



Country profile **Sweden**

Last profile update: July 2026 by Tobias Harding

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Sweden¹

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1. Cultural policy system

1.1 Objectives, main features and background

Historical background

The oldest cultural institutions in Sweden can be traced several hundred years back in time. The National Archives and the National Heritage Board have predecessors at least back to the 17th century; the royal theatres and many of the royal academies were created in the 18th century, and the national museums of history and art, as well as several other institutions, were founded in the 19th century. Such institutions were the product of a unitary state, expressing first the cultural ambitions of the royal court, and later the identity of Sweden as a nation-state.

Cultural education, public museums, concert halls and public libraries were favoured areas of cultural policy in the early 20th century, typically with substantial contributions from private patrons and voluntary work. In the 1930s, the democratic welfare state began to evolve with an increasing government involvement in arts and culture. During the same period, the efforts in popular cultural education made by popular movements, such as the labour movement, the temperance movement, and the non-conformist Christian movement, solidified into government-funded organisations. Since the 1930s, the main feature of Swedish cultural policy has been an emphasis on equal access to quality culture. One initiative typical of the early welfare state was the National Touring Theatre (Riksteatern), created in 1934.

1950-1970: Social Democratic governments continued to expand the state to create an all-encompassing welfare system. Established cultural institutions were modernised, and new ones were created, e.g. touring institutions for exhibitions and music, the Film Institute, and municipal music schools. Among the first new bodies of cultural policy was the Author's Fund, created in 1954 to distribute government grants to writers, established as a support system based in cultural policy and as compensation for the right of public libraries to lend out books.

1970-2000: In the 1960s, political debate focusing on cultural policy increased dramatically, resulting in the first general cultural policy objectives in the Government Bill on Culture of 1974. The democratic welfare-state model of cultural policy was now institutionalised. A new government agency, the Swedish Arts Council, was also created. While the objectives of cultural policy established at that time were the result of an initiative of the national government, the most significant result may have been the substantial strengthening of regional and municipal resources for the production and distribution of quality culture. In

the cultural policy model established at this time, cultural policy provided a certain degree of autonomy for arts and culture through funding for arm's-length institutions, while cultural policy as a whole also focused on giving equal access to the arts and culture thus produced, regardless of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and all over the country. The Ministry of Culture was separated from the Ministry of Education in 1991. Many participatory cultural activities are still the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, as is artistic education. The two fields thus remain closely linked.

From 2000: In the 2000's, regional governments became increasingly active in Swedish cultural policy, both in creating their own cultural policies and in distributing funding from the national budget. In 2009, a new Government Bill on Cultural Policy was passed by parliament, setting new objectives for cultural policy and creating a new and more decentralised organisation for government support of arts and culture. As a result, a significant part of the national funding for culture was transferred to regional governments. Under this model – known as the Culture Cooperation Model – 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. In the making of their Cultural Policy Plans, regional governments are obligated to consult with representatives of cultural institutions, professionals and civil society in their respective regions. During this period, several new aspects have gained importance in cultural policy, such as cultural industries, digitalisation, and cultural diversity. The last few years, cultural integration and national security have been increasingly prioritised.

Main features of the cultural policy model

The Swedish cultural policy model is characterised by a strong national level, with most of its powers invested in government agencies under the leadership of government-appointed directors and boards. Such boards, like the bodies of experts assisting such bodies, often include representatives of relevant sub-fields and professions within the field of arts and culture. The complexity of the Swedish cultural policy model is a result of the large number of heterogeneous units directly subordinated, and/or financially dependent on, the Ministry of Culture. Among the most important such bodies are the Swedish Arts Council, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, and the Swedish Heritage Board. Other large public bodies are the Swedish Film Institute (see chapter 1.2.2), and the government agencies responsible for various museums and other cultural institutions (see chapter 1.3).

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 publicly financed cultural institutions are relatively strong.

The autonomy of cultural institutions on the regional and local levels is not constitutionally protected.

In the Government Bill on Cultural Policy of 2009 (2009/10:3), the previous focus on the national level of cultural policy was somewhat changed. Since then, a new system has been introduced, in which national government funding of regional institutions is governed through regional Cultural Policy Plans approved by the Swedish Arts Council. In a recent inquiry report, several changes to this model were proposed, and it has been announced that a plan for reforming it will be presented by the government. Among the proposals in the report is a new law, which would, among other things, protect the arm's length principle on the regional level (see chapter 1.2.3 and 1.2.6).

Cultural education is largely outside of the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. Instead, higher artistic education is integrated into the university system, a responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Lower-level culture and music schools are a common area of activity for the municipalities. The Ministry of Education also supports national study associations and folk high schools, which often deal with cultural activities and cultural education (see chapter 5).

Cultural policy objectives

Swedish cultural policy has a long-standing focus on equal access to, and participation in, arts and culture, as well as on government support for artists.

The current objectives for cultural policy, listed below, were established with the government bill on cultural policy of 2009 ([prop. 2009/10:3](#)). Specific goals also exist for some parts of the arts and culture sector. These goals are described in this Compendium profile under the headlines for these specific areas.

"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.

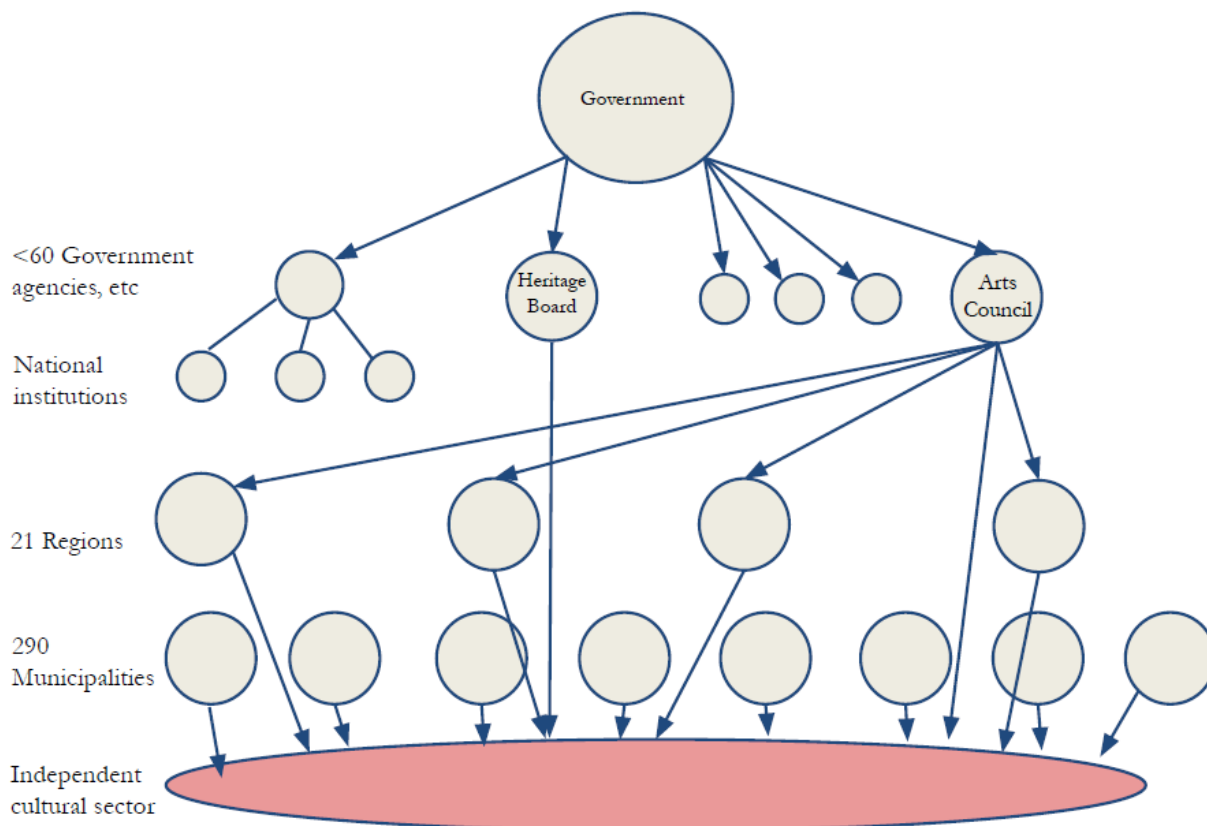
To reach the objectives, cultural policy should:

- *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 developed;*
- *promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation; and*
- *especially notice the right to culture of children and the young."*

1.2 Domestic governance system

1.2.1 Organisational organigram

Overall picture of the relationship between different levels of government and arm's-length government agencies and cultural institutions at the national level (arrows indicating funding).



1.2.2 National authorities

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 provided 47 per cent of public expenditure on culture in 2022. Most of the practical work of the national government is carried out by government agencies. These receive formal instructions decided in government decisions within a framework decided by Parliament. The main actors in Swedish cultural policy on the national level include the following:

The Parliament (Riksdagen) elects the government, 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 cultural policy via the appropriate ministries and related bodies.

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for the arts, cultural heritage, media, national minorities, civil society, and democracy. It prepares government bills concerning these areas, and coordinates government agencies. More than 40 government agencies report to the Ministry of Culture. The main agencies dealing with cultural policy are described in this chapter. 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 ([web page](#)).

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for education on all levels, including cultural education and education in the arts ([web page](#)).

The Ministry of Climate and Enterprise is responsible for supporting business and innovation in various sectors, including cultural and creative industries.

The Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) is a government agency reporting to the Ministry of Culture. It allocates funds to organisations in accordance with cultural policy, for a number of purposes. 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 plans before allocating national funding to the regional level. ([web page](#)).

The National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) is a government agency reporting to the Ministry of Culture. It serves as Sweden's central administrative agency in the area of cultural heritage and historic environments. Among its activities are initiatives aiming to protect historic environments, preservation, conservation, interagency coordination, and the accumulation and dissemination of information in these areas. Since 2017, the National Heritage Board also has responsibility for coordinating and developing museums and museum policy ([web page](#)).

Swedish Arts Grants Committee is a government agency that distributes state scholarships and grants to individual artists working in the visual arts, design, music, dance, theatre and film ([web page](#)).

The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy 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. It reports every fourth year to the government. The national budget for 2027 states that the government intends to review the possibility of transferring tasks to the National Council for Culture ([web page](#)).

The Royal Library (Kungliga biblioteket) is a government agency reporting to the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for the national library of Sweden, collecting all works published in the country, as well as a number of other categories of relevant material and media. It is also responsible for official statistics and coordination regarding public libraries in Sweden. On issues regarding public libraries, the Royal Library reports to the Ministry of Culture ([web page](#)).

The Sámi Parliament (Sametinget) is an elected body acting as a representative body for the Sámi people in Sweden. The Sámi Parliament supports professional skills development, as well as Sámi culture and language. The role of the Swedish Sámi Parliament is regulated in Swedish law and financed through the Swedish national budget ([web page](#)). Similar Sámi parliaments also exist in Norway and Finland.

The Swedish Film Institute (Svenska Filminstitutet, SFI) is a government-funded 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 abroad ([web page](#)).

The Swedish Institute (Svenska Institutet, SI), together with the Swedish Arts Council, is responsible for supporting and initiating activities promoting international cultural exchanges (see also 1.4.1) ([web page](#)).

The Swedish Media Council (Statens Medieråd) is a government agency established in 2011, when the National Board of Film Classification was merged with the former Swedish Media Council. Its objectives include reducing the risk of harmful media influences on minors and empowering minors as conscious media users. The agency is to be merged with the Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority by January 1st, 2024.

Swedish Television (Sveriges Television, SVT) is the Swedish public service TV broadcaster. It is organized as a public limited company, and funded by a special tax on personal income. Together with the other two public broadcasters, **Swedish Radio (Sveriges Radio)** and **Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (Sveriges Utbildningsradio)**, it is owned by

an independent foundation. The foundation's board is appointed by the national government and consists of 13 representatives of the political parties in the Riksdag. The foundation in turn appoints the members of the SVT board.

The Authors' Fund (Författarfonden) ([web page](#)) compensates writers for works being lent out in public libraries.

The National Public Arts Council (Statens konstråd) and The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design were government agencies that, from January 1st, 2026, are part of the **Swedish Museum of Modern Art**. As a result of this merger, the enlarged government agency now maintains the Museum of Modern Art, supports architecture and design, and publicly displays artworks.

1.2.3 Regional authorities

Regions (regioner) are tax-levying authorities on the regional level headed by directly elected Regional Assemblies and Regional Councils appointed by these. Sweden has 21 such regions (including the island of Gotland, where Gotland Municipality also carries the responsibilities of a Region). Until 2020, regional authorities in Sweden were officially known as County Councils (landsting). The Regions are mainly responsible for health services, but also provide support for, among other things, regional theatres, orchestras, museums, and libraries (mainly regional library services and hospital libraries). Historically, this has meant that the role of regional authorities has been comparatively limited in cultural policy. This was changed following the 2009 government bill on culture, and the subsequent introduction of the Culture Cooperation Model, under which each Regional Council submits a Culture Plan for the region to the Swedish Arts Council (see also chapter 1.2.6). In the making of their cultural policy plans, Regional Councils are obligated to consult with representatives of institutions, professionals, and civil society in arts and culture in their respective regions. After the plan has been approved, the Regional Council is granted government funding for the support of arts and culture in the region, including the regional cultural institutions. Their nationally funded work with cultural policy should support

1. professional theatre, dance, and music,
2. museums, and their work with the cultural environment,
3. libraries, and activities supporting reading and literature,
4. professional image and form art, and activities,
5. private archives in the region,
6. film cultural activities,
7. support for crafts.

In 2011, this procedure was tested in five regions (West Sweden, Skåne, Norrbotten, Gotland, and Halland). Eleven more regions followed in 2012, leaving Stockholm Region, including the city of Stockholm, as the only region in which the model is yet to be implemented.

In July 2022, the government appointed an investigation to re-evaluate the Cultural Cooperation model. In the report published in September 2023, several changes to the model were proposed. The report proposed introducing a law on collaboration between the state, region, and municipality in the cultural field, simplifying processes within the model and guaranteeing artistic freedom in regional and municipal activities funded through the model. The existing regional culture plans should be replaced with plans focusing on the state-funded parts of regional cultural policy. The Swedish Arts Council should be given full authority to represent the state in this area, and new artistic and cultural areas should be possible to include in the plans (SOU 2023:58). These proposed changes have yet to be realised.

Regional governments provide 14 per cent of the total public expenditure on culture.

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 at that level. This includes responsibilities in the areas of protecting the natural environment and cultural heritage (since the National Heritage Board does not have regional branches). Each County Administrative Board is headed by a County Governor (landshövding) appointed by the national government.

1.2.4 Local authorities

The 290 Municipalities (kommuner) of Sweden are tax-levying, local authorities headed by elected assemblies, which elect Municipal Councils. They are legally obligated to fund at least one public library (see chapter 3.2), but they also fund other cultural activities, such as culture and music schools (see chapter 5.4), theatres, art galleries, museums, and popular cultural education (see chapter 6.4). Municipalities are also responsible for regular schools, up to, but not including, university-level education. Funding comes mainly from locally derived municipal income, i.e., primarily taxes (additional resources may be allocated by the national government). The main areas for municipal activities in the cultural sphere – apart from organising the regular school system – are libraries, culture and music schools, and support for local NGOs, but larger municipalities may organise a significantly broader range of cultural institutions and programmes.

Swedish municipalities vary greatly in size and population – ranging from Dorotea, with 2,251 inhabitants, to Stockholm, with 998,782, and from Sundbyberg, with 6 544 inhabitants/km², to Arjeplog with 0.2 – as well as in the range of their cultural activities. Sweden as a whole is the second least densely populated country in the EU. Factors such as employment and the median income of inhabitants also vary greatly. Such differences force some municipalities

to focus on creating access to cultural institutions and activities over great distances, while larger cities have the ability to maintain large institutions and grants for arts and civil society. Some suburban municipalities rely on the cultural resources of a larger city, while others have ambitious cultural policies adapting to increasing cultural diversity.

Local governments provide 38 per cent of the total public expenditure on culture.

1.2.5 Main non-governmental actors

Voluntary associations have historically played an important role in Swedish society and politics, often in close cooperation with the state. However, in many areas this role is mostly limited to acting as advocacy groups, leaving welfare arrangements to the state. Leisure activities are one of the exceptions to this rule. Consequently, organizations relevant to cultural policy are in most cases concerned either with advocacy or with organizing leisure activities. On the advocacy side, organisations representing the professionals of the culture sector and the various art forms play a significant role by being consulted during the process of policy formation, as well as by being represented in committees and boards within the sector.

