



Country guide for new EPIET/EUPHEM fellows

SVERIGE

(Sweden)

FOLKHÄLSOMYNDIGHETEN

Last updated: 08.04.2014

Intro

Dear Fellow,

This guide was originally written by Alin Gherasim in April 2011. He is/was a Fellow in EPIET Cohort 16, based at SMI during, originally from Romania. It was then updated by Pete Kinross, EPIET fellow at ECDC in 2011-2013. I'm updating it in April 2014.

This document records 'essential, important and useful' info for Fellows that will help them settle in Stockholm and make the transition to this new country a little easier.

If you remember nothing else from this document, remember these two things: 1. Start looking for a place to live as soon as you know you're going to Sweden, and accept a place if you get a long-term offer in a good location, it'll be worth the cash. 2. Get a personal number as soon as possible after you arrive.

Good luck!

Michael Edelstein
EPIET Cohort 18

Index

A) Essential

1. How to register as a resident on arrival
2. How to find accommodation
3. What are the average costs of accommodation (e.g., rent, estate agent fees)
4. How to make health insurance and social security arrangements
5. How to access health care
6. How to handle the tax system in the host country

B) Important

7. How to open a bank account
8. How to choose among language courses and schools available (e.g. offered at the host site/ attended by previous fellows)
9. How to interpret the institute payslip

C) Useful

10. Contact details of previous fellows who are willing to share them
11. Recommended removal companies (e.g. used by the host site employees or by previous fellows)
12. Public transport information
13. Internet and mobile phone providers
14. Useful websites e.g. for expatriates

A) Essential

1. How to register as a resident on arrival

Your personal number will be the most important thing to acquire in Sweden. It allows you to do everything: get paid, access healthcare, get sick leave, get a phone, a bank account etc etc... Even a loyalty card at the supermarket. Until you have the personnummer, you will feel like an illegal immigrant.

To get a personnummer, if you are not an EU/EEA citizen, you first need to get a residence permit. The procedure is explained at the following website:

<http://www.yourlivingcity.com/stockholm/essentials/personal-number-sweden/>

If you are an EU/EEA citizen, you can go straight to the tax Agency (Skatteverket) with the right documentation to get your personal number. The procedure is explained here:

<http://www.skatteverket.se/servicelankar/otherlanguages/inenglish/individualemployees/movingtosweden.4.2b543913a42158acf800027235.html>

Your HR department can help you with getting it if you are struggling

If you can fill in forms to get the personal number during your first or second day at work, the number can arrive within a week or two of the end of the initial training, i.e. it takes something like 3-4 weeks.

2. How to find accommodation

Finding accommodation to rent in Stockholm is notoriously difficult. According to a staff survey at ECDC in 2011 half the expats at ECDC had bought a place because the housing situation is so difficult here. Of those who rented, at least a third had moved 2-4 times in the past year. So, here's some do's and don'ts:

Do:

- 1) Start early. Start early.
- 2) Ask everyone you know if they know someone in Stockholm who has an apartment. Not just friends, ask everyone.
- 3) Look on <http://www.blocket.se/> and on <http://www.bostaddirekt.com/> for available apartments. Bostaddirekt has a fee to join but it is worth it (better quality flats). That's how I found my flat
- 4) Place an ad on <http://www.blocket.se/> in parallel to all your other efforts. This is really worth doing, as many people do not advertise their flats but rather screen people who are looking and contact them directly. I had at least 4-5 people contacting me and offering me flats to rent this way. I strongly suggest you place the ad in Swedish (ask someone to write it for you), put a picture of yourself and clearly mention in the ad that you are professional (if you are a Dr, mention that), that you have a fixed salary for a fixed contract of 2 years that will not be renewed. If you come with a family, put a family picture with your kids. Swedes love kids and families as you will soon find out.

