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Sweden^{*}, ^{}**

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annex to the present document may be accessed from the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.



1. The purpose of this core document is to assist the treaty bodies in understanding the situation in Sweden. The document contains information of both a general and a specific nature relating to the implementation of the treaties to which Sweden is party, and which may be of relevance to all, or several, treaty bodies.

I. General information

A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics

2. The first national constitution that was valid throughout Sweden was drawn up around 1350. Swedish parliamentarianism began to evolve in the nineteenth century, when political power started being transferred from the monarch to the parliament. Universal male suffrage was introduced in 1909 and women's suffrage was introduced in 1921.

3. The principle of separation of political power between the executive and the legislative organs of state was laid down in the Instrument of Government of 1809. Today, fundamental rights and freedoms are protected by the Instrument of Government of 1974, which is one of the four fundamental laws of Sweden that are often referred to collectively as the Constitution. There is no separate bill of rights. Instead, the Instrument of Government protects civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression in other media are protected by two separate fundamental laws, the Freedom of the Press Act, and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression. The fourth fundamental law is the Act of Succession. The Riksdag Act occupies an intermediate position between a fundamental law and an ordinary law. It contains rules concerning the working procedures of the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament). Until 1974 the Riksdag Act was a fundamental law, but, as stated above, it now occupies an intermediate position.

Population

4. Sweden's population grew by 30 151 to 10 551 707 in 2023 which is the lowest increase in population since 2001. Immigration declined compared to 2022, with 94 514 immigrants coming to Sweden. Emigration increased compared to 2022 to 73 434 in 2023.

5. A total of 94 385 people died in 2023. 89 per cent of the deceased were aged over 65. The number of deaths decreased by 352 compared with 2022.

6. A total of 100 051 children were born in 2023. Among newborns, 51.2 per cent were male and 48.8 per cent were female.

7. Trends over the last five years:

(a) The population is increasing and there are more men than women. The population increase has been greater for men but in 2023 this trend was reversed and the increase was slightly greater for women than for men;

(b) The number of inhabitants per square kilometre is increasing;

(c) The number of births is decreasing, and more boys than girls are being born. The number of births is decreasing despite an increased population. The total fertility rate has decreased since 2010 and in 2023 it reached 1.45, the lowest rate ever. Approximately 106 boys are born for every 100 girls;

(d) The number of deaths increased during the pandemic in 2020, but has since returned to normal levels. The differences between the sexes depends on age and sex distribution in the population. Life expectancy is more than three years longer for women than men;

(e) The number of foreign nationals in Sweden has increased over the last five years.

Population summary

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Population 31 December	10 327 589	10 379 295	10 452 326	10 521 556	10 551 707
Men	5 195 814	5 222 847	5 260 707	5 298 324	5 312 519
Women	5 131 775	5 156 448	5 191 619	5 223 232	5 239 188
Number of people aged 0–17 years	2 180 508	2 189 403	2 198 240	2 194 785	2 176 224
People aged 0–17 years as a % of total population	21.1	21.1	21	20.9	20.6
Number of people aged 65 + years	2 065 367	2 088 086	2 118 766	2 147 137	2 174 752
People aged 65 + years as a % of total population	20	20.1	20.3	20.4	20.6
Households	4 718 271	4 776 239	4 831 811	4 883 816	N/A
Average number of residents per household	2.19	2.17	2.16	2.15	N/A
Foreign nationals ¹	940 580	905 323	880 826	865 256	N/A
Foreign nationals as a % of total population	9.1	8.7	8.4	8.2	N/A
Foreign-born	2 019 733	2 046 731	2 090 503	2 145 674	2 170 627
Foreign-born as a % of total population	19.6	19.7	20	20.4	20.6
Foreign-born Swedish citizens	1 168 202	1 227 977	1 292 203	1 358 014	N/A
Born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents	615 234	639 309	662 069	681 448	N/A
People with foreign background as a % of total population ²	25.5	25.9	26.3	26.9	N/A
Live births	114 523	113 077	114 263	104 734	100 051
Birth rate (per 1 000 mean population)	11.1	10.9	11	10	9.5
Total fertility rate	1.7	1.66	1.67	1.52	1.45
Deaths	88 766	98 124	91 958	94 737	94 385
Death rate (per 1 000 mean population)	8.6	9.5	8.8	9	9
Life expectancy men	81.34	80.6	81.21	81.34	N/A
Life expectancy women	84.73	84.29	84.82	84.73	N/A
Infant mortality (per 1 000 live births)	2.07	2.37	1.85	2.19	N/A
Immigration	115 805	82 518	90 631	102 436	94 514
Immigration (per 1 000 population at the beginning of the year)	11.3	8	8.7	9.8	9
Emigration	47 718	48 937	48 284	50 592	73 434
Emigration (per 1 000 population at the beginning of the year)	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	7.0
Population growth	97 404	51 706	73 031	69 230	30 151
Population growth (per 1 000 population at the beginning of the year)	9.5	5	7	6.6	2.9
Acquired Swedish citizenship	64 206	80 175	89 354	92 225	N/A

Source: Statistics Sweden.

* <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/31156>

* <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/31157>

¹ People with dual nationality, one of which is Swedish, are not included.

² Foreign background includes those who are foreign-born and those born in Sweden who have two foreign-born parents.

Sweden's population (grouped by age) 2019–2023

Year	Age					
	0–19		20–64		65+	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2019	1 163 754	1 239 976	2 864 294	2 994 198	1 103 727	961 640
2020	1 170 648	1 243 726	2 871 277	3 005 558	1 114 523	973 563
2021	1 179 382	1 250 692	2 883 310	3 020 176	1 128 927	989 839
2022	1 180 395	1 251 545	2 900 453	3 042 026	1 142 384	1 004 753
2023	1 173 013	1 243 246	2 910 816	3 049 880	1 155 359	1 019 393

Source: Statistics Sweden.

Employment and social situation

8. In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 crisis caused major negative consequences on the Swedish labour market, but since then the labour market has developed positively. The employment rate began to surge in the summer of 2020 and continued to increase through the first quarter of 2023. During the latter part of 2023, the employment rate has decreased slightly. The rate of employment (age 15–74) increased from 66.8 per cent in 2020 to 69.4 per cent in 2023. Over the same period, the number of employees has increased by 260 000 or 5.2 per cent. Among foreign-born men and women, the employment rate increased from 59.2 per cent in 2020 to 67.1 per cent in 2023. At the same time the number of employed increased by 21.9 per cent among foreign-born men and women (For employment statistics and a breakdown of employment by economic sector, please refer to Appendix 1.)

9. Unemployment rose in 2020 to 8.5 per cent, from 6.9 per cent in 2019, in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. In 2021, unemployment began to decrease, but was nevertheless slightly higher than in 2020 at 8.9 per cent. After a significant decrease in 2022, unemployment has started to increase again and reached 7.7 per cent in 2023. During the COVID-19 crisis, unemployment increased significantly more among foreign-born people than among people born in Sweden. Since then, the unemployment gap between Swedish-born and foreign-born people has decreased from 14.1 percentage points in 2021 to 10.0 percentage points in 2023. In recent years, the total percentage of members in trade unions has mainly followed a downward trend. Between 2014 and 2015, 75 per cent of women and 68 per cent of men were members of a union. In the most recent survey from 2021, just under 72 per cent of women and just over 65 per cent of men in Sweden were union members.

10. More people are able to earn their own living, but the proportion of people outside both the labour market and the social insurance system has remained unchanged in recent years. A weak connection to the labour market has a major impact on people's living conditions, for example their risk of illness. Those who are outside the labour market, especially those who have never entered it, are also at risk of not benefiting from the protection provided by the income-related part of the social insurance system. The social insurance system is individualised and includes both income-related benefits and basic protection in the form of universal and means-tested benefits. The social insurance system provides financial security during the different stages of life, for example in the event of illness or disability and to older people and families with children. It does not include health care or unemployment.