The Swedish voluntary sector, and the approaches to it taken in government policy, has long been dominated by organisations sharing several organisational characteristics:

- they have equal membership open to everyone who wants to join;
- they have a hierarchical and democratic federal structure divided into regional districts that are, in turn, based on local clubs;
- they have a high number of individual members who form the basis of the organisation's internal democracy; typically cover the whole nation geographically, and only the nation;
- they, to a high degree, rely on voluntary work,
- the state contributes a significant part of their income; and
- they are often closely integrated in government and are, for example, typically consulted by the government before new legislation is proposed to parliament.

Such organisations are often described as popular movement organisations (folkrörelseorganisationer). This way of organising is enforced by strong links to the nation-state, as well as to its regional authorities and municipalities.

A slightly different form from the typical Swedish NGO structure is the study association. These are more complex in structure. They are also the economically dominant form of organisation in the field of cultural amateur activities. While they are government-funded, non-profit, membership-based organisations, their members include federations of voluntary organisations of the popular movement type. Their function is to offer popular education activities to the members of these organisations, as well as to the general public.

Since 1991, their national government funding – 4,4 billion SEK in the budget bill for 2026 – is distributed by the Swedish **National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet)**. The Council is a non-profit association with three official members: the National Association of Local and Regional Authorities (representing the large number of folk high schools organised by regional governments), the Interest Organisation of Popular Movement Folk High Schools (representing the folk high schools organised by voluntary organisations), and the Swedish National Federation of Study Associations (Folkbildningsförbundet, representing the study associations). Most of the established voluntary organisations of the country are involved in these structures, generally as members of study associations. In September, the government assigned a government inquiry to prepare a proposal for reforming the system. The inquiry was also instructed to consider the possibility of transferring the responsibility for allocating government funding in this area from the National Council for Adult Education to an existing government agency. The report from this inquiry is due in June 2024 (Dir. 2023:130).

Another exception to the typical case is the registered religious denominations. The largest of these is the **Church of Sweden**, with 5.4 million members. When analysing trends in the Swedish voluntary sector, it is thus worth noting that the Church of Sweden was separated from the state in 2000 and is now a part of the voluntary sector. Even if one does not consider religious activities, as such, to be a part of the cultural sector, its activities still contain many aspects which could be characterised as arts and culture, e.g. church choirs, church music, and heritage preservation.

1.2.6 Transversal co-operation

Since implementation of policies is typically a matter for government agencies rather than for the ministries themselves, inter-agency cooperation is much more common than direct inter-ministerial cooperation.

Cooperation between the national and regional levels in cultural policy is organised according to the **Culture Cooperation Model** (see also chapter 1.2.3). Under this model, nationally supported regional cultural policies are guided by regional Culture Plans prepared by the Regions and approved by the Swedish Arts Council. While preparing the Culture Plan, the Region should be in dialogue with civil society, professionals in arts and culture, and the municipalities of the region. In its work with Culture Plans and the Culture Cooperation Model, The Swedish Arts Council is supported by a cooperation council (samverkansråd) consisting of representatives of The Swedish Arts Council (chairing the council), The Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden), The Royal Library (Kungliga biblioteket), the County Administrative Boards (länstyrelser), The National Swedish Handicraft Council (Nämnden för hemslöjdsfrågor), The National Touring Theatre (Riksteatern), The National Heritage Board

(Riksantikvarieämbetet), The National Archives (Arkivverket), and the Swedish Film Institute (Filminstitutet).

Cultural aspects of foreign policy are an important area for inter-ministerial cooperation, mainly between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. **Cultural attachés** are currently placed at the Swedish embassies in Berlin, London, Paris (also heading the Swedish Institute in 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 (see 1.4.1). Together with the Swedish Film Institute, the Swedish Arts Council runs the **Creative Europe Desk Sweden** (see chapter 1.4.2).

1.3 Cultural institutions

1.3.1 Overview of cultural institutions

Most major cultural institutions in Sweden are financed by the national, regional, or local levels of government. Most of these are owned and maintained by public authorities. The national government also contributes to regional and municipal cultural institutions (see chapters 1.2.3 and 1.2.6).

National museums are under government authority, and most of them are organised as parts of government agencies. A few national museums have the legal status of foundations, but there is little practical difference in their relationship to the government. The government stipulates instructions and regulations, appoints boards, and supports them financially. For historical reasons, most cultural institutions are located in the capital. However, the newer Museum of World Cultures has its headquarters in Gothenburg, and the Maritime Museum is headquartered in the port city Karlskrona. Two national stages, the Royal Opera and the Royal Dramatic Theatre – both in Stockholm – are organised as limited liability companies, with the state as sole shareholder. These companies are not financially self-supporting; they receive 70-80 per cent of their annual budgets from the state funds for culture. National public service TV and radio are organised in companies owned by a foundation with a board representing the parties represented in the national parliament.

Regional and municipal cultural institutions are mostly run as foundations, as limited liability companies, in which the Region and/or municipal authorities are the owners, or as integrated parts of regional or municipal administration. Access to EU structural funds and earmarked money for cultural projects has become increasingly important at these levels.

1.3.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain (2024 if not else noted)

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Public sector		Private sector	
		Number	Trend last 5 years	Number	Trend last 5 years
Cultural heritage	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)*	6 034 (2024)	-	0	0
	Archaeological sites*	702 642 (2024)	7.60 %	0	0
Museums	Museum institutions*	199 (2024)	15.03 %	N/A	N/A
Archives	Archive institutions**	312		N/A	N/A
Visual arts	Public art galleries/exhibition halls	55 (2024)	N/A	192 (2024)	N/A
Performing arts	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre***	52	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Concert houses***	13	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Theatre companies***	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dance and ballet companies***	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Symphonic orchestras***	14	N/A	N/A	N/A
Libraries	Libraries****	1059	-3 %	0	0
Audiovisual	Cinemas****	-	-	444	-7
	Broadcasting organisations*****	2	+0	2	+0
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	132	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source(s):

* Source: The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis

** Source: The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis. The statistics include public funded performing arts institutions.

*** Source: public libraries from the Nordic statistics database (<https://www.nordicstatistics.org/culture/>)

**** Source: the Nordic statistics database (<https://www.nordicstatistics.org/culture/>) latest data is from 2019.

***** Source: The Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority (Myndigheten för press, radio och tv)

N/A: Data not available. No data present for this measure

1.3.3 Public cultural institutions: trends and strategies

Traditionally, the arm's-length principle applies to the relationship between the government and national cultural institutions, such as the Royal Opera and national museums. The government thus appoints the director, and sometimes also a board or advisory council, supports the institution financially, and formulates goals for its activities related to the national cultural policy objectives. No major institutions are entirely non-governmental or private. However, the government does not directly control the content of activities in cultural institutions, such as their choice of repertoire and artistic expressions.

The most significant trends in cultural policy in the 2000s have been the result of increasing regionalisation, globalisation, and digitalisation; in particular, the increased movements of people, cultural products and cultural influences across national borders have been the main influences on 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. The notion of Sweden as a multicultural society, and what this entails, has increasingly been the subject of political debate in the last ten years, and the current centre-right government appears to be moving away from it. These trends and debates have been noticeable also for cultural institutions, and are visible in Culture Plans and government instructions to relevant cultural institutions.

Regional and municipal institutions are usually part of regional, or local, administrations, and depend for funding both on local and regional authorities, and – in many cases – also on the national government, and on funding allocated within the Culture Cooperation Model (see chapters 1.2.3 and 1.2.6). The introduction of this model has meant that national funding for regional institutions is now subject to changes in the Culture Plans made by the Regions and approved by the Swedish Arts Council. While this initially was a cause of worry, funding for regional institutions has remained stable. Increasing the role of private and civil society supported culture in relation to government-supported culture has, during the past 20-25 years, been an issue of increasing importance in Swedish cultural policy.

1.4 International cooperation

1.4.1 Public actors and cultural diplomacy

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for coordinating international cooperation within cultural policy. It is also responsible for the **cultural attachés (kulturråd)** at Swedish embassies. Cultural attachés currently exist at the Swedish embassies in Berlin, London,

Paris (also heading the Swedish Institute in 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).

The Swedish Institute (SI) is a public agency that promotes interest and trust in Sweden around the world ([web page](#)). Its core activities include:

- Analysing how foreign target groups perceive Sweden, and how this affects opportunities for Swedish actors abroad.
- Providing expert support to both private and public actors wishing to communicate the image of Sweden and Swedish skills.
- Spreading information about Swedish values and experience in the fields of innovation, sustainability, culture and creativity.
- Increasing cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, which is a prerequisite for long-term development in Sweden and the region itself.
- Supporting projects that encourage democratic development in our partner countries.
- Establishing relations between Swedish partners and the decision-makers of tomorrow around the world.
- Actively promoting mobility for students, researchers and skilled labour to and from Sweden.
- Providing funding and other support for Swedish language tuition and knowledge-enhancement programmes focusing on Sweden abroad.
- Running the Swedish Institute in Paris.

Aside from embassies, the SI, and the Swedish Institute in Paris, Sweden is also represented abroad by the Swedish Institute in Istanbul and the Swedish Institute in Rome. These last two have their main activities in the areas of education and research, but are also of some importance for cultural contacts, including in the museum and heritage sector. They are supported by the Swedish state through the Ministry of Education and Research.

Much of Sweden's international cooperation in the cultural sphere takes place within **Nordic cooperation**, one of the most extensive regional systems of cooperation anywhere in the world. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are members of the Nordic cooperation, as well as the self-governing areas of Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands. Work in the Nordic cooperation is organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council (based in the parliaments of the member states). Cultural policy and cultural cooperation are among the central areas of this cooperation. The Nordic Culture Fund and Nordic Culture Point fund cultural cooperation between the Nordic countries.

Additional to this are special exchange programs and cultural centres focusing on cultural and academic exchange between specific Nordic countries. On behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis maintains Kulturanalys Norden, reporting on cultural policy in all the Nordic countries ([website of the Nordic Council](#)).

1.4.2 European / international actors and programmes

Sweden has a long tradition of involvement in international cultural cooperation, including in the UNESCO, Nordic Council, and Council of Europe. This work is maintained by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, as well as by a number of government agencies, primarily under the Ministry of Culture.

The Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) and the Swedish Film Institute (Svenska Filminstitutet) share the responsibility of being the Swedish contact point for the EU Creative Europe programme. Together, they maintain the Swedish Creative Europe Desk. The Arts Council is responsible for the Culture sub-program and Creative Europe Desk Culture ([web page](#)), while the Swedish Film Institute is responsible for the MEDIA sub-program and Creative Europe Desk MEDIA ([web page](#)). These responsibilities are financed within the framework of the cross-sectoral program area, which since 2019 also offers the possibility of a financial loan guarantee for cultural and creative industries. According to reports from the Swedish Arts Council (2023), over six and a half million euros were granted to a total of 111 projects during 2022.

OMC is a method of EU institutions to communicate with their member states. It is also a forum for cooperation on issues with no legislation at the European level. From 2011 to 2013, the Swedish Arts Council participated in the Open Method Cooperation (OMC) groups Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and accessible culture for all; Cultural and Creative Industries; and culture for sustainable living. The Arts Council is not currently appointed by the government to participate in any OMC groups. The Arts Grants Committee and the National Heritage Board have also previously represented Sweden in OMC groups.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for Swedish cooperation within UNESCO and for the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO. Much of the work with international cooperation also takes place within government agencies reporting to the Ministry of Culture.

1.4.3 NGO's and direct professional cooperation

There is an extensive tradition of international professional cooperation, particularly within the Nordic region, involving most major Swedish cultural institutions, government agencies, and major NGOs. International cooperation is also increasingly common on the regional and

local levels, especially within the EU. EU funding also plays an increasing role in local and regional cultural policy, although this role has earlier been less developed than in most other European countries. The Creative Europe programme funded projects in Sweden with a total of 34 million SEK in 2022. EU structural funds provided over 100 million SEK in funding for projects in Sweden the same year (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2023d).

Government measures are now being taken in order to further stimulate cultural institutions and professionals in Sweden to broaden their international scope. In relation to exchanges within Europe, this work is led by the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) and the Swedish Film Institute (Svenska Filminstitutet), who share the responsibility of being the Swedish contact point for the EU Creative Europe programme. The Swedish Institute and the cultural attachés at Swedish embassies are also engaged in the work of expanding the contacts between the Swedish arts and culture sector and the rest of the world (see chapters 1.4.1 and 1.4.2). The International Artists Studio Programme in Sweden (IASPIS) offers artist-in-residence grants to visiting artists and supports artists from Sweden exhibiting abroad. Sweden is also an active member of The Organizing Committee of Ars Baltica, which was founded to enhance cultural exchange and co-operation among the countries of the Baltic Sea region.

2. Current cultural affairs

2.1 Key developments

The most significant trends in cultural policy in the 21st century have been the result of increasing regionalisation, globalisation, and digitalisation; in particular, the increased movements of people, cultural goods, and cultural influences across national borders have been significant influences on developments in arts and culture, as well as increasingly 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 cultural and creative industries, and new efforts to transfer policy-making powers from the national to the regional level.

The notion of Sweden as a multicultural society, and the implications of this, has increasingly been the subject of political debate in the last several years. So far, cultural policy remains relatively stable, but there are indications that the consensus that once characterised Swedish cultural policy is beginning to give way to increased politicisation. One reason for this is the emergence of the nationalist Sweden Democrats as a major political party, and now a close ally of the governing coalition. Many researchers also see a more general tendency towards an increased polarisation of the political climate of Sweden. Increasing polarisation and politicisation of cultural policy can be noticed, for example, in recent debates on threats against artists and other professionals in the culture sector, political activism in libraries, politicisation of museums, free entry at national museums, and politicisation of the influence of grant-giving bodies on artists and artistic projects (Harding 2022, Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2021).

Since October 2022, Sweden is governed by a centre-right coalition government with the support of the Sweden Democrats. While the published agreement between the coalition parties and the Sweden Democrats only mentions a few aspects of cultural policy, these include the establishment of a Swedish culture canon, as well as the appointment of government commissions for reevaluating the government support model for popular adult education (folkbildning) and public service media. The importance of the arm's-length principle in cultural policy is explicitly stated in the agreement, but without giving a clear definition. Most of these issues have now been addressed by the government, and neither popular adult education nor public service broadcasting has been reorganised, although funding for popular adult education has been reduced.

Partially because of increasing debate, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis was tasked by the government in 2019 to review the effects of political control on artistic freedom. In 2021, they delivered their report from this project, identifying four main threats

to artistic freedom and recommending that the government should increase its efforts to counteract these:

1. Hatred, threats, campaigns, and harassment of artists, motivated by hostility against cultural expressions and/or the artists themselves.
2. Government restrictions of artistic freedom in the implementation of cultural policies.
3. Excessively detailed policies and policy objectives forcing arts and culture funded by government bodies to adapt to policy agendas.
4. Excessively strict financial frameworks circumventing the freedom of artists and cultural creators, and undermining free and inclusive cultural life, in practice restricting the opportunity to express oneself artistically to only a few (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2021).

There is good reason to think that this assessment is still valid.

The government report presented in September 2023 proposing changes in the relationship between the national, regional, and local levels of government could be seen as a step towards further increasing regional autonomy in cultural policy, while at the same time increasing the protection of artistic freedom in government-funded arts and culture on the regional and local level. A law on collaboration between the state, region, and municipality in the cultural field is suggested to simplify the processes within the model and guarantee artistic freedom in the regional and municipal activities funded through the model. The existing regional culture plans should be replaced with plans focusing on the state-funded parts of regional cultural policy. The Swedish Arts Council should be given full authority to represent the state in this area, and new artistic and cultural areas should be possible to include in the plans (SOU 2023:58). So far, these proposed reforms have not been enacted, and the Cultural Cooperation Model may remain unchanged.

Another major issue in Swedish cultural policy in the last few years has been the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. As elsewhere in Europe, government recommendations and restrictions against public events have had serious consequences for the cultural sector of the economy. By July 2021, revenue in artistic activities had decreased by 18.6 per cent, according to preliminary statistics from the Arts Grants Committee. Cultural activities have yet to recover fully from this downturn (for a discussion of the consequences of the pandemic on the arts and culture sector in the Nordic countries, see Kulturanalys Norden 2023). During the pandemic, the internet has played a larger role than ever in people's cultural habits, from listening to music to ordering books and watching theatre performances. Many cultural institutions have increased their efforts to make their work electronically available. The long-term consequences of the pandemic remain difficult to predict, but they will continue to affect the culture sector, as well as society as a whole, for the foreseeable future. In 2021, financial measures amounting to SEK 3,916 million in the

years 2022–2024, and 760 million a year after 2024 to “restart” the culture sector were proposed in a government report, in addition to the support programs already initiated by the government. (SOU 2021:77). Not all this funding has materialised in national budgets (prop. 2023/2024:1). Introduced as a crisis budget, the national budget for 2024 included several cuts in public spending on arts and culture, the largest of which concerned support for popular adult education (Sw. folkbildning) (see also 6.4 and 7.2).

