

SGI Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2009

Sweden report



Executive summary

Many people consider Sweden to be the model country, for example, because it is a well-functioning welfare state with a very high degree of equality. For others, however Sweden is the model of a bureaucratic state that leaves only minimal space for individual freedom. Even if the time has passed when Sweden was seen as a model for a certain kind of socio-political development, its political culture still bears the stamp of those time. Although it is not as universalistic as it was a few decades ago, Sweden still has a highly developed welfare state. What makes this even more astonishing is the fact that Sweden experienced a severe economic crisis in the early 1990s, but its welfare state was rescued by a pragmatic and goal-oriented reform policy.

There are three special features of Swedish politics. The first is the government's level of ambition, which leads it to top the charts of all other rich democracies when it comes to public social spending. The second is the country's idea of social citizenship. The Swedish welfare state is based on a universalistic principle, which includes all residents in the welfare state. The third characteristic regards family policy. Since the 1960s, family policy in Sweden has been geared toward encouraging or enabling mothers to work. In addition to family allowances, the Swedish welfare state provides subsidized public day care to all families as well as parental leave schemes that allow both parents to take time off their jobs with almost complete income maintenance. This level of support is something that clearly distinguishes Sweden and the other Nordic countries from welfare states in continental Europe.

On the other hand, however, the welfare state is financed through the world's highest rate of taxation related to GDP. Sweden levies taxes that account for 52 percent of GDP, as opposed to the EU average of 40 percent. Moreover, this high level of taxation – along with the high level of social security provided by the welfare state – is often accused of reducing individual work initiative and thereby hampering economic growth. At the same time, though, Sweden's ambitious welfare state and high taxes have also made it into a country with relatively few poverty-related problems and relatively low income dispersion.

Over the last few decades, Sweden has transformed itself into a deregulated market economy in a globalized world. Moreover, whereas it was once a very

homogeneous society, it now opens its borders to a large number of political refugees. Indeed, immigration-related problems are probably the fastest growing – though, by no means only – social problems faced in Sweden. Lastly, although Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, it is still in its infancy face in terms of European integration.

Despite these fundamental social and political changes, Sweden is still a highly successful welfare state.

Strategic Outlook

Sweden has both the material and social resources it needs to remain a rich and successful society. It has a good infrastructure, highly educated citizens and a system of management that can cope with human capital. Sweden also has a highly competitive economy with national firms that are moving onto the global markets. The country's political style has been – and is very likely to remain – pragmatic and goal-oriented. Nevertheless, Swedish society and politics still have a number of challenges to face in the near future.

The first issue Sweden will have to face relates to its structure of public administration. This system needs to be reformed in order to strengthen the state's reform capacity, and this could be achieved by making the division of responsibilities clearer between the local, the regional and the national levels of government.

Seeing the need for such a reform, the then Social Democratic government appointed a special Committee on Public Sector Responsibility in 2003 to draft suggested reforms, and it presented its final report in February 2007. Although Sweden's history of (and commitment to) local and regional self-government is admirable, it still makes reform much more problematic. In fact, you could say that the semiautonomous executive agencies and subnational governments of the Swedish political system make it so strongly centrifugal that the political and administrative center finds it very difficult to reform and modernize the system. Once you create autonomous institutions, it becomes very difficult to change them.

Another major challenge that Sweden must face relates to the growing number of people taking advantage of social insurances, particularly sickness insurance and early retirement. This trend has been triggered by demographic and behavioral factors. Since the early 1990s, the proportion of the Swedish population between 20 and 64 living on some kind of social insurance has

grown from around 15 percent to around 20 percent. Of these, the proportion living on sickness insurance has grown from 2.5 percent in 1997 to almost 4 percent today, and the proportion that has taken early retirement has grown from around 6 percent in the early 1990s to 9 percent today.

These problems were identified in the early 2000s and recognized both by the Social Democrats and the non-socialistic opposition. The then Social Democratic government launched an official commission of inquiry charged with investigating the problems related to social insurances and with proposing possible solutions. In the report it presented last November, the commission concluded that several of the social insurances in Sweden are used for purposes other than those they were intended for.

The third problem Sweden will have to face relates to the proportional electoral system mandated by its constitution. For the most part, in the postwar years, this system has produced minority – and predominantly Social Democratic – governments. Many people believe that, by definition, minority governments have weaker reform capacities than majority governments do. Nevertheless, Sweden's Social Democratic minority governments have often proven to be more efficient than rightist coalition governments. However, with changes in the political landscape, this has come to be more problematic for the Social Democrats.

Such changes have included the Left Party's (V) occasional refusal to support the Social Democrats and the fact that they have often needed to join together with not one but two opposition parties in order to obtain a parliamentary majority. The second party is often the Environment Party the Greens, but this party has demanded a place in the government as a precondition for supporting the Social Democrats before both the 2002 and 2006 elections.

Furthermore, over the last five years, the center-right parties have also strengthened cooperation among themselves, which has made it harder for the Social Democrats to strike a deal with one or two of the center-right parties on any particular policy issue. As a result of these factors, a future Social Democratic minority government might have less reform capacity than it traditionally has. Today, there is a special Working Committee on Constitutional Reform that is reviewing the instruments of government. It was launched by the then Social Democratic government in 2004 and will present its final report in December 2008.

Sweden is also in acute need of reforming its integration policy. This policy area has been identified as a failure in need of reform by the governments of both Gören Persson and Fredrik Reinfeldt. All political parties seem to agree that the major problem has been a failure to integrate immigrants and their

children into both society and the labor market. At the same time, however, not all parties agree on how this issue should be addressed. As a result, at this time, there are no major integration-policy reforms in the planning stage, and this policy area will most likely continue to function poorly, as it has for at least three decades.

The last challenge Sweden has to face relates to its performance in a globalized world. Sweden is an inward-looking society and appears to have problems embracing the rest of the world. Paradoxically, although Sweden has built much of its wealth on export revenues, new companies there are still tentative about “going international.” At the same time, although it takes pride in its active foreign policy, it is still relatively passive when it comes to participating in international organizations (e.g., the European Union) in comparison to countries such as Finland or Denmark. For Sweden to succeed, it will most likely have to overcome these obstacles. The real challenge, however, might lay in the fact that many of the problems are reflections of ingrained Swedish culture and norms that will consequently not easily be changed.

Status Index

I. Status of democracy

Electoral process

Fair electoral process

Score: 10

During the period under review, the electoral process in Sweden was free and fair. The Elections Act, the Elections Ordinance and a number of other laws govern the conduct of elections. The right to vote and to be elected is extended to those with Swedish citizenship who are at least 18 years old. The Swedish Election Authority is responsible for planning and coordinating the conduct of elections and referendums, and the Election Review Board handles all election-related appeals. In September 2006, general elections were held for county councils, municipal councils, and the Swedish parliament, known as the Riksdag.

Since 1994, election day has been held on the third Sunday in September every fourth year, whereas it had been held every third year between 1970 and 1994. There are 20 election districts, and 310 MPs are elected on the district level. The remaining 39 seats are used to achieve proportionality between seats and votes. For a party to gain representation, it must either receive at least 4 percent of the total vote or 12 percent in one district.