11. The public sector comprises central government, government agencies, regions and municipalities. It provides services such as health care, elderly care and education. It also administers the social security system, for example child allowance and public pensions. Public-sector expenditure is chiefly funded by taxes, social insurance contributions and, to some extent, patient fees. Health care and social services are provided directly by regional or local government or by private-sector actors, and while they are regulated at national level they are mainly funded by local government.

12. Long-term poverty (five years or more) has continued to decrease in all population groups. Furthermore, incomes have increased among all groups, although the increase was higher among high-income earners than among those with lower incomes. Consequently, the income gap has increased (For statistics on living conditions, indicators, percentage by gender, age and time period, Gini coefficient and health and socio-economic indicators, please refer to Appendix 2.)

13. In Sweden, 53 per cent of the population live in the three largest city regions, defined as the three largest cities and their surrounding municipalities from which people commute. The proportion of the population living in the three main city regions has increased in recent decades. Slightly more than 50 per cent of the population, both in Sweden as a whole and in city regions, is male, while almost 50 per cent is female. Compared to outside the three largest city regions, there are more young people and more people with a higher education in city regions. Religion, ethnicity, and mother tongue are not registered in Sweden, only country of birth. Foreign-born people are overrepresented in urban areas (the three largest city regions). Sixty-three per cent of all foreign-born people live in these areas. Twenty-four per cent of the population of these three regions were born in countries other than Sweden, compared with 21 per cent of the total population. However, it is not unusual for over 20 per cent of the population of municipalities within these three regions to have been born abroad. This trend has increased over the past five years.

14. There are signs of increased segregation in cities in Sweden. Differences in terms of unemployment, school results, income, benefit dependency, need for support from public social services, health, electoral participation and insecurity can vary significantly between different residential areas in the same city or municipality. These factors also vary between women and men and between boys and girls. Several general welfare problems may occur concurrently, with one common combination being poor health and financial vulnerability. Serious illness often leads to poorer financial circumstances and an increased risk of couples separating (For statistics on people at risk of poverty 2011–2015, see Appendix 3.)

Education

15. Preschool class, primary and secondary school are compulsory for children aged 6–16 who are considered to be residents of Sweden. All children are supposed to be enrolled. There were 1 111 568 pupils in primary school in the school year 2022/23. (For statistics on the number of pupils in compulsory education please refer to Appendix 4.) Municipalities and schools are obliged to ensure that all children covered by compulsory education attend school.

16. Children seeking asylum and children staying in Sweden without the necessary permits or legal support are entitled to education in primary and secondary school, but it is not compulsory for these children. The right to education in upper secondary school includes children in these categories if they entered school before the age of 18. A targeted government grant is available to municipalities for the education of these children. According to assessments made by the Swedish Migration Agency, almost all children are enrolled in school, and exceptions are rare. Parents are encouraged by migration officers to contact the nearest school and, if they consent, the Swedish Migration Agency notifies the municipality responsible for providing education.

17. Upper secondary education consists of national vocational programmes, national higher education preparatory programmes and introduction programmes. The minimum requirements for pupils who wish to apply for a national programme are passing grades from compulsory education in Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics and at least five other subjects for vocational programmes or at least nine other subjects for higher education preparatory programmes. Pupils who do not fulfil these requirements can apply to an introductory programme as a route into a national programme or working life. Ahead of the 2023/24 school year, 85.2 per cent of pupils were eligible to apply for national programmes. The 14.8 per cent of pupils who were not eligible will instead study an introductory programme.

18. The proportion of pupils who complete compulsory school and continue on to upper secondary education is close to 100 per cent.

19. The proportion of pupils in upper secondary education who complete a three-year programme with a school diploma within five years is presented below. (Assuming that pupils who have not completed a three-year programme within five years have dropped out, these figures could be used as an indication of the upper secondary education drop-out rate.)

<i>Year of enrollment in USE</i>	<i>Female completed within 5 years</i>	<i>Male completed within 5 years</i>	<i>Total completed within 5 years</i>
Autumn 2018	78.3 %	71.2 %	74.6 %

Source: National Agency for Education (NAE) database

Teacher-pupil ratio in publicly funded schools

<i>Pupils per teacher in compulsory school</i>				
<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/2023</i>
12.1	12.2	12.2	12.2	12.0

Source: NAE

<i>Number of teachers per 100 pupils in upper secondary education</i>				
<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/2023</i>
11.9	12.1	12.2	12.3	12.2

20. There are no statistics regarding the literacy rate in Sweden. Results from international assessments such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) may serve as an indicator of the literacy rate of pupils in primary education. PISA is the only international education study that measures the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds, an age at which students in most countries are nearing the end of their compulsory schooling. The result of the latest PISA survey, conducted in 2022 but published in late 2023, shows that Sweden's earlier positive results from 2018 have gone into reverse for reading comprehension and mathematics (for science the results are the same as 2018 although the number of low performers has increased). The results are now at the same level as in PISA 2012. The decline is largely due to an increase in pupils performing at a lower level (level 2 or below). In mathematics, for example, the percentage of pupils performing at level 2 or below has increased from 19 per cent in 2018 to 27 per cent in 2022, whereas high performers have decreased from 13 per cent to 10 per cent. In science, however, the decrease is not as large due to an increased number of pupils performing at the higher levels (level 5 or above), which has compensated for part of the effects of low performers. Combined, this means that overall equity has decreased according to PISA. However, Sweden still performs above the OECD average in all three subjects. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, Sweden's decreasing results can largely be explained by the pandemic.

Public finances

21. For an overview of GDP, the consumer price index, public sector revenue and expenditure and the central government budget balance, please refer to Appendix 5.

Development cooperation

22. In December 2023, a Reform Agenda for Sweden's international development cooperation entitled Development assistance for a new era – freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth, was adopted. The new policy focuses on a long-term perspective, transparency and effectiveness, to be able to better tackle multiple global challenges. The Reform Agenda has seven thematic priorities: combating poverty through job creation, trade, and education; improved health for the most vulnerable people; promoting freedom and fighting oppression; expanded and more effective climate aid; strengthening women and girls' freedom and empowerment; enhanced synergies between development assistance and migration policies; and enhanced humanitarian assistance to save lives and alleviate suffering.

23. The Swedish development assistance budget for 2023–2026 totals SEK 56 billion per year. Sweden is one of few countries that live up to the UN target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI).

B. Constitutional, political and legal structure

24. Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. Swedish democracy is founded on universal and equal suffrage and the free formation of opinion. The monarch is head of state, but has no political power.

25. Sweden is a parliamentary democracy. All public power proceeds from the people. The form of government is representative; the people are represented by the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament), which has legislative power. The government implements the Riksdag's decisions and drafts proposals for new laws or legislative amendments. One of the implications of the parliamentary system is that the government must have the confidence of the Riksdag, or at least be tolerated by it. It must always be possible for a parliamentary majority to force a government out of office.

26. The 1974 Instrument of Government – which forms part of the Swedish Constitution – is based on the principles of popular sovereignty, representative democracy, parliamentarianism, local self-governance and the rule of law. All public power must be exercised under the law. This not only applies to the courts and administrative authorities, but also to the Government and the Riksdag. It applies equally to local and central government.

27. As regards the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms gives a central role to such rights and freedoms that are of particular significance to the form of government, i.e. the 'political' freedoms. The specific aim is to guarantee the free formation of opinion on political, religious and cultural matters. However, the rules are also aimed at protecting the individual from, for instance, inhuman punishment and other physical or mental abuse that might be employed for the purposes of harassment or coercion.

28. Under the Instrument of Government, the Government governs the country. To execute this task, the Government has at its disposal the administrative authorities. The Government decides how the authorities are organised and what tasks they perform. However, the authorities are independent of the Government and of other public authorities, including the Riksdag, in their decision-making capacity in a particular case relating to the exercise of public authority vis-à-vis a private individual or a local authority, or relating to the application of law. Consequently, the Government is prohibited in such cases from giving directions as to what decision the authority should arrive at in the particular case.