Digitalisation has been a feature of the cultural sector in Sweden, much as in other nations, at least since the 1990s. Digitalisation of archives, libraries, and museum collections is an ongoing work (see 2.4), as is the engagement of cultural institutions and agencies with social media, and through these with the public. This work is now very much part of everyday life in the Swedish cultural sector. In the last few years, another layer is added to digitalisation in the form of emerging technologies and applications in artificial intelligence (A.I.), and particularly in Large Language Models (LLMs), and related image-generating programs. These developments now challenge an unknown number of jobs in arts and culture, as well as the copyrights of work used to train A.I. While these threats have been frequently discussed, it currently appears that the initiative in regulating these technologies primarily lies with the E.U., potentially influencing and strengthening the role of the E.U. in cultural policy in the long term, at least if we assume that this area is going to become increasingly central to cultural work in Europe. On the national level, the government displays a generally positive attitude to A.I. in cultural policy, promoting the use of A.I. to a higher degree in government-financed arts and culture, in cultural institutions, and in the government agencies themselves.

Another recent development in Swedish cultural policy is that discussions concerned with it have increasingly focused on its relation to national security and defence preparedness. The 2023 government report on civil defence and general preparedness stated that “Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing protracted war have put the spotlight on the importance of culture for a country at war” (Ds. 2023:34, p. 77), emphasizing not only the importance of protecting heritage in wartime, or its importance to national identity, and thus to morale and motivation, but also the role of arts and culture for maintaining a sense of normalcy, a functioning public life, providing entertainment, but also valuable methods for processing the traumatic realities of war. This report has later been followed by a government bill (prop. 2024/25:34), and a report on protecting the autonomy of arts and culture in wartime (McWilliams et al 2026). Additionally, a new council has been created for exchanging ideas and experiences regarding the protection of cultural heritage in wartime. This council includes representatives of the National Heritage Board, the National Archive, the National Library, the Agency for Civil Defence, the National Property Board, the County Administrative Boards, the national museums, and the Church of Sweden.

2.2 Cultural rights and ethics

Basic cultural rights are included in the Swedish constitution. The *Instrument of Government* (1974:152), one of the Fundamental Laws that make up the constitution of Sweden, states that “The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the private person shall be a fundamental aim of public activity”, and that “Opportunities should be promoted for ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own” (Article 2, Chapter 1). In addition to articles on fundamental democratic rights and freedom of expression, information, religion, and assembly, the *Instrument of Government* includes the provision that “Authors, artists and photographers shall own the rights to their works in accordance with rules laid down in law” (Article 19 in Chapter 1) (for further information on culture and Swedish constitutional law, see chapter 4.1.1).

The cultural rights mentioned in the Fundamental Laws are the framework for Swedish cultural policy. Below this level, much of cultural policy is not regulated by law (see chapter 4) but guided by cultural policy objectives decided by parliament (see chapter 1.1). The objectives of cultural policy establish that “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”, thus emphasising that cultural policy should work for the autonomy of art and culture, freedom of expression, cultural diversity, artistic quality, and that everyone in the country should be able to participate in arts and culture. This interpretation of the objectives formed the starting point when the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis evaluated the impact of governance of the art and culture sector on the freedom of the arts in 2021 (see chapter 2.1).

2.3 Role of artists and cultural professionals

Income and employment conditions among artists and cultural professionals have been a central issue in Swedish cultural policy for decades, but results have remained unsatisfactory. According to studies made by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, artists and other cultural professionals work under poorer financial conditions than professionals with comparable education and experience in other sectors of society do. The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis has concluded that “The cultural institutions upon which many career opportunities rely in the cultural field are also facing financial challenges, especially with regard to their ability to act, due to trends in wage expenditures.” In its situational assessment 2020, the Agency identified the economic circumstances of the cultural sector as a threat to artistic freedom, along with “hate, threats and harassment”, and various forms of political control with and without direct financial connections (Swedish

Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2020). This situation does not appear to have changed (e.g. Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation became significantly more problematic, and large numbers of people have ceased working in arts and culture due to increased difficulties (SOU 2021:77). Employment in arts and culture reached a low point during the winter 2020/2021 and the spring of 2021, but during 2022, the labour market appears to have recovered. From April 2022, and throughout that year, employment numbers were higher than the corresponding months in 2019 (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2023b).

Historically, Swedish support systems for the unemployed have often been relatively favourable to artistic professions, enabling independent professionals to mix periods of employment and unemployment. The system has been criticised as enabling theatres to force independent performers to rehearse on unemployment aid. Programmes to help people into employment have also been used to finance, e.g. trainee positions in the culture sector to a relatively great extent. Several initiatives to move resources from the unemployment budgets to the cultural sector have been taken. An example of this combined budgeting is the "theatre pool" (Teateralliansen) financed by the government, providing salaried training and rehearsal facilities for actors. Since 2008, similar pools are in operation for dancers as well as for musicians.

Since 2005, the Arts Grants Committee has been responsible for monitoring economic and social conditions of artists and publishes annual statistical reports. In 2011, the Arts Grants Committee published a report concerning the employment situation and sources of income of Swedish artists. According to this study, artists spend 73 per cent of their time on direct artistic work or administration of such, while 61 per cent of their income is derived from this. Of the artists who said they have been employed in their artistic profession during the previous year, 35 per cent were permanent full-time employees and 15 percent of permanent part-time employees. 20 per cent were temporary employees, and about 35 per cent of those employed had so-called project employment. In the Swedish labour market in general, 85 per cent of all employees had permanent employment. The survey also indicates that artist labour is more mobile. One third of the artists said they had at least six employers or principals for their artistic work during a year.

In 2018, a government commission submitted a report on artist policy, *Konstnär – oavsett villkor?* ("Artist – regardless of terms?", SOU 2018: 23), describing the conditions for professionally active artists in Sweden. According to this study, artists are increasingly working as freelancers, combining different types of projects, employment, and other sources of income, within and outside of the arts and culture sector. It concludes that current social security is not adapted to these new conditions in the arts and culture labour market. It also highlights the problem that persons with different backgrounds do not have the same opportunities to become artists, and that bias in recruitment to artistic education starts at a

young age. Another issue discussed in the report is the concentration of artists to urban areas – especially the Stockholm area – making it nearly impossible to make an artistic career in large parts of the country.

These issues were revisited by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis in a report published in 2023. The report shows that, in general, persons with a degree in the fields of arts and cultural heritage, who are active in these areas, have lower incomes than persons with degrees in other areas and who are active in those areas. For those with a degree in the arts, the mean income is lower than for those without a degree. These conditions are likely part of the reason why students in the arts tend to have higher-income parents, and parents with higher education than average; i.e., this is a path that one is more likely to set out on with a secure background (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2023c).

2.4 Digital policy and developments

Digitalisation has been a feature of the cultural sector at least since the 1990s. Digitalisation of archives, libraries, and museum collections is an ongoing work, as is the engagement of cultural institutions and agencies with social media, and through these with the public. This work is now very much part of everyday life in the Swedish cultural sector.

Internet use in Sweden is among the highest in the world. In 2025, 97 per cent of Swedes had access to the internet, and 93 per cent used it daily. Nearly all of these had access to social media, but only 45 per cent made their own posts on social media (Internetstiftelsen 2025). The use of social media thus appears to be more passive and less participatory than many predicted just ten to twenty years ago. In contrast, many now converse regularly with Large Language Model (LLM) artificial intelligence (A.I.). Among the more common uses of the internet is gaining access to films, video, and music. Already in 2020, 65 per cent of the population used the internet to watch films and TV series, and 69 per cent to listen to music.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet became both more central and more vital in people's lives. At the same time, 49 per cent were worried about their personal information on the internet being collected for advertising purposes (SCB 2020). These figures illustrate the drastic changes, opportunities and challenges posed by new modes of communication to cultural policy. Digital media have become tools in the daily work of all institutions, e.g., in the form of websites, digitalisation of catalogues, online library loans, documentation and registration of museum collections, use of digital equipment for stage and other music and drama performances, box-office sales, etc. Similarly, digital media have become the natural mode of communication and networking, and a growing medium for creative expressions. As pointed out, for example, by the Government Commission on the Restart of Culture in their recent report (SOU 2021:77), the increasingly digital distribution of literature, music, and other art forms create new challenges for professionals in these areas when it comes to

being paid for their work. In a report on digitalisation in arts and culture, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee describes the implementation of the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market as a chance to improve the financial situation of artists in various fields (Swedish Arts Grants Committee 2021).

A major government priority for Sweden in this area has been education, on all levels. Special funding for equipment and projects has been made available for schools in general and for educational programmes in museums and other cultural institutions. In 2017, the government approved a comprehensive strategy for digitalisation, emphasising competence, security, innovation, leadership, and infrastructure.

Specific projects deal with the digitalisation of cultural heritage. The National Heritage Board is the main responsible government agency in this area, although a large number of public bodies are engaged in such work. Projects are also conducted by the Royal Library concerning the preservation of works published on the Internet, as well as making physical books and documents available through scanning and electronic publishing. Museums and other institutions in arts and culture work with improving electronic access, an effort which acquired increased urgency during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2021b). In the national budget for 2024, the government allocated SEK 17 million per year for 2024–2026 to central museums for the digitalisation of archives and collections.

In the last few years, a new layer has been added to digitalisation in the form of emerging technologies and applications in artificial intelligence (A.I.), particularly in Large Language Models (LLMs), and related image-generating programs. In 2025, 37 per cent of the population (above 16 years old) had used generative A.I., according to a survey. About one in six have used A.I. to create images, and two-thirds of students use A.I. in their studies (Internetstiftelsen 2025). These developments now challenge an unknown number of jobs in arts and culture, as well as the copyrights of work used to train A.I. While these threats have been frequently discussed, it currently appears that the initiative in regulating these technologies primarily lies with the E.U., potentially influencing and strengthening the role of the E.U. in cultural policy in the long term, at least if we assume that this area is going to become increasingly central to cultural work in Europe. On the national level, the government displays a generally positive attitude to A.I. in cultural policy, promoting the use of A.I. to a higher degree in government-financed arts and culture, in cultural institutions, and the government agencies themselves. The government has also assigned to the National Archives, the National Heritage Board, the Arts Council and the Arts Grants Committee to map the development of A.I. use in their respective areas of cultural policy.

2.5 Cultural and social diversity

2.5.1 National / international intercultural dialogue

To “promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation” is one of the national objectives of Swedish cultural policy. This is primarily considered an objective that should be promoted in all areas by mainstreaming it as a priority for all government agencies. As a main objective of cultural policy, this is evaluated by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis. In line to promote intercultural dialogue, several institutions and government agencies run projects and activities in this area. The Swedish Arts Council has a grants programme aimed at projects within this area. The National Museums of World Culture has the facilitation of intercultural dialogue as part of its objectives.

IASPIS is the Swedish Arts Grants Committee's International Programme supporting international exchange for practitioners in the areas of visual art, design, craft and architecture. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee has international programmes for professional dance artists and choreographers, as well as an international music programme for professional musicians. Authors and translators from other languages to Swedish can apply for travel and international exchange grants from the Swedish Authors' Fund, and the Swedish Film Institute has special grants for international distribution of Swedish films.

The National Museums of World Culture is a government agency responsible for the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, as well as for three museums in Stockholm. As a government agency, it is “aimed at adapting the collections of historical and ethnographic museums to the globalisation process, as well as to accelerating intercontinental migration and multicultural society”. The Museum of World Culture states as its mission to “in dialogue with others [be] a forum for emotional and intellectual encounters that help people feel at home wherever they are, trust each other and accept joint responsibility for the planet's constantly changing future.”

2.5.2 Diversity education

Sweden does not have a specific framework for diversity education. This is not to say that cultural diversity is not a priority in education on various levels, and in various contexts. On the contrary, cultural diversity is an area that is emphasized on most, or all, levels of education in Sweden. For example, the national curriculum for schools and pre-schools states in its description of the purposes and general principles of the Swedish school system that “The internationalisation of Swedish society and the increasing mobility across national borders place high demands on people's ability to live with and realise the values that lie in

cultural diversity. ... The school is a social and cultural meeting place that has both an opportunity and a responsibility to strengthen this ability in everyone who works there.”

2.5.3 Media pluralism and content diversity

One of the overall aims of all measures taken by the Swedish government within the field of culture and media is to safeguard freedom of expression, as well as the accessibility and diversity of content. The mandates of public service broadcasting companies include direct responsibility for culture, e.g., broadcasting of programmes which cover and debate cultural subjects and events, including religious issues. The relationship between the state and the public service companies is regulated by an official agreement as well as in law (see chapter 4.2.6). Newspapers are supported by government grants depending on their size and regional context. The growing number of commercial TV and radio channels, and the possibility to access such channels from around the world via satellite and the Internet, provide a wealth of attitudes, images, and icons which is difficult for a public service policy to monitor. It is a common argument in favour of government grants and public service broadcasting that the pluralism of the sector could otherwise be imperilled, considering that ownership of commercial media based in Sweden over the last few decades has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of a limited number of owners.

In addition to the traditional media, new forms of information and communication media have become increasingly important. The commercial market of edutainment and electronic gaming is expanding rapidly. Digital communication creates new possibilities for increased public access to the work of artists and cultural institutions, something that became increasingly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many projects are underway to make the art and collections of public institutions available via IT-based solutions, for example, the digitisation of archives and museums and support for IT-based art projects from different foundations and institutions. Most recently, the national budget for 2024 included SEK 17 million per year for 2024–2026 to central museums for the digitalisation of archives and collections.

2.5.4 Language

In 2009, the Language Act legally stated Swedish as the official language of Sweden. Even if Swedish is a majority language within Sweden, it is a minority language in a European and global context. Swedish is currently spoken by about ten million people: mainly the inhabitants of Sweden and a minority (approximately 290,000) in Finland, where Swedish is one of the two official national languages. Furthermore, an increasing number of Swedes live abroad, often for limited periods of their lives (nearly 50,000 Swedes emigrate each year). It is therefore supported by libraries and research institutions and promoted via literature

grants, media, and education. In recent years, the government has placed great emphasis on children's reading and speaking via support schemes for library purchases and reading campaigns. Knowledge of the Swedish language among immigrants has also been prioritised. Free introductory language courses for immigrants are provided by all municipalities. The agreement made between the government coalition and the Sweden Democrats (Tidöavtalet) emphasised language training for immigrants as a part of the integration process, and full knowledge of the language as a requirement for citizenship. Further changes in public policy and law to that effect are likely to be presented by the current government.

Measures intended to strengthen the position of the Swedish language have been a feature of government policy at least since the 18th century. Such measures include supervision of the development of the language, guidelines for setting language standards, the production of manuals and dictionaries, and promotion of relevant guidance and research. Measures taken by the government to support and protect the Swedish language, as well as the languages of the recognised national minorities, are coordinated by the Swedish Language Council, a government agency created in 2006 through the merger of the (previous) Swedish Language Council and the Centre for Technical Terminology. The Royal Swedish Academy (dating back to the 18th century) also serves several functions in language and literature policy, including the publication of Swedish dictionaries, as well as grants and prizes to writers.

In 1999, five minority languages were declared official in Sweden: Sami (all varieties), Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani Chib (all varieties), and Yiddish. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was ratified by Sweden in January 2000 regarding these minority languages. Swedish sign language has also been declared an official language. Sami, Finnish, and Meänkieli have, furthermore, been recognised as having further rights in specific regions of the country. Cultural policy directed at the national minority languages and sign language includes a number of measures intended to support and develop these. Of these languages, Finnish has, by far, the most speakers in Sweden. It is estimated that around 260,000 persons in Sweden are native speakers of Finnish.

Due to immigration, a large percentage of the population speak other languages than Swedish, or the recognised national minority languages, as their mother tongues. No official statistics exist on the first languages of people living in Sweden, but it has been estimated that more than 200 languages are spoken in the country, and that (based on the country of origin of immigrants) around 400 000 people in Sweden speak Arabic as their first language. Other large languages in the country include Finnish, Farsi, Somali, Dari, Tigrinya, and Polish. Culture in languages other than Swedish and the recognised national minority languages is not a prioritised area within cultural policy. Neither are they recognised in any official sense.

The increased communication across national borders, including satellite television and the Internet, may, however, increase their connection to their respective linguistic communities transnationally and may thus influence the contribution of diaspora communities in Sweden both to culture in Sweden and to culture within their own respective linguistic communities.

