



Eva Nordmark discussed transition package with OECD

Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs at the OECD Stefano Scarpetta visited Sweden on Friday to discuss the Government's reform for improved adaptability in the labour market. During his visit, Mr Scarpetta met with Minister for Employment and Gender Equality Eva Nordmark and representatives of the social partners.

Mr Scarpetta from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has visited Stockholm. The aim of the visit was to study the Government's transition package for improved long-term flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market. During his visit, Mr Scarpetta met with Ms Nordmark together with Minister for Education Anna Ekström's State Secretary Kristina Persdotter. Mr Scarpetta also met with representatives of the social partners to discuss their role in the transition package.

The Government has approved the government bill 'Flexibilitet, omställningsförmåga och trygghet på arbetsmarknaden' (flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market). The proposals come from an agreement between the Government and the Centre Party and are based on a proposal from the trade unions and private sector employers. All workers will gain better opportunities for transition and skills development throughout their working life. In March, the government bill was submitted to the Riksdag for processing. The Riksdag is expected to decide on the proposals in June 2022. When the reforms are fully operational, the estimated total cost to central government will be around SEK 11 billion annually.



New Director-General of the ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Governing Body elected Gilbert Hougbo as the ILO's 11th Director-General on 25 March. Hougbo was most recently President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Prime Minister of Togo and Deputy Director-General of the ILO. Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark and Deputy Minister for Employment Johan Danielsson congratulate the new Director-General.

“The Government congratulates Gilbert Hougbo on his new and important role as Director-General of the ILO. In these uncertain times, with the labour market heavily impacted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the role of the ILO is more vital than it has been for a long time. The situation we are currently experiencing highlights the significance of strong social institutions in our societies, institutions that are the backbone of our democratic States. The social partners should be an integral part of these institutions in all ILO Member States,” says Ms Nordmark.

“I am delighted that Gilbert Hougbo has been elected as the new Director-General. He brings extensive and multi-faceted experience of the UN system, multilateral cooperation and labour market issues. With his solid knowledge, Hougbo will continue to develop the organisation at a very challenging time,” says Mr Danielsson.

Gilbert Hougbo's term as ILO Director-General begins on 1 October 2022. He was elected on 25 March at the 344th Session of the Governing Body. Sweden has been a regular member of the ILO Governing Body since June 2021. As a regular member, Sweden has the right to vote and speak at Governing Body sessions and when the Director-General is elected.



Ukraine and the Swedish labour market

Since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February, the number of people leaving Ukraine has increased rapidly. At a press briefing on 21 March, Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark and Minister for Integration and Migration Anders Ygeman reported on what applies on the Swedish labour market for people covered by the Temporary Protection Directive.

The Temporary Protection Directive adopted by the EU means that people who have fled from Ukraine can be granted a residence permit with temporary protection. Residence permits will initially be valid until 4 March 2023, with the possibility to extend them for another two years.

“Many people coming now want to start working. The basic premise is that they should be able to support themselves through work or private savings. A person who is granted a residence permit with temporary protection under the Temporary Protection Directive will also be granted a work permit,” says Ms Nordmark.

People who have a residence permit with temporary protection who are entitled to work in Sweden are also allowed to register as a jobseeker with Arbetsförmedlingen. The agency can provide tips, advice and support in various languages about the labour market and applying for jobs in Sweden. There are currently many temporary job vacancies that can be applied for.

“We have already seen examples of employers who are interested in hiring people from Ukraine. This is very welcome. I would like to encourage all employers in need of workers who have not already contacted Arbetsförmedlingen to do so,” says Ms Nordmark.



Eva Nordmark to New York to take part in session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

On 14–17 March, Minister for Employment and Gender Equality Eva Nordmark will take part in a session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66). The theme is achieving gender equality in the context of climate change.

“It feels especially important to take part in CSW66 and stand up for human rights when Russia’s illegal aggression against Ukraine forces primarily women and children to flee. This year’s theme also focuses on one of the most important issues of our time: climate change. I look forward to making progress on both gender equality and climate change,” says Ms Nordmark.

During the session, Ms Nordmark will make Sweden’s keynote speech in the General Assembly, take part in several side events and have bilateral meetings with various states and multilateral organisations. Ms Nordmark will lead Sweden’s delegation, which consists of representatives from civil society, public authorities, the Government and the Riksdag. Due to COVID19 restrictions, parts of the delegation will take part digitally via link from Stockholm.