29. The independence of the judiciary is safeguarded by the Instrument of Government. No public authority, including the Riksdag, may determine how a court of law adjudicates an individual case, or otherwise applies a rule of law in a particular case. Provisions concerning the functions of the courts relevant to the administration of justice, the principal features of their organisation and court procedure are laid down in law.

Elections

30. The early twentieth century saw a gradual expansion of the electorate. Universal suffrage was introduced for men in 1909 and for women in 1921. General elections to the Riksdag and the regional and municipal assemblies are held every four years. The Riksdag is a unicameral body composed of 349 seats, with members being elected for a fixed term of four years. Three hundred and ten of the seats are permanent constituency seats, while the remaining 39 are allocated to ensure greater proportionality to the national distribution of the constituency seats. The electoral method is based on proportionality.

31. The electorate comprises all Swedish citizens aged 18 and above who are, or have been, resident in Sweden. Apart from Swedish citizens, citizens of the European Union, Norway and Iceland aged 18 and above who are legally resident in Sweden, as well as other foreign nationals who have been resident in Sweden for at least three years may participate in elections to regional and municipal assemblies. Swedish citizens who are entitled to

participate in elections to the Riksdag are also entitled to participate in elections to the European Parliament. Citizens of the European Union residing in Sweden are also entitled to participate in elections to the European Parliament if they claim this right and certify that they will not exercise their right to vote or stand for election in their country of origin.

32. In the current electoral period (2022–2026), eight political parties are represented in the Riksdag: Socialdemokraterna (the Social Democratic Party), Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats), Moderaterna (the Moderate Party), Vänsterpartiet (the Left Party), Centerpartiet (the Centre Party), Kristdemokraterna (the Christian Democrats), Miljöpartiet (the Green Party) and Liberalerna (the Liberal Party). To be allocated seats in the Riksdag, a party is required to receive at least four per cent of the votes. An exception to this general rule is made if a party receives at least 12 per cent of the votes in any one constituency. The party can then participate in the allocation of seats in that particular constituency, even if it has not received 4 per cent of the votes across the whole country.

33. A total of 7 772 120 people were eligible to vote in the 2022 election to the Riksdag, 8 196 423 were eligible to vote in the 2022 municipal council election and 8 147 129 were eligible to vote in the 2022 regional council election.

34. Elections to the Riksdag, regional councils and municipal councils are held in September every four years. In the election to the Riksdag in 2022, voter turnout decreased by 3 percentage points to 84.2 per cent from the previous election in 2018. This was the first election since 2002 where turnout decreased. The corresponding decreases in turnout for the elections to regional councils and municipal councils in 2022 were 3.5 and 3.6 percentage points respectively. Turnout in the election to regional councils was 80.2 per cent, while turnout in the election to municipal councils was 80.5 per cent.

35. Anyone who, according to the electoral roll, was entitled to vote in the election and who believes that a mistake or an error has been made that has affected the results of an election may lodge an appeal within ten days after the election is concluded. A party that participated in the election may also lodge an appeal. Appeals are submitted to the Election Review Board. Following the 2022 elections, 148 appeals were registered regarding the national elections, 110 appeals regarding the elections to the regional assemblies and 148 appeals regarding the elections to the municipal assemblies. All appeals concerning the outcome of the national election were deemed unsubstantiated or rejected. In three cases concerning the elections to municipal assemblies, the appeals led to a recount of the votes (Färgelanda, Haninge and Laxå municipalities).

36. The Riksdag has a single chamber with 349 seats. Since the 2022 election, the governing coalition comprises Moderaterna (the Moderate Party), Kristdemokraterna (the Christian Democrats) and Liberalerna (the Liberal Party). Since the 2022 elections, the various political parties hold the following number of seats: Socialdemokraterna (the Social Democratic Party) – 107 seats; Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats) – 73 seats; Moderaterna (the Moderate Party) – 68 seats; Vänsterpartiet (the Left Party) – 24 seats; Centerpartiet (the Centre Party) – 24 seats; Kristdemokraterna (the Christian Democrats) – 19 seats; Miljöpartiet (the Green Party) – 18 seats; and Liberalerna (the Liberal Party) – 16 seats. Two members of parliament have left their parties since the 2022 elections. They are still members of the Riksdag, but they no longer have any party affiliation. Following the 2022 elections, female members of parliament account for 46.1 per cent of the total (161 out of 349 seats).

<i>Name of political party</i>	<i>Share of votes in 2022 election (%)</i>	<i>Seats in the Riksdag in 2022 election</i>
Socialdemokraterna	30.33	107
Sverigedemokraterna	20.54	73
Moderaterna	19.10	68
Vänsterpartiet	6.75	24
Centerpartiet	6.71	24
Kristdemokraterna	5.34	19
Miljöpartiet	5.08	18

<i>Name of political party</i>	<i>Share of votes in 2022 election (%)</i>	<i>Seats in the Riksdag in 2022 election</i>
Socialdemokraterna	30.33	107
Liberalerna	4.61	16
Other parties	1.54	

Source: Swedish Election Authority.

Media

37. The daily newspaper companies, which account for a large proportion of independent news reporting, are under pressure from several directions, including both domestic and international competitors. Technological developments, new consumption patterns and increased competition in the media market have presented the industry with major challenges: for example, advertisers are choosing other ways of reaching their target audiences. The printed newspaper industry in particular is facing issues with ongoing structural transformation and digitalisation. Magazines find it difficult to charge users for their digital content and digital sales have not compensated for the decline in print advertising sales. The largest company in Sweden is Bonnier AB, which directly or indirectly controls 55 daily newspaper titles, such as Dagens Nyheter, Sydsvenska Dagbladet, Expressen/GT/Kvällsposten and Dagens Industri and has a turnover of SEK 6.8 billion. Second largest is Schibsted, owner of Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet, with a turnover of SEK 2.5 billion. Third is Norrköpings Tidningars Media (NTM), which focuses on local and regional newspaper markets and has a turnover of SEK 1.9 billion. The nine biggest newspaper groups have a total turnover of SEK 14.4 billion, which represents almost the entire market.

38. The use of on-demand audiovisual services continues to increase, and the viewing of linear services continues to decline. Together, the public service broadcaster Sveriges Television AB (SVT) and TV4 Media, which is owned by Telia Company, have the major part of the audience share for linear television. Other broadcasters such as Viaplay Group AB and Warner Bros. Discovery are viewed by smaller shares of the audience. Among on-demand services where a subscription is not required, SVT's on-demand service, SVT Play, is the most popular service among the older audience and YouTube is most popular among the younger audience. Netflix is the most popular subscription-based on-demand service, followed by C More/TV4 play and Viaplay. As for radio, the public service radio broadcaster Sveriges Radio AB (SR) has more than two thirds of all listeners. Commercial radio, national or regional/local stations have slightly less than one third. At present, nearly all independent local radio stations are owned or controlled by either Bauer Media or Viaplay Group Radio.

Civil society

39. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Sweden are generally either non-profit associations or registered religious communities. However, the former do not have to be registered. There is no general legislation governing non-profit associations or any general requirement that they be registered. The right of every person to initiate and participate in any form of association – freedom of association – is a constitutional right. In order to become a legal entity, a non-governmental organisation must have a board and rules that clearly set out how decisions are made and who is authorised to represent the association. Minutes kept in accordance with the rules constitute evidence as to the person or persons who are authorised to represent the association. As is the case for other organisations that are legal entities, non-profit associations are subject to rules and regulations set out in specific pieces of legislation such as tax law and labour law. There are no restrictions on a Swedish NGO receiving funding from abroad, or to prevent non-Swedish citizens from establishing or participating in Swedish NGOs. In order to be considered a Swedish NGO, the organisation must be based in Sweden. In accordance with the principles of the independence of civil society, non-governmental organisations are not registered by the Government and there is no record of the total number of recognised organisations. According to Statistics Sweden

there are more than 260 000 local, national and regional non-governmental organisations in Sweden.

