

COMPENDIUM SHORT PROFILE: SWEDEN

(based on the comprehensive country profile of Tobias Harding: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/sweden.php>)

1. Facts and figures

Political system:	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
Year of membership to the Council of Europe:	5 May 1949
Year of membership to UNESCO:	23 January 1950
Population:	9 851 017 (2016)
Non-nationals of total population:	17% (2015)
Official language(s):	Swedish (Minority languages: Sami, Finnish, Meänkieli, Yiddish and Romani Chib)
Share of population using the Internet	93.3% (2015)
Public cultural expenditures per capita:	272 EUR (2015)
GDP in Billion EUR:	439.6 (2015)
Accession to Key Cultural Conventions:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>European Cultural Convention</i> (1955): 16 June 1956 • <i>European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages</i> (1992): 1 June 2000 • <i>UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions</i> (2005): 18 December 2006

2. Historical Perspective of Cultural Policy and recent Changes

Since the 1990s, the most significant changes in the general conditions for cultural policy in Sweden resulted from increasing regionalisation, globalisation and new media. In particular, the increased movements of people, cultural products and cultural influences across national borders largely influenced developments in arts and culture as well as in cultural policy. The main cultural policy responses to these changes can be summed up as a new perspective on Sweden as a multicultural society, a more positive perspective on the 'creative industries' and new efforts to transfer policy-making powers from the national to the regional level. In 2009, the Parliament approved a **Government Bill on Cultural Policy** with new objectives for Swedish cultural policy that led also to a **more decentralised organisation state support of arts and culture**. During the 2000s, regional governments started to develop their own cultural policies and to distribute a significant part of the national funding for culture.

In 2015, the government reformed the support of film production: From 2017, supporting film production will entirely be the responsibility of the national government. A government bill proposing a new museum policy is also expected in 2017.

3. Overall description of the system

General context

Until recently, the Swedish cultural policy model has been marked by centralism, with most of its powers invested in government agencies under the leadership of government appointed directors and boards, including representatives of relevant fields and professions. The complexity of the Swedish cultural policy model is revealed by a large number of heterogeneous units directly subordinated to, or financially dependent on, the Ministry of Culture. Among the most

important of these bodies are the Swedish Arts Council and the Swedish Heritage Board. Other large public bodies are the Swedish Film Institute, and the government agencies responsible for various museums and other cultural institutions. The autonomy of cultural institutions organised as government agencies is protected by constitutional law.

In addition, there is a tradition of respect for the autonomy of artists and cultural professionals in matters of content and quality of cultural production. This can be described as a double arm's length principle. Safeguards against political intervention in the practices of publicly owned and / or financed cultural institutions are relatively strong.

The *Government Bill on Cultural Policy* (2009/10:3) somewhat changed the previous national focus of cultural policy. Since then, a new 'Cultural Cooperation Model' has been introduced and the Swedish Arts Council acts as a representative of the national government in approving the Cultural Policy Plans of the regional governments for national funding. The autonomy of cultural institutions on the regional and local levels is not constitutionally protected.

While the national government remains in many ways the key actor in Swedish cultural policy, the organisation of arts and culture can be described as a complex web of interactions between the state, the market, civil society, private patronage and professional associations. The dominant political attitude in cultural policy favoured cooperation between the state and the cultural professions, while - until recently - being more sceptical about the market or private sponsors.

The 2009 *Government Bill* states the following objectives for Swedish national cultural policy:

“Culture should be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on the freedom of expression. Everyone should be able to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity and artistic quality should mark society's development. To reach the objectives, cultural policy should:

- *promote everyone's opportunity to cultural experiences, cultural education and to develop their creative capabilities;*
- *promote quality and artistic renewal;*
- *promote a living cultural heritage which is preserved, used and developing;*
- *promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation; and*
- *especially notice the right to culture of children and the young.”*

Division of tasks & main national actors in Swedish cultural policy

Sweden is a unitary state with certain autonomy for local and regional governments guaranteed by its *Instrument of Government* (one of its Fundamental Laws). In total, the national government provides 45% of public expenditure on culture. Local governments, municipalities, are mainly responsible for public libraries, and for music and culture schools, but are now gaining greater influence, both through their own initiatives and by reforms in national cultural policy.

