

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden



We are pleased with your decision to come to  
Sweden and hope this handbook will  
help you in planning your stay!

Welcome to Sweden!

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT SWEDEN</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Short facts .....	2
Culture and traditions .....	3
Some hints to understanding the Swedes ☺.....	4
Religions.....	4
Research in Sweden .....	4
The Nobel Prize.....	5
Weather .....	5
Euraxess Sweden .....	5
<b>BEFORE COMING</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Work and residence permits for researchers .....	6
Accommodation.....	6
Transportation and airports .....	6
Vaccination.....	7
Electricity .....	7
Cost of living.....	7
Swedish language courses .....	7
Currency .....	7
<b>UPON ARRIVAL</b> .....	<b>8</b>
National registration number (=personnummer) .....	8
Health and medical care .....	8
Insurances .....	8
Banks .....	9
Shops .....	9
Driving .....	9
Emergency .....	9
Media and News in English.....	10
Child care and schooling.....	10
Taxation.....	10
Telephone and television .....	10
Internet access .....	10
No smoking .....	10
More useful links about Sweden .....	11
Sentences in Swedish.....	11
<b>CHECKLISTS</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Before travelling to Sweden .....	12
Upon arrival in Sweden .....	12
About this handbook .....	12

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT SWEDEN

Sweden is situated in northern Europe between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea.



Sweden is the third largest country in Western Europe  
© www.imagebank.sweden.se, Swedish institute



Longest distance north-south is 1,574 km.  
© www.imagebank.sweden.se, Stockholm Visitors Board.

### Short facts

- Capital: Stockholm.
- Population: 9,4 million inhabitants.
- Area: 450,000 km<sup>2</sup> (174,000 sq. mi.), third largest country in Western Europe. The land consists of: 53% forests, 11%, mountains, 8% cultivated land, 9% lakes and rivers. Longest north-south distance: 1,574 km (978 miles) and longest east-west distance: 499 km (310 miles.).
- Languages: Swedish. Recognized minority languages: Sami (Lapp), Finnish, Meänkieli (Tornedalen Finnish), Yiddish, Romani Chib.
- Form of government: constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy: "Riksdag" with 349 members in one chamber.
- Average life expectancy: women 83 years, men 78 years.
- The Swedish economy is a developed diverse economy, aided by timber, hydropower, and iron ore. These constitute the resource base of an economy oriented toward foreign trade. The main industries include motor vehicles, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, industrial machines, precision equipments, chemical goods, forestry, Iron and steel (facts from Wikipedia).

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## **Culture and traditions**

Living and working in a new country can be challenging in many ways. The day-to-day practical matters in your new home country can turn into an adventure. Living in a new culture can be exhilarating, personally rewarding, and intellectually stimulating, but it can also be frustrating. It is one thing to visit a country, moving on when you have seen enough, and it is quite another to live there to work and function according to a different, and sometimes, mysterious set of norms.

Swedes value their independence and privacy and that is why many visitors to Swedish work-places might find it difficult to get to know Swedes. In comparison to many other countries, however, you will find it quite easy to have access to top management as work hierarchy is less structured in Sweden. Casual dress is common in most work environments. Workers are entitled to at least 25 days of holiday per year, and people tend to use the majority of those days during the summer time.

Some important traditional holidays:

- **Valborgsmässoafton** (Walpurgis Night) is celebrated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April and celebrates the arrival of spring with lighting huge bonfires. The 1<sup>st</sup> of May is a bank holiday.
- **Midsummer** is celebrated on the Friday closest to the 24<sup>th</sup> of June. Most people go out of town in to the country-side, to summer cottages etc. Children and women wear flowers in their hair, there are dances around a may-pole, new potatoes and herring are eaten for lunch.
- **Lucia**, the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. In Swedish homes, factories, offices, nurseries, hospitals, schools, pre-schools, Lucia comes dressed in white to spread her light (candle-lights on her head) and sing songs with her accompany. Lucia mainly appears early in the morning...
- **Official public holidays:** New Year's Day (1 January), Epiphany (6 January), Good Friday (the Friday at the beginning of Easter), Easter Sunday, Easter Monday, First of May, Ascension Day (40 days after Easter), Whitsunday, Sweden's national day (6 June), Midsummer Day (Saturday of the period 20-26 June), All Saints Day (Saturday of the period 31 October–6 November), Christmas Eve (24 December), Christmas Day (25 December), Boxing Day (26 December).