2.5.5 Gender

Sweden has a Minister of Gender Equality, as well as a parliamentary Ombudsman for Gender Equality. Each ministry has a Gender Equality Coordinator, who is part of an inter-ministerial working group on gender mainstreaming that meets quarterly. Work with gender equality should be integrated into all policies and programmes, including those in cultural policy. Women have been in the majority among employees in the Swedish arts and culture sector, at least since 2001. As summed up in a report from the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis in 2015, gender balance in the cultural sector's management level changed between studies made in 2001–2004 and 2009–2012. In more recent studies, women were in the majority among employees in leadership positions in the arts and culture sector, with regional music institutions as the only exception among the categories included in the study. In 2015, the Agency also noted that while administrative positions had a majority of women, artistic work showed a predominance of men. The report also mentioned, as a hypothesis put forward in a reference group, that this gendered division of labour may explain why the proportion of men decreased during the period; the administration increased as a part of the total number of employees, while artistic work is increasingly done by freelancers. Among applicants to the Arts Grants Committee, 57 per cent were female before the Covid-19 pandemic, but interestingly only 47 per cent among those applying for the special support grants granted during the pandemic (Swedish Arts Grants Committee 2020). Among those receiving grants from the Swedish Arts Council 2019–2021, women were in the majority, both among participating artists and among arts managers in the projects. Measured in number of individuals, women were also the majority among applicants (Swedish Agency of Cultural Analysis 2023c).

2.5.6 Disability

The Swedish Arts Council has been given a general responsibility for development in relation to enabling people with disabilities to take equal part in cultural activities, and equal access to arts and culture. Their work in this area is based on the UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities, which has been signed by Sweden. The Arts Council informs, advises, and provides support in matters concerning accessibility in arts and culture, including annual formal consultations with national disability organisations, and responding to referrals concerning the development of disability policy in Sweden and the EU. Most public grants to arts and culture include minimum requirements for accessibility. This includes, e.g. all funding within the Culture Cooperation Model (see chapters 1.2.3 and 1.2.6).

General legislation makes similar requirements on the activities of government agencies, regions, and municipalities. No thorough statistical overviews exist concerning the success of these efforts.

2.6 Culture and social inclusion

Government-supported culture in Sweden should, according to the national cultural policy objectives, promote “international and intercultural exchange and cooperation”, as well as guarantee that “Everyone should be able to participate in cultural life”. It is today the established norm to recognise Sweden as a multicultural society. There are also funding schemes dealing with the national minorities and minority languages, mainly providing grants for projects in the fields of language and literature, and periodicals with cultural content.

In January 2000, Sweden ratified the Council of Europe *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* and the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. The officially recognised national minorities are the indigenous Sami people, the Swedish Finns, the Tornedalians, the Roma and the Jews. All the national minorities have national cultural institutions. Examples are the Sami Theatre, the Sami Museum Ajtte, the Tornedalen Theatre, the Roma Cultural Centre in Malmö and the Jewish Museum. The indigenous Sami people are a national minority population with approximately 20 000 members in Sweden. There are also populations of Sami in Finland, Norway and northwestern Russia. The Swedish Sami Parliament (*Sametinget*) has been allocated an earmarked government budget for cultural activities, research and social development projects. Nordic cooperation exists both between the Sami parliaments and between the respective nation-state governments on Sami-related issues. In the national budget for 2024, increased funding has been allocated to spreading information to prevent antisemitism, as well as to the Giron Sami theatre.

Aside from these legally recognised national minorities, Sweden has several other cultural and linguistic communities, as a result of immigration in the last sixty years. 19.6 per cent of the population is born in another country. Many of these originate in other Nordic countries, the largest group being those born in Finland. Other major groups are people with a background in the former Yugoslavia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Chile and Somalia. Many immigrant groups are organised in associations that receive government grants. In 2008, the Muslim Study Association Ibn Rushd gained the status of a study association recognised by the government, giving it access to funding for adult education and cultural activities. It remained one of ten such recognised national study associations until 2025.

According to a report published by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis in 2015, the percentage of arts-and-culture sector employees with foreign backgrounds had remained at a constant level for a decade, i.e., 13.4 per cent in 2012, which was lower than the corresponding percentage of the population (20.1 per cent in 2012). Underrepresentation had thus increased with the increasing percentage of the population

with a foreign background. The greater diversity in the population was thus not reflected in staff composition in the culture sector. In leading positions, the percentage of persons born outside of Sweden was even lower than among employees in general. The agency's assessment was that the cultural sector in 2015 was further from the target of reflecting the population than it had been ten years earlier. In a report published in 2023, the agency revisited these issues, showing that while foreign-born persons were underrepresented, both in the arts (10 %) and in the heritage sector (9 %), those with one foreign-born parent were underrepresented (3 % in both fields). In the cultural labour market, those born abroad are not underrepresented in relation to their share of the group with a degree in the arts, or in cultural heritage (Swedish Agency of Cultural Policy Analysis 2023c).

The National Museums of World Culture is a government agency composed of four museums specifically charged with making a broader cultural heritage available to the people. The museums of world culture exhibit ethnographical and archaeological collections, from, among other places, Egypt, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, China, North America and Peru. The alleged tendency for these museums to focus more on current issues in Sweden than on the historical contexts of their collections has been criticised by the political opposition and media as constituting a polarisation of the role of museums (Harding 2021).

2.7 Societal impacts of arts

It is a longstanding goal of modern Swedish cultural policy that it should increase access to culture for everyone living in Sweden; both through access to high-quality culture and by enabling more people to practice cultural and artistic activities. Hence, participation and social cohesion can be considered to be at the very core of Swedish cultural policy. In the present objectives of Swedish cultural policy, this goal is formulated in the statement that *"Everyone should be able to participate in cultural life"*, and that cultural policy should *"promote everyone's opportunity to cultural experiences, cultural education, and to develop their creative capabilities"* and *"especially notice the right to culture of children and the young."* (Government bill 2009/10:3).

Integration policy aims to support equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for everyone, irrespective of ethnic and cultural background; social cohesion built on diversity; social development characterised by mutual respect, irrespective of background (should participate and share a sense of community). These objectives cover all of public policy, including cultural policy. Ethnic and cultural diversity is the point of departure for shaping general policies in all sectors and at all levels of society. High priority is, in many policy documents, given to addressing segregation in Swedish society, as well as to efforts to combat racism, xenophobia, and ethnic discrimination. Integration efforts focus on creating opportunities that enable individuals to economically support themselves and participate in society, safeguarding basic democratic values and working to secure equal rights and

opportunities for women and men. In the last few years, Swedish language and culture have been increasingly emphasised in policies on the integration of immigrants.

2.8 Cultural sustainability

Cultural sustainability, and sustainability in general, are widely recognised as important in Sweden. Working towards the goals of Agenda 2030 is, for example, to be integrated in all areas of government policy. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Cooperation Programme for Cultural Policy (2025–2030) is described as contributing to their overarching Vision 2030 of a “green, competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic Region”. It outlines several goals for how Nordic actors in arts and culture are to support this ambition, including strengthening the cultural sector to become more inclusive and competitive, and supporting the development of climate-friendly cultural productions. Another Nordic initiative is the Nordic Green Roadmap, which provides guidance for how cultural institutions in the Nordic region can improve their environmental sustainability (Nordiska ministerrådet 2023; 2024).

In a 2025 report, the Nordic cultural analysis centre Kulturanalys Norden observed that many Nordic governments express ambitions for arts and culture to contribute to making Nordic societies more sustainable, as well as for the cultural sector itself to become so. This includes improving working conditions for artists and cultural professionals, as well as making more environmentally conscious choices within the everyday practices of the sector. The report also claims that “There are also points of overlap between the two overarching perspectives on the role of culture within sustainable development. For instance, a more sustainable cultural sector can contribute to a more sustainable societal development overall. Hence, the policy initiatives examined in this policy brief, to varying degrees, relate to both perspectives.” While the concept of sustainability tends to be used in broad and visionary terms in various policy documents, it is - according to Kulturanalys Norden (2025) - often unclear how the intentions framed in these policies are to be implemented. Yet sustainability as a norm appears to have a strong presence in the culture sector of Sweden and the other Nordic countries.

2.9 Other main cultural policy issues

Increasing cultural participation has been a central aim for Swedish cultural policy at least since the 1970's. Historically, this ambition has focused on making arts and culture activities available throughout the country – which is the second least densely populated country in the EU – and on widening audiences in terms of class and educational background. In recent decades, increased emphasis has been placed on other factors, such as gender, functional differences, and immigrant background, as well, but class, education, and especially

geography remain central issues in cultural policy, even though issues relating to cultural diversity and multiculturalism have become dominant.

The current centre-right government has emphasised the protection of artists and other professionals in the culture sector against threats and violence, as part of upholding public safety, as well as safe work environments and freedom of expression. Issues relating to law enforcement have increasingly come into focus in policy discussions in general. Municipalities have, for example, been given increased responsibilities in preventing crimes, something which has also impacted discussions on cultural policy-related topics such as city planning and leisure activities for the young.

The notion of Sweden as a multicultural society, and the implications of this, has increasingly been the subject of political debate in the last several years. Since October 2022, Sweden is governed by a centre-right coalition government with the support of the Sweden Democrats. While the published agreement between the coalition parties and the Sweden Democrats only mentions a few aspects of cultural policy, these include the establishment of a Swedish cultural canon. In 2025, this canon was presented in a report by a government commission. This commission also proposed several measures to make the works of art and culture listed in the canon more present in government-funded cultural activities (SOU 2025:92; Harding 2025). This may be a part of a more general shift in focus of cultural policy, increasingly prioritising the strengthening of national identity and the integration of immigrants into this cultural community. So far this has not led to any major changes in institutional cultural policy, or even budgetary priorities, but the tendency is noticeable in political statements and in individual projects such as the new Swedish culture canon.

Another recent development in Swedish cultural policy is that discussions concerned with it have increasingly focused on its relation to national security and defence preparedness. The 2023 government report on civil defence and general preparedness stated that “Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing protracted war have put the spotlight on the importance of culture for a country at war” (prop. Ds. 2023:34, p. 77), emphasizing not only the importance of protecting heritage in wartime, or its importance to national identity, and thus to moral and motivation, but also the role of arts and culture for maintaining a sense of normalcy, a functioning public life, providing entertainment, but also valuable methods for processing the traumatic realities of war. This report has later been followed by a government bill (prop. 2024/25:34), and a report on protecting the autonomy of arts and culture in wartime (McWilliams et al 2026). Additionally, a new council has been created for exchanging ideas and experiences regarding the protection of cultural heritage in wartime. This council includes representatives of the National Heritage Board, the National Archive, the National Library, the Agency for Civil Defence, the National Property Board, the County Administrative Boards, the national museums, and the Church of Sweden.

3. Cultural and creative sectors

3.1 Heritage

The Museum Act (2017:563) regulates the primary roles of public, i.e., national, regional, and municipal, museums, defining a museum as *“an institution that is open to the public, and which acquires, preserves, investigates, mediates, and exhibits material and intangible testimonies about mankind, and her environment”* (Swedish Code of Statutes 2017:563, §2).

As of Government Bill 2012/13:96 (Parliamentary Committee on Culture 2012/13:KrU9, rskr. 2012/13:273), the national objectives of Swedish policies on heritage and cultural environment are to promote

- a sustainable society with a diversity of cultural environments that are preserved, used and developed;
- the participation of people in public work with the cultural environment, and providing opportunities to understand and take responsibility for the cultural environment;
- an inclusive society with the cultural environment as a common source of knowledge, education, and experiences; and
- a holistic view of landscape management, and that the cultural environment should be utilised in the development of society (Government Bill 2012/13:96).

The Swedish National Heritage Board is the government agency responsible for matters concerning cultural environment preservation, cultural heritage, and museums. The objectives of the Heritage Board include taking a proactive and inspirational role in cultural heritage efforts, as well as promoting a society that is sustainable in the long term and everyone's ability to understand, participate in and take responsibility for their own cultural environment. The National Heritage Board, and many of the museums and other heritage institutions in Sweden, are currently working on increasing their emphasis on proactive work, encouraging discussions on the use of narratives as a focus for organising heritage presentation. Much of this work focuses on making both exhibitions and the national heritage more inclusive to all parts of the population. Main themes in this work have included civil society and the inclusion of minority perspectives in the heritage preserved and presented by government-supported agencies and institutions. In 2015, the archaeological activities of the National Heritage Board were transferred to the National Museums of History. The national budget for 2024 provided further funding for the National Heritage Board, including SEK 17 million per year for 2024–2026 to central museums for the digitalisation of archives and collections.

On the regional level, County Administrative Boards (Länstyrelser) are responsible for issues relating to the cultural environment. It is they who decide on matters related to the National Heritage Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1988:950) within their regions, and who are responsible for ensuring that protection of the cultural environment is taken into account in regional planning and development. The county administrative boards also allocate state funds for the restoration of historic buildings, ancient monuments, and historic landscapes within their regions. Together with the County Administrative Boards, regional museums work to protect cultural heritage. Their tasks include collecting and disseminating knowledge about the cultural heritage of the country. Regional museums are often involved in the care or restoration of buildings, ancient monuments, and historic landscapes. At the local level, many municipalities run municipal museums, often labelled as city museums.

In the last few years, issues relating to museums have been the topic of recurring discussions in the media, mostly focusing on allegations against the government of politicising and instrumentalising museums, and cultural heritage in general, through increased ideological regulation. The suggested merger of the Mediterranean Museum, the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, and the Museum of Ethnography has been used as an example of this tendency. The introduction of a museum act, and its emphasis on the independence of museums, may at least partially be understood in the context of this criticism (Harding 2021, 2022). The suggestion that museums should be instructed to work with the works of art and culture included in the national culture canon presented in 2025 (SOU 2025:92) is another example.

3.2 Archives and libraries

The Swedish government's work with archives and libraries has a long history. The first regulations for the National Archive (then, the Royal Archive) were formulated in 1618, and the Royal Library has similarly ancient origins. National archive policy is intrinsically connected to the provisions for public access to official and public documents guaranteed in the Swedish constitution (see chapter 4.1.1), while library policies are connected to central aspects of Swedish cultural policy, such as equal access to culture and public education. As a central feature of Swedish cultural policy, several recent debates on cultural policy have been relevant to this area.

As established in the Library Act (2013:801) §2, *"Libraries in the public library system shall work for the development of a democratic society by contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and the free formation of opinions. Libraries in the public library system shall promote the position of literature and the interest in education, enlightenment, education, and research, as well as cultural activities in general. Library activities must be available to everyone."* The same law also

establishes that each municipality must provide its inhabitants with a public library. Other than municipal libraries, the legislation also covers school libraries, university libraries, regional libraries, and all other publicly financed libraries. In 2020, this included a total of 2201 libraries (35 fewer than the previous year). Physical visits to municipal libraries increased by 50 per cent from 2021 to 2022, with a total of just under 46 million visits during 2022. During the same year, libraries facilitated around 63 million loans of books and other physical media, and just under 3 million loans of electronic media. This represents a partial return to the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic (National Library of Sweden 2023). The coordinating government agency for this sector is the National Library of Sweden, which also collects all printed works published in Sweden.

The library-related issues which have been discussed in the last few years include access to school libraries. According to the official library statistics of 2022, approximately 48 per cent of pupils in primary and secondary school have access to a school library with at least part-time staff (National Library of Sweden 2023). For 2024–2026, the government allocated SEK 40 million annually to support municipal libraries, which are otherwise funded primarily by the municipalities.

In municipal libraries, there has been an increase in harassment and threats towards librarians. A survey conducted by the librarian trade union, published in 2019, showed that librarians' work situation includes aspects of social unrest, insecurity and violations as well as hatred and threats, and that this situation was especially grave for female librarians and in libraries in suburban areas (DIK 2019). Public debate concerning libraries and library policy has also included criticism of political bias in libraries. This criticism has been recurring, especially against left-wing political bias in the literature made available in libraries. A research study describing the left-wing bias of certain librarian organisations (Blomgren & Sundeen 2020) has also caused some debate. These debates have continued over the last several years.

Swedish public archives are regulated in the Archive Act (1990:782). The purposes of the state archives activities expressed in the Archives Act (Bill 1989/90: 72, amendment 1989/90: KrU29, rskr. 1989/90: 307) are:

- to increase the opportunities for access to public documents and other archival material,
- to clarify and strengthen the importance of archives as a source of information and knowledge about society and its development, and
- method and knowledge development within the archive area.

The coordinating government agency in this area is the National Archive.

In 2019, a government commission submitted the report *Härifrån till evigheten: En långsiktig arkivpolitik för förvaltning och kulturarv* ("From here to eternity: A long term archive policy for administration and cultural heritage", SOU 2019:58), proposing that the Archive Act should be revised, updating archive policy for a digitalised society and focusing on 1) the right of the public to access public documents, 2) the information needs of administration and justice, and 3) the needs of research. The commission also recommended that the Royal Library, the Swedish Institute, the Swedish Film Institute, the Swedish Performing Arts Agency, and the National Archive should be made jointly responsible for making a national inventory of audiovisual material and to investigate the conditions for the implementation of the digitisation of the material.