Don't

- 1) Pay an agency to find you a place. It's common to waste your money.
- 2) Don't be discouraged. Short term lets, of 3-6 months are common as rules within each apartment building can limit the time someone can sublet to under a year. I hear that the rationale of maximizing owners vs renters is that owners treat the building and co-occupants better, and community spirit is improved. Of course this is debatable. Therefore if you clearly mention that your contract is limited to 2 years and is non-renewable will help you.
- 3) Don't believe the hype on the internet. Horror stories prevail. I have not heard of most of them coming true for the 200 ECDC expats. The main problem is that it can take ages to find somewhere central enough, and then it's only for 3 months.

Also, note that you will most likely rent "Second hand", ie sublet (rent from someone already renting rather than the flat owner). While this is illegal in most countries, it is perfectly legal in Sweden.

3. What are the average costs of accommodation (e.g., rent, estate agent fees)

There are mostly no agency fees since there are no estate agents for rental. If you register with bostaddirekt.com, then I think the fee is SEK 400/month. Regarding rent, Pete (Cohort 17) paid 8000SEK for a 40sqm apartment with a balcony by St Eriksplan, with almost all bills included. I paid 13000 SEK for 80sqm

in a brand new luxury block bang on in the centre, with all bills and internet included. On the whole, rent is not cheap but cheaper than Paris or London.

Look for a place as central as possible (public transport radiates from T-centralen), preferably not facing a main road (there's little traffic noise in Stockholm, all limited to main roads), preferably close to shops (places further from the centre commonly require a bus trip), preferably close to the subway or train station.

Most people travel half an hour to the Karolinska campus, where ECDC Folkhalsomyndigheten are based. You can estimate travel times very accurately using this website: <http://sl.se/Visitor/Plan-your-journey/>.

A flat that has [2 bedrooms with a separate living room and kitchen and bathroom and decent sized hallway and even a largish balcony] = a 3 room flat. A common type of flat, that has a separate kitchen etc, but the bedroom as part of the living room, usually in a small recessed area, is called a 1.5 room flat.

It is common for apartments to have large storage areas for each flat in the room or basement, e.g. 2x3m. It is also Very common for apartments to have communal laundry areas, where you book an appointment using a very simple system. Swedes respect this and each other's space, and laundry ☺.

4. How to make health insurance and social security arrangements

Health insurance: As soon as you have a personal number, even a temporary one, you should have health insurance. All you need to do is find a local GP and go and register. Your HR department is definitely responsible for providing you with this information.

5. How to access health care

In emergencies, call 112. (113 is police, 114 is fire).

To find a medical practitioner, consult the medical guide *Vårdguiden*. You can find the guide for free in pharmacies. The information is also available (in Swedish only) on their website <http://www.1177.se/Stockholm/Hitta-varld>

For information about private practitioners, consult the medical guide *Privat Vård*. You can find the guide for free in pharmacies. You can also use their website <http://www.privatvard.info/> (in Swedish).

When you call your primary health care centre (*vårdcentralen*), you usually talk to a nurse who assesses your situation and then offers you an appointment. Some medical centres use a system where you first get in touch with an answering machine. You have to leave your name and telephone number, and they call you back to make an appointment. You can also book appointments online once you are registered.

You pay <200SEK for each visit to a (family) doctor, up to a maximum of something like 1500SEK in a year, then it's free.

You may also call 08-320-100 (*Vårdguiden*, available 24 h/day, 7 days/week) for general information and to talk to a nurse for advice. After you have heard the first automatic information in Swedish you press 1 to have somebody at the information desk who will be able to guide you further (also in English).