*Lucia often appears early in the morning on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December.*  
© [www.imagebank.sweden.se](http://www.imagebank.sweden.se). Photographer Nicho Södling.

How do modern Swedes celebrate their traditional festivities? How are Swedish traditions today? Swedish journalist Po Tidholm presents a personal selection of customs and traditions celebrated in Sweden today. Background information about all the holidays and customs described in the book is provided by ethnologist Agneta Lilja. Can be downloaded: [www.sweden.se/traditions](http://www.sweden.se/traditions) (Swedish Institute)

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## Some hints to understanding the Swedes ☺

- **Allemansrätten**, the Right of Public Access, is a unique tradition with both opportunities and responsibilities. This means that you, on the condition that you do not intrude on the privacy of the owner, vandalise or litter, can hike freely in forests and fields, go swimming or boat on private water. For further information please see: <http://www.naturvardsverket.se/en/In-English/Menu/Enjoying-nature/The-right-of-public-access/What-is-the-Right-of-Public-Access/>
- **Be on time** for appointments.
- **Take off** your shoes when entering somebody's home.
- **Queues** are common in cinemas, shops, banks, post-offices, etc. You are expected to stay in the line and not cut the queue even when you are waiting at a bus stop. However, many institutions use queuing tickets. Collect a ticket and wait until your numbers shows on the display, then it is your turn.
- **Tack**, thank you, is one of the most frequently used words in Swedish.

### Rosa, guest researcher from Universidad de León in Spain, says about:

**Sweden:** everybody keeps telling me that Sweden is much better in the summer and that Swedes become so different then. But I went to Sweden because I wanted to experience cold and snowy days!

**Swedish language:** they all speak English perfectly well. However, there are three compulsory words to learn for all visitors: *Hej* (hello), *Tack* (thanks), *Just det* (that's right).

**Swedish people:** in the beginning they keep some distance and give an image of seriousness. They seem to be independent people. After some time the distance disappears. It is all perfect; I just wish I could stay longer. I'll be back!



## Religions

Most of the population, about 80%, belongs to the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) from birth/christening. However, the society does not appear to be very religious even though most bank holidays have a religious background. Few people regularly attend services in church. Since January 2000, the Church and the State are divided. Sweden has a large number of Free Churches as well. Members of various churches may find their own churches in the big cities.

<http://www.researchinsweden.se/en/LiveWorkInSweden/Language-and-leisure/Religious-communities/>

## Research in Sweden

Research and development have had high priority in Sweden in recent decades. Sweden is one of the countries that invest the largest percentage of its Gross Domestic Product in R&D. About 4% of GDP is put on Swedish R&D, putting the country number one among the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in terms of R&D investments as a percentage of GDP. The high standard of Swedish research is internationally recognised. Independent evaluations almost consistently give high marks to Swedish researchers and show that Swedish research pursued as part of European Union common programs is of high scientific quality.

[www.researchinsweden.se](http://www.researchinsweden.se)

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## **The Nobel Prize**

The inventor Alfred Nobel is the founder of the Nobel Prize. This prize is an international award given yearly since 1901 for achievements in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace. In 1968, the Bank of Sweden (Sveriges Riksbank) instituted the Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel. Each prize consists of a medal, personal diploma, and prize amount. The grand evening dinner takes place in the City Hall of Stockholm. More information about Alfred Nobel and the Nobel Prize can be found at [www.nobelprize.org](http://www.nobelprize.org)



*The prizes are handed out in the Concert Hall in Stockholm.*  
© [www.imagebank.sweden.se](http://www.imagebank.sweden.se). Photographer Henrik Montgomery.

## **Weather**

Sweden has four distinct seasons, so if you plan to come to Sweden for a year or more you will need many different kinds of clothes. It might be wise to buy the winter clothes and boots in Sweden. The Swedish climate is positively influenced by the warm Gulf Stream which means that it might be milder than you could expect at this latitude. However, you might experience that the winter is colder than you are used to and also longer. Sweden is a long country and the weather varies a lot during the winter from north to south. Sweden uses day-light saving time like all other EU member states (clocks change one hour in October and in March respectively).