3.3 Performing arts

Support for performing arts, such as theatre, opera, and dance, has long been a central part of Swedish cultural policy. The Royal Opera dates back to the 18th century, the Royal Dramatic Theatre to the 19th century, and the National Touring Theatre to the early part of the 20th century. Today, the two main government agencies supporting activities in the performing arts are the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet), and the Swedish Performing Arts Agency (Musikverket). The main actors in this field on the national level also include institutions such as The Royal Opera, The Royal Dramatic Theatre, The National Touring Theatre, The House of Dance, and The Drottningholm Palace Theatre. Most of these institutions are organised either in the form of government-supported foundations or as government-owned and government-supported limited companies. Regardless of organisational form, they are supported with grants in the national budget. The National Touring Theatre is a national government-supported non-profit organisation providing theatre performances all over the country.

On the regional and local levels, all regions have regional theatres, and some cities have city theatres. These have long received government funding, which is now included in the Culture Cooperation Model (see chapter 1.2.3 and 1.2.6). In order to increase the availability of dance performances outside of the bigger cities, several dance institutions (including theatres, opera houses, and concert halls) cooperate in the government-supported network Dansnät Sverige. The performing arts have seen relatively severe consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic, even though they have received significant additional government support during this period. In 2022, the number of performances had reached the same number as before the pandemic, but audience numbers had yet to recover.

3.4 Visual arts and crafts

The Swedish Arts Council distributes operating grants and project grants within the visual arts area. These funds are distributed to projects and organisations within the various art forms, as well as through the Culture Cooperation Model. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee distributes grants to individual artists. The association Svensk Form works to stimulate development in Swedish design, and to spread and deepen knowledge of design issues in Sweden. It consists of 13 regional associations, working in each region to contribute to spreading knowledge about form and design through collaborations with municipality, region and industry organisations.

Other important government-funded actors in the area of visual art are the national museums and similar cultural institutions, working within this area, including the National Museum of Fine Arts, the National Museum of Modern Art, the foundation Carl och Olga Milles Lidingöhem, the foundation for the Thiel Gallery, Bildmuseet, the Zorn Collections, and the foundation for Prince Eugen's Waldemarsudde. In recent years, the Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum, and the Swedish Arts Council have collaborated to actively compensate for the historical under-representation of women artists' works in the collections of these museums by purchasing such works of art, to enable more people to see a greater diversity of public works of art in their everyday lives.

The National Public Arts Council (Statens konstråd) and the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design were government agencies that, from January 1st, 2026, are part of the Swedish Museum of Modern Art. As a result of this merger, the enlarged government agency now maintains the Museum of Modern Art, supports architecture and design, and publicly displays artworks. In a report submitted in 2019, the Swedish Arts Council showed that insufficient knowledge, unclear divisions of responsibilities, and an unclear application of laws and regulations by national, municipal, and regional authorities have increased risks of damage and loss of building-related public works of art in 20th-century cultural environments. As a result of this report, the National Heritage Board, in collaboration with the Swedish Arts Council, was commissioned by the government to work to ensure that building-related public art is taken into account in cultural heritage valuation (Ku2019 / 01191 / KO).

3.5 Cultural arts and creative industries

3.5.1 General developments

The role of cultural and creative industries has been given increased importance in the last couple of decades. This has been evident in inter-ministerial cooperation on the national level, but even more so in cultural policies on the regional and local levels. Especially in some municipalities and regions, the creative industries have now become the focus for cultural policy in the hope of developing the regions and strengthening their financial situation.

In describing cultural and creative industries, the Swedish government generally uses the same definition as the EU. In national statistics, cultural and creative industries include architecture, audiovisual media, computer games, film and TV, radio, art, design, photo, archives, museums, historical and archaeological sites, press, literature, libraries, fashion, advertisement, music, art education, and stage arts. Studies in this area have been performed by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) in collaboration with the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis, the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Evaluations and Analyses (Tillväxtanalys), and Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån).

A 2018 report concludes that increased efforts must be made not only to support this sector, but also to adequately measure its contributions to the economy, for example, the contributions of digital production and of cultural and creative industries in regional growth. According to their studies, cultural and creative industries contributed 3.1 per cent of GDP in 2016, and there were approximately 130,000 businesses and 143,000 employees in the sector. During the period 2010–2016, the export of goods from cultural and creative industries increased from just over SEK 16 billion to almost SEK 21 billion. The number of companies increased by almost 15,000 from 2010 to 2016. The number of employees in the sector remained relatively stable during the same period. Most new companies had 0 employees (the owner of the company not counted). This highlights the importance of improving conditions for small businesses to strengthen cultural and creative industries, as well as other innovative businesses (Tillväxtverket 2021). Cultural and creative industries were significantly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken against it (SOU 2021:77) but by the end of 2022 the number of self-employed within the culture sector had recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and the number of employees and full time employments, had reached even higher levels (Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis 2023b).

In 2022, a strategy on cultural and creative industries was proposed by a government-appointed special inquiry (SOU 2022:44). In 2026, the government introduced such a national strategy, pointing out six strategic areas (skriv. 2024/2024:11):

1. National statistics.
2. Knowledge about creator rights.
3. Advice, support, funding, and costs of rules.
4. Competence and social security
5. Living and business in the entire country
6. International impact of cultural and creative businesses.

The Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis is currently working on a proposal for regular statistics on the values produced by cultural and creative industries.

The year before, the Government Commission on the Restart of Culture had proposed the creation of an inter-ministerial coordinating unit for government initiatives directed at cultural and creative industries, as well as a fund for co-funding matching private initiatives in support of arts and culture (SOU 2021:77). This recommendation has so far not been implemented by the government. Similar measures have been taken earlier. The Foundation for the Culture of the Future (Stiftelsen Framtidens kultur) was established by the government in 1994 to support long-term and innovative cultural projects and stimulate regional culture in a wider sense. It ceased its operations in 2011. In its 2009 government bill on cultural policy (prop. 2009/10:3), the government created a new fund for similar purposes, the Culture Bridge (Kulturbryggan), which is currently administered by the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, focusing on innovative arts and culture projects, rather than specifically on financially innovative projects.

Much more than at the national level, cultural and creative industries tend to be in focus at the local level, and to some extent at the regional. Several Swedish cities and less populated municipalities have made efforts to use culture as a means to revive the local economy and make the municipality a more attractive place to live or invest. Such efforts are often guided by the notion of cultural planning, focusing on mapping and making use of all the cultural resources available in the local cultural life. 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.

3.5.2 Books and press

The main public support for writers is the Swedish Authors' Fund. Originators of literary works (authors, translators, and illustrators) are compensated for lending in public libraries in accordance with the Government Statute on the Swedish Authors' Fund (1962:652). The Fund allocates this government compensation. A portion of this compensation is given to the individual author in direct proportion to the number of public loans of his / her work, while another portion is transferred to the Swedish Authors' Fund, which awards grants and

scholarships in support of authors, translators, playwrights, and journalists in the field of arts. Since 1985, the size of government funds allocated to the Swedish Authors' Fund, i.e., the Library Fee, is decided in agreements between, on the one hand, the government and, on the other hand, the Swedish Writers' Association, the Swedish Illustrators, and the Swedish Photographers' Association. As of 2015, these agreements are negotiated biannually. In 2023, the agreement included temporary extra funding to compensate for the negative impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on library lending. The most recent negotiations were concluded in September 2025 and concerned library compensation for 2026 and 2027. The parties agreed on a basic amount of SEK 2.28 (an increase of SEK 0.08) for 2026, and then an unchanged SEK 2.28 for 2027. For 2026, this is estimated to amount to SEK 200,9 million in total. Negotiations about the basic amount of library compensation for the years 2028 and 2029 will begin in January 2027.

Press and media are supported by the government via the Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority, with the intention of promoting diversity in general news media on both the national and local level. This funding is distributed in two main forms of financial support: press support and media support. Media Support is aimed at all general media (including web-based media, printed newspapers, radio, and television) whose main purpose is to convey news. From January 1st, 2024, Media Support has been allocated in five areas:

- General editorial support
- Extended editorial support
- Distribution support
- Transitional support
- Support for daily newspaper distribution in case of mail delivery every second day.

The reformed media support is aimed to be neutral in relation to the type of media. For 2026, a total of 894 million SEK has been granted to applicants for media support.

3.5.3 Audiovisual and interactive media

With Government Bill 2015/16:132, a new film policy was established, including seven new objectives for the national film policy:

- Development and production of valuable Swedish film is done continuously in the entire country.
- More people see valuable film, which is distributed and shown in various ways, in the entire country.
- Film heritage is preserved, used, and developed.
- Swedish film is increasingly made available abroad, and qualified international exchange and cooperation takes place in the area of film.

- Children and young people have good knowledge about film and moving pictures, and are allowed to create on their own,
- Equality and diversity characterise the film area.
- Film contributes to strengthening freedom of speech and public discourse.

The central authority in Swedish film policy is the Swedish Film Institute (SFI). Before 2017, SFI was co-financed by the national government and other actors within the film sector, as per the Film Agreement (which had been renegotiated every fifth year by these parties since 1963). Since 2017, and as a part of the new film policy outlined in Government Bill 2015/16:132, grants and programmes within Swedish film policy are now entirely funded by the government. Among the arguments for this reform was providing a more stable platform for government support for the film sector.

In September 2023, the government announced that a government commission will be appointed to propose changes in the national film policy. This will include reforms made necessary by the changing landscape in the film sector, including the impact of streaming and A.I. The inquiry presented its report in March 2025 (SOU 2025:24). Among the recommendations is a new film fund with an annual budget of approximately SEK 300 million. This would be financed in equal parts by the state, cinema owners and streaming services that target a Swedish audience. A second proposal is that the cinema VAT, which currently stands at 25 per cent, will be reduced to six per cent. A third recommendation is that Swedish and foreign streaming services targeting a Swedish audience should be required to contribute to the financing of Swedish film. A fee of 1.5 per cent of the streaming services' annual turnover in Sweden is therefore proposed to cover their contribution to the new film fund. A new government bill is expected later in 2026.

Public service TV and radio broadcasting is provided by three companies funded by a special tax on personal income: Swedish Television (Sveriges Television, SVT), Swedish Radio (Sveriges Radio) and Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (Sveriges Utbildningsradio). These are organised as limited companies and owned by an independent foundation. The foundation's board is appointed by the national government and consists of 13 representatives of the political parties in the Riksdag. The foundation in turn appoints the members of the SVT board.

Government support for computer games and similar media has so far been limited, but has occurred within specific programmes, e.g., within SFI's work with Creative Europe grants. The Swedish Media Council acts as the central authority in the wider area of media policy.

3.5.4 Music

The two most important government actors supporting artists and projects in the area of music are the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) and the Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden). On the regional level, all regions in the country support activities in the area of music, including regional orchestras.

The Swedish Arts Council is a government agency responsible for supporting arts and culture in general, focusing on institutions, organisations, and groups, rather than on individual artists. It is a central agency in relation to the music sector. Relevant grants from the Arts Council include grants for regions, regional music organisations and institutions, to producers of music, and for international cultural exchange. This includes, e.g. development grants for regional music activities, e.g. for developing new audiences, tours, or collaboration between different art forms.

The Swedish Performing Arts Agency (Statens musikverk) is a government agency that previously supported music and performing arts. It was created in 2011, gathering a number of preexisting organisations, including the Museum of Performing Arts (Scenkonstmuseet), the Swedish Music and Theatre Library, EMS (an electronic music studio), and the record label Caprice Records. Its responsibilities for funding music and performing arts have now been transferred to the Swedish Arts Council.

3.5.5 Design and creative services

As of Government Bill 2017/18:110, the national objective for Swedish cultural policy in the area of architecture, form, and design is that “Architecture, form and design must contribute to a sustainable, equal, and less segregated society with carefully designed living environments, where everyone is given good conditions to influence the development of the common environment. The goal is to be achieved by

- sustainability and quality are not subject to short-term economic considerations,
- knowledge of architecture, form and design is developed and disseminated,
- the public sector acts as an example,
- aesthetic, artistic and cultural-historical values are utilized and developed,
- environments are designed to be accessible to all, and
- cooperation and collaboration is developed, domestically and internationally.”

The policy area includes several government agencies and also affects municipalities in their work with city planning. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design (ArkDes), the Swedish Arts Council, and the Swedish National Heritage Board have central roles in this policy area. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has been charged by the government (N2018 / 02273 / SPN) to

coordinate policy, monitor development, increase competence, and guide government agencies, regional councils, and municipalities in the area of architecture and planning.

The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design (ArkDes) was a government agency and a collecting institution, acting as a knowledge centre in the area of architecture and design, focusing on the intersections between architecture, art, design, landscape and the public space. From January 1st, 2026, the National Public Arts Council (Statens konstråd) and ArkDes are part of the Swedish Museum of Modern Art. As a result of this merger, the enlarged government agency now maintains the Museum of Modern Art, supports architecture and design, and publicly displays artworks. In March the same year, the government published further directives for work in this area (Skr. 2025/26:163).

3.5.6 Cultural and creative tourism

Tourism is a growing area of business in Sweden and has received only limited political attention at the national level. Tourism-related expenditure in Sweden in 2021 was around SEK 249 billion. SEK 192 billion (77 per cent) of the expenditure was consumed by domestic tourists and SEK 57 billion (23 per cent) by international tourists

In 2019, around 126,000 persons were employed in tourism-related work, and tourism produced around 2.5 per cent of GDP. Tourism consumption was SEK 306 billion, an increase of 0.7 per cent compared with the previous year. Swedish internal tourism made up SEK 206 billion (an increase of 2.3 per cent), compared to SEK 100 billion by foreign tourists (a decrease of 2.5 per cent). Since then, the tourism business has been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017, a government commission of inquiry submitted a report proposing a coordination of national tourism policy under the overall objective “to enhance the tourism and hospitality industry’s contribution to economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development throughout the country” (SOU 2017:95, p. 23). Since then, a coordinating group has been created with representatives of relevant government agencies, with the National Heritage Board representing the culture sector. Supporting cultural and creative tourism was also one of the goals of the strategy on cultural and creative industries proposed in 2022 (SOU 2022:44). In a report published by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) in cooperation with the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis, the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Evaluations and Analyses (Tillväxtanalys), and Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån) in 2018, it was concluded that increased efforts ought to be made not only to support, but also to measure, the contribution of cultural and creative industries to tourism, e.g. “cultural values, social values and increased attractiveness of places associated with a production involving a significant element of creative processes, specialised manual processes and artistic presentations” (Tillväxtverket 2018).

4. Law and legislation

4.1 General legislation

4.1.1 Constitution

The Swedish Constitution (grundlagen) consists of four Fundamental Laws; the Instrument of Government (Regeringsformen), the Act of Succession (Successionsordningen), the Freedom of the Press Act (Tryckfrihetsförordningen), and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen). The central provisions on how the state is to be governed are contained in the *Instrument of Government*. However, all of the fundamental laws except the *Act of Succession* (regulating the succession of the Swedish monarchy) contain regulations directly relevant to the field of arts and culture.

Article 2, Chapter 1 of the Instrument of Government (1974:152) concerns the basic principles of government:

Public power shall be exercised with respect to the equal worth of all, and the liberty and dignity of the private person. The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the private person shall be a fundamental aim of public activity. In particular, it shall be incumbent upon the public institutions to secure the right to health, employment, housing and education, and to promote social care and social security. Public institutions shall promote sustainable development leading to a good environment for present and future generations. Public institutions shall promote the ideals of democracy as guidelines in all sectors of society and protect the private and family lives of private persons. Public institutions shall promote the opportunity for all to attain participation and equality in society. Public institutions shall combat discrimination of persons on grounds of gender, colour, national or ethnic origin, linguistic or religious affiliation, functional disability, sexual orientation, age or other circumstance affecting the private person. Opportunities should be promoted for ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own.

These regulations also regard cultural policy, which is often considered a part of the welfare state, and sometimes - especially in the case of heritage policy - as a part of its environmental policy, promoting a “sustainable development leading to a good environment for present and future generations”. Sweden has a tradition of viewing cultural policy as a democratising force in society, guaranteeing equal access to culture, thus promoting “the opportunity for all to attain participation and equality in society”. The last sentence of the paragraph quoted above relates to minority culture: “Opportunities should be promoted for ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own.”

In addition to articles on fundamental democratic rights and freedom of expression, information, religion, and assembly, there is a special Article 19 in Chapter 1 of the *Instrument of Government* concerning artists and artistic copyrights: “Authors, artists and photographers shall own the rights to their works in accordance with rules laid down in law”. These issues are further regulated in special copyright legislation.

The Freedom of the Press Act (1766) is the oldest existing law on freedom of speech in the world, and in some ways the first. It regulates the principle of openness in government administration, as well as freedom of speech in written media. The corresponding freedom of expression on radio, television and other transmissions, as well as in films, video recordings, sound recordings, and other recordings are further regulated in the *Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression* (1991).