Hospitals, Stockholm North:

- Capio St Görans sjukhus

Tel: 08-587 010 00

Sankt Göransplan 1, 112 81 Stockholm
(on the blue line of the subway, stop: St.Görans sjukhus station)

<http://www.stgoran.se>

• Danderyds sjukhus

Tel: 08-655 50 00

Mörbygårdsvägen, Danderyd

<http://www.ds.se>

• Karolinska universitetssjukhuset, Solna

Tel: 08-517 700 00

<http://www.karolinska.se/>

Hospitals, Stockholm South:

• Södersjukhuset

Tel: 08-616 21 10 or 08-616 21 20

Sjukhusbacken 10, 118 83 Stockholm (in Södermalm)

<http://www.sodersjukhuset.se>

• Karolinska universitetssjukhuset, Huddinge

Tel: 08-585 800 00

Hälsovägen 141, 141 52 Huddinge

(Pendeltåg to Södertälje/Märsta; stop: Flemingsberg's station)

<http://www.karolinska.se/>

• Södertälje sjukhus

Tel: 08-550 240 00

Rosenborgsgatan 6-10, 152 40 Södertälje

<http://www.sns.sll.se>

Some **medical centers** also offer medical care for light emergency after the usual medical centers have closed for the day. You can find their information in *Vårdguiden* (Search for *Akut vård, närakut*) and on www.1177.se. The page is in Swedish only, but you can read their contact information easily. Enter *närakut* and your location in the first box "*Sök på Vårdguiden*" (EX: *närakut solna*). Click on "*Sök*". In the right column on the new page, you get a list of all medical centers that offer care in your area. You can click on their names to get their address, telephone number and opening hours.

There is also a place at Dalagatan 9, Stockholm, that has an outpatient clinic from 17:00 – 21:00 on weekdays, and 08:00 – 22:00 on weekends. Call in advance, 0046 8672 3990.

6. How to handle the tax system in the host country

You will receive salary, therefore you should ask your HR department. Note that tax is taken at source, so the salary you receive every month is net of tax. You still need to fill in a tax return every year. It's quite straightforward if your only income in Sweden is your salary.

B) Important

7. How to open a bank account

You normally need a personnummer to open a bank account, but Handelsbanken in Solna recognises the peculiarities of expatriate clients, and I managed to open a bank account there before I got a personnummer. Elsewhere it might be more difficult. Handelsbanken is fine in my experience.

8. How to choose among language courses and schools available (e.g. offered at the host site/ attended by previous fellows)

It's embarrassing how far English will get you in Sweden. But you still need to master at least basic Swedish, as all meetings and communication in Folkhalsomyndigheten is in Swedish. You can conduct one to one meetings in English, but team meetings and regular communication will be in Swedish and you will be expected to contribute.. So, Swedish courses:

- A) Google 'SFI' for a course. It's free, commonly used, and you get cash for completing it (yep), but it requires attendees to retake if they miss more than a few classes. The EPIET and EUPHEM timetable could prevent you completing their requirements. As you may want to progress through classes, this may not be a sensible option.
- B) Folksuniversitet classes are 5 weeks only, cost 2475 SEK / 5 weeks, and are quite good
- C) Private lessons. I did this. Some of your days can be Long, sometime courses or missions can remove weeks. This flexible option was useful, even though more expensive. Expect to pay 150-400 SEK an hour. Search online.
- D) I found teaching myself basic Swedish with Rosetta Stone (www.rosettastone.eu) before coming was very useful.

C) Useful

9. Contact details of previous fellows who are willing to share them

Email: Michael.edelstein@doctors.org.uk . Happy to hear from you. Yes, do pass my email address on to friends or colleagues, but please do not enter this address onto any website or form (this strategy successfully avoids spam).

10. Recommended removal companies

Check out this excel sheet which may help you too. <http://www.epietalum.net/content/removal-companies-previously-used-fellows>

11. Public transport information

I have found cycling to be the most effective mode of transport in Stockholm. It's free, they have good cycling paths everywhere and you can get special winter tyres for the winter.