Ms Nordmark will take part in several side events during the week.

- 15 March: Give the opening address at a side event on women’s rights and economic empowerment during an event organised together with the United States and Korea.
- 15 March: Give the opening address at a side event on online violence against women. The South Korean Minister of Gender Equality and Family will also speak.

- 17 March: Take part in a side event co-organised by Sweden on climate change and gender equality together with the Czech Republic and France (the Presidency trio holding their Presidencies of the Council of the European Union one after the another).

During CSW, the Nordic gender equality ministers will also meet with Executive Director of UN Women Sima Sami Bahous. At the meeting, a Nordic commitment on gender equality and climate will be launched and submitted.

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Historic transition package for flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market

On 27 January 2022 the Government decided on a historic transition package to improve flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market in the long term. The proposals are based on an agreement between the Government and the Centre Party.

On 27 January 2022 the Government decided on two proposals on a labour law reform and a new career transition assistance scheme to be referred to the Council on Legislation for consideration.

The proposals are based on an agreement between the Government and the Centre Party, stemming from the January Agreement. The proposals are in line with the agreement in principle that the social partners in the private sector had referred to the Government. The social partners' intention was to take an integrated approach to tackling factors that together can create flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market. They jointly requested that the Government propose how the agreement in principle should be implemented with regard to employment protection and the associated unemployment insurance issues, and how it should be implemented in line with the social partners' proposals on a new public organisation for basic transition and skills support and a new and parallel form of publicly financed student finance.

The Government's proposals include:

Labour law will be reformed, giving employers greater flexibility and better opportunities to adapt skills to operational requirements. Security for employees will be increased through improved predictability in a variety of terms of employment, such as standard working hours and forms of employment. Wider possibilities will be introduced for employers to make

exceptions to the order of priority rules and lower costs when terminating employment, whereby exceptions to the order of priority rules will be extended by one person, and the limit on the size of the employer will be removed. The rules on termination of employment on objective grounds will be made clearer so as to increase predictability for employers and employees. Employers will no longer bear wage costs in the event of disputes concerning the validity of termination. Overall, the reform will make it easier for small and growing businesses to recruit staff and employ them on a permanent basis. The balance between different terms of employment will be improved. General fixed-term employment contracts will be replaced by a new form of fixed-term employment contracts that more rapidly transform into indefinite term employment contract – the time period will be halved. In the event of re-regulation of employees' working hours, employers must follow specific order of priority rules and employees will be entitled to an adjustment period of up to three months. Hiring of temporary staff and full-time work will be regulated.

A new student finance scheme for transition and retraining will be introduced to strengthen employees' position in the labour market. The scheme will make it significantly easier for people in mid-life and with work experience to undertake further education or training using student finance in the form of grants and loans which, for the vast majority, will be equivalent to at least 80 per cent of their wages. Professionals will be able to study for up to 44 weeks (equivalent to one year) while receiving the new student finance. At a time when society and the labour market are changing increasingly rapidly as a result of the digital transformation, the green transition, etc, it is important that people can develop their skills throughout their working lives through lifelong learning. The new student finance scheme is a reform for the freedom of Sweden's workers, who will now have new and improved opportunities to strengthen their position in the labour market. Self-employed people will also be eligible for the scheme. Individuals will be able to initiate their own continuing skills development and retraining to strengthen their position in the labour market. This will strengthen the skills supply for employers, boost Sweden's competitiveness and strengthen individuals' power over their own lives.

The proposed date of entry into force of these legislative amendments is 30 June 2022.

Additional proposals concerning basic retraining and skills support

The memorandum Grundläggande omställnings- och kompetensstöd – för

flexibilitet, omställningsförmåga och trygghet på arbetsmarknaden (‘Basic retraining and skills support – for flexibility, adaptability and security in the labour market’, Ministry Publications Series 2021:16) that was circulated for consultation proposed the introduction of a new basic transition and skills support scheme. The scheme will aim to strengthen the position of individuals in the Swedish labour market. The basic transition and skills support will consist of public basic support for individuals who are not covered by collective agreements, and central government financing of the basic transition and skills support provided by registered transition organisations. The consultation concerning the memorandum has identified a need to supplement certain proposals to make the scheme fit for purpose. The Ministry of Employment has therefore decided that an addendum to the proposal will be circulated for consultation.

The proposed act on retraining and skills support does not have to be referred to the Council on Legislation.