40. A policy on non-profit organisations (NPOs) and popular movements was established as a separate policy area in the central government budget for the first time in 2001. This policy has focused on encouraging and supporting people who form associations and similar groups and on providing a favourable climate for these organisations to operate in and pursue their activities.

41. In 2009, a policy for civil society was launched. The objective of the policy is to improve the conditions for civil society as an integral part of democracy. This is to be done in dialogue with civil society organisations by developing opportunities for civil society to help people participate based on commitment and a desire to influence their own lives or society in general.

Judiciary

42. The independence of the judiciary in Sweden is safeguarded by the Instrument of Government. The Riksdag, the Government and other public authorities cannot determine how a court is to adjudicate a particular case or how a court otherwise applies a rule of law in a particular case. Nor may any other public authority, including the Government, determine how judicial responsibilities are distributed among individual judges. Judges may be removed from office only if, by reason of a criminal act or through gross or repeated neglect of their official duties, they have shown themselves to be manifestly unfit to hold office, or if they are under a legal obligation to retire.

43. Courts of law play a central role in protecting the rights of individuals in Sweden. The remedies provided for under the Swedish court system are adopted to provide a means to protect human rights. The judicial system consists of general courts and administrative courts. The courts concerned with general matters are the district courts, the courts of appeal and the Supreme Court. There are regional administrative courts, administrative courts of appeal and a Supreme Administrative Court for administrative matters. Besides this, a few courts and tribunals have been established to adjudicate in cases within specific branches of law.

44. The Instrument of Government stipulates that a legal dispute between individuals must not be settled by an authority other than a court of law except in accordance with the law. The Instrument of Government also guarantees that it must always be possible to have deprivation of liberty examined by a court without undue delay. Provisions concerning the functions of the courts relating to the administration of justice, the principal features of the organisation of the courts and legal proceedings must be laid down in an act of law.

45. During the period 2017–2023, the number of professional judges sitting in courts per 100 000 inhabitants ranged between approximately 11.8 and 12.3. If non-permanent judges are included, the number of professional judges sitting in courts per 100 000 inhabitants is instead approximately 23.

46. The average backlog of cases per judge at different levels of the judicial system, 2017–2023 (average number of cases adjudicated per judge within brackets in table below):

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
The Supreme Court	14 (110)	12 (119)	16 (128)	20 (128)	26 (149)	28 (142)	41 (153)
Courts of appeal	7 (35)	8 (36)	9 (37)	10 (40)	11 (42)	11 (44)	11 (42)
District courts	122 (301)	129 (308)	138 (329)	137 (346)	130 (339)	127 (333)	130 (338)
The Supreme Administrative Court	43 (129)	31 (136)	28 (126)	33 (128)	36 (133)	36 (146)	35 (147)
Administrative courts of appeal	23 (132)	32 (120)	37 (126)	24 (129)	28 (109)	21 (102)	21 (106)
Administrative courts	172 (425)	185 (464)	176 (514)	173 (592)	159 (569)	150 (510)	116 (515)

Note: Non-permanent judges, who adjudicate cases independently, are included above.

47. Legislative amendments regarding time limits for pre-trial detention entered into force on 1 July 2021. A time limit of nine months for adults and three months for suspects under the age of 18 is set for detention before prosecution. The time limit may only be exceeded when there are exceptional reasons, for example if the penalty value is very high and the offence is especially difficult to investigate. Regarding the number of detainees in Sweden awaiting trial and details on periods of detention, please refer to statistics and indicators on crime in Appendix 6.

48. If a suspect under arrest or in detention so requests, a public defence counsel must be appointed for them. A public defence counsel must also be appointed upon request for a person who is suspected of an offence for which the penalty prescribed is no less than six months imprisonment. A public defence counsel must also be appointed if defence counsel is required by the suspect in connection with the inquiry into the offence, or in view of doubt concerning what sanction will be chosen and there is reason to impose a sentence of a sanction other than a fine or conditional sentence or such sanctions linked together, or if there are otherwise specific grounds relating to the personal circumstances of the suspect or the subject of the case. Initially, central government will pay the costs of the public defence counsel. If the defendant or suspect is acquitted, they will not need to repay anything. If they are sentenced, they will, depending upon their income, normally be liable to pay all or part of the central government costs. The number of public defence counsels appointed in the period 2017–2022 averaged approximately 60 000–70 000 per year. There are no statistics concerning how many applications for a public defence counsel are rejected, and so the proportion of applicants who are granted a public defence counsel is thus not available.

49. Victims of crime may be entitled to compensation/damages from the perpetrator in accordance with the Tort Liability Act (1972:207). Such damages may include compensation for personal injuries, damage to or loss of property, financial loss and violation of personal integrity. In cases where no perpetrator can be identified or where the perpetrator is not able to pay damages and there is no insurance to fully cover the injuries, victims of crime can generally apply for compensation from central government. Such compensation is known as criminal injuries compensation and is regulated by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act (2014:322). The Crime Victim Authority is responsible for processing applications under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act. Compensation is primarily payable for personal injury, which includes both physical and psychological injury, and, in cases where the crime entitles the victim to such compensation, for the violation of personal integrity suffered by the victim. In exceptional cases, compensation for financial loss or damage to and loss of property may also be paid out.

50. In 2022, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority assessed 10 383 applications for central government compensation and a total of SEK 117 684 000 was paid to applicants. In 2021, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority assessed 9 755 applications for central government compensation and a total of SEK 105 278 000 was paid to applicants. In 2020, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority assessed 10 086 applications for central government compensation and a total of SEK 95 842 000 was paid to applicants. In 2019, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority assessed 10 372 applications for central government compensation and a total of SEK 104 562 000 was paid to applicants. In 2018, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority assessed 8 686 applications for central government compensation and a total of SEK 91 211 000 was paid to applicants. In 2017, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority assessed 9 539 applications for central government compensation and a total of SEK 91 272 000 was paid to applicants.

51. The number of police officers per 100 000 people in Sweden has increased from 195 in 2017 to 218 in 2023. The share of central government expenditure going to the Swedish Police Authority has, over the course of the same period, increased from 2.35 per cent to 2.95 per cent. The share of central government expenditure going to the judiciary has increased from 4.68 per cent in 2017 to 4.97 per cent in 2022. The number of prosecutors per 100 000 inhabitants was 13.44 in 2023. This number has increased from 10.62 in 2017.

52. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) produces and distributes information about crime and crime prevention. Brå produces the official crime statistics, evaluates reforms, conducts research, and supports local crime prevention efforts. For

example, Brå publishes preliminary statistics on reported crime every month. This collates incidents that have been reported and registered as crimes by the police, customs and public prosecutors in Sweden. Accordingly, these statistics include incidents that are reported but, once investigated fully, deemed not to be a crime as well as reported incidents where a crime cannot be proved. Each year, Brå publishes crime statistics and the Swedish Crime Survey, which is a survey of the attitudes and experiences of the general public (aged 16–84) on subjects including victimisation, fear of crime and public confidence in the justice system (For more detailed information, please refer to: www.bra.se.)

53. In 2022 (1 October), 6 146 individuals were subject to ongoing enforcement of a prison sentence, which constitutes an increase of eight per cent compared with 2021. The prison population has increased steadily over the last five years. Of those sentenced to imprisonment who had begun enforcement of their sentence in 2022, 17 per cent had been sentenced for theft offences as the main offence. Around 12 per cent had been sentenced for crimes against life and health, around 31 per cent for drug offences and around 10 per cent for road traffic offences. Assault offences dominated among the crimes against life and health, and drink-driving offences dominated among the traffic offences.

54. The majority of the prison population are men. In 2022, men accounted for approximately 93 per cent of new prison enforcements. This proportion has been relatively stable over the past ten years. Men constitute the majority of those given custodial sentences in connection with all types of offence. Men also constitute the majority of all those found guilty of offences in general – 82 per cent in 2022.