If cycling is not your thing, then a monthly card is around 800 SEK and gets you unlimited travel on all public transport in Stockholm and the surroundings. Buying a 3-month travel card is an excellent investment if your course(s)/mission(s) schedule(s) permit

You need to get a travel card, either from the SI shop in the central station or from a convenience store (7-elevenm Presbyrån). This gives you a 20SEK credit card-sized pass. You charge it up like a credit card, and just touch it on the blue pads you see at the barriers in train/metro stations, and on buses.

12. Internet and mobile phone providers

Mobile Phones:

Would you like a phone contract for 2 years? For 1 year? Yeah, so did I. Forget it. No, seriously forget it. Firstly, you have to have a personal number. Then you have to have been paying tax for a year. Then you can get a two year contract. And then the rates aren't even that good! A pay-as-you-go SIM card, that you charge up with vouchers bought... Everywhere, are good value. I use comviq and pay about 250 SEK per month for unlimited calls and 3Gb of data per month.

This requires an unlocked phone. These are cheaper outside Sweden.

Internet:

Initially: Buy a 3G or 4G USB stick. Yes, Stockholm is one of the first cities to have a 4G network. I got 3G, and it was 1-2MB/s in by 1st floor apartment, which faced the inner courtyard, at the bottom of a hill. If you are on the top floor at the top of the hill, you can get 3MB/s with 3G, and up to perhaps 10G with 4G. Go into any phonehouse shop, or electrical store, or even a 7-11. They will sell you this.

Broadband: A pain in the butt to get, but when you do life is all sweet. Sweden has the third fastest broadband internet in the world. I chose to get a ferociously fast max 100MB/s for 400SEK/month rather than the unspeakably fast 200MB/s. Broadband requires a personal number, and a phone line. If your phone line is not great, or the wall attachment is wrong the company will come put it in for free. Call 'ComHem'. Trust me, don't muck about, go to them. They will sell/give you a modem and wifibox all in one. There is the option to have TV with this too. Internet companies have territories. So either they can do your building or if they can't, there's perhaps one other decent company, which they'll recommend, or ask your co-workers. Anyway, this is all nice to know, but irrelevant if you don't have a personal number. So, early on, get a 3G/4G USB. I bought myself an extension cord for this too, so I could hang the USB high up over the curtain rail. (this info could save you hours from your life..!).

13. Useful websites e.g. for expatriates

General: The local.se has interesting Sweden/Stockholm news for English speakers . Yourlivingcity.com has a lot of useful information too

Weather: Sweden's general level of sophistication and modernity in all spheres of social and professional life is near unparalleled, but still, somehow, they're weather forecasting is really quite bad. If it says 'rain' check out the probability that this will happen. It's often 20% chance of thunderstorm. Hmm. Locals look at the Norwegian weather report for Stockholm. <http://www.yr.no/sted/Sverige/Stockholm/Stockholm/>

Essential electrical stuff: The road Kungsholmen is good for electrical stuff. El giganten is comprehensive

Hardware: Clas Ohlson is reasonably priced and comprehensive, otherwise of course there's 2 huge IKEAs

Supermarkets: Cheapest supermarkets are Lidl and Willys. Then ICA and COOP are next. Then Hemköp is more upmarket. But the prices are not so different. Food is expensive in Sweden compared to other EU countries

APPENDIX: Alin's info for Sweden from April 2011

EPIET fellow start-up guide

First administrative steps

1. At Folkhalsomyndigheten.se
 - a. Get SMI building pass
 - b. Email address
 - c. SmiNet account

You will get help from the admin team for this.

2. Opening a bank account

With almost every bank in Sweden you will need a "personnummer" in order to open up a bank account. If you can wait for this then no problem but if you want to open one straight away, your only option is to try the **Handelsbanken** office in Solna. They are used to dealing with ECDC staff who also do not have personnummers. However only some staff members know about this so it is worth phoning up beforehand to check that suitable people are there and will help you.