[www.smhi.se](http://www.smhi.se) (Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute)

## **Euraxess Sweden**

Euraxess Sweden is part of the pan-European network Euraxess and gives on-line information for researchers to and from Sweden: [www.researchinsweden.se](http://www.researchinsweden.se)



*Your key to mobility: Euraxess Sweden.*  
© Photographer Eva Carnestedt.

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## BEFORE COMING

### *Work and residence permits for researchers*

#### **EU-citizens**

EU citizens have an automatic right of entry into Sweden. If you plan to stay longer than three months, you must register your right of residence with the Swedish Migration Board. You no longer need to apply for a residence permit. Necessary documents are certified copies of a work contract and passport (or ID card).

[http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/start\\_en.html](http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/start_en.html) (Swedish Migration Board)

#### **Non-EU citizens**

The EU directive concerning visiting researchers came into force in Sweden on 1 July 2008. This means that work permits no longer will be required for visiting researchers coming to Sweden from countries outside the EU/EEA area. In order to be included in the “visiting researchers’ category” you need to have at minimum a university education qualifying for access to postgraduate studies. Visiting researchers will still need residence permit if you will work for over three months and the permit must be granted before coming to Sweden. To receive a residence permit you need to have a hosting agreement with an accepted (approved by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) research organisation. Researchers from countries whose citizens need a visa for entering Sweden must have such an entry visa before arriving.

[http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/start\\_en.html](http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/start_en.html) (Swedish Migration Board)

[www.swedenabroad.se](http://www.swedenabroad.se) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

<http://www.hsv.se/2.539a949110f3d5914ec800056285.html> (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education)

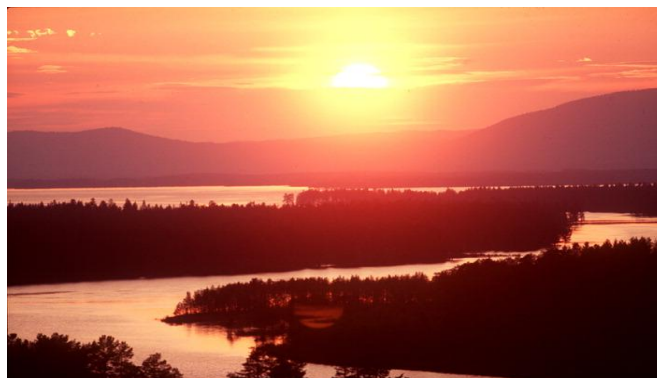
### **Accommodation**

Accommodation can be difficult to find in big cities. Check with your host institution if they provide housing or have good contacts. Another alternative is to advertise in a local paper or put up an advert on the notice board at your future work place.

<http://www.researchinsweden.se/en/LiveWorkInSweden/Entry-into-Sweden/Accommodation/>

### **Transportation and airports**

The public transportation system is quite good all over Sweden. The main airport, Arlanda, is situated between Uppsala and Stockholm. Bromma airport is centrally situated in Stockholm for flights within Sweden as well as to Brussels. Skavsta airport, 80 minutes south of Stockholm, is fast becoming an important airport.



© www.imagebank.sweden.se. Photographer Patrick Trädgårdh.

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## ***Vaccination***

Generally there are no vaccination requirements before entry to Sweden, however, ticks (the Ixodes ricinus tick or common castor-bean tick, fästing in Swedish) is prevalent across Europe. Sweden is in the high-risk area and it is wise to check the vaccination for TBE upon arrival to Sweden. Ticks live in forest clearings and meadows.

## ***Electricity***

The voltage in Sweden is 230V AC, 50Hz. The plugs may be different from those in your home country, so an adapter might be required.

## ***Cost of living***

To give you a brief idea of the cost of living in Sweden, there are various internet sites to give you a current picture such as: [www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country\\_result.jsp?country=Sweden](http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Sweden), or [www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Work/Move-to-Sweden/Living-costs/](http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Work/Move-to-Sweden/Living-costs/).