Fair electoral campaign

Score: 10

There are no legal restrictions on political advertising in the print media and on commercial television in Sweden, and all political parties enjoy equal opportunity of access to advertising. However, the media are biased. Campaigns are very dependent on their financial assets, and they are normally between the two left and right blocs. The media biases for these blocs are balanced, although the right bloc enjoys somewhat of an advantage, particularly with the largest newspapers in Sweden, such as Dagens Nyheter, Expressen, Svenska Dagbladet and Göteborgs-Posten. The only exception with a readership of comparable size is Aftonbladet. For this reason, there have been

claims of media bias in Sweden's public political discourse. Moreover, issues and parties unaffiliated with these blocs may have a more difficult time making themselves heard.

While there is no political advertising on the state-owned radio and television stations, the major private stations give substantial media coverage to the positions of the various parties represented in parliament. Coverage is generally fair, and party leaders are usually given an equal opportunity to speak on programs. In fact, politicians in debates are traditionally allotted set amounts of time to speak so as to ensure that they are all given a chance to get equal exposure. However, parties without representation in parliament usually get little or no media exposure.

Annotation: This score lies outside the range of the country experts. The higher score is justified in relation to the scores of the other countries.

*Inclusive
electoral process
Score: 10*

All Swedish citizens who are at least 18 years old have the right to vote in parliamentary elections. In order to vote in elections for county and municipal councils, voters must also be registered in the county municipal council areas (for census purposes). For these elections, EU citizens residing in Sweden as well as citizens of Iceland and Norway residing in Sweden also have the right to vote and are subject to the same conditions. Citizens within the European Union and citizens of Iceland and Norway also have the right to vote, subject to the same conditions. Since 1976, individuals who are not Swedish citizens have enjoyed the right to vote in elections for county and municipal councils as long as they have been registered as residents of Sweden for at least three years.

In addition, in order to vote, a person must be listed on the electoral roll, which is compiled by the Election Authority using information from the population registration database of the Swedish Tax Agency 30 days before the election. If a person wants to make a correction on the electoral roll, he or she must notify the County Administrative Board in writing no later than 12 days before the election.

Access to information

*Media freedom
Score: 10*

Media freedom in Sweden is highly developed. The Swedish constitution's Freedom of the Press Act, which dates back to 1766, and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression guarantee freedom of the press.

The autonomy and integrity of the media is viewed in Sweden as part of the

foundation of democratic governance. Sweden's state-owned radio and TV channels have a long history as public-service corporations. They are formally controlled by the government through a foundation, which owns the television and radio companies. The foundation's board is politically appointed, but the companies' executives are not. Both state-owned radio and television are financed by means of a compulsory licensing fee for owners of televisions. Their programming is subject to the provisions of the Radio Act, internal programming guidelines and terms set out in the charter between Sveriges Television (the public television company, or SVT) and the state. This charter guarantees independence from all pressure groups, including political and commercial ones.

The past few decades have witnessed a massive challenge to state-owned media in the form of deregulation and competition. The state has deregulated the market for broadcast media and currently has a neutral regulatory framework for permits and concessions that does not favor the state-owned media system. The printed media, on the other hand, are essentially unregulated.

Media pluralism

Score: 8

The media sector can be divided into public and private parts. The public media entail two TV channels and radio stations, and there are two TV channels run by private consortia. Over the last 20 years, there has been a process of privatization that has led to is the emergence of a media oligopoly.

About 65 percent of Sweden's daily newspapers are privately owned, about 15 percent are owned by foundations, and about 20 percent are owned by organizations. The privately owned media have traditionally had only a few owners, among which the Bonnier family is dominant. This family's policy has been not to interfere in determining what should or should not be published, as they are aware of the potential – and sometimes loud – criticism of media concentration.

Another private owner with large media interests is the Stenbeck family and the investment company Investment AB Kinnevik, which particularly expanded their share of the media market in the 1990s. As already noted, there is also substantial state ownership in radio and television through state owned foundations.

There is very little media interference from both private owners and the state.

Access to government information

Score: 10

The principle of official transparency has a long history in Swedish law. Sweden enacted the world's first Freedom of Information Act in 1766, and it is now one of the four laws serving as the foundation of the Swedish constitution. According to the act's specific rules, public authorities must respond immediately to requests for official documents.

Requests can be made either orally or in writing and may be anonymous. Each authority is required to keep a register of all official documents, and most official indices are accessible to the public. For example, under this system, even ordinary citizens may go to the Prime Minister's Office and view copies of all of his or her official correspondence.

Civil rights

Civil rights protection

Score: 9

The Swedish constitution broadly protects human rights. These rights include not only the traditional rights associated with democracies, such as the right of personal liberty, but also some material rights. Furthermore, in international comparison, Sweden's public administration enjoys a very high level of trust from its citizens. This partially results from the fact that Sweden has been slow and cautious to implement market-driven administrative reform and, instead, continues to emphasize due process, legal security and the performance of swift, high-quality services.

The only sign of problems between individuals and the public administration is the very strong emphasis on increased efficiency, which will eventually jeopardize legal security and equal treatment. There is currently a priority to further develop e-government and the so-called "24-hour agency," so as to deliver better service, increase efficiency and cut costs.

The main reason why Sweden does not receive a top score on this assessment results from the numerous criticisms leveled against it by Amnesty International (AI) regarding prison conditions and a few conspicuous cases of the government's surrendering refugees to the CIA. AI has also repeatedly criticized cases in which inmates have had to wait an inordinately long time before standing trial. In its 2007 report, AI also criticized the Swedish authorities for multiple human rights violations in connection with a summary expulsion to Egypt in 2001.

Non-discrimination

Score: 8

Discrimination clearly violates the constitution and all other laws and regulations. Nevertheless, the media regularly reports on immigrants having problems gaining access to the labor market and facing other forms of discrimination. In the courts, cases of discrimination are generally decided in favor of the plaintiff, but it would appear that societal norms and values continue to give the typical Swede advantages over immigrants.

The main state institutions for preventing discrimination are the four ombudsman institutions. The Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO) is an independent government authority responsible for responding to cases of discrimination related to ethnicity, religion or opinion in Swedish society. The

Equal Opportunities Ombudsman is responsible for guaranteeing compliance with laws against gender discrimination. On July 1, 2005, legislation against gender discrimination was made more stringent as a result of changes in the Equal Opportunities Act and the introduction of revised definitions of unlawful discrimination into the Prohibition of Discriminations Act.

The Office of the Ombudsman against Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation is a public body established by parliament in 1999. Although publicly funded, the authority is an independent body that is able to comment freely on government policy. The Swedish Disability Ombudsman (HO) works for people with disabilities and aims to ensure that they enjoy rights equal to those enjoyed by the non-disabled.

Sweden's ombudsman institutions have been criticized for being too weak. For example, the ombudsman offices do not take many cases to court and do not win many convictions. Furthermore, in 2006, an official inquiry commission strongly criticized the high degree of ethnic discrimination in Swedish society, although there was much debate about the accuracy of the report.