Central government costs of the proposals

When the reforms are fully operational (in 2026), the estimated total cost to central government will be around SEK 11 billion annually, taking into account wage trends. The annual cost of the new student finance scheme will vary, as it is partly linked to economic developments. Retraining support will be provided subject to the availability of funds.

Inquiry on collectively agreed unemployment benefits

Acting on a proposal by the social partners, in August 2021 the Government appointed an inquiry tasked with reviewing the conditions for a new form of collectively agreed unemployment benefits. The inquiry is due to submit its final report by 15 December 2024.

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Government Offices of Sweden

Eva Nordmark took part in EU meeting on gender equality

Minister for Employment and Gender Equality Eva Nordmark took part in a digital meeting with other EU gender equality ministers on Monday 31 January. At the meeting, Ms Nordmark presented the priorities of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2023 in this area.

Gender equality ministers from most of the EU Member States took part in the meeting, at which a trio Presidency declaration on gender equality was presented. The declaration was jointly prepared by France, Czechia and Sweden. Sweden presented its activities in the area of gender equality ahead of its Presidency of the Council in 2023.

The meeting also included discussions on women's labour force participation and gender equality in working life in a life-course perspective. Ms Nordmark stressed the importance of increasing the employment rate among foreign-born women, and also women's right to full-time employment and to gender equality in lifelong learning.

Published 31 January 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Change of government, 30 November 2021

Today in the Riksdag, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson announced the ministers who will serve in the Government. The change of government takes place at a Council of State at the Royal Palace presided over by His Majesty the King. The Council of State begins at 13.00.

Sweden's new Government consists of the Prime Minister and 22 ministers.

Prime Minister's Office

Magdalena Andersson, Prime Minister

Hans Dahlgren, Minister for EU Affairs

Ministry of Employment

Eva Nordmark, Minister for Employment and Gender Equality

Johan Danielsson, Minister for Housing and Deputy Minister for Employment

Ministry of Finance

Mikael Damberg, Minister for Finance

Max Elger, Minister for Financial Markets

Ida Karkiainen, Minister for Public Administration

Ministry of Defence

Peter Hultqvist, Minister for Defence

Ministry of Infrastructure

Tomas Eneroth, Minister for Infrastructure

Khashayar Farmanbar, Minister for Energy and Digital Development

Ministry of Justice

Morgan Johansson, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs

Anders Ygeman, Minister for Integration and Migration

Ministry of Culture

Jeanette Gustafsdotter, Minister for Culture

Ministry of the Environment

Annika Strandhäll, Minister for Climate and the Environment

Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation

Anna-Caren Säterberg, Minister for Rural Affairs

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Lena Hallengren, Minister for Health and Social Affairs

Ardalan Shekarabi, Minister for Social Security

Ministry of Education and Research

Anna Ekström, Minister for Education

Lina Axelsson Kihlblom, Minister for Schools

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Anna Hallberg, Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs

Matilda Ernkrans, Minister for International Development Cooperation

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Published 30 November 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Sweden's new Government

Today in the Riksdag, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven announced the ministers who will serve in the Government. The change of government will take place at a Council of State at the Royal Palace presided over by His Majesty The King. The Council of State will begin at 14.15.

Sweden's new Government consists of the Prime Minister and 21 ministers.

Prime Minister's Office

Prime Minister

Stefan Löfven

Minister for EU Affairs

Hans Dahlgren

Ministry of Employment

Minister for Employment

Eva Nordmark

Minister for Gender Equality and Housing, with responsibility for urban development, anti-segregation and anti-discrimination

Märta Stenevi

Ministry of Finance

Minister for Finance

Magdalena Andersson

Minister for Public Administration

Lena Micko

Minister for Financial Markets and Deputy Minister for Finance

Åsa Lindhagen

Ministry of Defence

Minister for Defence

Peter Hultqvist

Ministry of Infrastructure

Minister for Infrastructure

Tomas Eneroth

Minister for Energy and Digital Development

Anders Ygeman

Ministry of Justice

Minister for Justice and Migration

Morgan Johansson

Minister for Home Affairs

Mikael Damberg

Ministry of Culture

Minister for Culture and Democracy, with responsibility for sport

Amanda Lind

Ministry of the Environment

Minister for Environment and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister

Per Bolund

Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation

Ibrahim Baylan

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Minister for Health and Social Affairs

Lena Hallengren

Minister for Social Security

Ardalan Shekarabi

Ministry of Education and Research

Minister for Education

Anna Ekström

Minister for Higher Education and Research

Matilda Ernkrans

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ann Linde

Minister for International Development Cooperation

Per Olsson Fridh

Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs

Anna Hallberg

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Sweden gathers Member States to protest against European minimum wages

At Sweden's initiative, several EU Member States gathered to discuss the Minimum Wage Directive. The meeting resulted in several Member States joining together to send a letter to the EU Presidency. In the letter, the ministers object to the way the issue has been handled, and suggest that a legally binding directive is not the right approach.