The Parliament (Riksdagen) legislates and decides on the national budget, including the general policies, and provisions for government agencies (including some of the major cultural institutions). **The national government's** principal responsibility within cultural policy is proposing legislation and the national budget, as well as co-ordinating and long-term planning of cultural policy via the appropriate ministries and related bodies. Most of the practical work of the national government is carried out by government agencies. These have their own boards, appointed by the government, and receive formal instructions decided in government decisions within a framework decided by parliament.

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for the arts, cultural heritage, media, national minorities, civil society, and human rights, and democracy, as well as for policies against discrimination and

racism. It prepares government bills concerning these areas, and co-ordinate government agencies. More than 40 government agencies report to the Ministry of Culture. Government agencies responsible to the Ministry of Culture include many of the more than 30 museums financed directly by the state. Directly responsible to the Ministry of Culture is also The Royal Opera and The Royal Dramatic Theatre. Through its grants to regional governments, the state supports a large number of regional museums, theatres and other cultural institutions.

The Swedish Arts Council (Statens Kulturråd) is a government agency whose principal task is to implement the national cultural policy. The Council is responsible for:

- the allocation of state cultural funding to theatre, dance, music, literature, arts periodicals and public libraries, and to the fine arts, museums and exhibitions;
- providing the Swedish government with the basic data it needs to make cultural policy decisions, by evaluating state spending in the cultural sphere, etc.;
- providing information on culture and cultural policy; and
- approving regional cultural policies before allocating national funding to the regional level.

The National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) serves as Sweden's central administrative agency in the area of cultural heritage and historic environments and has overall responsibility for promoting the objectives of Sweden's heritage policy. Among the Board's activities are various initiatives to protect the historic environment, which includes the accumulation and dissemination of information, preservation, conservation, interagency coordination and archaeological activities. It allocates financial resources to regional heritage agencies and acts as a national centre of expertise in the heritage field. From 2017, the National Heritage Board will be given increased responsibility for museum issues.

The National Archives (Riksarkivet) supervises all public records of the agencies of the central government, as well as the records generated by regional and local authorities. In line with the 2009 *Government Bill on Culture*, the regional archives, which were until then independent government agencies, have been merged into The National Archives.

The Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis (Myndigheten för kulturanalys) was established in 2011 to gather information on arts and culture, follow relevant research, analyse information and evaluate cultural policy. It is also responsible for statistics within the area of cultural policy.

The Swedish Institute (Svenska Institutet, SI), together with the Swedish Arts Council, is responsible for supporting and initiating activities promoting international cultural exchanges.

The Swedish Film Institute (Svenska Filminstitutet, SFI) is a foundation responsible for the promotion, support and development of Swedish film, the allocation of grants for the production, distribution and exhibition of Swedish films and the promotion of Swedish cinema at international level. Many of the SFI's activities have previously been regulated by the *Film Agreement*, an agreement between the Swedish state and the film and media industry. From 2017, the SFI and government grants to film will be funded solely via the national budget and regulated by national cultural policy.

The Swedish Media Council (Statens Medieråd) is a government agency founded 1 January 2011, when the National Board of Film Classification was merged with former Swedish Media Council. Its objectives include reducing the risk of harmful media influences on minors and empowering minors as conscious media users.

The Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden), **The Authors' Fund** (Författarfonden) and **The National Public Arts Council** (Statens konstråd) are agencies responsible for various kinds of grants to support authors and other artists.

The County Administrative Boards (länsstyrelser) are 21 government agencies representing the national government on the regional level on issues for which there is no other body of the national government on that level, including the natural environment and cultural heritage. Each County Administrative Board is headed by a governor (landshövding) appointed by the national government.

The County Councils, or regional governments (landsting), numbering 18, plus 2 specially regulated regions, are tax-levying authorities headed by elected assemblies. They are mainly responsible for regional health services, but also provide support for regional theatres, orchestras, museums, and libraries (mainly county and hospital libraries). Under the Cultural Cooperation Model, each county council or other regional authority submits a culture plan for the region to the Swedish Arts Council. After this plan has been approved, the regional authority is granted government funding for the support of arts and culture in the region, including the regional cultural institutions.

