

Sweden

Short cultural policy profile

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1. Fact and figures

- **Political system:** parliamentary democracy with a single chamber parliament, constitutional monarchy.
- **Official language:** Swedish. Recognized national minority languages: Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani, Sámi languages, Yiddish, Swedish Sign Language

	2020 (Latest available data)	2015 (Latest available data minus 5 years)
<i>Population on January 1st</i>	10 379 295	9 747 355
<i>GDP in million EUR</i>	480 734.4	455 643.2
<i>GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)</i>	124	128
<i>General government expenditure (in % of GDP)</i>	52.1%	49.3%
<i>Public cultural expenditure</i>	34 321	26 015
<i>Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP</i>	0.69%	0.61%
<i>Public cultural expenditure per Capita</i>	3 307	2 640
<i>Share of cultural employment of total employment</i>	5.4%	5.2%

Sources: Population on January 1st, latest data available / <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en>
 GDP in million EUR, latest data available /

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/namq_10_gdp/default/table?lang=en

GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100), latest data available /

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00114/default/table?lang=en>

General government expenditure (in % of GDP), latest data available /

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00023/default/table?lang=en>

Public cultural expenditure / Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP / Public cultural expenditure per Capita: see also chapter 7.1.1 of the national Compendium profile

Share of cultural employment of total employment / latest data available:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/cult_emp_sex/default/table?lang=en

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 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 are described in the longer version of the 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 access 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 for children and the young.”*

2.2 Main features

The Swedish cultural policy model is characterized by a strong national (state) level, with most of its powers invested in government agencies under the leadership of government-appointed directors and boards. Such boards, and the bodies of experts assisting such bodies, often include representatives of relevant sub-

fields, professions, and professional organizations 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, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, and the Swedish Heritage Board. Other large public bodies are the Swedish Film Institute, and the government agencies responsible for various museums and other cultural institutions.

The autonomy of cultural institutions organized 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.

In the most recent Government Bill on Cultural Policy of 2009 (prop. 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.

The Regions are 21 tax-levying authorities on the regional level, headed by Regional Councils appointed by directly elected Regional Assemblies. The Regions are mainly responsible for health services, but also provide support for, among other things, regional theatres, orchestras, museums, and libraries, within the framework of regional Cultural Policy Plans. While the autonomy of regional and local government is protected by the constitution, the autonomy of cultural institutions on the regional and local levels is not. The arm's length principle thus does not exist in the same way at the regional and local levels as it does on the national level.