The letter sends a clear message that negotiations on the issue should wait for the opinion now being prepared by the Council's Legal Service on the proposed minimum wage's compatibility with the legal basis.

– It is important to gather many Member States in order to influence the issue. From Sweden's perspective, we are very concerned that the legislative proposal could have a negative effect on our wage formation model and consider that the EU should not interfere in determining which wages and conditions should apply in Member States. The Government will continue to take forceful action to ensure that the proposal from the European Commission does not jeopardise the Swedish collective agreement model and the social partners' responsibilities for wage formation, says Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark.

The letter was signed by ministers from Austria, Estonia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Sweden.



Eva Nordmark discusses COVID-19 pandemic with ILO Director-General

Today, Tuesday, Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark took part in a meeting with ILO Director-General Guy Ryder. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market.

Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark met with Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Tuesday. The topics discussed included the work of the future, green transition in the labour market and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the labour market hard, which has had a massive impact on already vulnerable groups. A working life built on precarious employment and exploitation increases the risk of spreading COVID-19, and of social and financial vulnerability,” says Ms Nordmark.

Ms Nordmark and Mr Ryder discussed the need for more employers in the world to be covered by security systems to mitigate the financial impact of the pandemic, as well as the importance of stepping up working environment efforts globally to protect workers in the crisis. They also discussed the importance of social dialogue and international cooperation in handling both the current pandemic and future crises.

On Tuesday, Ms Nordmark will also take part in a digital conference organised by the Swedish ILO Committee marking 100 years of cooperation between Sweden and the ILO. Mr Ryder will also take part in the conference. The Committee will launch an anthology highlighting Sweden’s cooperation with the ILO at the conference.



European Commission wants to protect the Swedish model

Yesterday, the European Commission presented a proposal for a framework for adequate minimum wages across EU Member States. The Government welcomes the fact that the proposal will not impose an obligation on Sweden to introduce a statutory minimum wage or make collective agreements universally applicable.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced when she took office that she intended to present a legal proposal on minimum wages during her tenure. Today, the Commission proposed an EU directive. It proposes a framework at EU level to ensure adequate minimum wage levels and workers' access to minimum wage protection, either through statutory minimum wages or wages set by collective agreements. In the proposal, the Commission writes that the Directive does not interfere with the freedom of Member States to either set statutory minimum wages or promote access to minimum wage protection through collective agreements. It is explicitly stated that the Directive does not entail an obligation on Member States to introduce statutory minimum wages or make collective agreements universally applicable, which the Government welcomes.

The Government, in close dialogue with the social partners, has worked to ensure that the proposal on minimum wages is not legally binding. The Government also has particularly close cooperation with Denmark, which has a similar labour market model to that in Sweden.

“I am strongly critical of EU interference in wage formation. But I can also say that the Commission has designed a proposal that respects countries where wages are solely set through collective agreements. It is now important that we examine the proposal carefully and continue to work closely with other countries,” says Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark.

Essentially, the Government remains critical of the EU's decision to move forward with a legally binding directive. Sweden, in cooperation with other relevant actors, will continue to make it clear that the EU should not interfere in the Swedish collective agreement model.

“Addressing social challenges is important for the cohesion of the entire EU. But proposals from the EU to achieve this must not risk destroying wage formation in countries such as Sweden, where it's already working well. The Government will not accept the EU deciding which wages should apply in Sweden. Trade unions and employers will continue to negotiate conditions and wages in the Swedish labour market,” says Ms Nordmark.

Published 29 October 2020



SEK 30 million to fight work-related crime

In the Budget Bill for 2021, the Government proposes a permanent increase of SEK 30 million in the Swedish Work Environment Authority's administrative appropriation. This will better enable the Swedish Work Environment Authority and other agencies to work in a focused and collaborative manner to continue to fight fraud, regulatory non-compliance and crime in the Swedish labour market. The Government's proposal is based on an agreement between the government parties, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party.