Rule of law

Legal certainty

Score: 10

Sweden still strongly subscribes to the notion of a constitutional state in which lawfulness, due process and predictability are the core values in governance and public administration. Corruption is all but non-existent, government transparency is exemplary, and actions of the state bureaucracy are predictable and can be appealed to the legal system.

Judicial review

Score: 10

Sweden's system of judicial review functions well. Members of the courts have an independent and professional education, and the courts face no pressure from the government, political parties or other groups. Actions taken by the administration can be appealed, and administrative decisions can be reversed by the courts.

There is also a special ombudsman, the Ombudsmen of Justice (JO), elected by the Swedish parliament, which guarantees that public authorities and their staffs comply with the laws and other statutes governing their actions. The JO exercises this supervision by evaluating and investigating complaints from the general public, by making its own inspections of the various authorities, and by conducting other forms of self-initiated inquiry.

Nevertheless, Sweden lacks an effective constitutional court. Instead, laws proposed by the government are considered and sometimes considerably changed by parliamentary commissions and decided upon by the Swedish parliament, and there is not always a process of judicial review. When a

Corruption prevention
Score: 10

judicial review is made, it is conducted by the Council on Legislation, which is composed of judges from the Supreme Court and the Administrative Supreme Court. Despite this review, the government can opt to ignore the council's advice, provided it does so with a written justification, and the parliament may decide against the council's advice.

Corruption in Sweden is rare both in the state bureaucracy and among politicians. Studies conducted by the World Bank and Transparency International confirm that Sweden has very few or no problems with corruption. Cases of political or administrative malfeasance are also rare and typically involve the unlawful expenditure of public funds.

In compliance with EU regulations, a special national institution designed to handle cases of suspected corruption crimes was founded in Sweden in 2003. This institution is called the National Anti-Corruption Unit and is a part of the Swedish Prosecution Authority.

II. Economic and policy-specific performance

<i>Basic socioeconomic parameters</i>	<i>score</i>	<i>value</i>	<i>year</i>
GDP p.c.	4.51	32111 \$	2005
Potential growth	4.14	3.3 %	2008
Unemployment rate	6.67	7 %	2006
Labor force growth	5.4	2.4 %	2007-2008
Gini coefficient	9.09	0.252	2000
Foreign trade	2.63	-12.4	2005
Inflation rate	8.85	1.9 %	2007
Real interest rates	7.23	2.2 %	2007

A Economy and employment

Labor market policy

Score: 9

Throughout most of the postwar period, Sweden has had an extensive and active labor market policy. This policy has served to facilitate labor transition between different regions and sectors of the economy and to assist the unemployed in finding new jobs. For a very long time, the so-called “Swedish model” of organizational involvement and interest accommodation sustained labor market policy. It was not until the 1980s that labor market relations suffered as a result of the aggressive promotion of the introduction of so-called “wage-earners’ funds” by a confederation of labor unions.

Moreover, the Swedish employers’ association has argued more and more that the labor market is overregulated and that the unions are too powerful. At this time, a rather intense debate is being waged over whether the labor market regulatory framework impedes flexibility or serves as a necessary vehicle for helping the unemployed find jobs. Fighting unemployment has been an overarching policy objective for most of the postwar period, and for most of that time, Sweden has enjoyed a sustained high level of employment.

The most problematic period was in the early 1990s, when unemployment skyrocketed into double digits. The potential downside of the extensive labor market policy – and particularly of the high level of income compensation for the unemployed – has been that it removes incentives for the unemployed to look for jobs. The current non-socialist government seeks to reinforce those incentives by lowering the level of compensation and to force the unemployed to look for work in a region geographical area larger than was previously the case.

Viewed as a whole, the history of labor market policy in Sweden has been highly successful. Only recently have political concerns been voiced arguing that the system in reality promotes a preservation of the status quo instead of flexibility and security in transition. Consistent with the workfare model of social security, the current government appears set on increasing incentives for finding employment.

Enterprise policy

Score: 7

Enterprise policy has been a perennial problem in Sweden, and several factors contribute to this state of affairs. On the level of social behavior, studies suggest that the Swedes are the most risk-averse population in the European Union. As such Swedes are hesitant to embark on projects entailing risk, such as starting a new business.

Secondly, labor costs in Sweden are high, partly because salaries are high and partly because employers pay an additional 50 percent of an employee’s salary

to the state as a so-called “employer’s fee.” Moreover, given the high level of labor market regulation, businesses are expected to provide the government with extensive information on employee numbers and business developments. In fact, it is widely believed that small businesses in Sweden suffer from massive regulation, disadvantageous tax rules and rigid bureaucratic regulations.

Interestingly enough, however, a closer look at small-business regulation suggests that this belief is not altogether correct, particularly when Sweden is compared to other countries. For example, registering a new business in Sweden is far less complicated than it is to do so in many other EU countries. At the same time, though, the employer’s fee does significantly burden small businesses and may, in fact, discourage companies from hiring more employees.

To some extent, this situation can be explained by the extensive period in which the Social Democrats controlled the government. Since individuals employed by small businesses were never part of the core Social Democratic constituency, there was no detailed policy knowledge about the working conditions of small enterprises. More recently, however, governments on both sides of the ideological fence have started deregulating small businesses in order to encourage people to start their own businesses, but much work remains to be done.

When it comes to promoting innovation and economic competitiveness, the picture is less bleak. For several years, Sweden has ranked among the top three countries in terms of public and private support for R&D. This figure currently hovers around 3 percent of GDP. Given its comparatively high labor costs, however, Sweden’s competitive edge does not derive from mass production but, rather, from knowledge-intensive products, which require a sizeable R&D sector in turn. In addition, Sweden and its neighbor Finland top the list of all OECD countries when it comes to the number of patents and high-tech patents issued per million inhabitants. Sweden is also seen as a top performer in developing human capital.

Despite these many problems, the historical record and performance of Swedish enterprise suggest that the country’s enterprise policy has achieved at least some of its goals of ensuring international competitiveness.

Tax policy

Score: 9

Sweden’s tax policy is highly ideological. As a result, any assessment of the Swedish tax system is inevitably colored by the political leanings of the person

performing the assessment. All in all, however, it is fair to say that the tax system meets the three goals of maintaining equity, fostering competitiveness and generating sufficient public revenues.

Although the tax system bears the marks of the extensive period in which the Social Democrats held power, it nevertheless bears some surprises. For example, Sweden has traditionally levied high taxes on individuals and low taxes on corporations. This tax mix is a compromise between fostering competitiveness and generating sufficient resources.

However, the tax system has occasionally had problems responding to international competitiveness, as skilled professionals have often chosen to work abroad where they receive larger salaries and pay lower taxes. Recent changes in tax legislation have made it possible for short-term, highly qualified visitors to Sweden to pay lower taxes. The current center-right government has also made some amendments in tax legislation aimed at promoting the creation of more working initiatives. At the same time, however, not all of the government's changes have promoted this goal, particularly its abolishment of real estate taxes.

Taken as a whole, however, unequal aspects of the Swedish tax system (e.g., the high taxes on consumption) have been balanced by high job security, a good labor environment and a complex social welfare system.

