



EMBASSY OF SWEDEN



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Platform for increased talent mobility between Sweden and the United States

Project description (September 27th, 2021) translated from Swedish

Summary

With increased global competition and a rapid pace of innovation, having a work force with the required skill set is increasingly important to attract foreign investments and secure long term economic growth.

The U.S. is a leading country for research and education with many of the top universities and global corporations. Establishing long term relationships with American partners within both academia and business would thus be highly valuable to Sweden. More broadly, the complex situation in the world necessitates the strengthening of Swedish foreign relations.

The focus of the project is to strengthen the quality of higher education and research by:

- **Increasing the number of students, trainees and researchers participating in exchange programs between Sweden and the USA**
- **Increasing knowledge exchange through collaborative research and innovation projects**
- **Strengthening the attractiveness of Sweden as a destination for studies, research, and internships**

To maintain quality and relevance, Swedish universities are dependent on international contacts and networks. With strengthened resources, common activities can be carried out between universities and the business community for increased talent mobility between Sweden and the U.S., this to secure the competence needs of tomorrow and promote Sweden as a nation of knowledge. The project will be based on The Swedish-American Chambers of Commerce – SACC-USA’s – bilateral business and talent network.

The Concept

One of the biggest obstacles to economic growth today is the lack of relevant skill sets. Such skills are built through domestic education and internationalization, as well as by attracting foreign expertise. Sweden’s attractiveness as a nation of knowledge is largely dependent on how close international collaboration our universities have.

The concept consists of a three-year-long collaborative project to establish and operate a structured platform for increased talent mobility and strengthened knowledge exchange between Sweden and the U.S.

The project is based on Sweden's export and investment strategy which underscores the importance of access to required skill sets and foreign investment for Sweden's continued prosperity. The project also draws on, and is inspired by, the Government's Research Proposition (Prop. 2020/21:60) and the Government Inquiries "Increasing the Attractiveness of Sweden as a Knowledge Nation" (SOU 2018:78). The inquiry puts forth many recommendations which this project addresses.

Coming to Sweden as a student, researcher or teacher can be a complicated process which requires contact with different government agencies, various organizations, and businesses. In light of this, The Swedish-American Chambers of Commerce – SACC-USA's – experience and responsibility from its bilateral talent mobility program between Sweden and the U.S. is highly valuable.¹

The two pillars of the project are SACC-USA's network of 19 Regional Chambers in the U.S. and their corporate members as well as existing academic and research exchange between Swedish universities and the U.S.

The Purpose

By investing in existing regional structures, available tools and an intensified collaboration between universities and the business community, this platform will:

- **Increase the number of students, trainees and researchers participating in exchange programs between Sweden and the U.S.**
- **Increase knowledge exchange through collaborative research and innovation projects**
- **Strengthen the attractiveness of Sweden as a destination for studies, research, and internships**

With strengthened resources, common activities can be carried out between universities and the business community to promote Sweden as a country of export and knowledge. Swedish universities already work towards this objective but much more can be done in terms of operative coordination and common activities with U.S. contacts.

The Goal

The goal of the project is to:

- **Strengthen the collaboration between Swedish universities and the Swedish-American business community**
 - Map current business collaborations and identify relevant companies and industry groups within the 19 Chamber regions to find synergies and develop new projects between the Swedish universities and Swedish-American business pertaining to research, innovation, and talent mobility.
 - Generate new collaborations emphasizing internships in the U.S. and Sweden through match making and existing recruitment tools.
- **Strengthen the collaboration and mobility between Swedish and American universities**
 - Continuously map existing internship programs to identify content and geographic distribution. Promote the strengthening of existing collaborations and create new

¹SACC-USA is a designated J-1 visa sponsor authorized by the U.S. Department of State. As such, SACC-USA facilitates for Swedes to come to the U.S. as trainees with a US-based company. SACC-USA is also authorized by Migrationsverket to initiate Swedish residence permits for Americans.

transatlantic collaboration agreements to increase the exchange of students and researchers between the participating universities.

- Tie business internships to the agreements.
- **Strengthen the bilateral collaboration concerning research, innovation, and entrepreneurship**
 - Support existing collaborations and create new transatlantic collaboration agreements to increase the exchange of students and researchers between the participating universities in partnership with SACC-USA's regional contacts in the U.S. Create an information portal and meeting places for researchers, entrepreneurs, and investors. Regional SACC Chambers will be engaged in these meeting place activities.
- **Strengthen the attractiveness of Sweden as a destination of studies for American students**
 - Recruitment of more paying students from the U.S. to Sweden through coordinated resource distribution and increased marketing efforts nationally in the U.S. and regionally through 19 Regional Chambers.

Activities

To achieve the overarching goals of the project, the following activities will be implemented:

- Find synergies between Swedish universities and regional SACC Chamber networks.
- Identify and develop Swedish-American exchange programs, business contacts and research collaborations (PhD, post-docs, etc.).
- Increase the attractiveness of the exchange programs by offering internships in connection with studies, in both directions.
- Create an information portal with information concerning bilateral programs, courses, and internships.
- Create meeting places for researchers, companies, students, and investors.
- Enable Swedish students to carry out their thesis project with an American company.
- Recruit more full-time students to Sweden through marketing efforts of Sweden as a destination for studies (career fairs, events, etc.) combined with concluding internships with Swedish companies.
- Facilitate for Swedish universities to be certified to administer American student loans (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA).
- Develop contacts between Swedish universities and Swedish-American companies for more internships in both directions.
- Make an inventory of existing private and public scholarships in both countries for studies and research.
- Create opportunities for exchange concerning academic leadership.
- Identify, educate and coordinate "ambassadors" for education.