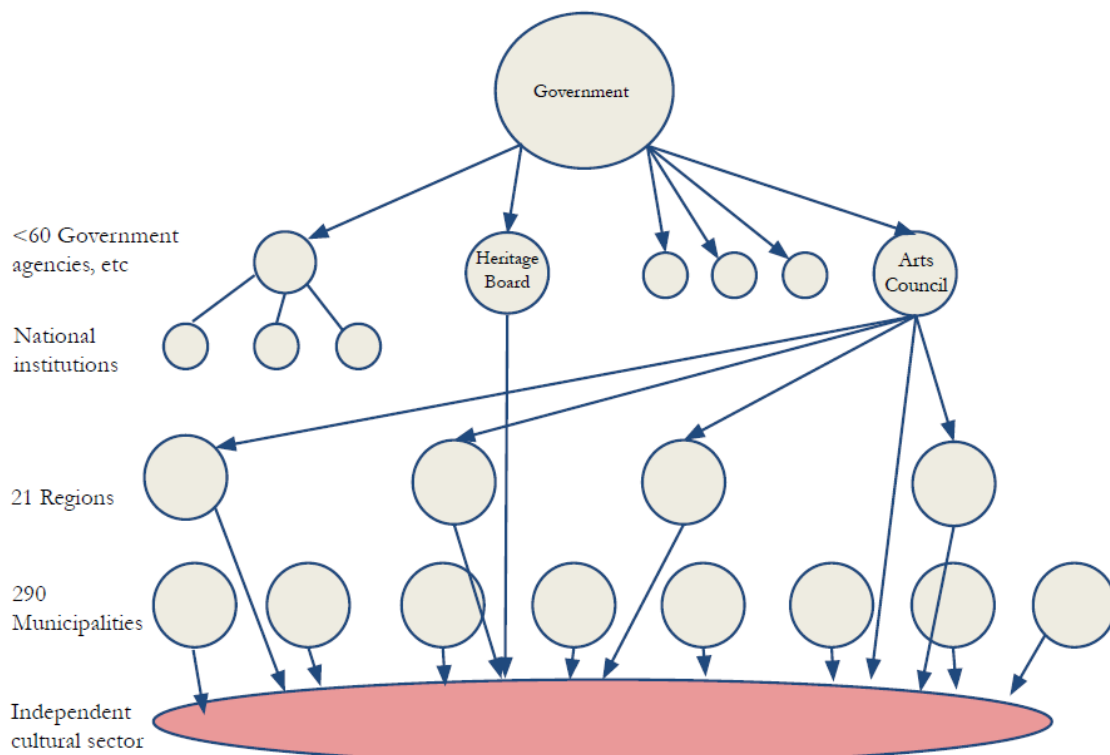
The 290 Municipalities (kommuner) are tax levying local authorities headed by directly elected assemblies, which elects municipal councils. They are legally obligated to fund at least one public library, but also fund other cultural activities, such as culture and music schools, theatres, art galleries, museums, and popular cultural education. Municipalities are also responsible for regular schools, up to, but not including, university-level education. Funding comes mainly from locally leveled taxes. The main areas for municipal activities in the cultural sphere – apart from organizing the regular school system – are libraries, culture and music

schools, and support for local NGOs, but larger municipalities may support a significantly broader range of cultural institutions and programmes.

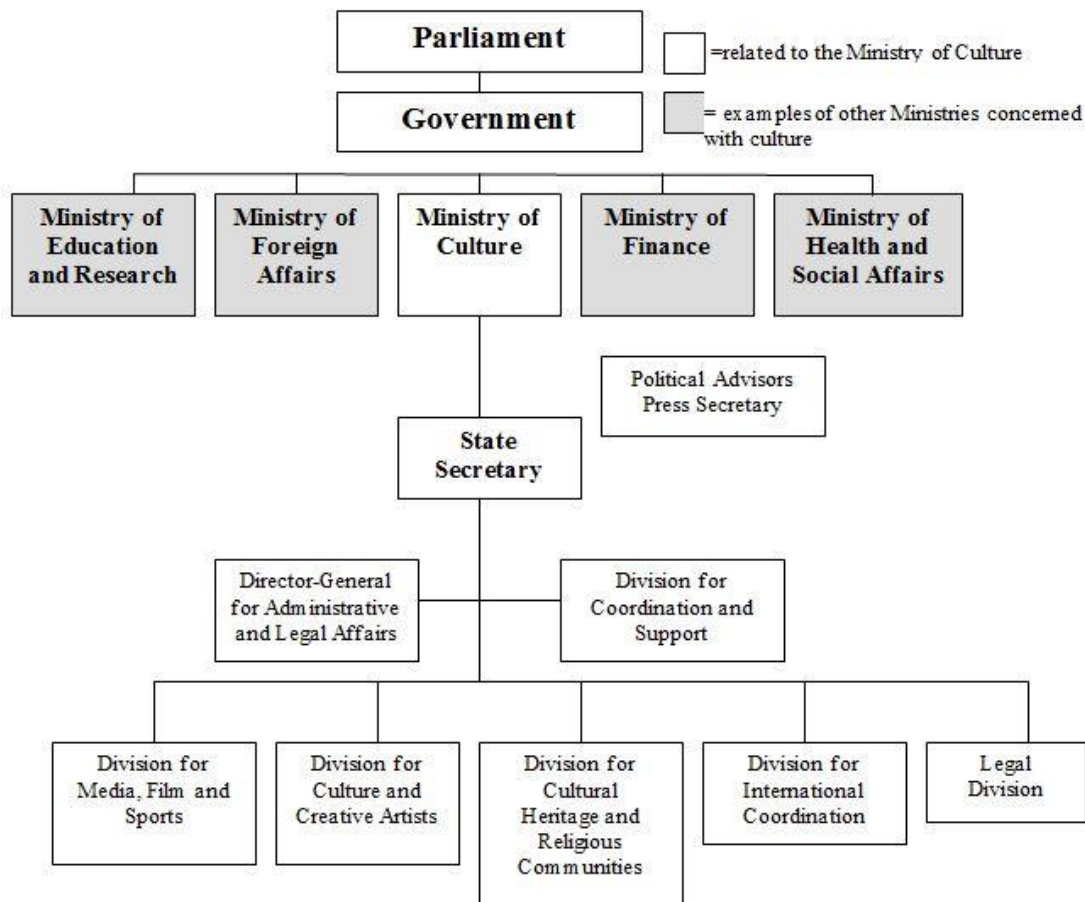
Cultural education is organized largely outside of the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. Instead, higher artistic education is integrated in the university system, a responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Lower-level culture and music schools are a municipal responsibility. The Ministry of Education also supports national study associations and folk high schools, also often dealing with cultural activities and cultural education.