Budgetary policy

Score: 10

During the economic crisis of the early 1990s, Sweden's national debt rose dramatically. Since the mid-1990s, however, a strong budget reconstruction program has been successfully implemented. Moreover, while budgetary policy was arguably the most important political issue in Sweden during the 1990s, it did not receive the same amount of attention during the period under review. Today, budgetary policy is long-term-oriented, disciplined, in harmony with EU criteria for inflation and budgetary deficits, and seemingly successful at fostering economic growth.

B Social affairs

Health policy

Score: 9

Swedish health care is of good quality and basically free for all the country's inhabitants. Although the health care system is primarily public, a large number

of private providers have emerged during the 2000s, and this is viewed as an expanding sector.

There are a number of inefficiencies in the social insurance system funding health care. According to a special commission of inquiry, since the early 1990s, the proportion of the population between 20 and 64 living on some kind of social insurance has grown from around 15 percent to around 20 percent. Moreover, the proportion of this same age group living on sickness insurance has grown from 2.5 percent in 1997 to almost 4 percent today, and the proportion that has gone into early retirement has grown from around 6 percent in the early 1990s to 9 percent today. The issue of how these burdens on the social insurance system will be handled was one of the most important political issues during the period under observation and continues to be so.

The main problem facing the health care system today is meeting increasing demand. A very large number of people are forced to wait for what are frequently months rather than weeks before undergoing necessary surgical procedures, tests or other treatments. Last year, Sweden's parliament passed a law (also referred to as "a health care guarantee") stating that all patients are entitled to treatment no more than three months after their initial contact with a doctor. Moreover, if the county in which the patient lives cannot meet this deadline, the patient will be advised to go to another county with a shorter waiting period. While this new policy appears to have improved the problem to some degree, the fact is that access remains a significant problem in Sweden's health care system.

All dental care in Sweden is subsidized, and it is free for those younger than 19. Nevertheless, the fact that the pricing of dental care was deregulated in 1999 has been criticized for allegedly turning dental health into a class issue and making dental care unaffordable to the less well-off. Before the 2006 election, the Social Democratic government made an election pledge to reform the dental care system, but it was not re-elected. On the other hand, the center-right government currently in power has publically acknowledged the need for dental care reform. Some type of reform is expected next year, and it will reportedly include some type of protection against high costs for patients between the ages of 20 and 64.

Social cohesion

Score: 9

The Swedish welfare state is based on the principle of universalism, whereby all residents are included in the welfare state. As a result, the welfare state includes only a very small proportion of means-tested programs, and a large

proportion of the population is covered by welfare programs. Furthermore, Sweden has traditionally been dedicated to the principle of social citizenship rather than the principle of social insurance, for which eligibility results from prior contributions.

On the one hand, following this principle has been effective at reducing poverty and socioeconomic differences between different segments of the population, particularly when compared with other countries. On the other hand, however, to a large extent, Sweden remains a segregated society, in which immigrants and people living on welfare dwell in suburbs with uncertain and bleak life prospects, while members of the middle class lead better lives in every respect. The limits of this social policy can be seen in that fact that there are homeless people in Sweden, although their numbers are limited.

Family policy

Score: 10

Family policy is a very important policy field in Sweden, and gender equality has always been placed high on the political agenda. Since the 1960s, family policy in Sweden has been geared toward encouraging and enabling mothers to work. In addition to family allowances, the Swedish welfare state provides subsidized public day care to all families as well as parental leave schemes that allow both parents to take time off their jobs with almost complete income maintenance after a child has been born. More recently, the current government has launched an optional “care support” program, which allows parents to decide whether to stay at home or place their children in day care.

The vast majority of fathers in Sweden take some time off to be with their small children. Nevertheless, an analysis of the gender allocation of income compensation from the social insurance system for time spent at home reveals that women still account for more than 75 percent of this time. At the same time, although women are still mainly responsible for raising children, the rate of female participation in the labor force is still very high. Even if Sweden does not satisfy all the criteria of an ideal state, its family policy is in many respects a model for other countries.

Pension policy

Score: 9

The Swedish pension system was reformed approximately 10 years ago. Prior to these reforms, pensions were calculated based on the salary accumulated over the 15 best years of earnings. According to the current system, pensions are calculated based on the accumulated income of the individual’s entire

working life. At the same time, however, the state continues to be responsible for providing a minimum level of provision for all citizens, and this commitment has been strengthened by the new so-called “guarantee pension.”

Since the general level of pensions appears to be decreasing, a growing number of people are signing up for private pension insurance. Although seniors are supported by welfare in any case if their pensions are too small, the fact that they would feel the need to turn to additional sources of pension income indicates some degree of failure on the part of the public pension system.

Another part of the reform made it possible for individuals to manage a small part of their retirement savings as an individual investment fund (known as a “premium reserve”). While this may help individuals feel more involved and in control of their retirement savings, it does nothing to compensate for modest pension levels. In the end, it would appear that the reformed public pension system has done little to improve the amount of pension funding individuals receive when compared with the previous system. Furthermore, changes in the financing structure and indexing mechanisms have reduced the pressure the pension system puts on the central government’s finances. The new system also significantly increases work incentives by introducing a more actuarial benefit formula.

C Security and integration policy

Security policy

External security

Score: 9

Sweden is not a member of any military alliances and maintains a rather neutral role in wars, as has been a long-standing tradition in Swedish security policy. At the same time, however, Sweden has an elaborate and competitive military industry that produces and exports many technically advanced weapons (e.g., the JAS fighter aircraft). Moreover, Sweden relies more on its domestically produced high-tech military equipment for its defense than, for example, its neighbor Finland, which according to recent reports can mobilize an army more than twice the size of Sweden’s in cases of national emergency (and at half the cost).

The Swedish armed forces are currently undergoing a process of comprehensive transformation aimed at creating smaller, more mission-focused defense forces. The political decision to undertake this reform results from the radically altered threat situation, the emerging common approach to European security and the rapid pace of developments in both technology and European

society at large. Sweden also collaborates in international military operations with the European Union, the United Nations and in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

Internal security

Score: 9

Sweden's police force has about 22,000 employees working at the national and local levels, which makes it one of the country's largest governmental services. The National Police Board (NPB) is the central administrative and supervisory authority of the police service. The National Security Service is responsible for counterespionage, anti-terrorist activities and protecting sensitive objects and the constitution. In the fight against threats to national security, regular police units handle investigations and operational field work, while the National Security Service provides intelligence, resources and know-how.

In 1995, Sweden's government decided to close the Swedish National Police Academy for five terms. This decision has led to a political debate about the size of the police force and the shortage of police officers. In 2003, two additional police academies were opened, but the debate is still ongoing. For many years, the Moderate Party (M) criticized the Social Democratic government for its internal security policy. Then, at the end of 2006, the newly elected center-right government appointed a commission of inquiry charged with coming up with suggestions on how to reform the current system of police education. The commission presented its final report in June 2007.

Furthermore, government policy on crime in Sweden emphasizes rehabilitation and societal reintegration more than punishment. As a result, in international comparison, prison sentences in Sweden are shorter and therefore serve as less of a deterrent than they might in other countries. At the same time, the crime rate has been increasing over the past several years, some of which is gang-related and some of which results from the growing number of criminals neither born or residing in Sweden.