55. Around 36 per cent of those given custodial sentences in district courts in 2022 were aged 40 or older, 44 per cent were between the ages of 25 and 39, and 14 per cent were between the ages of 21 and 24. Young people aged 20 or under accounted for 6 per cent of custodial sentences in 2022. (No one aged between 15 and 17 was given a custodial sentence in 2022. Please note that ‘custodial sentences’ refers to prison sentences. Individuals aged 15–17 at the time of the offence are primarily sentenced to institutional youth care rather than imprisonment. In 2022, 59 convictions concerning institutional youth care were issued, which equates to 16 per 100 000 population). The distribution of those given custodial sentences per 100 000 population varies among the respective age groups. The dominant age group consists of those aged 21–24, with 377 custodial sentences per 100 000 population, compared with 104 per 100 000 population among those aged 15 to 20 years.

56. Approximately 1 610 individuals started serving a custodial sentence by means of intensive electronic supervision in 2022, which constitutes a decrease of 9 per cent compared with 2021. There were approximately 2 420 individuals detained in remand centres on 1 October 2021. Of these, 85 per cent were detained pending trial or during ongoing criminal investigations, and 2 per cent were under arrest or otherwise in police custody. On 1 October 2021, the number of people serving a custodial sentence in remand centres was 229. In 2022, approximately 10 500 people entered the supervision of the probation service. This represents a decrease of 6 per cent compared with 2021. Of all conviction decisions in 2022, approximately 5 480 (5 per cent) concerned probation in 2022. Of the clients who completed a prison sentence in 2022, 70 per cent were released on parole.

The International Criminal Court and other international criminal tribunals

57. Sweden has been cooperating with the International Criminal Court (ICC) since 2002 and has transposed the Rome Statute into domestic law through the Act on Criminal Responsibility for Certain International Offences (2014:406). As of 2007, Sweden has arrangements with the ICC for the relocation to the territory of Sweden of witnesses who have appeared or are to appear in proceedings before the ICC, and, where necessary, people closely related to these witnesses. Pursuant to these arrangements, the Registrar of the ICC may require the relocation of a witness and, where necessary, people closely related to the witness. Such requests are considered on an individual basis by Sweden and, if deemed necessary and appropriate by Sweden, a residence and work permit is granted for one year to those being relocated. These arrangements are implemented in Swedish domestic legislation through Chapter 22 of the Aliens Act (2005:716).

58. In 2017, Sweden entered into an Agreement on the Enforcement of Sentences of the ICC with the Court. After sentencing an accused person, the Presidency of the ICC communicates with Sweden and requests that Sweden provide an indication of its readiness to receive a person convicted by the Court. If Sweden indicates its readiness to receive a person convicted by the ICC, the Presidency must request that Sweden provide the Court with updated and necessary information regarding its national detention regime. If the Presidency designates Sweden as the State in which the sentenced person is to serve their sentence, it must notify Sweden of its decision. Sweden must promptly decide on the Court's designation, in accordance with its national law, and inform the Presidency whether it accepts the designation.

59. Furthermore, Sweden is a party to the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court. Since the mid-1990s, Sweden has also cooperated with the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR), established by the UN Security Council in 1993 and 1994 respectively. As of 2006, Sweden is also able to cooperate with the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established in 2002. This cooperation is governed by several Swedish laws and the conditions for cooperation vary depending on which of the courts has made the request. In brief, Swedish legislation concerns different forms of legal assistance in criminal matters such as interrogation, the taking of evidence, various coercive measures in preliminary investigations, the surrender of suspects (extradition) and the enforcement of penalties and other decisions.

II. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

A. Acceptance of international human rights norms

60. Sweden is a party to most major UN human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Sweden has ratified the protocols to these conventions, with the exception of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR and the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure. Sweden signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2007. Sweden regularly reviews its reservations to the central UN human rights instruments.

61. Sweden reviewed its reservations to Articles 10(3), 14(7) and 20(1) of the ICCPR, Article 7(d) of the ICESCR, Article 5(2) of the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and Article 14(1) of the ICERD in connection with the adoption of its strategy on the national implementation of human rights. Sweden found that maintaining the reservations was necessary.

62. The reservation against the requirement of keeping juvenile offenders segregated from adults is deemed to be justified since the application of Article 10, paragraph 3 of the ICCPR could lead to young offenders being put in central institutions far away from their families and social services, which may have a negative impact on their wellbeing. The alternative option of separating juveniles from adults in central institutions entails a risk of isolation because there are relatively few juveniles serving custodial sentences. Children under the age of 18 who are found guilty of offences that are so serious that the child must be deprived of their liberty are, under the current system, normally not sentenced to prison but to institutional youth care, a sentence that is served in institutions that are specifically intended for the treatment of young offenders up to the age of about 25. Sweden has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, under which every child deprived of liberty must be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so (article 37(c)). The reservation regarding Article 14, paragraph 7 of the ICCPR has been

considered necessary with reference to the possibility of requesting reopening of a case in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 58, Section 3 of the Code of Judicial Procedure. Not providing the right to reopen cases where new evidence has come to light would undermine the credibility of the Swedish justice system.

63. The reservation to Article 20, paragraph 1 of the ICCPR was made for three reasons. Firstly, the prohibition of propaganda for war implies a restriction in the freedoms of expression and opinion, which are protected by Article 19 of the Covenant as well as by the Swedish Constitution. Secondly, the effect of this provision on free public debate must be considered. Finally, there are difficulties specifying the punishable area.

64. Sweden has entered a declaration with regard to the 1966 Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, to the effect that Sweden's understanding is that Article 5, paragraph 2 of the Protocol implies that the Human Rights Committee must not consider any communication from an individual unless it has ascertained that the same matter is not being examined, or has not been examined, under another procedure of international investigation or settlement.

65. Sweden found that maintaining the reservation to Article 14(1) of ICERD is necessary due to the same reasons as with regard to the reservation to Article 5, paragraph 2 of the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.

66. Sweden is also a party to a large number of ILO conventions on labour rights, including the ten core conventions.

67. Sweden is a party to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR). The Convention and the additional protocols 1, 4, 6, 7 and 13 were incorporated into Swedish law in 1995. Sweden has no reservations to the Convention or these protocols, but has not ratified protocols 12 and 16. Under the Instrument of Government, no act of law or other provision may be adopted which contravenes Sweden's undertakings under the ECHR.

68. Any person, non-governmental organisation or group of individuals claiming to be the victim of a violation by Sweden of the rights set forth in the ECHR, or its protocols, may have recourse to the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, any High Contracting Party may refer to the Court any alleged breach of the provisions of the ECHR, or its protocols, by another High Contracting Party. As a state party to the Convention, Sweden is obliged to abide by the judgments of the Court in cases in which it is a party. Judgments against Sweden have, in a number of cases, prompted the payment of just satisfaction to applicants and, in some instances, led to amendments to Swedish law. Sweden is also a party to a number of other Council of Europe human rights conventions.

69. As a participating state of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Sweden implements the commitments undertaken in the OSCE, which includes commitments undertaken in the human dimension.

B. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level

70. The rights and freedoms enjoyed by people in Sweden are primarily protected through three fundamental laws: the Instrument of Government, the Freedom of the Press Act and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression. The Instrument of Government stipulates that public power must be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual.

71. The Instrument of Government contains a list of human rights and freedoms, some of which are considered 'absolute' in the sense that they cannot be restricted other than by an amendment to a fundamental law. Others may be restricted by other kinds of statutes, mainly acts of law. The absolute rights include freedom of worship; protection from retroactive punishment; protection against being coerced by public authorities into divulging an opinion on a political, religious, cultural or similar matter; protection against being coerced into participating in meetings for the formation of opinion, into membership of a political association, religious congregation or other such association; and the right to a hearing before

a court when taken into custody. The Instrument of Government also contains an absolute prohibition of capital punishment, torture, corporal punishment and medical intervention for the purposes of extorting or suppressing statements.