4.1.2 Allocation of public funds

The allocation of public funds to arts and culture is not typically regulated by law in Sweden. National public funds are instead determined on a yearly basis by parliament in the national budget. The only major exception to this rule has long been Public Service broadcasting, which is funded by a special tax (previously a TV license fee) and regulated in law. Some regulations regarding the Culture Cooperation Model (see chapters 1.2.3 and 1.2.6) are, furthermore, regulated in the law on certain government grants to regional cultural activities (2010:1919). When the government-appointed re-evaluation of this model presented its report in 2023, it recommended the introduction of a new law on collaboration between state, region, and municipality in the cultural field, simplifying the processes within the model, guaranteeing artistic freedom in the regional and municipal activities funded through the model (SOU 2023:58). This could be seen as a part of a larger trend towards increasing uses of legislation in Swedish cultural policy.

A lack of specific legislation has long been a characteristic feature of the Swedish model of cultural policy. Objectives are decided either by parliamentary decision (as with the general cultural policy goals), or in the specific instructions given either in the national budget (by annual parliament decision), or by the government. The majority of cultural policies are implemented by government agencies and similar bodies, which are constitutionally separated from the government ministries, and only subjected to decisions and regulations made by the government collectively, or by parliament. The powers of a government minister are thus severely limited, but in practice include the power to make propositions to the government concerning instructions to government agencies, appointments of their directors and board members, and concerning the government bill on the national budget (see also chapters 1.1 and 1.3).

4.1.3 Social security frameworks

There is no comprehensive legal framework for artists in Sweden; instead, the general principles for social security and taxes apply. There are several artists' unions representing their members in labour market negotiations, which are central to the Swedish labour market model. These also function as lobbying groups with the government and the public authorities.

The average income in arts and culture is significantly lower than among persons with comparable education in other professions. Self-employed artists – who form an increasingly large part of those active in the arts and culture sector – have specific problems vis-à-vis public health insurance, pensions, and unemployment insurance, since the Swedish social security model is better adapted to employees and larger employers than to small businesses and the self-employed. Many national, regional, and private art grants and stipends to individual artists are not taxable, and thus not included in the life income that forms the basis of an individual's pension. Together with a labour market that makes certain categories of employees in the arts and culture unemployed regularly (for example, between seasonal employment or work with projects), this makes many of those working in arts and culture financially vulnerable. This situation was part of the background for government support for intermediary employment centres within the fields of theatre, music, photography and film, for data banks, and for training facilities for professional dancers and actors during periods between job contracts.

In 2018, a government commission submitted a report on artist policy, *Konstnär – oavsett villkor?* ("Artist – regardless of terms?", SOU 2018: 23). The report describes the current conditions for professionally active artists in Sweden. According to this study, artists are increasingly working as freelancers, combining different types of projects, employment, and other sources of income, within and outside of the arts and culture sector. It concludes that current social security is not adapted to these new conditions in the arts and culture labour market. It also highlights the problem that persons with different backgrounds do not have the same opportunities to become artists, and that bias in recruitment to artistic education starts at a young age. Another issue discussed in the report is the concentration of artists in urban areas – especially the Stockholm area – making it nearly impossible to make an artistic career in large parts of the country. In 2023, a government commission report on the system for compensating employees on sick leave made specific investigations into conditions in the arts and culture sector, making recommendations on how to better integrate these into the system, e.g. by including artistic stipends in the income qualifying for compensation (SOU 2023:30).

These impressions were confirmed in a study reported by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis in 2025. The study covered people who have applied for grants from the Arts Grants Committee or the Writers' Fund 2019-2022, a total of 18,228 artistic professionals. 69 per cent of the men, and 64 per cent of the women, were self-employed. The median value of the business income increased by 19 per cent for artists in 2019-2022, compared to 16 per cent among employed artists. Even though 2022 was a pandemic year, the income of artistic professionals increased. A possible explanation for this may be that in 2022 there were various supports aimed at arts and culture. The group of younger artists was significantly smaller in 2022 than in 2019, which may be because fewer artists entered the labour market during the pandemic years.

4.1.4 Tax laws

The general tax system also applies to artists, whether employed, self-employed, or owning businesses. This means – among other things - that all costs incurred to earn an income are tax deductible, if the income is generated from professional activities. Self-employed artists face a number of problems within the current tax system: for example, basic pensions are calculated on the taxable income generated over their lifetime, and as most scholarships or grants are not taxable, they are not included in the overall total of lifetime income. For non-profit organisations, including foundations, taxation rules are beneficial, as long as the purpose of the organisation is for the common good, which includes purposes relating to arts and culture.

One of the few special regulations that exist for arts and culture is that of value-added tax on books; in 2001, the 25percent VAT rate on books was lowered to 6percent by the parliament.

The issue of corporate sponsorship in the arts has been under much debate in recent years, both in the media and in political fora. Culture and Business (Kultur och näringsliv) is a forum especially created to further debate, obtain contacts and experiences from joint projects, and to source financial contributions from the market.

Enabling tax deductions for donations to culture, science, and other forms of public good have been discussed repeatedly in the last few decades. The Government Commission on Cultural Policy (SOU 2009:16) concluded that such measures would greatly benefit arts and culture. It should be noted that the Commission's expert from the Ministry of Finance publicly advised against this conclusion. The Commission for Incentives for Gifts, which published its report (SOU 2009:59) in 2009, was, furthermore, sceptical of such reforms in favour of any area, and entirely ignored all issues relating to arts or culture.

In 2023, a new government commission was appointed to present proposals in the area of tax deductions for donations and sponsorships for public good. Its first report (SOU 2024:90) was submitted in 2024 and included an overview of the current extent and roles played by such donations made by juridical persons. The report also proposed the introduction of such deductions made by legal persons, similar to the limited deductions already available for natural persons. In 2026, another report was submitted with a proposal to introduce tax deductions for sponsorships of certain public goods, including culture, when these are benefiting the sponsoring company (SOU 2026:5). These proposals are now under consideration.

4.1.5 Labour laws

There are no special labour law regulations for arts and culture. Instead, the general legislation on labour is in force also when it comes to these areas. However, some special conditions may be in force, since Swedish labour law to a high degree relies on the agreements made between trade unions and employer representatives. This also gives a special small business character to the subfields of arts and culture where a large portion of the professional workforce is self-employed.

The following list of labour laws is relevant to the field of culture, whether on a national or local level, about private persons, cultural institutions, free theatre groups or similar companies:

- Prohibition of Discrimination in Working Life because of Sexual Orientation Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1999:133);
- Prohibition of Discrimination in Working Life of People with a Disability Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1999:132);
- Measures to Counteract Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1999:130);
- Parental Leave Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1995:584);
- Public Employment Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1994:260);
- The Equal Opportunities Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1991:433);
- Working Hours Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1982:673);
- Employment Protection Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1982:80);
- Work Environment Ordinance (Swedish Code of Statutes 1977:1166);
- Work Environment Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1977:1160);
- Annual Leave Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1977:480);
- Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1976:580);
- Employee's Right to Educational Leave Act (Swedish Code of Statutes 1974:1981).

4.1.6 Copyright provisions

In Sweden, basic copyright provisions are similar to those of other continental European countries, although with some differences. The basic legal provision is the Swedish Copyright Law of Literary and Artistic Works (Upphovsrättslagen, Swedish Code of Statutes 1960:729). Important developments concerning authors' rights have been linked to the implementation of EU directives within the copyright field, aimed at harmonising and facilitating the single market. Sweden has implemented the following EU directives:

- rental and lending rights.
- satellite broadcasting and cable retransmission, and
- harmonisation of the duration of rights protection (70 years after the death of an author).

Legal measures against copyright infringement have been intensified in the last two decades. The digitalisation of production, access and consumption of protected works and performances is continuously producing new possibilities and new problems. Since 1998, possessors of legal rights in the music field have been awarded copyright-based financial compensation for the losses that have been caused by private copying of phonograms, in a model originally intended to compensate for music being copied to blank cassette tapes. Revenue is allocated to creators and performers by their respective collecting societies. Reimbursement to composers and musicians has also been introduced for public lending of phonograms and to composers for public lending of sheet music.

For authors, translators, and illustrators, a system for reimbursement has existed since the 1950's. Reimbursement for authors is allocated by the Swedish Authors' Fund (Författarfonden). Originators of literary works (authors, translators and illustrators) are compensated for lending in public libraries in accordance with the *Government Statute on the Swedish Authors' Fund* (1962:652). A portion of this compensation is given to the individual Originator in direct proportion to the number of public loans of his / her work, while another portion is transferred to the Swedish Authors' Fund, which awards grants and scholarships in support of authors, translators, playwrights, and journalists in the field of arts. Since 1985, the size of government funds allocated to the Swedish Authors' Fund, i.e., the Library Fee, is decided in agreements between, on the one hand, the government and, on the other hand, the Swedish Writers' Association, the Swedish Illustrators, and the Swedish Photographers' Association.

In 2023, a new agreement on library compensation was made for 2024 and 2025. The basic compensation for the lending of one Swedish original work was increased by SEK 0.08 to 2.12 for the year 2024, and by an additional SEK 0.08 for 2025. The parties also agreed on temporary extra funding to compensate for the negative impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on library lending. This amounts to a total library compensation of around SEK 190.5 million

in 2024 (an increase of SEK 2.0 million), and SEK 190.6 million in 2025 (+0.1 million). Compensation for use of the author rights of visual artists in the context of exhibitions, etc is regulated by a separate agreement ("MU avtalet"). In April 2023, the government charged the Swedish Arts Council with the task of renegotiating this agreement with the relevant visual-artist organisations. The renegotiated agreement aims to be clearer and easily applied for both exhibition organisers and artists. The new agreement has been in force since the beginning of 2024.

4.1.7 Data protection laws

Sweden has implemented the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018 with the law SFS nr 2018:218.

This legislation also relates directly to a general principle of the Swedish Fundamental Laws: that all information held by public authorities that is not explicitly made secret is automatically made public. Thus, all government archives are accessible to the public, except material that has been made secret. Among the more common reasons to declare information secret is when it is deemed personal. The amount of information thus protected has been increasing in the 21st century.

4.1.8 Language laws

Swedish was recognised as the official language of Sweden in 2009, with the new *Language Law* (Swedish Code of Statutes 2009:600), a law that also guarantees the use of Swedish as the language of Swedish government agencies and other public institutions, including universities and museums. Rules on the use of the Swedish language in the legislation on radio, TV, and in public administration have existed for a long time. According to the agreement between the centre-right government coalition and the Sweden Democrats party, knowledge of the Swedish language will be introduced as a requirement for citizenship, as well as included in various other regulations on government programs relating to integration and support for immigrants.

In 1999, a law was made entitling individuals to use Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli in dealings with administrative authorities and courts of law in localities in which these languages continue to be used. The law also requires municipalities to offer pre-school activities, as well as care for the elderly, in national minority languages, i.e., Sami (all varieties), Finnish, Meänkieli, Yiddish, and Romani Chib. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was ratified by Sweden in January 2000 with regard to these minority languages. Sami, Finnish, and Meänkieli were also recognised as having further rights in specific regions of the country. Swedish Sign Language has also been declared an official language (SFS 2009:724).

4.1.9 Other areas of general legislation

The right to culture, and to not be subjected to discrimination, is expressed in the UN Declaration on Human Rights, which is ratified by Sweden, as well as in the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567), which together with the Equality Act (SFS 1991:433) forbids discrimination based on gender, transgender identity, or expression, ethnicity, religion, or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, or age. These laws cover areas such as employment, education, and access to goods and services. The legislation thus has consequences not only for employment and education in arts and culture, but also for areas such as access to cultural activities and institutions. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child became Swedish law in 2020 (SFS 2018:1197). Other groups whose rights are regulated in special legislation or in special cases are national minorities (SFS 2009:724) and persons with disabilities (prop. 2016/17:188).

4.2 Legislation on culture

4.2.1 General legislation on culture

There is very little overarching legislation in the cultural field in Sweden. Apart from general legislation adopted by parliament, there are, however, a great number of regulations issued by the government to guide central institutions on the use of government funds for various cultural purposes. The legal foundation for these is typically parliamentary decisions, especially budgetary decisions, as opposed to legislation.

The laws listed below are general laws enacted by parliament, which, together with parliamentary decisions such as the objectives for cultural policy, act as a framework for lower-level decisions.

Table 2: Legislation on culture

Title of the act	Year of adoption
Freedom of the Press Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1949:105	1949
Copyright Law of Literary and Artistic Works, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1960:729	1960
Radio and Television Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1966:755	1966
Archive Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1990:782	1990
Heritage Commemoration Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1988:950	1988

Law on financing of radio and TV in the service of the public, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1989:41	1989
Law on the protection of the term Swedish Archive, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1990:783	1990
Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1991:1469	1991
Law on the transfer of public documents for storage to organs other than government agencies, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1994:1383	1994
Law on standards for the transmission of radio and TV signals, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1998:31	1998
Library Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 1996:1596	1996
Law on the dissolution of foundations in some cases, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 2001:845	2001
Discrimination Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 2008:569	2008
Law on age limits for film that is to be shown publicly, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 2010:1882	2010
Law on the distribution of certain government grants to regional cultural activities, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 2010:1919	2010
Museum Act, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 2017:563	2017
Convention on the Rights of the Child, <i>Swedish Code of Statutes</i> 2018:1197	2018

Several of the laws on this list refer to the media, which is also specifically covered by the Freedom of the Press Act (part of the Constitution), which regulates freedom of expression in print media. Others refer to the archives (also considered cultural heritage institutions) and to archiving procedures, and are thus covered by that Fundamental law to the extent that they deal with access to public records. As the list shows, most of the main areas of cultural policy lack specific legislation, except for copyright legislation.

Apart from national legislation, international documents signed by Sweden may also have the force of law. The following conventions and other international legal instruments related to culture have been adopted by Sweden. Please note that this list includes some of the more important and relevant documents, not all international agreements in this field.

Table 2b: International legal instruments implemented by Sweden in the cultural field

Title of the act	Year of adoption
International Convention for the Protection of Performers, producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organisations	1962
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1971
Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights	1996
Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works	1904
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	1985
Convention for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage	1985
Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention	1985
Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe	1992
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe	1985
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	2003
Convention on means to Prohibit and Prevent the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property	2002
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	2005
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages	1999
European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production	1993
European Landscape Convention	2000
Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	1999
World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Copyright Treaty	1996
World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Performances and Phonograms Treaty	2010
UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects	2011
Convention on the Rights of the Child	2020

Sources: SOU 2003:121, updated from various other sources, including the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, the Swedish Arts Council and the Ministry of Culture

4.2.2 Legislation on culture and natural heritage

The Heritage Commemoration Act (Kulturminneslagen, Swedish Code of Statutes 1988:950) contains regulations on ancient monuments, historic buildings, religious monuments and export and restoration of cultural objects etc. The Act stipulates that everyone in Sweden share responsibility for the cultural environment. Authorities, and individuals alike, shall show consideration and respect for the cultural environment.

The following government agencies and institutions have a special role in safeguarding the cultural environment, and in implementing this legislation:

- the National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) is the central administrative authority. At the national level, the Board has overall responsibility for disseminating knowledge about the cultural environment and for information campaigns and contact with the public;
- the County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelser) have responsibility for the cultural environment at the regional level. This means that they decide on matters related to the National Heritage Act within their regions, and are responsible for ensuring that protection of the cultural environment is taken into account in regional planning and development. The county administrative boards also allocate state funds for the restoration of historic buildings, ancient monuments and historic landscapes within their regions;
- at the local level, local government is responsible for the protection and development of the cultural heritage. This role is exercised, inter alia, with physical municipal planning and through the application of the Planning and Building Act (2010:900).

The most recent significant changes in Swedish heritage policy were introduced in Government Bill 2016/17:116, introducing a new museum law, and confirming existing objectives for heritage policy. The Museum Law (2017:563) regulates the primary roles of public, i.e. national, regional, and municipal, museums, defining a museums as “an institution that is open to the public, and which acquires, preserves, investigates, mediates, and exhibits material and intangible testimonies about mankind, and her environment” (Swedish Code of Statutes 2017:563, §2). It includes measures to protect their independence vis-à-vis political involvement. In the bill, the government also discussed general issues concerning policies on heritage and the cultural environment, as well as clarifications regarding e.g., protection of vegetation on cemeteries, and regulations to protect national treasures by limiting export of culturally and historically significant objects.

4.2.3 Legislation on performance and celebration

No specific legislation regulates the performing arts. Music is regulated by copyright legislation (see chapter 5.1.7). The Swedish Copyright Law (Swedish Code of Statutes 1960:729, chapter 3a, sections §42a–f) grants users (such as broadcasters) of works the right to use all works under a single contract with The Swedish Performing Rights Society (STIM). The collected fees depend on the size of the audience and are set by STIM. For a composer to have a share of the fees, STIM membership is required.