Address: Centralvägen 21, 171 21 Solna
Tel. 08 56 84 21 00

Opening times:

Mon - Thurs 9.30-18.00

Fri 9.30-15.00

Sat 10.00-14.00

Take bus 506 to Solna Centrum

Take with you:

- Passport
- EPIET Contracts

3. Trying (!) to become Swedish

- a. Register at **migrationsverket** (<http://www.migrationsverket.se/>) either
 - i. Online at: http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/1231_en.html

OR

- ii. Use the paper form

(http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.56e4f4801246221d25680002506/blur_140011_en.pdf) and take it (or post it) to the Solna office:

Address: Pyramidvägen 2 A

Opening hours: Monday-Tuesday 9.00—15.00

Wednesday closed

Thursday 9.00—18.00

Friday 9.00—12.00

- b. Once you have received your proof of “Right of residence” from Migrationsverket (it will come in the post before you get back from Menorca) go to **Skatteverket**.

Take with you:

- Passport
- EPIET Contracts
- Letter from migrationsverket

Please note, if you are an EU citizen you do not need a letter from Migrationsverket. You can go straight to Skatteverket. Check online for the list of needed documentation

- c. Once you have received your personnummer (should only take a couple of weeks), go back to Skatteverket and complete a form for the **Försäkringskassan**. www.forsakringskassan.se This gives you access to social insurance and healthcare.

****NOTE:** Be very careful when submitting papers online. One wrong paper or a missing one could delay obtaining the personnummer by months! Be sure to always show them BOTH the host site agreement and the ECDC contract.

4. Mobile phone – you will have to get a “pay-as-you-go” sim card until you get your personnummer. Then you will have to shop around, some companies (like Telia) require that you have lived in Sweden for 8 months before they can give you a contract, even if you have a personnummer.

Language courses

→ *In the beginning...*

We would suggest that you start with an intensive Swedish course which meets for 2 hours every day for 4 weeks. The one we have all done is called "Intensive A1 Swedish" at Folkuniversitetet and costs 4925 SEK. For your first language course SMI let you go during work hours, this course runs from 9 -11:15 a.m. everyday. It requires also to buy the books: Rivstart A1 and A2, you can find them on various bookshop indicated on the website.

<http://www.folkuniversitetet.se/Har-finns-vi/Stockholm/>

Another option would be: <http://www.medborgarskolan.se/>

→ *Later on.....*

After the A1 course you are expected to continue with Swedish outside of work hours. You could either:

- take another group course at Folkuniversitetet or Medborgarskolan
- tag along to the group courses run by Berlitz at ECDC. Many different levels exist and they meet twice a week for 1.5 hours each time.
- take private lessons
- All of the above have pros and cons so you just have to pick the one you think will be best for your schedule and level. Also be aware of the module schedule at the beginning of EPIET. If you have a busy schedule, you might end up losing a lot of sessions. One option would be to look for private lessons after you finish the Swedish language introductory course because this would give you more flexibility.

Finding a place to stay in Stockholm

This could be quite difficult so you might want to take care of it before you arrive in Stockholm. Some useful links:

www.bostaddirekt.se

www.blocket.se

www.andrahand.se

MISCELLANEOUS

Learning about SMI and SMI Net (the national surveillance system):

Useful paper describing how SMI Net works:

<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=626&LanguageId=2>

Useful websites:

- Stockholm transport (which has a route planner): www.sl.se

- Things to see and do in Stockholm:

<http://beta.stockholmtown.com/sv/>

<http://www.alltomstockholm.se/>

<http://www.stockholmsmuseer.se/>

<http://www.spottedbylocals.com/stockholm/>

www.skansen.se

- Handy language links:

<http://www.nyhetstidningen.nu/> - this is a weekly newspaper in 'easy Swedish' that you can subscribe to on the internet. Useful when you've been here a few months and are starting to get the hang of it but can't yet deal with the more heavy complicated newspapers.

<http://www.verbix.com/languages/swedish.shtml> - useful website that conjugates verbs for you...might not be perfect but will help!