## ***Swedish language courses***

Swedish is the official language and is spoken by about 9 million people in Sweden and approximately 300 000 Finnish nationals in Finland. The Swedish language belongs to the North Germanic branch of the Germanic languages, closely related to Danish and Norwegian. Depending on the location of your stay there are different options for learning Swedish while in the country. Courses in Swedish for immigrants (SFI) are provided by the local municipality. English is the first foreign language taught in schools, so most people understand and speak English. For more information and links: [www.researchinsweden.se/en/LiveWorkInSweden/Language-and-leisure/Swedish-language](http://www.researchinsweden.se/en/LiveWorkInSweden/Language-and-leisure/Swedish-language).

## ***Currency***

The currency in Sweden is “krona/kronor”, abbreviated “kr” in Swedish and SEK internationally. One krona is divided in to 100 öre. You can change money in banks and in exchange bureaux. For current exchange rate: [www.forex.se](http://www.forex.se).

## UPON ARRIVAL

### ***National registration number (=personnummer)***

If you plan to stay in Sweden for more than a year you must register with the local tax office (within seven days of your arrival. Look for your local "Skattekontor" at [www.skatteverket.se](http://www.skatteverket.se) or in the telephone directory. When you have registered with the local tax office you will receive your national registration number (=personnummer). It normally takes about two weeks before you receive it by ordinary mail. This consists of your date of birth (year, month, day) and four extra digitals, e.g. 440901-110x. The national registration number is used for many purposes. People are registered by this number and not by names at many places such as hospitals, banks and it functions like a personal identification number. With this number you can apply for an identity card at the bank.

### ***Health and medical care***

If there is an emergency, you can go directly to an emergency ward at the closest hospital. For a medical appointment you could either contact the District Health Centre (Vårdcentral), the District Nurse (Distriktsköterskemottagning) or a private clinic. Each medical district has a child healthcare clinic (Barnvårdscentral, BVC) for all preschool aged children. BVC provides advice to parents, offer regular checkups. Addresses and telephone numbers will be found under the blue pages in the telephone directory. You can reach the Medical Advisory Service (Sjukvårdsrådgivningen) 24 hours a day by calling 1177.

If you need an interpreter at a medical appointment, you should notify the clinic in advance. If you are registered with the National Social Insurance Scheme, the social insurance will pay most of the cost when receiving medical treatment. Medical prescriptions have to be taken to a pharmacy (Apotek). In large cities there are normally some pharmacies that stay open every day of the year.



*Northern lights, Aurora Borealis*

© [www.imagebank.sweden.se](http://www.imagebank.sweden.se) Photographer Tomas Utsi.

### ***Insurances***

If you are an EU-citizen and employed and salaried in Sweden, you are generally entitled to the social benefits from the first day of work. Members of your family are included in the insurance. EU-citizens can normally prove valid insurance by bringing their European Health Insurance Card.

[www.forsakringskassan.se](http://www.forsakringskassan.se) (Swedish Social Insurance Office)

If you come from country not in the EU, you should check if your home country has a mutual agreement with Sweden. Your local Swedish embassy can provide you with the current information. Contact your

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

employer in Sweden to see what kind of insurances might be provided. If you stay less than one year and are not an EU-citizen, you will need to have private health insurance.

[www.kammarkollegiet.se](http://www.kammarkollegiet.se) (the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency).

Insurance of personal belongings can be bought from any company listed under "Försäkringar" in the telephone directory, [www.eniro.se](http://www.eniro.se).

## **Banks**

Banks are normally open Monday-Friday between 10.00-15.00. Some offices have additional opening hours in late afternoon once a week. Banks are closed on weekends. Different banks have different conditions for opening an account. You will need your national registration number (=personnummer, see above) to open an account. At some banks your passport and a certificate from your host department is enough.

## **Shops**

Quite common opening hours for shops are Monday–Friday 10.00-18.00 (or 19.00), Saturday 10.00-14.00 (or 15.00). Large cities and big department stores have more generous opening hours. Systembolaget, a state-run shop, is the only shop where you can buy alcoholic beverages and it is closed on Sundays. Credit cards are widely accepted in most restaurants, shops, bus shuttles from airports etc.