72. In addition to the absolute rights, the Instrument of Government also lays down a number of rights and freedoms which may, under certain circumstances, be restricted by law. These include freedom of expression; freedom of information; freedom of assembly; freedom to demonstrate; freedom of association; freedom of movement and the right to protection against deprivation of personal liberty; protection against body searches and other forced physical violations; protection against examination of mail and other confidential correspondence and telecommunications; protection against other significant invasions of personal privacy involving surveillance or systematic monitoring; and the right to a public trial. However, such restrictions are themselves subject to restrictions.

73. Restrictions may be imposed only to satisfy a purpose acceptable in a democratic society and must not exceed what is necessary having regard to the purpose which occasioned it, nor may it be carried so far as to constitute a threat to the free formation of opinion as one of the fundamentals of democracy. No restriction may be imposed solely on grounds of a political, religious, cultural or other such opinion. When restricting rights, the legislator must also bear in mind the prohibitions in the Instrument of Government against discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, etc.

74. The existence of a free press is a fundamental basis for a free and democratic society. The Freedom of the Press Act, which is one of four fundamental laws in Sweden, guarantees freedom of the press. The purpose of freedom of the press is to secure the free exchange of opinion, free and comprehensive information and freedom of artistic creation. Under the Freedom of the Press Act, everyone may express their thoughts, opinions and sentiments in print, and publish official documents and in general communicate information on any subject whatsoever. A special feature in the constitutional framework is that freedom of information, as regulated in the Freedom of the Press Act, encompasses the right of public access to official documents. Sweden's first Freedom of the Press Act was introduced as early as 1766.

75. As of 1992, the Freedom of the Press Act has been supplemented by the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression. The purposes of this act include ensuring the freedom to express thoughts and opinions on the radio, on television, in films, on video and, to some extent, on the internet, and safeguarding against censorship in these media. The act is based on the same fundamental principles as the Freedom of the Press Act.

76. Sweden adheres to a dualistic system and ratified conventions do not automatically become part of domestic law. There are two main methods for giving legal effect to international conventions in Swedish law: incorporation and transformation. International conventions are usually transformed into Swedish law by the enactment of equivalent provisions in an existing or new Swedish statute. In certain cases, a convention can be incorporated by means of general law, stating that the convention will apply in Sweden as law and be directly applicable. One example of the latter approach is the ECHR, which was incorporated into Swedish law in 1995.

77. European Union law has, under certain circumstances, direct effect. For example, in several cases concerning discrimination, the European Court of Justice ruled that the relevant provisions have direct effect. EU law is applied by Swedish courts, tribunals and administrative authorities, thereby contributing to the protection of human rights in Sweden. Since the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights is legally binding, with the same legal value as the Treaties. Consequently, the Charter must be applied by Swedish courts and authorities when applying EU law.

78. A fundamental objective of the exercise of all public power in Sweden is to ensure full respect for human rights. Central, regional and local government, including the public administration, are all bound by Sweden's international human rights obligations in the exercise of their authority, as are the Riksdag and the judiciary. Responsibility for the implementation of Sweden's international human rights obligations rests first and foremost with the Government, but is also shared with regional authorities and municipalities.

79. Sweden has a long tradition of local self-government, meaning that regions and municipalities are free to make their own decisions within limits determined by the Riksdag. Regional and local authorities are responsible for areas including health services, social welfare matters, matters concerning compulsory school and upper secondary school, preschool and care of older people.

80. Courts of law play a central role in protecting the rights of individuals in Sweden. The remedies provided for under the court system are adopted so as to provide a means to protect human rights. Legal proceedings are dealt with by general courts, general administrative courts and, to some extent, administrative authorities. In addition, a number of courts and tribunals have been established to hear cases within specific categories. Such special courts and tribunals of relevance to human rights include the Swedish Labour Court, the migration courts and the Migration Court of Appeal.

81. The courts, administrative authorities and other public bodies are obliged, under the Instrument of Government, not to apply any provision that is found to be in conflict with a rule of fundamental law or other superior statute, or where a procedure laid down in law has been disregarded in any important respect when the provision was made. In this connection it should be mentioned that, under the Instrument of Government, no act of law or other provision may be adopted which contravenes Sweden's undertakings under the ECHR. In the case of such a review of an act of law, particular attention must be paid to the fact that the Riksdag is the foremost representative of the people and that fundamental law takes precedence over other law.

Remedies and damages

82. Human rights issues form an intrinsic part of many different kinds of actions brought before Swedish courts and authorities. It would therefore prove difficult to produce an exhaustive list of all available remedies concerning individual human rights. If a person alleges that they have been subjected to illegal practices, the allegations can be submitted to a public prosecutor for investigation. As a rule, such an investigation should be undertaken by the prosecutor *ex officio* if there are reasonable grounds to believe that an offence has been committed. The victim of a crime may, however, institute criminal proceedings in two instances, namely when the prosecutor has decided not to prosecute and when false accusations or indictments have been levelled against them. If the victim has been killed, this remedy is also open to the surviving family.

83. In connection with criminal proceeding pertaining to a certain offence, an individual may bring an action for damages resulting from the offence in accordance with the Code of Judicial Procedure. In general, the public prosecutor, upon the request of the injured party, is obliged to prepare and present the injured party's claim together with the prosecution. If the action for damages is not pursued together with the criminal proceedings, either because the public prosecutor decides not to claim for damages on behalf of the victim or because the court decides that the matter should be dealt with separately, the individual can make a separate civil claim. On the other hand, if a separate action is brought against the accused in criminal proceedings, the court may decide to treat the civil and criminal proceedings jointly. With regard to compensation, the victim may request that the prosecutor assist them in presenting a private claim for damages to the court in connection with a trial in a criminal case. However, if for some reason the individual prefers not to have the private claim dealt with in that context, they may institute compensation proceedings in the manner prescribed for civil actions. Legal aid may be granted in such cases. Under certain circumstances, the victim may be granted legal aid in the form of legal counsel.

84. Under the Tort Liability Act (1972:207), central government or a municipality is obliged to pay compensation for damage caused by a wrongful act or an omission in the course of, or in connection with, the exercise of public authority for which central government or the municipality is responsible. If someone has been detained or held in custody without later being convicted of a crime, there will normally be a right to compensation from central government in accordance with the Compensation for Deprivation of Liberty and other Coercive Measures Act (1998:714). The same may apply if someone suffers personal injury or damage to property due to the use of force by a public official.

85. Under the ECHR, everyone whose rights and freedoms as set out in the Convention are violated must have an effective remedy before a national authority. Judgments against Sweden by the European Court of Human Rights have, in a number of cases, prompted the payment of just satisfaction to applicants, and in some instances amendments to Swedish law relating to matters including widening the right of access to the courts. In some cases, the Convention demands that a state pay compensation, although such compensation is generally not awarded pursuant to Swedish legislation (non-pecuniary damages are usually not compensated pursuant to Swedish legislation). However, the Supreme Court has found that if someone's rights under the Convention have been violated by, for example, the State, the State may have an obligation to pay compensation. In 2018, a specific provision was introduced in the Tort Liability Act, whereby the State or a municipality must provide compensation for damages resulting from violations of the Convention.

