



Summary

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The National Agency for Education statistical remit – information, follow-up and evaluation

Summary

The National Agency for Education's statistics are important for enabling pupils and guardians to make an informed school choice and for being able to evaluate various initiatives in the school area. The Swedish National Audit Office (Swedish NAO) has audited whether the National Agency for Education effectively fulfils its remit regarding the production and use of statistics for school choice, resource allocation and follow-up and evaluation of school operations.

The overall conclusion of the Swedish NAO is that the work of National Agency for Education could be improved in order to better meet the various users' needs for quality-assured statistics.

Good quality assurance of official statistics but shortcomings in other statistics

The Swedish NAO assesses that the National Agency for Education has satisfactory procedures to secure the quality of the statistics classified as official statistics. This also applies to official statistics that have been disaggregated to municipal or school level, and which are then no longer classified by the National Agency for Education as official statistics.

However, there are shortcomings in parts of the statistics that are not classified as official statistics, but that the Swedish NAO considers to be of major practical

importance. This applies to statistics that are intended to serve as a basis for school choice and for the compensatory resource allocation to increase equality among schools.

Users' needs of school statistics are not systematically monitored

The assessment of the Swedish NAO is that the National Agency for Education does not have satisfactory procedures for identifying the statistical needs among key users. Statistics Sweden's User Council for statistics on education does not have a representative for researchers in the school area and the National Agency for Education also lacks a user council for statistics on schools. The majority of school authorities have confidence in the statistics, although they would like to see additional statistical data.

The Swedish NAO also assesses that there is scope for the National Agency for Education to improve its communication of the statistics. In particular, this refers to the content and function of the statistical keys that are intended to serve as a basis for the compensatory allocation of government grants.

The Government is passive in its follow-up of the National Agency for Education's statistical remit

The Swedish NAO considers that the Government has not monitored that the National Agency for Education fulfils its statistical remit in a satisfactory manner. The Government should comprehensively follow up that the National Agency for Education fulfils its statistical responsibility in accordance with the intentions of the Statistics Act. The Swedish NAO's assessment is that this can be accomplished without the Government infringing on the agency's independence to decide the content of the official statistics. The Government has not monitored the work of the National Agency for Education in recent years also with regard to other statistics of key importance for users.

The Swedish NAO makes the following recommendations to the Government

- Regularly follow up, at an overall level, that the National Agency for Education fulfils its remit as an agency responsible for statistics.
- Regularly follow up that the National Agency for Education fulfils its remits that have a clear connection to the use of school statistics. This applies to, for example, the work of the National Agency for Education on the national information system for the school system and the statistical allocation keys.

The Swedish NAO makes the following recommendations to the National Agency for Education

- Review procedures for classifying statistics as official statistics to ensure that they follow social development and meet users' needs. For example, the National Agency for Education should review its principle of only classifying statistics at the national level as official statistics, since in many cases, users need statistics that cannot be aggregated at the national level.
- Some of the statistics that are not classified as official statistics but are of significant importance need to be better quality assured. The National Agency for Education could, for example, produce a scientifically based model for socio-economic differences between schools that can be used to highlight school results, and the agency's statistical allocation keys.
- Inform the school authorities of the statistical key values that the National Agency for Education applies, for example by offering training.