The points stated above are example of possible activities. Many of the activities in the project will be mutual for all participating universities, while others are adapted according to the USA strategies of the respective universities. For example, a university may want to primarily develop business contacts, while another may want to focus on research collaborations. There must therefore be a degree of flexibility within the project to meet the needs of the universities and tailor solutions accordingly.

“Ambassadors” for education

Within the framework of this project, a program will also be created for Swedish “ambassadors” for research and higher education, who contribute to the goal and ambition of the project. The program is in line with the previously mentioned SOU 2018:17. There are many relevant stakeholders who can contribute to the program, such as SI, STINT and STARS (Swedish Trans-Atlantic Researchers and Scholars Network). The network of ambassadors will consist of Swedish researchers and teachers, as well as foreign researchers and teachers active at universities across the U.S. with substantial experience of working in Sweden. These make up a previously relatively invisible and underused resource in terms of promoting Sweden as a nation of knowledge.

The Commitment of the Universities

The Swedish universities will be active participants in the project and share relevant information about strategies, experiences, and contacts with partners in the project. The universities are expected to have a designated contact person and be prepared to place students with universities and companies in the U.S., create new collaborative projects with universities and business, in addition to receiving students from the U.S. for studies, preferably combined with an internship.

SACC-USA’s commitment

In the fall of 2021 and with the support of the Embassy of Sweden’s Office of Science and Innovation, SACC-USA will apply for partial funding from the Swedish public sector. The ambition is to attain partial funding corresponding at least to the financial contributions provided by the universities.

SACC-USA will be the project leader and will contract the resources required to carry out the project. SACC-USA will also convene a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the universities, the Embassy, SACC, and the Swedish Institute. The project will also promote the creation of different working groups where the universities can collaborate on mutual interests and activities.

Action plans

An individual action plan with a collective and a specific part for each participating university will be completed in the fall of 2021. The action plans will be based on individual dialogues concerning prerequisites, objectives, and realistic results.

- **Common action plan**

Benefits all participating universities, is built up gradually over 3 years

 - Promotion of Sweden as a nation of education and knowledge.
 - Create an information portal.
 - Make House of Sweden, Washington DC a starting point and meeting place for Swedish promotion of talent mobility, innovation, and research exchange
 - Resource distribution; participation at career fairs
 - Exchange experience concerning FAFSA certification
 - New initiatives/exchange concerning academic leadership
 - Develop initiatives concerning educational and research “ambassadors”

- **Individual action plans**

Focus on one or many activities within the following areas and with specific annual goals.

 - More American students to the universities in the program
 - More exchanges for Swedish students in the U.S.

- Combine studies with internships
- Business contacts/business events, new collaborative projects
- Collaborative project in research and innovation

Measurable result

The activities outlined above will lead to increased internationalization in both directions. Both with regards to Swedish students, trainees and researchers experiencing the U.S., as well as U.S. talent turning to Sweden as an innovative nation of knowledge. The project contributes to cultural diversity and its result will be measured in the number of new collaborations and the number of new placements to the U.S. and to Sweden.

Resource needs

The project will increase talent mobility and strengthen the knowledge exchange between Sweden and the U.S. This requires resources in the U.S., as well as in Sweden and receiving capacity on behalf of the universities. Part of the work consists of developing and managing the project according to the goals and activities outlined above. Match making and information sharing will be vital components of the project, as well as recruitment and placement of students, researchers and trainees between Sweden and the U.S.

The project will be organized as a unit within SACC-USA, with a dedicated and focused responsible Program Director. There will be resources for communication and social media within the unit, and specialized competences will be contracted for certain projects. Resource for coordination will be engaged in Sweden. For local activities with regional SACC Chambers, resources will be commissioned from the specific regional SACC Chamber. In addition, some coordination resources may be engaged throughout the project. The annual cost of staff and resources is budgeted to an estimated 2,5MSEK, activities and special efforts are budgeted to an estimated 1MSEK and other costs such as expenses for travel and offices are budgeted to an estimated 0.5MSEK per year. Given the three-year-long span of the project, the distribution of costs will naturally vary throughout the course of the project. Specific financial follow-up will be done and reported on an ongoing basis to the Steering Committee, which will represent all stakeholders of the project.

Financing

The basic principle with regards to financing is that participating universities co-finance the project at rates equivalent to the Study-in-Sweden project in South Korea, namely 150-200 KSEK per university and year. The planned co-financing of the project is 200 KSEK per university and year. A SACC-USA membership is included in this fee. After thorough preparatory work and constructive dialogue with many of Swedish universities, at least 10 universities will join the project. Like the Study-in-Sweden project (South Korea), government funding is expected to be secured to the corresponding level of an estimated 2 MSEK per year.

As stated above, an engaged and initiated Steering Committee with full insight into activities, costs, and results, which continuously informs all stakeholders of the activities and results of the project, is of utmost importance.