Ombudsmen

86. The implementation of human rights is also supervised by the functions of ombudsmen. Anyone who feels that they have been treated wrongly or unjustly by a public authority or an official employed by the civil service or local government can make a complaint to the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen. In other words, it is not necessary for a person to be a Swedish citizen or have reached a certain age to lodge a complaint. The Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen was established in 1809 and the Parliamentary Ombudsmen are appointed by the Riksdag. The Parliamentary Ombudsmen have the authority to issue statements if the measures taken by a public authority or a public official are in conflict with an existing law or other statute or are incorrect or inappropriate in some other way. The ombudsmen have the right to issue advisory opinions intended to promote uniform and appropriate application of the law. In the role of extraordinary prosecutor, the ombudsmen may initiate legal proceedings against an official who, disregarding the obligations of their office or mandate, has committed a criminal offence. The ombudsmen may also report a civil servant for dereliction of duty, recommend changes to statutes to either the Riksdag or the Government and refer cases to a regular supervisory authority for action,

87. Some supervisory functions are also executed by the Chancellor of Justice. For example, the Chancellor of Justice can receive complaints and claims for damages directed to the State and decide on financial compensation for such damages. The Office of the Chancellor of Justice was introduced in 1713. The Chancellor of Justice is a non-political civil servant appointed by the Government. The period of time for which they are appointed is not limited. The present Chancellor took up office in 2018. The Office of the Chancellor of Justice is an independent authority and the Chancellor performs their duties from a strictly legal point of view. The main tasks of the Chancellor of Justice are to act as the Government's ombudsman in the supervision of authorities and civil servants, represent the State in legal disputes, primarily actions for damages against the State, ensure that the limits of freedom of the press and other media are not transgressed and act as sole prosecutor in cases concerning offences against freedom of the press and freedom of expression. The Office of the Chancellor of Justice currently has a staff of about 50 people, most of whom are experienced lawyers.

88. The Equality Ombudsman was established in 2009 and is a government agency that works to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. The Equality Ombudsman is tasked with supervising compliance with the Discrimination Act, combating discrimination and promoting equal rights and opportunities. Another task is investigating complaints of discrimination. This may include representing the victim of discrimination in settlement proceedings or, ultimately, in a court of law. The Equality Ombudsman can also conduct independent surveys, produce reports and make recommendations.

89. The intention of having a single ombudsman for anti-discrimination issues is to ensure more effective and powerful monitoring of compliance with the Discrimination Act. A comprehensive discrimination law based, as far as possible, on equal treatment on all grounds also emphasises the non-hierarchical relationship between the different grounds of discrimination. The Act also includes the right, given to organisations and associations such

as non-governmental organisations, to act on behalf of the complainant. The Act also stipulates sanctions and compensation for infringements of the Act. The sanctions are designed both to compensate for the violation represented by an infringement and to act as a deterrent.

90. People in Sweden who are under the age of 18 have an ombudsman of their own, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden. The main duty of the Ombudsman is to promote the rights and interests of children and young people as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In 2018, the Riksdag approved the Government's proposal to enshrine the CRC in Swedish law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act (2018:1197) came into force on 1 January 2020. In its bill on incorporating the CRC, the Government presented a package consisting of an act regarding the CRC, a guidance document, an awareness-raising initiative and continued systematic transformation work to ensure the CRC's impact in practical application. The Ombudsman monitors implementation of the CRC in Sweden, which involves measures that include submitting proposals for legislative amendments and encouraging the application of the CRC in the work of government agencies, municipalities and regions. However, the Ombudsman does not supervise other authorities and has no legal right to intervene in individual cases.

91. As of 1 July 2011, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen has a special unit – the OPCAT unit – which is tasked with monitoring to ensure that individuals deprived of their liberty are not exposed to cruel, inhuman or other degrading treatment or punishment. The OPCAT unit regularly inspects facilities in Sweden where individuals deprived of their liberty are held, reports on its visits and takes part in international cooperation in this area.

92. Another supervisory agency of relevance to human rights is the Health and Social Care Inspectorate. The Swedish Bar Association also has a supervisory role. In addition, the Swedish Agency for Participation monitors and analyses developments pertaining to disability policy. In addition, the National Board of Health and Welfare performs health system performance assessment and monitors delivery of social services to ensure that the individual receives the assistance that they need.

C. Framework within which human rights are promoted at national level

93. A national human rights strategy was adopted in 2016. It involves taking further steps towards a coherent structure for the promotion and protection of human rights on an overarching level. A structure of this type should consist of strong legal and institutional protection of human rights, coordinated and systematic implementation of human rights within the public sector and strong support for work involving human rights in civil society and in business.

94. The goal of Sweden's human rights policy is to ensure full compliance with Sweden's international human rights commitments. This goal is the basis for the national human rights efforts and clarifies the link between these efforts and Sweden's international commitments.

95. On 1 January 2022, the Swedish Institute for Human Rights was established. The Institute's mandate is to encourage respect for human rights and to monitor, investigate and report on how human rights are being respected and realised. The Institute can also submit proposals to the Government on measures needed to safeguard human rights and may also submit proposals to the Government on the expansion of Sweden's obligations under international law in the area of human rights. The Institute does not examine individual complaints about human rights violations. To comply with the Paris Principles and to strengthen the Institute's independence from the Government, its mandate and management and certain fundamental matters pertaining to its organisation and ways of working are governed by law, the Institute for Human Rights Act (2021:642).

96. Under Section 1, point 4 of the Institute for Human Rights Act, the Institute must work to promote the safeguarding of human rights in Sweden based on binding international agreements in the field of human rights.

97. The Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages (2009:724) entered into force in 2010 (Govt Bill 2008/09:158, 'From recognition to empowerment – the Government's

strategy on national minorities’). The Act was strengthened in 2019 through amendments such as introducing an obligation for municipalities and regions to adopt objectives and guidelines for their minority policy work, and clarifying administrative authorities’ obligation to provide information and what consultation involves. The amendments to the Act also meant strengthening the right to preschool and care for older people in minority languages. Two agencies, the Stockholm County Administrative Board and the Sami Parliament, have been tasked with monitoring implementation of the Act. These two agencies must also aid and support authorities and municipalities in the implementation process. In order to spread information on the policy, a government website, www.minoritet.se, was launched in 2009. This contains information about minority rights and discrimination legislation as well as general information about the national minorities.

98. A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion for the period 2012–2032 was adopted in 2012. This 20-year strategy should be seen as a reinforcement of the minorities policy that applies to the five national minorities. The strategy has a human rights perspective, with a specific emphasis on the principle of non-discrimination. The overall goal of the 20-year strategy is that a Roma who turns 20 years of age in 2032 should have the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma. Women and children are a particular priority.

99. In 2014 a national strategy aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression was adopted. The strategy is a framework for long-term and result-oriented efforts. Building on this foundation, since 2021 an action plan has been in place to actively promote and uphold the goal of equal rights and opportunities for all LGBTIQ people.

100. In 2016 a national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime was adopted. The overarching goal of the national plan is strategic, effective, and coherent work against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime in Sweden.

Local level

101. The municipalities and regions currently account for a large proportion of the services provided directly to individual citizens. A number of these services are of importance to the implementation of human rights, e.g. the right to education, the right to adequate housing, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the rights of people with disabilities and the rights of national minorities. Accordingly, the municipalities’ and regions’ operations often have an impact on the economic, social and cultural rights of the individual.

102. Under the Instrument of Government, the municipalities and regions must manage local and regional matters of public interest on the basis of local self-government. Local self-government means that municipalities and regions have far-reaching autonomy in terms of how their activities are framed and what action they take in order to ensure respect for human rights. Therefore, efforts to ensure compliance with international conventions relies in part on systematic cooperation with the municipalities and regions.

103. Regions and municipalities have the main responsibility for financing health care, which is done through local taxes. Additional grants are also provided by the central government.

Information

104. On the Government’s official website there is a page dedicated to information on international observations and recommendations to Sweden from international human rights bodies. Observations and recommendations conducted by the UN and the European Council are published continuously.

105. Swedish translations of binding international agreements concluded by Sweden are published in the Swedish Treaty Series (Sveriges internationella överenskommelser, SÖ) and agreements concluded as of 1994 are also published on the Government’s website. In addition, Swedish legislation adopted in connection with the conclusion of international agreements is published in the Swedish Code of Statutes (Svensk författningssamling). International agreements that require changes to existing legislation or the enactment of new legislation must be approved by the Riksdag. Parliamentary approval is also necessary for agreements

in areas which lie within the decision-making competence of the Riksdag and for other agreements of major significance. Government bills are published in parliamentary publications, which are available to the public.