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram

Overall picture of the relationship between different levels of government and arm's-length bodies (arrows indicating funding)



Organisation of the Ministry of Culture:



2.4 Historical background for the past 70 years

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

1970-1990: In the 1960s, political debate focusing on cultural policy increased dramatically, resulting in the first general cultural policy objectives, presented in the Government Bill on Culture 1974. A new government agency, the Swedish Arts Council, was created. While the objectives of cultural policy established at this

time were the results 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.

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.

2000-2021: 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.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

The most significant trends in cultural policy in the 21st century have been the results of increasing regionalisation, globalisation, and new media. In particular, the increased movements of people, cultural goods, and cultural influences across national borders have impacted significantly developments in arts and culture, as well as increasingly in cultural policy. The main cultural policy responses to these changes so far 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. These trends, and debates, have been noticeable also for cultural institutions, and are visible in regional cultural plans and government instructions to relevant cultural institutions.

The notion of Sweden as a multicultural society, and what this entails, 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 characterized Swedish cultural policy is beginning to give way to increased politicization. One reason for this is the emergence of the populist and nationalist Sweden Democrats as a major political party. Increasing polarization and politicization of cultural policy can be noticed, for example, in recent debates on threats against artists and other professionals in the cultural sector, political activism in libraries, politicization of museums, and politicization of the influence of grant giving bodies on artists and artistic projects.

After the national election in September 2022, a new government was established by a centre-right coalition (Moderates, Christian Democrats, and Liberals), supported by the Sweden Democrats. The new government has declared an ambition to significantly reduce immigration to Sweden, and to emphasize the integration of immigrants into Swedish society and culture. However, the published agreement between the parties in the government coalition and the Sweden Democrats does not indicate any plans for radical changes in cultural policy.

In the last few years, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have been a significant issue in Swedish cultural policy. As elsewhere in Europe, government recommendations and restrictions against public events have had serious conse-

quences for the cultural sector of the economy. During the pandemic, digital culture 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. Several programmes have been introduced in order to alleviate the negative consequences that the pandemic has had on the arts and culture sector. The long-term consequences of the pandemic remain difficult to predict, but it is clear that they will continue to affect the cultural sector, as well as society as a whole, for the foreseeable future.

3.2 Key themes

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. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation has become significantly more problematic, and large numbers of people have ceased working in arts and culture due to increased difficulties. According to preliminary statistics from the Arts Grants Committee, revenue in artistic activities had decreased by 18.6 percent by July 2019. Between July 2019 and July 2020, the number of persons registered as unemployed in the culture and media division of the employment service (Arbetsförmedlingen Kultur Media) doubled.

