

Measures to attract international students – the case of Sweden

EMN Conference 2012

Immigration of International Students to the EU

29 - 30 October 2012

Paralimni, Cyprus

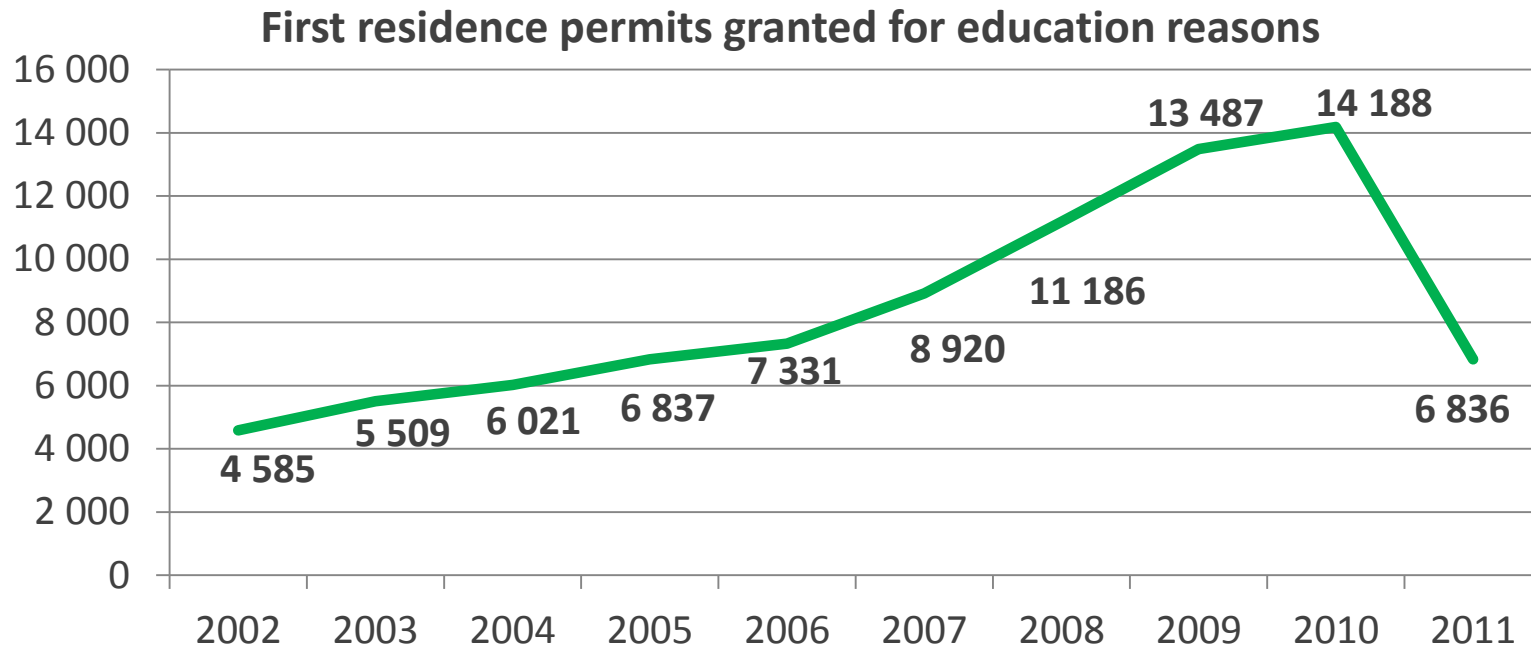


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Background: Number of third country national students coming to Sweden



Source: Swedish Migration Board; Figures include residence permits issued for studies at universities (2011: 73%), other studies (7%) and family members of students (20%)

Main reason for decline 2011: Introduction of tuition fees for third-country national students

Introduction of tuition fees (2011)

- **Tradition of free higher education in Sweden**
- However: Universities should compete internationally for attracting students on the basis of high quality education, not on the basis of offering free studies
(Government Bill 2009/10:65)
- Since 2011, third country nationals who wish to study in Sweden have to pay tuition fees
Exceptions: students that take part in exchange programmes, doctoral students, persons who already have a residence permit
- Drop in student immigration 2011 underlines that measures to attract students are a priority in Sweden

Marketing and recruitment strategies, information provision

- Website www.studyinsweden.se serves as a portal and hub for information regarding studies in Sweden
- Marketing for Sweden as a study destination by the *Swedish Institute, Swedish missions abroad* and individual *higher education institutions* (such as through agents, participation in education fairs, international offices and cooperation with foreign universities)

Legal aspects: Residence permits, application procedures

- As a general rule, in Sweden, residence permits for study reasons must be applied for from abroad
- Visas are only used for short-term stays and in exceptional circumstances
- Since 2011, biometric identifiers must be given in person at a Swedish mission abroad
- Time from application to decision shall be as short as possible (government objective: three months)
- No fast-tracking for special groups, but processing can be fast when applications are complete from the beginning
- Possibility of applying for a residence permit via the internet for nationals of almost all countries

Legal aspects: Access to labour market during and after studies

- International students have full access to the Swedish labour market
- Change of status from student permit to residence permit for work is only possible when the applicant has a job (or job offer) before the student permit expires
- Number of work permits issued to former students is increasing

Legal aspects: Conditions for students' dependents

- International students can be accompanied by spouses/partners and children
- 20% of all residence permits for study reasons were granted to dependents in 2011
- However: Applicants must prove that they are in possession of sufficient means to support their families; dependents are not allowed to work

Welcoming international students in Sweden



- Higher education institutions invest into more welcoming structures (such as “welcome days”, guaranteed housing)
- More and more education offered in English
- New scholarship schemes introduced in 2011



- The number of scholarships is considered to be too small to counter-balance the effects of the introduction of tuition fees
- Persons staying in Sweden on a short-term basis are not registered in the population registry and are therefore not issued a personal identity number, which can lead to difficulties concerning bank accounts, mobile phones and jobs

Inter-agency cooperation

- **Forum for internationalisation** started in 2008
- **Members:** Government ministries, agencies, representatives for higher education institutions, students' union
- **Objective:** Improve coordination between Swedish authorities and organisations dealing with the internationalisation of higher education institutions
- Forum has identified and addressed a range of problems, such as problems pertaining to intra-EU mobility of third country national students

Conclusions and future options

- Despite the new tuition fees, Sweden can be seen as an attractive destination for international students
- However, several **improvements** could be envisaged:
 - Introduction of a residence permit for graduates to look for work after completion of studies
 - Introduction of a work permit for students' dependents
 - Efforts to further speed up the application process for residence permits
 - Eradicate barriers to intra-EU mobility of third-country national students
 - Further local and regional integration efforts; promotion and facilitation of contacts between international students and employers
 - Expansion of exchange and scholarship programmes

Thank you for your attention!



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