Annotation:

The score lies outside the range of scores given by the experts and is justified in relation to scores given for the other countries.

*New security
policy*

Score: 9

Sweden has quickly joined international efforts to fight terrorism, and its policy has generally succeeded in protecting its citizens. At the same time, however, Sweden is an open society and does not share continental Europe's security culture, in which bodyguards protect politicians and the movements of random citizens are monitored. The price for this more open policy was the public assassinations of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986 and Foreign Minister

Anna Lindh in 2003. Another developing security risk may stem from the country's open policy of reporting about political events and cultures, which seems to particularly be in conflict with Islamic culture. As a result, murder threats from Islamic fanatics against Swedish intellectuals and journalists may become a more common threat.

Moreover, Sweden has a long tradition of committing itself to development aid and international cooperation, and it is a member of the United Nations and the European Union. For example, Sweden's 2005 level of development aid amounted to 0.94 percent of GNI, which makes Sweden among the world's most generous donor nations. Furthermore, when it comes to the ratio of untied to tied official development assistance (ODA) given to least-developed countries (LDCs), Sweden rates among the top countries, with an untied ODA ratio of 0.98 percent in 2004.

Integration policy

Score: 7

In comparative terms, when it came to the ethnic makeup of its citizenry, Sweden was for a long time unusually homogenous. Since the 1930s, however, Sweden has been a net immigration country, and since the 1960s, immigration to Sweden has been considerable. Today, almost one-fifth of the Swedish population is composed of individuals who were either born in another country or who have at least one parent who was born outside Sweden, and almost one out of every 10 residents of Sweden has immigrated themselves. This makes Sweden a country with a comparatively short history of immigration but a large immigrant population.

Sweden is often seen as a country with an immigration policy based on multicultural institutions. Nevertheless, Sweden differs from other multicultural countries that have a much longer history of immigration, such as Canada and Australia. The reason most often cited for Sweden's still being included in the group of multicultural countries is the strong state interventionist model of its social democracy. The country's immigration policy is backed by a set of policy programs, such as free Swedish language training for adult immigrants, support for religious and other organizations support for minority culture, free mother-tongue education, a set of supportive labor market policies and adult education for immigrants. Nevertheless, these policies have not been very effective. For example, unemployment is widespread among the foreign-born population and considered to be a major societal problem. Moreover, there are large suburbs in all the major cities in which a large proportion of the inhabitants are not well-integrated into society. Indeed, segregation remains a

major feature of the metropolitan areas, and immigrants still encounter significant difficulties finding their way into the labor market. The problem lies neither in the degree of political commitment (e.g., the readiness to accept political refugees out of humanitarian concern), nor in the level of integration policy's financial support. Instead, it is deeply rooted in the Swedish attitude of distrust toward foreigners.

D Sustainability

Environmental policy

Score: 8

Sweden is a highly developed industrial society with a high level of consumption. Owing to the very extensive use of nuclear energy, the country has few incentives to reduce the high level of energy consumption. Moreover, although Sweden is generally considered to be a pioneer “sustainable society,” its environmental policy is highly technocratic and “big picture,” focusing more on increasing efficiency than on limiting consumption.

At the same time, Swedish industry is among the world's leaders in terms of designing environmentally sustainable production processes and developing technology to protect the environment. Interestingly, Sweden has ranked so high among EU countries when it comes to managing carbon dioxide emissions and other salient environmental problems that the European Union has even allowed it to increase its emissions.

The environmental problem that attracted the most political attention in Sweden during the period under observation was climate change. The government under Gören Persson (1996–2006) tried to make environmental policy one of the larger political issues in Sweden by using the slogan “the Green People's Home,” an allusion to “the People's Home,” the slogan of Sweden's Social Democratic Party (SAP).

The current government of Fredrik Reinfeldt has recently launched two high-profile initiatives in the area of environmental policy. One is the so-called “green car” rebate, a €1000 rebate to private individuals buying new, ecologically friendly cars, which will be offered from April 1, 2007 to December 31, 2009. The other initiative entailed the so-called “Midnight Sun Dialogue on Climate Change,” held in June 2007, when Swedish Minister for the Environment Andreas Carlgren met with environment ministers from the European Commission and 27 countries that are central to global climate negotiations for informal meetings on climate issues aimed at laying the

foundation for a new global climate agreement.

Research and innovation policy

Score: 9

Sweden ranks in first place when it comes to R&D spending among the OECD countries. Furthermore, for the past several decades, Sweden has ranked in the top three in terms of global R&D spending. The Swedish government believes that the long-term competitive advantage of the country's economy lies in knowledge-intensive, R&D-based products. For example, Sweden has a relatively large proportion of research intensive industries in the telecommunications, medical and transportation industries.

The current center-right government, which came into office in 2006, says it intends to pursue a R&D-oriented policy toward business and industry as a part of its policy of stimulating economic growth. At the same time, however, when compared with other countries, Sweden has little technical research capability. In fact, a comparison of the technical research performed by non-private enterprises in Sweden and Finland shows that Finland has a larger technical research volume than Sweden in absolute numbers despite the fact that Sweden's population is almost twice as large as Finland's.

Moreover, Sweden has some difficulties shepherding ideas on their way from research facilities to companies that will transform them into products and bring them onto the market. In the process, factors from other policy areas (e.g., tax policy) have reportedly led researchers not to pursue the commercial application of prototypes in Sweden but, rather, to seek patent rights in other EU countries or in the United States.

In addition, securing venture capital funding has also occasionally been a problem, forcing research facilities to approach venture capital banks from other countries in order to fund the final stages of development. In general, then, while Sweden's R&D policy proper seems to meet its objectives, the critical link between research and industry is somewhat more problematic.

Education policy

Score: 7

In Sweden, children must attend nine years of compulsory schooling starting at age seven, and all education throughout the public school system is free. In addition to municipal schools, there are also independent schools, which are open to all and which must be approved by the Swedish National Agency for Education. During the period under observation, the number of independent schools has increased, but the main proportion of schools continue to be

publicly run. Sweden scores very high on public spending on education, which is a consequence of the public funding system. It also scores high on indicators measuring vocational training.

The Swedish education system is probably best described as being flat and relatively stable but with very few peaks. Indeed, there are almost no elite schools, and the results from the PISA tests indicate that Sweden only scores in the middle range of OECD countries. Furthermore, Sweden's anti-authoritarian style of education has been criticized recently by the parties on the right, and nepotism in recruitment and inflexibility have hurt the competitiveness of its universities. As a result of these factors, a large part of the political debate in Sweden during the period under observation was focused on the quality of education.

Management Index

I. Executive Capacity

<i>Cabinet composition</i>	<i>Prime minister</i>	<i>Parties in government</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Mode of termination *</i>	<i>Duration</i>
	Göran Persson	Social Democratic Party (SAP)	Single party minority government	1	09/02-09/06
	Fredrik Reinfeldt	Moderate Party (M), People's Party Liberals (FP), the Centre Party (C), Christian Democratic Party (KD)	Minimal winning coalition	-	09/06-

* The following modes of termination should be distinguished: elections = 1; voluntary resignation of the prime minister = 2; resignation of prime minister due to health reasons = 3; dissension within cabinet (coalition breaks up) = 4; lack of parliamentary support = 5; intervention by head of state = 6; broadening of the coalition = 7.