Performances and celebrations, like all public gatherings, are regulated in the Law on Public Order (Ordningslagen, Swedish Code of Statutes 1993:1617). All public gatherings, such as performances, film viewings, festivals, markets, demonstrations, dance events, religious services etc., require permission from the police. Such permissions can be denied only when the public gathering is considered to threaten public order or safety. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Law on Public Order was used to prohibit all gatherings consisting of more than eight people.

4.2.4 Legislation on visual arts and crafts

Since 1997, a government statute (*Swedish Code of Statutes 1996:1605*) requires the state to pay individual compensation for public exhibition of works of visual and applied art. Compensation for the use of the author rights of visual artists in the context of exhibitions etc. is regulated by a separate agreement (“MU-avtalet”). In April 2023, the government charged the Swedish Arts Council with the task of renegotiating this agreement with the relevant visual-artist organisations. The renegotiated agreement aims to be clearer and easily applied for both exhibition organisers and artists. The new agreement has been in force since the beginning of 2024.

4.2.5 Legislation on books and press

The Freedom of the Press Act (1766) is a constitutional law, which regulates the principle of openness in government administration and guarantees freedom of speech in written media, including books and newspapers. It is the oldest existing law on freedom of speech in the world, and in some ways the first.

Originators of literary works (authors, translators, and illustrators) are compensated for lending in public libraries in accordance with the *Government Statute on the Swedish Authors' Fund* (1962:652). A portion of this compensation is given to the individual Originator in direct proportion to the number of public loans of his / her work, while another portion is transferred to the Swedish Authors' Fund, which awards grants and scholarships in support of authors, translators, playwrights, and journalists in the field of arts. Since 1985, the size of government funds allocated to the Swedish Authors' Fund, i.e., the Library Fee, is decided in

agreements between, on the one hand, the government and, on the other hand, the Swedish Writers 'Association, the Swedish Illustrators, and the Swedish Photographers' Association.

The Library Act (Bibliotekslagen, Swedish Code of Statutes 2013:801) obligates municipalities to maintain at least one public library, and to refrain from levying direct fees for its loans to members of the public. Municipalities and regions are also obligated to have politically decided library plans, covering the coordination of public libraries, including school libraries, in their territories. The law further establishes that “*Libraries in the public library system shall work for the development of a democratic society by contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and the free formation of opinions. Libraries in the public library system shall promote the position of literature and interest in education, enlightenment, education and research, as well as cultural activities in general. Library activities must be available to everyone*” (Swedish Code of Statutes 2013:801, §2). Other than municipal libraries, this legislation also covers school libraries, university libraries, regional libraries, and all other publicly financed libraries.

4.2.6 Legislation on audiovisual and interactive media

Radio and TV transmission, other than via satellite, is subject to agreements between, on the one hand, the government and, on the other hand, the public service radio and TV companies, and TV4, a private company. The TV Authority, established in 1994, is responsible for regulations on commercial and satellite transmissions. It is also the licensing and registration authority for local and similar radio stations, temporary transmissions and distribution by cable and satellite companies, and collects fees from local radio and commercial TV transmissions within Sweden. *The Radio and Television Act* (Radiolagen, Swedish Code of Statutes 1966:755, 1978:476), applicable to television companies under Swedish jurisdiction, contains a provision equivalent to Articles 4 and 5 of the European Union Television Broadcasting Directive. This Act regulates that more than half of the annual broadcasting time, or at least 10 per cent, shall be of programmes of European origin, and that at least 10percent of the annual broadcasting time, or at least 10percent, of the programme budget shall refer to programmes of European origin, produced by independent producers. As large a proportion as possible of these should have been produced in the preceding five years. The television companies should report annually to the Swedish Radio and TV Authority on how they have complied with these regulations.

The freedom of expression on radio, television and in other audiovisual modes of transmission, as well as in films, video recordings, sound recordings, and other audiovisual recordings, is regulated and guaranteed in the *Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression* (1991:1469).

Until 2011, Sweden had a Law on Film Censorship, protecting the public from, e.g. overly violent content. Although this legislation was in force until recently, censorship was used only

seldom. Following the recommendation of a government commission (SOU 2009:51), censorship for adults was abolished on 1 January 2011 (Government Bill 2009/10:228) and replaced by a Law on age limits for film that is to be shown publicly (Swedish Code of Statutes 2010:1882). Similar objectives are now reached by the Swedish Media Council via age limits on films.

4.2.7 Legislation on design and creative service

City planning is, according to the *Instrument of Government*, one of the Fundamental Laws of Sweden, a preserve of the municipalities (local government), although several specific laws regulate building construction and safety. Heritage legislation (see above) is also often relevant to architecture and city planning.

5. Arts and cultural education

5.1 Policy and institutional overview

Swedish schools are organised and funded by the municipalities, often run by private owners, and funded via a voucher system. They all follow the same national curriculum (läroplanen), under the supervision of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen). The first ten years of school are mandatory, while the subsequent three years consist of programmes chosen by parents and pupils. Some of these programmes qualify pupils for university-level higher education. Adult education on lower levels than university is organised by municipalities. Informal education is also organised by non-profit organisations supported by the government. Municipalities are also responsible for out-of-school music and culture schools.

Higher education is the responsibility of the national government, and higher art education is an integrated part of the government-funded system of universities and university colleges. All education, including arts and culture education, falls within the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. In recent years, education and cultural policies have been given increasing emphasis in the curricula of artists' and actors' education at university level.

Participation and access to culture is one of the most important goals of Swedish cultural policy, including art education, with the ambition of enhancing creativity and giving the public access to arts and culture. While this sum has been reduced in the last few years, the government still allocates over a billion SEK to the national study associations (*studieförbund*, see 6.4). These are important actors providing language courses, creative workshops, venues for playing music, art lectures etc. Popular adult education also includes grants for non-profit folk high schools, including a large number of artistic courses.

5.2 Arts in schools

Art, crafts and music are all integrated as subjects in school, and obligatory in the first nine years of school (ages approximately 6-16 years old). In secondary school (ages 16-19), these subjects are no longer obligatory in all schools. Downsizing in these subjects, and their removal as obligatory subjects in secondary school, has been a returning issue in public discussion concerning the school system, and the status of arts and culture in Swedish society. Extensive municipal programmes for music and art education as leisure activities also exist in most municipalities in the form of municipal music and culture schools.

The Creative School programme (*Skapande skola*) is a government programme allowing municipalities and other school principals to apply for grants from the Swedish Arts Council

for culture projects involving children in preschools, and in the obligatory first ten years of school (ages 6-16 years old). The program has existed since 2008, and aims to strengthen the integration of artistic and cultural expressions in school, as well as to increase the participation of the pupils in professional art and culture. Projects within the Creative School programme were granted just under SEK 220 million in 2025.

5.3 Higher arts and cultural education

Higher education in the arts is integrated in the government-funded system of university and university college education. It is free of charge, and students' grants and loans are provided by the government. Artistic education programmes are offered at several of the country's universities and university colleges. These are typically organised as separate departments, often included in humanities faculties, but, e.g. at the University of Gothenburg and Lund University, as separate faculties. Most of the universities and university colleges educating schoolteachers educate arts and crafts teachers for the school system. Design and media-related education is represented in most universities and university colleges, and has expanded considerably in the last two decades. Courses in creative writing are established at a few universities. A few universities also provide doctoral post-graduate education in the fine arts, and the Swedish Research Council offers grants specifically for projects in artistic research.

At four university colleges in Stockholm, only artistic education is offered: the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (Konstfack), the Royal University College of Fine Arts (Kungliga Konsthögskolan), the Royal College of Music (Kungliga musikhögskolan), and Stockholm University of the Arts (Stockholms konstnärliga högskola). On January 1, 2014, the University College of Dance and Circus, the University College of Film, Radio, Television and Theatre, and the University College of Opera merged into the new Stockholm University of the Arts (Stockholms konstnärliga högskola).

5.4 Out-of-school arts and cultural education

Voluntary municipal music schools have a long history in Sweden. By the mid-20th century, they were established in most municipalities in the country. Today, voluntary municipal music and culture schools focusing on after-school activities for schoolchildren form one of the major areas of cultural activity at the municipal level of government. Since the 1990s, their activities have widened their focus from classical music to a broad selection of cultural expressions, including subjects such as music, dance, drama, theatre, and art, with music retaining its status as the most offered subject.

In 2023, municipal music and culture schools had 190 000 pupils, i.e., 11 per cent of children and young people aged 6-19. Many music and culture schools also organise open activities

not included in these numbers. In 2016, a national subsidy of SEK 100 million was introduced for music and culture schools. After being higher for some years, it is now once again SEK 100 million. Municipal spending on music and culture schools amounted to SEK 3.1 billion in 2023. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the trend was that municipal spending on music and culture schools was increasing (Swedish Arts Council 2019; Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis 2020). In 2023, 286 of the 290 municipalities of Sweden provided music or culture schools. In 12 per cent of the municipalities, this offer was free of charge.

5.5 Vocational and professional training

Government-supported (but often privately owned) arts and culture schools on the levels between secondary and university level education exist all across the country. In many fields, these schools are, at least in practice, a necessary preparation for admission to university-level arts education. This field, to some extent, overlaps with popular education (*folkbildning*), especially in the case of folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*) focusing on aesthetic and artistic subjects. Most art and culture schools at this level are either part of popular education (*folkbildning*), or vocational schools (*yrkeshögskola*).

Vocational schools (*yrkeshögskola*) are a part of the education system that was given its current shape through a reform in 2015. In the field of arts and culture, these exist in three main categories: schools preparing for university-level art education, professional education for work in the arts and culture sector, and professional education for work in the heritage sector. In 2023, more than 4,200 students were studying culture, media, or design in vocational schools (statistics from Statistics Sweden, SCB).

Of the 154 folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*) in Sweden, most offer aesthetic programmes at the post-compulsory educational level, specialising in music, fine art, handicrafts, performing arts or creative writing. In the autumn of 2016, more than 7,000 students participated in such programmes, a number which had then increased at least since the 1990's. Studies indicate that these courses have a central position in the infrastructure of Swedish professional arts education. In 2016, almost 60 per cent of students finishing such programmes applied to university-level education within 12 months, primarily for studies in the arts and humanities, but also in social sciences and pedagogy, and for teacher education. Interestingly, 27 per cent of the participants had studied university-level courses and programs before folk high school studies (Fürst, Levelius & Nylander 2018).

6. Cultural participation and consumption

6.1 Policies and programmes

Increasing cultural participation has been a central aim for Swedish cultural policy at least since the 1970's. As such, it has been included in the instructions to every government agency dealing with arts and culture. In the words of the present objectives for Swedish cultural policy (see chapter 1.1), "Everyone should be able to participate in cultural life." Historically, such programmes have focused on making arts and culture activities available throughout the country – which is the second least densely populated country in the EU – and on widening the audience in terms of class and educational background. In recent decades, increased emphasis has been placed on other factors, such as gender, functional disability, sexual orientation, and immigrant background, as well.

Within theatre/music, visual arts, and literature, there are organisations aiming at increasing cultural participation specifically supported by the government for such purposes. Cultural organisations are also involved in neighbourhood projects, and in finding new ways to promote culture to new groups of people. Skådebanan (theatre and music) provides information and tickets through special voluntary representatives at workplaces. The National Touring Theatre (Riksteatern) has long been active in making arts and culture available throughout the country. Konstfrämjandet (mainly visual arts) reach people in their working environment to promote purchasing of professional art, mainly graphic, and literature, at reduced prices so that quality art can be accessible to all. Public libraries exist in all municipalities. Every year a catalogue (Barnbokskatalogen) is distributed by the Swedish Arts Council listing all newly published children's literature. The catalogue is intended to spark an interest in reading by showcasing the new and exciting books that become available. The catalogue is free and is distributed to libraries, bookstores, and schools.

Policies intended to enhance the participation of citizens in cultural life and, particularly, in artistic activities, also focus on the availability of both in-school and out-of-school arts education. The Creative School programme (Skapande skola) is a government programme allowing municipalities and other school principals to apply for grants from the Swedish Arts Council for culture projects involving children in preschools and in the obligatory first ten years of school (ages 6-16 years old). Projects within the Creative School programme have been granted nearly SEK 220 million for grants in 2025. Voluntary municipal music schools also exist in most municipalities, providing after-school activities for schoolchildren. Since the 1990s, their activities have widened their focus from classical music to a broad selection of cultural expressions, including subjects such as music, dance, drama, theatre, and art, with music retaining its status as the most commonly offered subject.

The major recipients of government grants for cultural activities on the amateur level have long been the national study associations (*studieförbund*), but with the national budget proposed for 2024, their national funding is reduced for the first time in decades. To this are added varying sums from local and regional governments, as well as income from various fees. Statistics show that most of the activities organised by the study associations can be described as cultural activities, ranging from lectures and study circles on cultural matters to rock music and theatre groups rehearsing. Easily available music training and public facilities for rehearsals have often been pointed out as an explanation for Sweden's internationally successful music scene. Others have pointed to the prevalence of cultural group activities such as study circles and singing in choirs to explain the cohesiveness and high levels of trust in Swedish society.

6.2 Trends and figures in cultural participation

In 2022, most Swedes under 65 years old were culturally active, in the sense of visiting at least one cultural institution per year (concert, film, library, museum, drama, art exhibition). During the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers were considerably lower, but now they appear to have recovered to pre-pandemic numbers in most fields. The general trend for many years has been for increasing numbers of older people to attend cultural events. Younger people have shown a decrease in activity in traditional activities in arts and cultural activities. In 2022, 40 per cent – more than before the pandemic – attended pop or rock concerts, 18 percent classical concerts or opera performances, 62 per cent visited historical sites, 50 visited museums, and 54 per cent visited public libraries, 20 per cent sang in choirs or played instruments, 78 per cent had read at least one book in the last year, and 95 per cent had listened to music, making this the most common cultural activity. Judging from these statistics, women generally appear to have a wider interest in the arts than men do (SCB 2023).

While younger people show less attendance at traditional cultural events than other age groups, they participate actively in cultural activities to a higher degree; this includes not only new activities but also established activities such as playing music and participating in amateur theatre. Young Swedes also access the Internet more than other age groups and are active users of a number of Internet services for publishing their own work. Internet use in Sweden is among the highest in the world. In 2025, 97 per cent of Swedes had access to the internet, and 93 per cent used it daily (Internetstiftelsen 2025). In 2020, 65 per cent used the internet to watch movies or TV series, and 69 per cent to listen to music. During the COVID-19 pandemic, internet use has become more central in people's lives (SCB 2020), while fewer people attended live events. The trend in the use of social media appears to be towards more passive use. In contrast, many now converse regularly with Large Language Model (LLM) artificial intelligence (A.I.). In 2025, 37 per cent of the population (above 16 years

old) had used generative A.I., about one in six had used A.I. to create images, and two thirds of students used A.I. in their studies (Internetstiftelsen 2025).

Reading trends among adults have remained stable since the 1990's, but young people read less (at least when it comes to printed material), and men read less than women. While the reading of books has decreased somewhat, listening to audiobooks has increased in the last ten years, including among the young. In 2022, 36 percent read books every week, and 19 per cent listened to books every week (SCB 2023).

Table 3: People who participated in or attended a certain cultural activity during the last 12 months in Sweden, in % of the population, 2018-2024.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Activities heavily subsidised by the state							
Theatre	39	38	24	11	34	43	42
Opera performances	19	18	13	5	18	22	21
Zarzuela	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Dance	10	10	6	4	13	15	16
Concerts of classical music	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Libraries	53	55	51	40	54	55	56
Museums	N/A	55	43	32	50	53	52
Monuments	64	63	56	50	62	63	64
Cultural centres	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Activities without large public subsidies							
Cinema	67	68	52	29	55	58	58
To read books not related to the profession or studies	83	82	81	80	78	81	81
<i>In paper format (usually used)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>In digital format (usually used)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Directly on the Internet (usually used)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
To listen to music (Usually listen)	N/A	97	97	95	95	96	95
<i>In a computer or directly on the Internet</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
To read periodic publications (usually read)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Directly on the Internet</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
To watch videos (Usually watch) *	92	92	92	91	90	92	92
<i>Directly on the Internet</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
To watch television (Usually watch)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Directly on the Internet</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
To listen to the radio (Usually watch)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Directly on the Internet</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
To play video games (Usually play)**	38	36	56	51	50	50	52

To use a computer for entertainment or leisure (Usually use)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Internet for entertainment or leisure (usually used)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source(s): The SOM Institute. University of Gothenburg.

* Only movies included

** From the year 2000, also including computer games and mobile games

N/A: Data not available. No data present for this measure

Source: The SOM Institute, University of Gothenburg, <https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute/the-som-surveys/method>

Data is based on a survey with a representative sample of Sweden's population, 18-65 years old.