According to studies carried out 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. In its annual report of 2020, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis stated that "The cultural institutions upon which many career opportunities rely in the cultural field are also facing financial challenges, especially with regards to their ability to act, due to trends in wage expenditures." In that year's situational assessment, 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. These characterizations of the situation remain highly relevant.

Internet use in Sweden is among the highest in the world. In 2020, 96 percent of Swedes had access to the Internet, and 94 percent used it daily. 65 percent used the Internet to watch movies, or TV series, and 69 percent listen to music. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Internet use has become both more central and more vital in people's lives. These figures illustrate the drastic changes, opportunities

and challenges posed to cultural policy by new modes of communication. Digital media have become tools in the daily work of all institutions, e.g., in the form of websites, digitalization 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 its recent report, the increasingly digital distribution of literature, music, and other art forms creates new challenges for professionals in these areas when it comes to being paid for their work.

3.3 International Cultural Cooperation

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 Beijing, Berlin, London, Moscow, Paris (also heading the Swedish Institute in Paris), and Washington, the Swedish Consulate-General in Istanbul, and at the Swedish Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels.

The Swedish Institute (SI) is a public agency that promotes interest and trust in Sweden around the world (web page). Its core activities include spreading information about Swedish values and experience in the fields of innovation, sustainability, culture and creativity, and providing expert support to both private and public actors wishing to communicate the image of Sweden and Swedish skills.

Much of Sweden's 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 Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands. On behalf of the Nordic Council, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis maintains Kulturanalys Norden, reporting on cultural policy in all the Nordic countries (website of the Nordic Council).

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

With the exception of cinemas, amusement parks, a few private theatres, and a number of private art collections and heritage sites, all major cultural institutions are financed by the national, regional or local levels of governments. Most of them are owned, and maintained, by public authorities. The majority of the national cultural institutions are located in the capital. The national government also contributes to regional and municipal cultural institutions (see 2.2).

National museums are under government authority, and most of them are organised as parts of government agencies. For historical reasons, most cultural institutions are located in the capital. However, the newer Museum of World Cultures is headquartered in Gothenburg, and the Maritime Museum in Karlskrona. National public service TV and radio is organized in companies owned by a foundation with a board representing the parties represented in the national parliament.

Regional cultural institutions are often run as foundations, or limited liability companies, in which the Region and / or municipal authorities are the owners. They are generally co-funded by the regions and the national government under the Cultural Cooperation Model (see 2.2). There are also examples of institutions that are integrated in the regional, or municipal, administrations. Access to EU structural funds, and earmarked money for cultural projects, has become increasingly important at regional levels.

4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural institutions (sub-domains)	Public sector		Private sector	
		Number (year)	Trend last 5 years (In percent)	Number (year)	Trend last 5 years (In percent)
Cultural heritage*	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)*	5 987	1.8%	N/A	N/A
	Archaeological sites	673 795	3.7%	N/A	N/A
Museums**	Museum institutions	153 (2021)	-10%	168 (2021)	-21%
Archives***	Archive institutions	312	+0%	N/A	N/A
Visual arts	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Performing arts****	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre	N/A	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	1 080(2021)	-3,6%	-	-
Audiovisual	Cinemas*****	-	-	478	14.4%
	Broadcasting organisations*****	1	0%	2	0
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (please explain)		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

* Source: Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis

**Note: Number of museums that have responded on the survey for statistics on museums. Botanical gardens are not included

*** Source: Swedish National Archives

**** Source: Statistics on performing arts. The statistics is still under construction by The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis.