A Steering capability: preparing and formulating policies

Strategic capacity

Strategic planning
Score: 10

Strategic planning is the backbone of Swedish politics. The parliament often appoints so-called “royal commissions” composed of members of the social and other sciences. These commissions of inquiry then submit their proposals in the form of official reports (known as “Swedish Government Official Reports,” or SOUs), to the government. Such reports are often of a very high scholarly standard and based on research conducted at Swedish universities.

On the other hand, the government can also choose to have its ministries carry out inquiries. In such cases, the reports are published in a series called the Ministry Publications Series. Following the publication of such reports,

the government will usually then refer them to various public agencies, organizations and municipalities for their input. Thereafter, on the basis of the input it has received, the government will submit a policy proposal to the parliament. In general, Swedish politics are much more oriented toward solving problems than they are in other countries.

Scientific advice

Score: 8

Specially appointed commissions of inquiry play an important role in the Swedish policy process. Such commissions often include advisers who are nongovernmental academic experts. For example, both professional economists and political scientists are often included in commissions, such as the Working Committee on Constitutional Reform, which is in charge of carrying out a concerted review of the present Instrument of Government from 1974. This is one of the four fundamental laws of the Swedish constitution, and it spells out the basic political rights and freedoms in the country and its political structure. Thus far, this commission has produced several high-quality academic reports that are meant to form the basis for the commission's final report. Despite this input, politicians still take over policy-making later in the process and are ultimately responsible for them.

Inter-ministerial coordination

GO expertise

Score: 8

The Swedish system of governance has a high degree of centralization. This applies both to single-party and multiparty governments, although centralization becomes an important means of coordination when there are coalition governments.

While the vertical coordination of policy (i.e., between central, regional and local governments) is believed to work rather well, horizontal coordination (i.e., between various governmental departments) remains a major problem. The centralization of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) does not solve this problem.

The government departments continue to have problems coordinating their policies and decisions, and these problems are exacerbated by the growing number of so-called "overarching policy objectives." These are policy goals that should be taken into account in all policy proposals, royal commission appointments and budgetary allocations. The first overarching goal was issued in 1990 and focuses on economic growth. Since then, other goals have been added to the list, such as integration, sustainable development, gender equality and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. However, with the exception of the gender equality objective, no institutional changes have been made to ensure policy coordination so as to promote these policy goals.

*GO gatekeeping**Score: 8*

The government office plays a crucial role in the government's policy formation. Although government policy is a collective enterprise of the cabinet, the government office is *primus inter pares*. However, the influence of the government office over the cabinet is more informal than formal and less pronounced in coalition governments than it is in single-party governments, and particularly so when there is a minority government. As a result, it is difficult to give a robust estimate of the degree to which the government office plays a gatekeeper role.

*Line ministries**Score: 7*

It is highly unlikely that a line department in Sweden would try to promote an agenda that was not supported by the PMO. Within today's coalition government, the PMO has a special coordinating function between the coalition parties that handles all issues of any importance.

Deliberations on important matters take place at special meetings. These meetings can take the form of general meetings, which are held immediately after cabinet meetings, or daily meetings held over lunch. All concerned ministries cooperate in dealing with issues that are within the purview of more than one ministry. Such collaboration usually takes the form of inter-ministerial discussions between high-ranking officials of the respective ministries and, in some cases, such discussions may involve the state secretaries themselves. If the parties fail to reach an agreement among themselves, the issue becomes a matter for discussion by the entire government before any decision is made.

*Cabinet committees**Score: 1*

Decision-making in the Swedish cabinet is collective, and there are no formal or informal cabinet committees.

*Senior ministry officials**Score: 10*

The process of policy-making in Sweden is well-structured. Senior ministry officials perform a very effective organizing role, and every decision is well-prepared. There are several factors explaining the detailed deliberations of cabinet meetings. One is that the fact that the cabinet renders decisions on a very large number of (legal) appellate matters that must be properly deliberated. Another factor is that the fact that the cabinet makes all decisions as one body with collective responsibility. As a result, all matters must be approved of at an early stage in the process. In addition to these formal discussions, the cabinet also holds more improvised discussions on policy, particularly at the weekly cabinet luncheons.

*Line ministry civil servants**Score: 8*

To a very large extent, civil servants from different ministries coordinate the budget process. The ministry of finance naturally plays a central role in this process, but other ministries are also involved in every step of the process. Moreover, in the normal process of policy formation, the various ministers

are broadly aware of the policy proposals that are in the pipeline. Issues touching upon more than one ministry are dealt with collectively by the ministries concerned in the way described above (see “Line ministries”). In practice, there have been cases of government bills that have been revised more than 50 times after having been submitted to parliament. Negotiations for revisions tend to take place at the level of senior civil servants in the government office.

Regulatory impact assessments

RIA application

Score: 1

Regulatory impact assessments (RIAs) are not conducted systematically. Instead, royal commissions are frequently asked to analyze the anticipated impact of suggested regulations. Similarly, the Ministry of Finance communicates with other departments or agencies and occasionally requests similar analyses. All of these assessments are ex ante, rather than ex post.

Needs analysis

Score: 1

Alternative options

Score: 1

Societal consultation

Mobilizing public support

Score: 9

Sweden has a very high degree of corporatism. Although the degree of corporatism has declined in recent decades, it is based on the classic coordination between the Social Democratic Party (SAP) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO). Although the government is orientated toward integrating various societal groups, there are some limits. For example, governments have been criticized for failing to respond to some of the demands put forward by groups promoting changed environmental and gender policies. Nevertheless, societal organizations are almost always involved at different stages in the process of policy-making.

On the one hand, they are regularly represented on the special commissions of inquiry the government convenes to prepare reform suggestions. As a result, the organizations’ perspectives are often considered already from the beginning stages. On the other hand, they are normally consulted when a special commission of inquiry delivers a report, and the input from these consultations is taken into consideration when the government makes its final policy proposal.

Policy communication

Coherent communication

Score: 8

The government always aims to communicate in a coherent manner. Although it generally succeeds in doing so, on rare occasions it falls short. Regarding this issue, there are also differences between the single-party government the Social Democratic Party (SAP) led before the 2006 election and the center-right coalition government currently in power, which has been generally less successful than its predecessor.

A lack of coherency in government communication usually stems from a conflict between the minister of finance and another line minister. In a typical case, the minister of finance will publicly discuss some kind of budget reduction in the other minister's area of competence and that minister's response will publically oppose any such reduction. This has happened for both Social Democratic single-party governments and the center-right coalition.

However, in the case of the center-right coalition, incoherency could also stem to some degree from unsolved political questions between different parties within the government. Indeed, contradictions between the public statements of ministers tend to occur more frequently when there is a coalition government in which the parties are torn between promoting their own priorities and those of the government as a whole. Nevertheless, arguments and disagreements among ministers are usually contained within the cabinet for as long as possible.