## **Driving**

Like most European countries, Sweden has right-hand traffic. You have to be 18 years old and hold a driver's licence which you must carry with you whenever you drive. Sweden has very strict rules regarding driving and drinking. The police may stop a car at any time to have the driver taking a breathalyzer test. It is compulsory for both the driver, and passengers in the front as well as back seats of the car, to have their safety belts fastened. Dipped headlights are mandatory when driving, even in day-time. Car drivers have to give way for pedestrians and cyclists.

If you have a licence from your own country, you can use it for a maximum of one year in Sweden. All cars must have a red reflector warning triangle that you can display in the street in case of an accident or breakdown. The speed-limits are 30 km/h near schools, 50 km/h in the city, on minor roads 70km/h, on other roads 90 km/h and motorways 110 km/h. Keep an eye out for elks, reindeers and other wildlife when driving in the country-side.

[www.vagverket.se](http://www.vagverket.se) (Swedish National Road Administration)



© www.imagebank.sweden.se Photographer Bengt af Geijerstam.

## **Emergency**

The telephone number for fire brigade, police and ambulance is 112. You will be asked to explain what has happened and from what number you are calling.

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## **Media and News in English**

International newspapers can be bought in various news agents and *Pressbyrån*. Swedish and international newspapers can also be read for free at many libraries. In large cities there are a number of free newspapers in Swedish such as Metro and City. Foreign language films on Swedish TV are subtitled, and not dubbed, into Swedish which makes it easier for international visitors.

[www.sr.se/international](http://www.sr.se/international) (Radio Sweden)

[www.thelocal.se](http://www.thelocal.se) (Newspaper about Sweden in English on the net)

## **Child care and schooling**

Young children can be enrolled part- or full-time at pre-school ("förskola" or "dagis") from age 12 months. Sweden is rather unique; it promises a place at a dagis, or with a childminder (dagmamma), for every child until he or she is old enough to go to school. Charges are based on parents income. Schooling is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16 years. There are nine grades all together. Contact your local municipality in Sweden to learn more about schooling in your neighbourhood. Some municipalities have international schools. The university year consists of 40 weeks (2 semesters), starting in mid-August until mid-June.

More information and links: [www.researchinsweden.se/en/LiveWorkInSweden/Bringing-your-family/](http://www.researchinsweden.se/en/LiveWorkInSweden/Bringing-your-family/)

## **Taxation**

Foreign nationals, who live and are paid salary in Sweden, usually pay Swedish income tax instead of tax in their home country. Sweden has negotiated agreements with about 80 countries in order to avoid double taxation. The agreements vary considerably and information can be obtained from the tax authorities in your own country or in Sweden. Foreign key personnel - executives, experts, researchers, and others - may qualify for special tax relief when working in Sweden. The legislation provides an additional advantage to companies who need foreign expertise for their Swedish operations

[www.skatteverket.se](http://www.skatteverket.se) (Swedish Tax Office)

## **Telephone and television**

When dialling abroad from Sweden you start with 00 and thereafter the country code. The international country code for Sweden is 46. A good idea is to bring your mobile from home and buy a cash card upon arrival. Swedish system supports both GSM and 3G networks. For installation of a conventional telephone in your home, contact [www.telia.se](http://www.telia.se). If you buy or rent a TV, it is compulsory to pay a licence fee. Notify the Broadcasting Corporation (Radiotjänst AB). [www.radiotjanst.se](http://www.radiotjanst.se).

## **Internet access**

There are many Internet cafés in the big cities and student towns. Check with the nearest tourist information. If you have not yet received your personal identity number you might have to pay a deposit.

## **No smoking**

Smoking is not allowed in public places and not in restaurants nor bars. Always ask if it is alright to smoke indoors when visiting somebody's home.