Regional governments provide 15% of the total public expenditure on culture.

The Municipalities, or local governments (kommuner), numbering 290, are tax levying, local authorities headed by elected assemblies, i.e. local councils. They are legally obligated to fund at least one public library, but they also fund other cultural activities, such as culture and music schools, theatres, art galleries, museums and popular cultural education. Funding comes mainly from locally derived municipal taxes (additional resources may include regional and / or central-government grants).

Local governments provide 40% of the total public expenditure on culture.

Financing of culture

- **2008-2015, total public spending on culture increased with around 10%.** National government spending on culture has increased in absolute terms since 2012, but decreased as a percentage of total national government spending. There is a noticeable trend of regional governments increasing their part of total government spending on culture while the municipal part is decreasing.
- **Public culture expenditure**, at all levels of government, per capita in 2015 was **SEK 2 636 (272 EUR)** which corresponds to **0.62% of GDP**. The share of cultural expenditure of the total government expenditure in 2012 was 1.3 %.
- The latest survey (2012) sees total household expenditure on culture at 49.8 billion SEK.

Public culture expenditure at all levels of government per capita, in EUR, 2000-2015:

	2000	2005	2010	2011	2013	2015
Sweden	234	220	267	278	278	272

Public cultural expenditure: by level of government, in EUR, 2005, 2010 and 2015

Level of government	2005	2010	2015
State (national)	951 752 400	1 130 298 931	1 154 260 000
Regional (county)	200 038 340	368 238 390	402 670 000
Local (municipal)	867 010 240	1 016 849 632	1 123 300 000
TOTAL	2 018 800 980	2 515 386 953	2 680 230 000

4. Main cultural policies and priorities

General context

In recent years, large parts of the administrative reforms under the Cultural Cooperation Model with its delegation of power from the national government to the regional level have been implemented. When developing their cultural policy plans as a basis for national support via the Swedish Arts Council, regional governments are obligated to consult with representatives of cultural institutions, professionals and civil society in their respective territory. In 2011, this procedure was tested in five regions (West Sweden, Skåne, Norrbotten, Gotland and Halland). Eleven more regions followed during 2012, leaving Stockholm County as the only region in which the model is yet to be implemented.

As the model was implemented, representatives of artists became less critical to it. According to evaluations, financial priorities in regional cultural policy changed very little during the first years of implementation. Representatives of the regional governments were, on the other hand, critical to the way in which the model has been implemented, arguing that it is giving too much authority to the Swedish Arts Council over regional cultural policies made by elected regional governments.

Latest developments:

- In the government bill on the national budget 2016, several new measures have been introduced, increasing public grants to culture in several areas, including local culture, museums, drama, and film.
- During 2016, several measures have also been introduced to combat racism and strengthen democracy, diversity and inclusion through support for art, heritage, culture, and civil society. To this effect, the most recent national budget increased support for civil society activities focusing on the welcoming of refugees, as well as increased priority to cultural diversity and in policies directed at arts and heritage institutions, with special funding provided for, for example, the National Museum of History and the National Museums of World Culture for efforts in this direction.
- Earlier in 2016, free entry to national museums was reintroduced, following intense public debates.
- A government bill on cultural heritage is planned to be submitted to parliament in the near future. The preparations for this bill include the government report on museums presented by a special government commission in 2015 (SOU 2015:89). In its report, the commission emphasized the need to secure the independence of public museums and proposed the introduction of a Museum Law.
- Recently, the government gave the National Heritage Board increased responsibility for coordinating museum activities. The government agency National Touring Exhibitions was merged with the National Heritage Board.
- In the media and by the political opposition, the government has been criticised for politicizing museums in the interest of multiculturalism, especially with regard to the suggested merger of several museums of World Culture in Stockholm.
- Measures to stimulate cultural and creative industries are commonly discussed in the regional culture plans presented by regional authorities to the Swedish Arts Council, which thus plays a role in approving these measures on the national level. The Government Agency for Cultural Analysis also plays a role in evaluating these measures, and has published several reports dealing with them.

