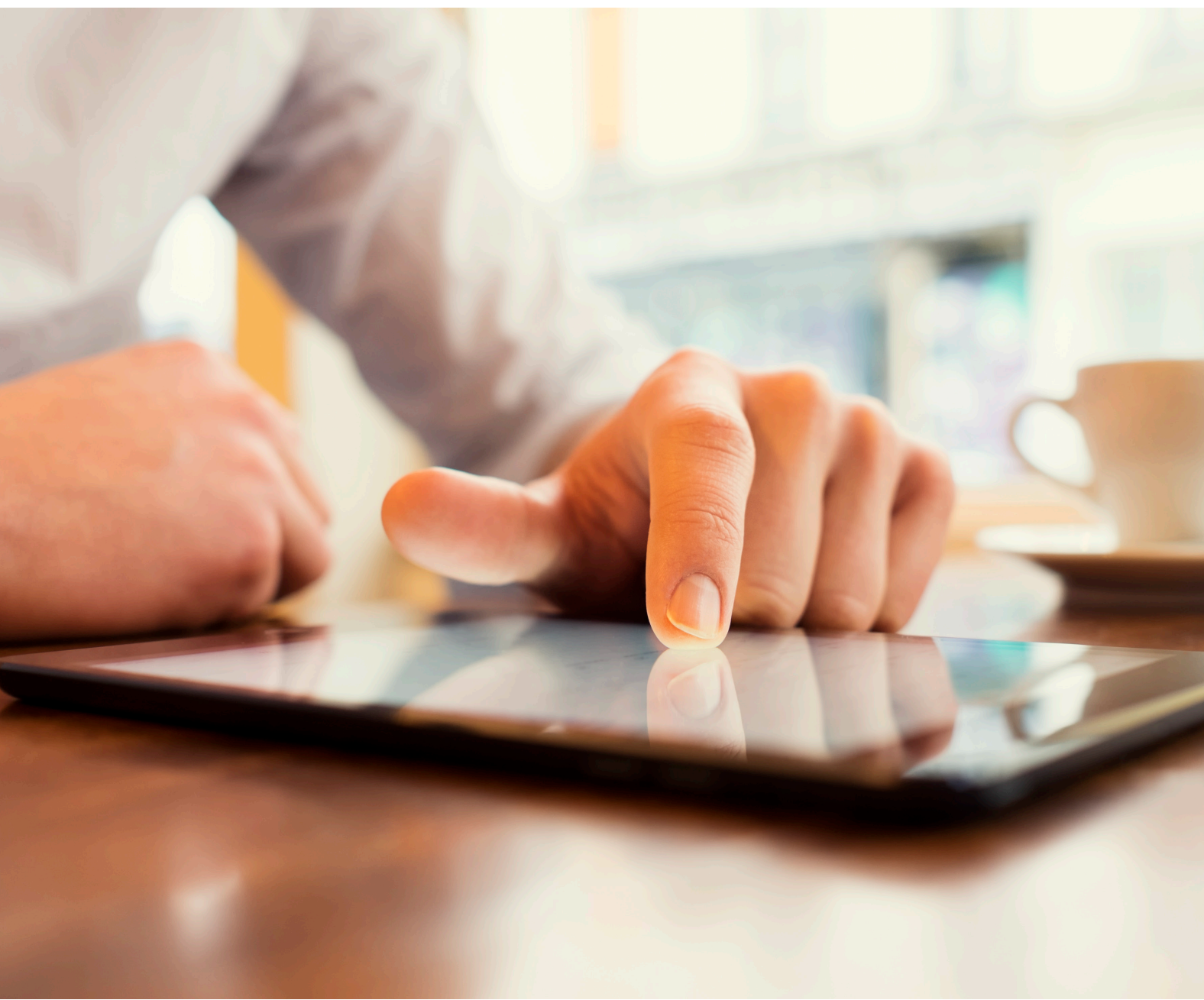
Combined, the European Union member states invest almost €300 billion in research and development each year. There is a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration, providing a unique research perspective, as well as offering ample opportunities to work with colleagues across the continent. Whether you choose a job in a European university, research institute or company, you will experience fantastic research facilities, generous funding and progressive working conditions.

Recommended reading:



The Global Academic Careers Guide

Essential advice and top tips for academics looking to expand their horizons overseas. This ebook will tell you more about the scale of the new global market, help you consider the pros and cons of seeking employment outside your nation of origin, and give you important information that will improve your success rate if you do decide to give working abroad a try.



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