

Chinese to be taught in all Swedish schools

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

Wednesday, 06 July 2011 14:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 13 July 2011 12:08

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Within a decade, all Swedish primary schools should offer Chinese lessons, Sweden's education minister was quoted as saying Wednesday, insisting the move was needed to improve competitiveness.

"I want to see Sweden become the first country in Europe to introduce instruction in Chinese as a foreign language at all primary and secondary schools," said Jan Björklund, who heads the Liberal Party, a junior member of the centre-right ruling coalition.

Getting Swedish pupils to learn Chinese was vital to strengthening Swedish competitiveness, the education minister told financial daily Dagens Industri.

"Not everyone in the business world speaks English. Very highly qualified activities are leaving Europe to move to China. Chinese will be much more important from an economic point of view than French or Spanish," he said.

English is today the main foreign language taught in Swedish schools, followed by Spanish, German and French.

Bjoerklund acknowledged that such a move would demand a lot of resources, especially for recruiting educators who can teach Chinese, but said that within a decade all primary schools should be equipped to teach the language, while it might take 15 years for secondary schools to readjust.