5. International cooperation

General context and main actors

Sweden has **traditionally been very active in international cooperation** in a number of cultural policy related organisations and contexts. For example, the decision of the UN to establish the World Commission on Culture and Development was actively promoted. There is also a strong tradition of Nordic cooperation in the cultural field, with several institutions (e.g. The Nordic Ministers Culture Fund).

Most of the leading government agencies and institutions have their own international networks. Such networking appears to be increasingly important in many areas. A more decentralised cultural policy increased also the interest in international networks and cooperation on the regional and local levels. **The government currently prioritises the following areas:**

- development of strategies for internationalisation in various fields within arts and culture;
- continued development of the international and intercultural cooperation of government agencies;
- promoting of national arenas for international and intercultural work;
- cooperation across the borders between policy areas; and
- promoting actively cultural issues within EU, UNESCO and Nordic cooperation.

Several government agencies and other public actors are relevant to cultural diplomacy, reporting to either the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The Swedish Institute (Svenska Institutet, SI), together with the Swedish Arts Council, is responsible for supporting and initiating activities promoting international cultural exchanges. The SI is also charged with issues regarding information on Sweden abroad and with facilitating exchanges in the spheres of education, research and public life in general. It falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and cooperates with Swedish embassies and consulates throughout the world.

The Swedish Arts Council supports Swedish cultural institutions to actively exchange and cooperate with colleagues in many parts of the world and to take part in many international organisations and networks. It provides grants for international cultural exchange, e.g. for performances, seminars, and support to the national committees of cultural NGOs, etc. The Council also manages the government insurance provisions for exhibitions on loan.

Culture attachés currently exist at the Swedish embassies in Beijing, Berlin, Istanbul, London, Moscow, Paris and Washington, and at the Swedish Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels. These representatives of Swedish culture are appointed by the Ministry of Culture but integrated in each embassy (part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). They are charged with promoting cultural exchanges with the host country and stimulate cultural dialogue. The head of the Swedish Cultural Centre in Paris is simultaneously also in charge of culture at the Swedish embassy in Paris.

The International Artists Studio Programme in Sweden (IASPIS) offers artist in residence grants to visiting artists and supports artists from Sweden exhibiting abroad. The programme is connected to the Academy of Arts in Stockholm and to other cities in Sweden such as Göteborg, Malmö and Umeå.

In addition to **The Nordic Ministers' Culture Fund** in Copenhagen, there are also bilateral funds available for the Nordic countries to realise common projects. In an effort to re-organise Nordic cultural cooperation, **Nordic Culture Point** was set up by the Nordic Council of Ministers in January 2007. Its mandate is to promote Nordic cultural co-operation as well as promoting Nordic culture internationally (see <http://www.kulturkontakt nord.org>).

The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) reports to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and is responsible for most of Sweden's contributions to international development



cooperation. The goal of SIDA's work is to improve the standard of living around the world and, in the long term, to eradicate poverty. SIDA is responsible for developing cultural support and exchange projects, closely linked to their general support to third world countries. Throughout the years, SIDA has supported large cultural exchange projects, developed in cooperation with NGO's (such as the Swedish-African Museum Programme - SAMP), and UNESCO with regard to the implementation of its 2005 Diversity Convention.

European cooperation

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for coordinating international cultural cooperation, e.g. via the Council of Europe. It is also responsible for the cultural attachés at Swedish embassies. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the Swedish cooperation within the UNESCO and for the Swedish UNESCO Council. Much of the work with international cooperation also takes place within government agencies reporting to the Ministry of Culture.

Much cooperation in the cultural sphere takes place within Nordic cooperation (<http://www.norden.org/en>).

EU membership has brought new perspectives and possibilities for international cultural co-operation and helped to realise cultural projects on a regional level through EU-Structural Funds or on a transnational level through European Territorial Co-operation. Much of the work of the Swedish Cultural Contact Point currently focuses on increasing the number of Swedish applications for various grants made available by the EU for cultural endeavours.