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

***** Source: Nordic Statistics Database (<https://www.nordicstatistics.org/culture/>)

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

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

Compared to the situation in many other European countries, public sector funding is unusually dominant in funding arts and heritage 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 on 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, and the issue has, in view of the marginality of current sponsoring, begun to cool down politically. 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 response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the national budget for arts and culture has increased in the last few years. There has also been a noticeable trend of regional governments increasing their part of total government spending on culture while the municipal part is decreasing.

Of the 18.5 billion SEK national government expenditure on culture, media, religious denominations, and leisure (as defined in the national budget for 2022) in 2021, 4.8 billion SEK went to popular adult education (folkbildning), 1.7 billion SEK to regional cultural activities, 1.8 billion SEK to national museums and exhibitions, and 1.5 billion SEK to national grants for theatre, music, and dance. 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.

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in SEK and in EUR, 2020/2015

NB: If no accounted expenditure figures can be provided, you may use budget figures, but this should be clearly indicated in a NOTE at the end of the table.

Level of government	Total cultural expenditure in 2020			Total cultural expenditure in 2015		
	In million SEK*	In EUR	% share of total	In million SEK*	In EUR	% share of total
State (national)	17 240	1 643 087 785	50%	11 185	1 195 648 247	43%
Regional*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local (municipal, counties)*	17 081	1 627 934 017	50%	14 830	1 585 289 539	57
TOTAL	34 321	3 271 021 802	100%	26 015	2 780 937 786	100%

Source: The report Public cultural expenditure 2021 by The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, The Swedish Tax Office (currency conversion).

*Local is including counties. Regional is not used in a Swedish context according to Eurostat standards

5.3 Public cultural expenditure per sector

Table 3: Public cultural expenditure by sector, in HUF and in EUR, 2020/2015

Field / Domain	Total cultural expenditure in 2020			Total cultural expenditure in 2015***		
	<i>In 1 000 SEK</i>	<i>In 1 000 EUR</i>	<i>% share of total</i>	<i>In 1 000 SEK</i>	<i>In 1 000 EUR</i>	<i>% share of total</i>
Cultural Heritage	728 575		0.2%			
Museums	2 016 919		0.6%			
Archives	410 353		0.1%			
Visual Arts*	1 141 588		0.3%			
Performing Arts	1 544 433		0.5%			
Audiovisual and Multimedia	1 279 353		0.3%			
Interdisciplinary Socioculture Cultural Rel. Abroad Administration Cultural Education**	2 212 355		0.6%			
Not covered by the above domains	9 923 342					
TOTAL	17 240 000					

Source: The report Public cultural expenditure 2020 by The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, The Swedish Tax Office (currency conversion).

* This category includes architecture, but not public investments in construction or for the renovation of buildings. It covers e.g., the promotion of architecture, educational activities, etc.

** When not allocable by domain.

*** Not comparable.

6. Legislation on culture

6.1 Overview of national cultural legislation

The allocation of public funds to arts and culture is not typically regulated by law in Sweden. Objectives are instead decided on either by parliamentary decision (as with the general cultural policy goals), or in the specific instructions given either in the national budget (by annual parliamentary decision), or by the government. Most of the cultural policy is 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 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 government bills, including the government bill on the national budget.

There have always been some exceptions to this rule, and the number of laws regulating the cultural sphere appears to be growing. The Library Law (1996:1596) requires all municipalities to provide public libraries. Public Service broadcasting is funded by a special tax (previously a TV license fee) and regulated in law. Some regulations regarding the Culture Cooperation Model (see 2.2) are included in the law on certain government grants to regional cultural activities (2010:1919). Museums are regulated by the Museum Law (2017:563), and for the preservation of heritage buildings an extensive body of legislation exists (e.g. The Heritage Commemoration Act, 1988:950).

In addition to articles on fundamental democratic rights and freedom of expression, information, religion, and assembly the constitution also includes a paragraph (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 expression in the world, and in some ways the first. It regulates the principle of openness in government administration, as well as freedom of expression 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).

6.2 Overview of international cultural legislation

Apart from national legislation, international documents signed by Sweden may also have been given 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.

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.