B Resource efficiency: implementing policies

Legislative efficiency

Veto players

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Share</i>
Bills envisaged in the government's work program	260	
Government-sponsored bills adopted	183	70.38 %
Second chamber vetos	-	- %
Head of state vetos	-	- %
Court vetos	-	- %

Effective implementation

Government efficiency

Score: 8

There is a clear constitutional distinction between departments and agencies. Departments are part of the government office, and their main task is to draft government bills. Agencies are not part of the government office, and their main role is to implement policy. Agencies also have a fairly free position vis-à-vis the government office. In constitutional terms, they are subordinate to the cabinet, but the cabinet has fairly few instruments with which to direct the agencies. As a result, the departments and agencies hold dialogues on policy implementation, and their interaction is largely characterized by negotiations rather than command and control.

When the Social Democratic government was in office, it occasionally ran into problems because, as a single-party minority government, it needed both the Environment Party the Greens (MP) and the Left Party (V) on its side in order to gain a majority in parliament. It tried to solve this by means of a partly institutionalized cooperation between the three parties, but without letting the other parties form part of the government. This arrangement generally worked out well for the government, but it made the government vulnerable to pressure, especially from the Greens. As a majority coalition government, the current center-right government is less likely to run into such problems in parliament.

Ministerial compliance

Score: 10

Sweden's government makes all decisions collectively, and the prime minister – as chair of government meetings – is involved in all formal decisions. The government makes its decisions at cabinet meetings, and at least five ministers must be present in order to reach a quorum. At these meetings, ministers present their own items and are replaced by another minister if he or she cannot attend the meeting.

Monitoring line ministries

Score: 9

As Swedish ministers have only limited opportunities to make independent decisions, the prime minister bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring that policies are coordinated and coherent. The PMO and the Ministry Finance Ministry monitor line-ministry activities. At the same time, however, the political basis and composition of the government has a significant effect on how likely it would be for a line minister to confront the prime minister with a conflicting political agenda.

This was particularly unlikely in the Social Democratic single-party government that dominated Swedish politics before the 2006 election. However, in today's coalition government, three of the line ministers are party leaders (excluding the prime minister). As a result, there may be less

monitoring of line ministries. However, before the 2006 elections, the center-right coalition did formulate a common platform that presented its common interests.

Monitoring agencies

Score: 9

Although agencies in Sweden are formally independent from the government, the rational policy process does not lead to greater implementation problems. Although government influence on agencies is limited (and despite the fact that the director general is appointed by the government), there is still much monitoring. Moreover, the agencies' overall level of compliance is high because the government still has several ways to steer and monitor their activities. In addition to setting the general rules on economic steering and the authorities and duties of the agencies, the government decides the conditions for each agency's specific activities.

Task funding

Score: 6

Over the last few decades, many government tasks have been transferred to the municipal level. This had led to regional disparities, and the municipals often complain that task funding is too low.

Moreover, unfunded or insufficiently funded mandates are not uncommon. For a long time, this has been a point of contention between the government office and the National Association of Local and Regional Authorities (SKL). The subnational governments do not object to delivering central government programs, but they insist that they be sufficiently funded.

Constitutional discretion

Score: 8

As local and regional self-government is written into the opening paragraph of the constitution, it is not easily tampered with. At the same time, however, there are a number of issues and controversies between the central and subnational governments. For example, subnational governments claim that underfunded mandates undercut local autonomy by forcing them to reallocate funds from their own programs to fund programs of the central government. There have also been instances – particularly in times of economic crisis – in which the central government has placed a cap on local taxation levels which are part of the local autonomy legislation.

National standards

Score: 8

In unitary states such as Sweden, the central government has many opportunities to ensure that subnational governments meet national standards. However, the subnational governments in Sweden are relatively strong actors and the implementation of national standards differs according to region. For example, densely populated areas in southern Sweden have different problems than the very sparsely populated northern areas. In the field of health care policy, in particular, there are clear differences between the subnational regions.

With education policy, on the other hand, the Swedish National Agency for

Education establishes and monitors national standards by defining common goals for, reviewing and inspecting schools, and schools that are deemed to be in violation of national standards may lose their right to continue. As a wealthy country, however, Sweden is generally able to guarantee rather high standards throughout the country.

C International cooperation: incorporating reform impulses

Domestic adaptability

*Domestic
adaptability*

Score: 8

As a relative latecomer to the European Union, Sweden adjusted its policy and polity very much to its requirements. For example, in April 2005 the EU Department, which had previously been part of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, was established within the PMO. This department is responsible for horizontal European integration matters, excluding those issues related to the enlargement of the European Union. The reorganization of who handles EU affairs has caused a certain degree of conflict between the PMO and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and it is generally believed that this reorganization has led to a power shift. Indeed, following the 2006 elections, a new ministerial post, the minister for EU Affairs, was established so as to provide a head for the new EU Department.

Since Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, EU policy has not been very popular in the country. This is illustrated, for example, by Sweden's decision to not join the euro zone and participate in other coordinated policy fields (e.g., information policy). Instead, Sweden has often chosen to follow its own path. The "appropriateness" of this decision is really a matter of opinion, seeing that Sweden often has higher standards than the rest of the EU countries.

Sweden has a permanent representation to the European Union in Brussels to handle its EU affairs. This representation is an extension of the Swedish government, and its primary task is to ensure that Swedish interests and policies are pursued as effectively as possible in the European Union. Another important task of the representation is to supply analyses and assessments to the Swedish government offices responsible for shaping EU policies. The representation also acts as the Swedish government's everyday communication link with EU institutions.

External adaptability

International coordination activities

Score: 10

Sweden has a long tradition of active participation in various international conventions, forums and activities. The government has been particularly active in the fields of the environment and human rights. One recent example of such activity is the “Midnight Sun Dialogue on Climate Change” held in June 2007, when Minister for the Environment Andreas Carlgren hosted environment ministers from the European Commission and 27 countries for an informal ministerial conference. Another example is when former Prime Minister Gören Persson invited government representatives, experts, researchers and survivors to take part in the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, an intergovernmental conference held in January 2000. The conference was aimed at contributing to international cooperative efforts on Holocaust education, remembrance and research. However, due to its declaration of neutrality, Sweden does not fully participate in NATO or in missions of the U.N. Security Council.

Exporting reforms

Score: 9

Swedish governments have a long history of exporting elements of the country’s constitutional model and welfare state. Whether through international aid organizations or bilateral contacts, Sweden has exported its systems of taxation and public administration to countries in Africa and Latin America. This should not be understood as indicating that Sweden harbors ambitions to create transnational reform networks. Instead, it is meant to suggest that Swedish governments of all ideological orientations have appeared eager to export some of their policy solutions to other countries.

The only potential problem in this diffusion process is that Swedish systems do not always work for the governments of some countries with different institutional arrangements or policy orientations. In general, however, despite its small size, Sweden has exported an astonishing number of reforms, including those related to its ombudsman, taxation, welfare and work-place-regulation systems.