Table 4: People who have carried out artistic activities in Sweden in the last 12 months by type of activity, in per cent of total population, 2018-2024

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Writing	19	20	23	20	21	21	24
Painting or drawing	28	31	36	30	38	39	43
Other visual arts	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Photography	62	63	62	63	65	n/a	n/a
Making videos	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Designing web pages	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Drama	N/A	2	3	3	3	6	5
Dance and ballet	N/A	37	36	28	36	38	41
Playing an instrument	N/A	17	20	20	21	22	22
Singing in a choir	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8	7

N/A: data not available. No data present for this measure

Source: The SOM Institute, University of Gothenburg, <https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute/the-som-surveys/method>

Data is based on a survey with a representative sample of Sweden's population, 18-65 years old.

Based on the following items in Swedish: Writing - "Skrivit dagbok/poesi", Painting or drawing - "Tecknat/målat", Photography - "Fotograferat/filmat", Drama - "spelat teater/lajv", Dance and ballet - "Dansat", Playing an instrument - "Spelat musikinstrument", Singing in a choir - "Sjungit i kör".

6.3 Trends and figures in household expenditure

Table 5: Household cultural expenditure by expenditure purpose, 2018-2019

Items (Field/Domain)	Household expenditure (in million EUR and percentages)				Average per capita expenditure (EUR)	
	2018	percent	2019	percent	2018	2019
I. Books and Press	609	0,29	641	0,28	59	63
Books	1127	0,54	1212	0,53	109	118
Press	609	0,29	641	0,28	59	63
II. Cultural Services						
Cinema, theatre and others	1500	0,72	1330	0,58	145	130
Museums, libraries, parks and similar	100	0,05	110	0,05	10	11
Photographic services and other	140	0,07	157	0,07	14	15
III. Audiovisual equipment and accessories						
Support for recording image, sound and data	2304	0,10	2238	0,10	223	219
Audiovisual equipment and accessories	17108	0,77	15937	0,74	1657	1558
Musical instruments	996	0,05	1111	0,05	96	109
IV. Subscriptions of television, information processing						
Rental and subscriptions of radio and television						
<i>Subscriptions of radio and television</i>	612	0,29	727	0,32	59	71
<i>Rental of cultural equipment and accessories</i>	1642	0,79	1432	0,62	159	140
Information Processing and Internet						
<i>Material for information processing</i>	1420	0,68	1456	1	137	142
<i>Mobile devices</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Mobile and Internet services</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total (visible rows)	9078	4 %	9121	4 %	879	892
Grand total (all expenditures)	202 935	100 %	235 591	100 %	19 650	23 029

Source(s): Data on expenditures from SCB (customised data from statistics on household expenditures, based on COICOP), population from SCB, Conversion rate from the Swedish Tax Agency.

* including streaming

Conversion from SEK to EURO based on monthly data from the Swedish Tax Agency: <https://www.skatteverket.se/foretag/drivaforetag/euronochskatterna/omrakningskurser/redovisningsperioder.4.2ef18e6a125660db8b080004155.html>

Population based on the total population at the end of each year

6.4 Culture and civil society

In total, the voluntary cultural organisations cooperating in Ideell Kulturrallians claim over a million members, and over 20 million personal visits annually. These organisations are, in most cases, organised in a way typical of Swedish NGOs, each dealing with amateur activities in a particular art form, or other cultural activity, e.g., choirs, music, theatre, traditional crafts, or local heritage. The largest of these organisations has long been the Swedish Local Heritage Federation (Svenska Hembygdsförbundet), which reports over 2000 clubs all over the country, and claims over 400,000 members. Large national associations organise national and ethnic minorities, organising many cultural activities in both Swedish and their native languages. While many organisations have high numbers of active members, their financial resources remain limited, and their activities to a high degree rely on volunteers. Civil society organisations in arts and culture have estimated that the total number of hours of voluntary work in their activities to nearly 16 million, or an average of 100 hours a year per volunteer. In addition, most state museums have a "friends of" association attached to them and these have, in many cases, provided significant financial contributions to the museum. Compared to volunteer work in other areas, volunteer work in arts and culture decreased from 7 per cent of all volunteer work in 2009 to 5 per cent in 2019 (von Essen 2020).

Most government funding for national associations in culture does not come via the Ministry of Culture or from its government agencies. Government funding for voluntary cultural organisations, as such, is relatively limited – on the national level, as well as on the regional and local levels. If such organisations receive government funding, they tend to receive funding designed for other purposes. Some of them are registered as youth organisations, and others are organisations for national or ethnic minorities, both of which are eligible to access special funding; both of which categories have access to specially designated government funds. Under the present government, there appears to be a tendency to further tighten control of funding for civil society organisations. In the national budget for 2024, the government removed the special support for ethnic organisations.

The major recipients of government grants for cultural amateur activities are the study associations. In spite of being repeatedly reduced in the last few years, their annual funding from the national government amounted to more than one billion SEK. To this are added varying sums from local and regional governments, as well as income from various fees. Statistics show that most of the activities organised by the study associations can be described as cultural activities, ranging from lectures and study circles on cultural matters to rock music and theatre groups rehearsing. Easily available music training and public facilities for rehearsals have often been pointed out as an explanation for Sweden's internationally

successful music scene. Others have pointed to the prevalence of cultural group activities such as study circles and singing in choirs to explain the cohesiveness and high levels of trust in Swedish society.

Culture houses of various sorts are maintained by many Swedish municipalities. These often include public libraries (which exist in all Swedish municipalities), theatres and other local cultural institutions. Other cultural houses are maintained by the municipalities for leisure activities for young people (*fritidsgårdar*). New and larger cultural houses, concert halls, and art galleries have been built in recent decades by relatively large municipalities, such as Helsingborg and Karlstad, in small communities, like Hässleholm, Vara, Mariefred, and Skärhamn, as well as in suburbs of major cities, e.g., the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Botkyrka (Stockholm) and the Dream House in Rosengård (Malmö).

Three major national associations are supported by the national government to maintain cultural houses and other similar facilities throughout the country: Folkets Hus och Parker, Våra Gårdar and Bygdegårdarnas Riksförbund. All three have a background in the popular movements that arose in the late 19th century. The largest of the three is Folkets Hus och Parker, an organisation that maintains about 900 venues all over the country. It has close ties to other organisations sharing its origins in the labour movement.

Many cultural activities, e.g., choir singing, often take place within the framework of registered religious denominations. The largest of these is the Church of Sweden, with 5.5 million members. When analysing trends in the Swedish voluntary sector, it is worth noting that the Church of Sweden was separated from the state in 2000. It is thus now a part of the voluntary sector. Before 2000, it was, on the other hand, a public body. The size of the voluntary sector can thus be said to have increased significantly, regardless of any change in the habits of the population.

Studies indicate that the voluntary sector in Sweden is increasingly organised in non-profit associations with a more limited number of members and a large number of non-member supporters and volunteers, or with large numbers of passive members. It is possible that the younger generation is not, as has been suggested, sceptical towards the voluntary organisation as a form, but simply takes a more practical approach to it, placing the activity before the organisational form. It could also be that organisations of the old model are decreasing in importance and that cultural activities are increasingly organised in new ways. One should, however, not assume that the new modes of organisation are entirely different from the old ones. New movements and forms of culture are often cooperating with older organisations, even when they themselves are more informally organised. The organisational forms of new cultural expressions appear to still be an open issue.

7. Financing and support

7.1 Public funding

7.1.1 Indicators

- Public culture expenditure, all levels of government, per capita in 2024: 3 293 SEK, 288 EUR.
- Public culture expenditure, all levels of government, in millions in 2024: 34 861 SEK, 3 050 EUR.
- Public culture expenditure in percentage of GDP, in 2024: 0.54 per cent.
- Public culture expenditure as a percentage of total public expenditure in 2024: 1.1 per cent.

There has been a noticeable trend of regional governments increasing their share of total government spending on culture while the municipal part is decreasing. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the national budgets for arts and culture increased further in the last two years. The national budget for 2024 (prop. 2023/24:1) is noticeably more restrained and will mean a removal of many of the increases implemented during the pandemic, as well as more severe cuts in some cases, noticeably with regard to funding for study associations (*studieförbund*, see 6.4).

Of the 17.4 billion SEK national government expenditure on culture, media, religious denominations, and leisure (as defined in the national budget) budgeted for 2026, 1.5 billion SEK went to popular study associations, 2.5 billion SEK to folk high schools, 1.7 billion SEK to regional cultural activities, 1.9 billion SEK to national museums and 800 million SEK to the national opera and theatre. Public spending on culture varies a great deal between different parts of the country, both because different municipalities and regional governments spend different amounts and because the national government's cultural budget is spent unevenly in relation to different parts of the country. Priorities within cultural policy may also differ between different levels of government.

7.1.2 Expenditure on government level

Table 6. Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2024

Level of government	Total expenditure in SEK	Total expenditure in EUR*	Per cent share of total
State (central, federal)	16 690	1 460	47 %
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	4 959	434	14 %
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	13 495	1 181	38 %
TOTAL	35 144	3 075	100 %

Sources: The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, The Swedish Tax Office (currency conversion). [Conversion from SEK to EURO based on monthly data from the Swedish Tax Office:](#)

7.1.3 Expenditure per sector

Table 7: Direct state cultural expenditure and transfers (central level) by sector, 2022, in SEK

Field/Domain/Sub-domain	TOTAL		of which: Direct expenditure** (of government or its agencies)	of which: Transfers**	
	in 1000	in % of total state expenditures		to other levels of government	to NGOs, companies, individuals
I. Cultural Heritage					
<i>Historical Monuments</i>	735 846	0,06	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Museums</i>	2 194 287	0,18	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Archives</i>	451 995	0,04	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Libraries</i>	425 410	0,03	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Intangible Heritage / Folk Culture</i>	72 218	0,01	N/A	N/A	N/A
II. Visual Arts					
<i>Fine Arts / Plastic Arts</i>	1 468 824	0,12	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Photography</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Architecture</i>	44 625	0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Design / Applied Arts</i>	72 876	0,01	N/A	N/A	N/A
III. Performing Arts					
<i>Music</i>	238 050	0,02	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Theatre, Music Theatre, Dance</i>	1 432 947	0,12	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Multidisciplinary</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
IV. Books and Press					
<i>Books</i>	375 668	0,03	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Press</i>		0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A
V. Audiovisual and Multimedia					
<i>Cinema</i>	628 444	0,05	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Television</i>	9 721	0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Sound recordings</i>		0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Radio</i>		0,00	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Multimedia</i>	1 153 763	0,09	N/A	N/A	N/A
VI. Interdisciplinary					
<i>Socio-culture</i>	1 720 126	0,14	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Cultural Relations Abroad</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Administration</i>	1 696 206	0,14	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Cultural Education</i>	238 804	0,02	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	12 959 809	1,05	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: [The Swedish National Financial Management Authority](https://www.scb.se/en/press/2023/04/2023-04-19-1),.

7.2 Support programmes

7.2.1 Strategies, programmes and other forms of support

The objectives for public support of artists in Sweden are those of cultural policy in general (see chapter 1.1), and perhaps in particular that cultural policy should “promote quality and artistic renewal” and that it should “promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation”. As noted above, when discussing the areas and art forms, parts of the arts and culture sector also have specific policy objectives directed at them. Even though Swedish cultural policy has a long tradition of focusing on improving the financial situation of artists, the income of artists and other professionals in the culture sector remains low compared to other professionals with education of comparable length. The Arts Grants Committee is responsible for monitoring the social and financial situation of artists (see chapter 2.3).

Several public authorities provide funding for individual creative artists. Important government agencies in this area include the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet), the Authors' Fund, the National Public Arts Council (Statens konstråd), and the Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden). These are discussed further below, under 7.2.2.

7.2.2 Artist's funds

As noted above, a number of agencies and public actors in Sweden award grants, awards, and scholarships to artists and projects in the area of arts and culture. There are common measures for visual artists, musicians, composers and authors, such as working grants for 1-10 years, income guarantees, project grants, travel grants and pension grants. There are also specific schemes which vary from field to field and take the nature and needs of the different art forms into account.

Through the Swedish Authors' Fund (Sveriges författarfond) and the Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden), the government supports individual artists financially through various grants. The Authors' Fund is directed towards authors, translators, book illustrators, and cultural journalists. The Fund allocates government compensation for public lending at libraries. A portion of this compensation is given to the individual author, in direct proportion to the number of public loans of his / her work; another portion is transferred to the Fund itself, from which grants and scholarships are allocated to writers, etc.

The Arts Grants Committee allocates travel grants, project grants, or stipends for one year or more, to artists who do not fall under the responsibility of the Authors' Fund. The Arts Grants Committee also runs a studio programme for visual artists (IASPIS), open to artists both from Sweden and from abroad. The Swedish Institute (Svenska institutet) has grants for

international exchange within the arts, sciences, and media. There is also a system of state income guarantees, through which chosen artists are guaranteed a minimum annual income.

The National Public Arts Council (Statens konstråd) and The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design were government agencies that, from January 1st, 2026, are part of the Swedish Museum of Modern Art. As a result of this merger, the enlarged government agency now takes over the responsibilities of the National Public Arts Council (Statens konstråd) in buying contemporary art to display in various premises of the government and government agencies, as well as for co-financing non-governmental partners for artistic contributions to housing areas, schools and public places, and even the traffic environment.

The Swedish Arts Council (Statens kulturråd) gives grants to groups, cooperative projects, and non-profit organisations. The Swedish Arts Council gives grants to artists' centres in various artistic fields. The role of these artists' centres is to find work opportunities and to find new types of artistic commissions for their members who are professional artists in their respective fields (theatre, dance, music, visual art, applied art, photography, literature, and film). The Swedish Arts Council is responsible for

- distributing national grants to independent theatre, music and dance companies, co-operative art studios, co-operative shops of arts and crafts and artist-owned galleries; and
- granting exhibition funding to non-profit organisations, to pay remuneration to artists who have placed their artwork at public disposal in exhibitions arranged by these organisations.

Additionally, on the regional and local levels, many regions and municipalities award grants, awards, and scholarships to artists and projects in the area of arts and culture.

7.2.3 Grants, awards, scholarships

A number of grants, awards, and scholarships exist for artists, writers, and other cultural professionals in Sweden, ranging from minor grants for travel or projects to the Nobel Prize in Literature. Many of these are provided by the national government (see chapter 7.2.3), or by regional or local authorities. Others are provided by private funds, or by other private sector actors. In some cases, professional unions keep track of these, but there is no comprehensive overview or database covering all of these stipends, grants, awards, scholarships, etc.

7.2.4 Support to professional artists' associations or unions

Grants or subsidies are not, as a rule, given to trade unions, or other organisations that represent artists, as they are negotiating counterparts and need to strictly maintain their

independence from the government. National committees of international NGOs, such as the International Artists Association (IAA), the World Crafts Council (WCC), etc., receive annual subsidies in the form of participation fees for travel to or hosting international conferences, as do many other non-governmental organisations.

7.3 Private funding

Compared to the situation in many other European countries, public sector funding is unusually dominant in funding arts and culture in the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden. During the post-war decades, commercially produced culture was considered low quality by official cultural policy, and private donations were considered to threaten the independence of arts and culture. Since the 1990s, donations and sponsoring have been increasingly viewed as a complement to public financial support of cultural institutions. Expectations that sponsoring would become an important source of funding have proved wrong so far. While the possibility of increased private funding of arts and culture remains on the political agenda, the issue of sponsoring as a source of funding has, in view of the marginality of current sponsoring, cooled down politically in the last decade. Official cultural statistics do not calculate the size of voluntary contributions either in the form of voluntary work or in the form of donations. Since donations to cultural purposes are not tax-deductible, and no statistics are collected, only very limited data exist on the size of donations.

In 2023, the Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis warned that private funding of culture in Sweden is likely to remain low for the foreseeable future, and that all artistic and cultural endeavours do not have the same chances to attract private funding. Both corporate sponsorship and crowdfunding require networks and contacts. Furthermore, such funding for projects in many cases requires that basic funding is available. There is also a risk that private funding may contribute to public funding concentrating on those who have the resources to obtain private funding as well (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2013). In 2023, the agency estimated that private foundations contribute somewhere between SEK 330 and 600 million to arts and culture. Compared to an estimate from 2002, it indicates an increase. In 2002, the Institute for Advertising and Media Statistics estimated that sponsorship of arts and culture contributed 743 million SEK. Compared to public funding, these sources of funding thus remain marginal. In contrast to this, private spending on arts and culture contributes 21 per cent of the funding for government-funded cultural activities, not including private spending on cultural products such as books, cinema, or music streaming (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2023d). The project was finalised in 2024 with a report highlighting the need for strengthening the competence and capacity of cultural activities and financiers to work with private funding of arts and culture, and the need to establish further economic incentives (Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis 2024b).

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