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## **More useful links about Sweden**

There are many good portals about Sweden. Here are some:

[www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se) (the official gateway to Sweden)

[www.visitsweden.com](http://www.visitsweden.com) (Swedish website for travel and tourism information)

[www.sverigeturism.se/smorgasbord/index.html](http://www.sverigeturism.se/smorgasbord/index.html) (the shortcut to Sweden)

<http://www.swedenabroad.com> (Swedish diplomatic missions abroad)

## **Sentences in Swedish**

Although most Swedes speak good English, it is a good idea to learn a few words in Swedish:

Hej	Hello
Tack	Thank you
Tack så mycket	Thank you very much!
Visa mig på kartan var jag är	Please show me on the map where I am!
På återseende	Good-bye!
Tala långsamt	Speak slowly, please!
Talar ni engelska?	Do you speak English?
Jag förstår inte	I don't understand
Kan ni hjälpa mig?	Could you help me, please?
Jag vet inte	I don't know
Var finns det en toalett?	Where's the toilet?
Var kan jag finna en taxi?	Where can I get a taxi?
Var ligger turistbyrån?	Where's the tourist office?
Var ligger närmaste sjukhus?	Where's the nearest hospital?
Var kan jag finna ett apotek?	Where is there a pharmacy / chemist's?
Jag ber om ursäkt	I'm sorry
Det är bra	That's good
God morgon!	Good morning!
God kväll!	Good evening!
God natt!	Good night!
Hur mycket är klockan?	What time is it?
Hur mår ni?	How are you?
Har ni något ledigt rum?	Have you got any vacancies?
En flaska	a bottle of
Ett glas	a glass of
Får jag be om	Could I have, please?
Vad kostar det?	How much is it?
Får jag prova	May I try on, please?
Hur långt är det till...	How far is it to...?
Jag är...	I am...
Mitt namn är...	My name is...
Var ligger ...?	Where is ...?
Idag	Today
Imorgon	Tomorrow
Igår	Yesterday
Nästa dag	Next day
Nästa vecka	Next Week
Höger	Right
Vänster	Left
Rakt fram	Straight on
Rökning förbjuden	No smoking
Flygplan	Aeroplane
Tåg	Train
Buss	Bus/coach
Lexikon	Dictionary
Utgång	Exit

# Handbook for international researchers to Sweden

## CHECKLISTS

### ***Before travelling to Sweden***

Depending on your starting-point and background, there are several things you might need to arrange prior to your travel to Sweden.

- Is your passport valid?
- Do you need a visa, residence permit or work permit?
- Do you need a driving licence? Is it valid in Sweden?
- Organise a health insurance certificate (EU-card, or equivalent).
- Do you need to arrange medical insurance?
- Do you have an insurance that covers your personal property?
- Arrangements for accompanying family members?
- Prepare your luggage: think about what is important for you and what you might want to bring as it could be difficult to find in your new home country such as special kind of seasoning, rice cooker. Do you want to bring it? Borrow or buy from somebody who already lives in Sweden?

### ***Upon arrival in Sweden***

- Register at *Migrationsverket* (the Migration Board).
- For civil registration, for tax purposes and to obtain a *personnummer* (national registration number), contact your local tax office (*Skatteverket*) in Sweden, at the latest one week after your arrival.
- Do you have a valid ID-card? Apply for one at a bank. You need to be accompanied by somebody with a valid ID-card and who can identify you.
- Open a bank account at a bank.
- Register at the Social Insurance Office (*Försäkringskassan*). If you pay tax in Sweden, have a right of residence (or residence permit) and a personal identity number, the Social Insurance Office will automatically send you a paper for registration. NB! The letter will be in Swedish. You will be asked to send your residence permit, if you are non-EU, from the Migration Office and your personal identity number received from the Tax Office.

More answers to your questions will be found on Euraxess Sweden's portal: [www.researchinsweden.se](http://www.researchinsweden.se).

### ***About this handbook***

This handbook has been written in order to give new-comers to Sweden some general and specific information about the country, its citizens and some good hints in order to better prepare the stay. We have tried to keep its content short and concise so you can print out the handbook in a paper version and bring it with you. More detailed information about most subjects can be found on the national portal connected to Euraxess Sweden: [www.researchinsweden.se](http://www.researchinsweden.se).

The information in this handbook is considered to be accurate and up-to-date as of February 2011. Please report any errors to [info@researchinsweden.se](mailto:info@researchinsweden.se). The information provided gives no right for claims or legitimate expectations of any kind. This document is continuously updated. Published by: Euraxess Sweden. Editor: Eva Carnestedt.