D Institutional learning: structures of self-monitoring and -reform

Organizational reform capacity

Self-monitoring

Score: 8

Despite the problems of policy coordination in the government office and the rather unique governmental system of having autonomous agencies and subnational governments, Sweden still manages to have a rather regular

system of review, which is conducted by a number of royal commissions. This system of review has led, for example, to cabinet portfolios being frequently revised as well as departments being merged and then split up again. At the agency level, there is perhaps an even larger degree of institutional flexibility, as seen by the fact that new agencies are created quite often, although sometimes through the merging of existing agencies.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that there is a difference between these types of structural changes and reforms aimed at altering institutional relationships, which have proven to be much more problematic. Indeed, for a rather extensive period of time, there has been some frustration in the government office regarding the agencies' high degree of autonomy. Since 1985, three royal commissions have been charged with addressing this issue, but all three have on the whole been failures.

Moreover, it comes as no surprise that two royal commissions are now in charge of steering and control for the government office. In general, Sweden's inability to reform its department-agency relationships raises serious questions about its ability to successfully carry out administrative reforms.

Institutional reform

Score: 7

Sweden has a very rational and technocratic style of governance that occasionally undergoes very impressive reform projects. As a unitary state – albeit one characterized by strong local units – Sweden is therefore able to efficiently implement institutional reforms. Nevertheless, in themselves, these institutional reforms say very little about the country's overall strategic capacity, as such capacity is contingent not only on institutional variables but also on the size and quality of the staff, management efficiency and the control of resources.

II. Executive accountability

E Citizens: evaluative and participatory competencies

Knowledge of government policy and political attitudes

Policy knowledge

Score: 9

Sweden is one of the world's premier so-called "information societies." Indeed, despite its small size, Sweden has many interest groups and an impressive media market. Moreover, the government's open information

policy and the citizenry's generally high level education result in their having a very high degree of policy knowledge. However, since specific political representation in Sweden is typically handled through the political parties, people tend to have less knowledge about specific candidates than they do about general party ideologies and policies.

F Parliament: information and control resources

Structures and resources of parliament, committees, parliamentary parties and deputies

Number of deputies	349
Number of parliamentary committees	16
Average number of committee members	17
Average number of subcommittee members	-
Pro-government committee chairs appointed	9
Deputy expert staff size	1
Total parliamentary group expert support staff	49
Total parliamentary expert support staff	385

Obtaining documents

Score: 10

The right of parliamentary committees to be able to ask for and obtain government documents is viewed as being an essential part of the country's general principle of document accessibility. Indeed, parliamentary committees have full access to all public documents except those that might be classified under very detailed and specific conditions.

Summoning ministers

Score: 10

Parliamentary committees have the right to summon members of the government, and they do so on a regular basis. Ministers always attend the meetings and hearings to which they are summoned. Sweden's Committee on the Constitution has a special responsibility for ensuring that the government observes existing regulations, and all members of parliament have the right to report government ministers to this committee. When this happens, the committee summons and questions the reported minister and publishes a report detailing its findings.

*Summoning experts**Score: 10*

Although they only rarely exercise the right to do so, parliamentary committees have the right to summon experts.

*Task area coincidence**Score: 8*

There is not a perfect and complete overlap between parliamentary committees, on the one hand, and ministries and departments, on the other. In fact, there are 22 parliamentary committees, which are frequently reorganized, while there are a total of 16 ministries and departments, which are far more stable. The parliamentary Committee on Constitutional matters (KU) has primary responsibility for monitoring the government office.

The policy issue that has been the hardest for the parliament to monitor is EU policies. This continues to be the case despite the fact that it has created a special Committee of European Union Affairs.

*Audit office**Score: 10*

The National Audit Office is responsible for examining how the government and public agencies use federal funds. The office is headed by so-called “auditors general,” who are elected by and frequently report to parliament. Although the office is under parliamentary control, it can decide independently what it will audit, how it will carry out such audits and the contents of its final reports.

*Ombuds office**Score: 10*

Sweden was the first country in the world to establish an Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen. This office is responsible for guaranteeing fair treatment by public agencies and is charged with monitoring and investigating cases of discrimination against sexual and ethnic minorities and the physically disabled. The office receives approximately 5,000 complaints each year.

G Intermediary organizations: professional and advisory capacities

Media, parties and interest associations

*Media reporting**Score: 9*

Sweden enjoys a pluralist media structure. Even if the media landscape has become less diversified as a result of high levels of competition and a certain degree of centralization, there are still many programs focused on political issues. There are three main national television channels, two of which are publicly funded, while the third is privately owned. In addition to daily news programs, these channels offer a fair number of high-quality programs that discuss and debate political issues. Generally speaking, the publicly funded channels offer more of these programs than the privately owned channel does. At the same time, however, there has also been a noticeable trend

toward providing so-called “infotainment,” particularly in the news coverage offered by newcomers in the broadcast media market.

When it comes to radio offerings, there is also a large degree of variation between publicly owned and commercial stations, which generally lack such programs. On the other hand, on the publicly owned station P1, for example, there are a number of daily programs that discuss governmental decisions and policies.

Fragmentation

Parliamentary election results as of 9/17/2006

<i>Name of party</i>	<i>Acronym</i>	<i>% of votes</i>	<i>% of mandates</i>
Social Democratic Party	SAP	34.99	37.25
Moderate Party	M	26.23	27.79
The Centre Party	C	7.88	8.31
People's Party Liberals	FP	7.54	8.02
Christian Democratic Party	KD	6.59	6.88
Left Party	V	5.85	6.30
Environment Party the Greens	MP	5.24	5.45
Others		5.67	0

Party competence Score: 9

Parties compete in elections on published election platforms. Between elections, the political parties play the role of opinion leaders that are deeply rooted in society. The Social Democratic Party (SAP) and the Center Party (C), in particular, are parties of social movement and are therefore deeply integrated in society.

Association competence Score: 9

Associations also have an active role in shaping public opinion. In studies on social capital, for example, Sweden scores very high owing to its citizens' high level of involvement in associations and political parties.

Owing to their extensive analytical capacities, Sweden's major interest associations are able to produce reasonable policy proposals. This results, in part, from most of the groups' long tradition of involvement in policy consultation. The major interest associations publish reports and give referrals on a regular basis. Take, for example, the actions of two major

interest associations in 2006: The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) published 40 reports and 62 referrals, while the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise published 150 reports and 131 referrals.

*Association
relevance*

Score: 9

Associations have a very high degree of relevance in Swedish society, as seen, for example, by the fact that they participate very regularly in royal commissions and other political activities, such as campaigns for specific policy initiatives.

For many years, there has been a corporatist arrangement in Sweden, particularly between the government, the employers' associations and the trade unions. Some have argued that this corporatist arrangement has been weakened in recent decades.

Sweden has no formal "think tank" arrangements, such as those found in the U.S. and Canada. However, before the government takes up a position based on the recommendations of a commission on inquiry, it often refers the commission's report to other relevant bodies for their consideration. The major interest associations always number among these referral bodies. In the end, if a number of referral bodies do not agree with a commission's recommendations, the government may try to find an alternative solution.

The relationship between the government and interest associations in Sweden is a reflection of party ideology and the nature of the interests promoted by the association. Governments led by the Social Democrats are more inclined to listen to views promoted by trade unions, while conservative governments keep closer ties to small business organizations and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise).

This country report is part of the Sustainable Governance Indicators 2009 project, which assesses and compares the reform capacities of the OECD member states.

More on the SGI 2009 at www.sgi-network.org

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