In 2018–2020 the Government has invested SEK 18 million per year to strengthen efforts to combat unfair competition in the labour market. The Government has previously tasked eight agencies – Arbetsförmedlingen (the Swedish Public Employment Service), the Swedish Work Environment Authority, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority, Försäkringskassan (the Swedish Social Insurance Agency), the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, the Swedish Migration Agency, the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Tax Agency – with jointly developing efficient and effective working methods in 2018–2020 for multi-agency controls to combat fraud, regulatory non-compliance and work-related crime. This assignment was coordinated by the Swedish Work Environment Authority.

In February 2020, the Minister for Employment decided to task an inquiry with following up and analysing the work on multi-agency controls to fight fraud, regulatory non-compliance and work-related crime. The inquiry will also propose measures in this area and actions required to ensure that efforts are effective and efficient. The final report is due by 30 December 2020.

The proposal is due to come into force on 1 January 2021 through

appropriation directions to the Swedish Work Environment Authority. The Government intends to inform about continued measures to fight fraud, regulatory non-compliance and crime in the Swedish labour market.

Published 28 September 2020



Eva Nordmark comments on the situation concerning union rights in Belarus

Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark has urged the Belarusian Government to fully respect workers' rights and freedoms and to release the detained trade unionists.

“I take a very serious view of the union rights violations taking place in connection with the protests following the election. The election was neither free nor fair. I urge the Belarusian Government to fully respect workers' rights and freedoms and to release the detained trade unionists who took part in peaceful protests and strikes,” says Ms Nordmark.

Belarus has ratified the International Labour Organization's (ILO) core conventions and has thereby committed to respecting the freedom of association, including the right to organise and take part in strikes. The country has been repeatedly criticised by the ILO Committee of Experts for restricting the freedom of association. In Belarus, trade union organisations are not allowed to receive support from foreign organisations to hold meetings, demonstrations or strikes, or to produce or distribute campaign material or hold seminars. The right to strike is very limited and any breach of the extremely strict legislation may result in trade union organisations being banned.

Published 16 September 2020



Letter calls for Nordic model in the EU

Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark, together with Denmark's Minister for Employment Peter Hummelgaard, has sent a letter to European Commissioner Nicolas Schmit. In the letter, they urge the EU to safeguard the Nordic model, in which trade unions and employers negotiate wages.

“We have a strong and well-functioning labour market model in Sweden. I will not accept the EU interfering in wage formation in Sweden. Trade unions and employers will continue to negotiate conditions and wages in the Swedish labour market. Together with Denmark, we have outlined how the EU can promote wage formation based on collective agreements rather than statutory minimum wages,” says Ms Nordmark.

The European Commission has announced an initiative to ensure that all workers in the EU receive a reasonable minimum wage. In a joint letter to European Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, Ms Nordmark and Mr Hummelgaard write that they do not believe that binding regulations on a minimum wage is the right way to achieve fair wages in the EU. Instead, they advocate the Nordic model, where employers and employees negotiate wages. The Commission is urged to identify and respond to the challenges facing the social dialogue in the Member States.

The Commission's proposal is expected to be presented during the fourth quarter of this year. A second and final consultation with the social partners at EU level on a possible initiative is currently in progress.

On Friday afternoon, Ms Nordmark will have a bilateral discussion with Mr Schmit.



Government Offices of Sweden

Eva Nordmark takes part in EU meeting on measures for employment and businesses in light of COVID-19

Yesterday, Thursday 19 March, EU employment and social ministers took part in an informal video conference. The agenda included issues related to the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19.

Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark and her EU counterparts discussed the impact of COVID-19 on employment and welfare systems in EU Member States. The socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 are one of four priority areas identified by EU leaders.

“Sweden has taken forceful action and presented a crisis package to mitigate the impact on Swedish jobs and businesses. A system for short-term layoffs was rapidly put in place and this is an important support for both businesses and employees in saving jobs. In today’s meeting, I emphasised the importance of a well-functioning EU single market even in difficult times if we are to succeed in reducing the impact of the crisis on jobs and businesses,” says Ms Nordmark.

The ministers also discussed how EU instruments such as the European Social Fund can be adapted and used.

“In Sweden, we are now looking at the possibility of certain initiatives within the national Social Funds programme to respond to the challenge facing the labour market,” says Ms Nordmark.

For more information and interview requests, please contact Gabriel Dahlander, Press Secretary to the Minister for Employment.

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