Government agencies

106. It is the State's responsibility, through legislation, agency management, dissemination of knowledge, information and other means, to counteract abuses of human rights. Efforts to make government agencies aware of their responsibility to ensure that human rights are not abused and to increase understanding of what the international obligations mean are part of the Government's national human rights strategy. Respect for, and awareness of, human rights must be seen as an integral part of the ordinary operations of public administration. The measures being implemented should aim to increase knowledge and awareness of, and respect for, human rights as binding obligations for Sweden. The starting point is international conventions on human rights. Measures implemented to promote respect for human rights should be seen as complementary with respect to ongoing or planned work involving human rights such as gender equality, non-discrimination, the rights of people with disabilities, the rights of the child and the rights of national minorities.

107. Since 2014, Uppsala University has been tasked with developing and implementing a human resources development programme concerning human rights for central government employees. Since 2020, relevant employees at municipalities and regions are included. The purpose of this assignment is to ensure that selected staff at government agencies have sufficient knowledge of human rights and what they entail to enable them to recognise situations in which human rights issues arise within the context of their occupations.

Education

108. The new Swedish Education Act entered into force on 1 July 2011. The Act places great emphasis on human rights as one of the fundamental values on which the school system is founded. The Act and the national curriculum both stipulate that everyone who works in preschools or schools is obliged to promote respect for human rights and to very clearly disassociate themselves from anything that conflicts with these values. As a consequence of the new Education Act, the role of human rights education has also been made clearer in the curriculum, in particular when it comes to overarching goals. Human rights education is reflected as part of the purpose, goal and core content of the subject Civics. Since 2010, newly employed head teachers are required to undergo special initial training at university level. As a part of the training, head teachers are to acquire knowledge of international agreements and conventions that are relevant to the education sector. The Swedish National Agency for Education's instructions state that the Agency must promote gender equality and integrate an equality perspective and a human rights perspective in its activities. The Agency must also promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Media

109. A number of other actors in society, both public and private, contribute to the promotion and enjoyment of human rights. The media play a crucial role by providing information to the public, initiating public debate and scrutinising the exercise of public power. The existence of a free press is a fundamental basis for a free and democratic society, as already mentioned.

Civil society

110. Sweden has a long tradition of civic engagement and an active civil society, often characterised by a high rate of participation and democratic internal organisation. Non-governmental organisations play an essential role in upholding and developing democratic values, respect for human rights and civic participation in Swedish society).

Financial resources

111. Since 2022, the Government has allocated SEK 12.5 million (approximately EUR 1.11 million) each year to finance overarching measures to promote and ensure respect for human rights at the national level. For 2024, SEK 51.8 million (approximately EUR 4.6 million) is allocated to the Swedish Institute for Human Rights. Budget allocations in specific human rights areas are, for 2024 alone, distributed as follows:

- SEK 748 million (approximately EUR 66.5 million) is allocated to gender equality actions;
- SEK 258 million (approximately EUR 22.9 million) is allocated to disability policies;
- SEK 249 million (approximately EUR 22.2 million) is allocated to the Equality Ombudsman and other action against discrimination, racism, similar forms of hostility such as homophobia and transphobia and for equal rights and opportunities;
- SEK 228 million (approximately EUR 20.3 million) is allocated to measures for national minorities;
- SEK 63 million (approximately EUR 5.6 million) is allocated to the Sami Parliament;
- SEK 63 million (approximately EUR 5.6 million) is allocated for child rights policies and specific funding to implement the CRC in Sweden. SEK 27.5 million (approximately EUR 2.4 million) is allocated to the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden. The total budget for 2024 is SEK 1 701 million (approximately EUR 151 million).

[Note: The exchange rate used above is EUR 1 = SEK 11.24]

Foreign policy

112. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are cornerstones of Sweden's foreign policy which includes promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law globally through dialogue with other states, multilateral negotiations, public diplomacy, dialogue with civil society and development cooperation.

113. A strategic direction for Swedish development assistance (Development assistance for a new era – freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth) was presented in December 2023. Promoting freedom and fighting oppression is one of the overarching thematic priorities. It includes strengthening human rights and freedoms such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, sexual and reproductive rights and the rights of women and girls, children and young people, LGBTIQ people and people with disabilities.

114. A strategy for global development cooperation activities in the areas of human rights and freedoms, democracy and the rule of law 2024–2028 was adopted in 2024. The overall objective of the five-year strategy is to promote free, secure, fair and inclusive democratic societies free from oppression and built on respect for human rights and freedoms and the rule of law. The strategy has three focus areas: (1) freedoms, (2) inclusive and democratic societies and (3) due process and accountability. The strategy outlines the Government's increased focus on supporting human rights defenders, democracy and free elections, and independent media, among other things.

115. In 2015, a national action plan for business and human rights was adopted. The action plan is based on the premise that business and respect for human rights go hand in hand and must be part of an active policy for responsible business conduct in both trade and development cooperation.

116. A priority for Sweden in the EU is to safeguard and protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law in both internal and external EU policies. Sweden supports the implementation of all EU guidelines on human rights and promotes the substantive work in the United Nations and other multilateral bodies on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Sweden plays an active role nationally and through the EU in UN bodies mandated to address human rights, such as the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Sweden will continue working to safeguard the crucial role of these bodies as forums for maintaining respect for and protection and fulfilment of all human rights, and for effectively addressing

all violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. Cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is also particularly important. Sweden also endeavours to ensure that human rights issues are fully addressed and reflected and in other UN contexts, such as in the work of the ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA and UNESCO.

D. Reporting process at national level

117. Sweden regularly reports to the United Nations (UN) treaty bodies on compliance with its international human rights obligations. The Government invites representatives for civil society organisations to meetings held in conjunction with Sweden's reporting as well as when Sweden receives observations and recommendations from the monitoring committees.

118. A permanent interministerial working group led by the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is tasked with following up on the Government's national human rights strategy. The working group also provides a forum within the Government Offices in which to disseminate information about and discuss international human rights efforts. All ministries are represented in the group. The members are contacts for their respective ministries on issues relating to human rights. The role of the working group is coordination and this does not involve taking over responsibility for the human rights issues that fall within the areas of expertise of the ministries themselves.

119. The responsibility for reporting in accordance with the various UN conventions on human rights is divided between the ministries within the Government Offices based on the issues concerned. As the reports cover a wide variety of issues, several specialised ministries are involved in the preparatory process. Procedures have been drawn up in the Government Offices for reporting and following up observations and recommendations from international bodies that examine compliance with human rights. The procedures are intended to provide support in the work of reporting and following up on observations and recommendations from international bodies

E. Follow-up on international conferences

120. In its follow-up on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action from the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, Sweden has adopted two national human rights action plans and is currently implementing a third that takes the form of a national human rights strategy. (See para. 91 for more information.) The implementation of commitments made at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance have been integrated into Sweden's overall human rights efforts as expressed in the national action plans. Furthermore, Sweden is actively working to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

III. Information about non-discrimination and equality and effective remedies

121. The task of strengthening the protection against discrimination and promoting equal rights and opportunities in other ways is implemented through a number of different measures within different parts of society. Sweden's goal for the policy to combat discrimination is a society that is free from discrimination. This includes measures to prevent discrimination on grounds of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression and age. Other issues linked to this area are measures to combat racism and similar forms of hostility and to promote equal rights and opportunities, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Under the Instrument of Government, in their work, courts of law, administrative authorities and others performing tasks within the public administration must have regard to the equality of all before the law and observe objectivity and impartiality. This principle, as laid down in the Constitution, is

binding for all who exercise public power, regardless of whether it is an administrative authority, a court or a private entity equipped with such powers.

122. Anti-discrimination legislation is based on several international legal instruments to which Sweden has acceded, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EU Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment of persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (Directive 2000/43/EC), and the EU Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (Directive 2000/78/EC).

123. Under the Discrimination Act (2008:567), discrimination is prohibited in principle in all sectors of society and on grounds of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression and age. Under the Discrimination Act, the prohibition of discrimination does not prevent measures that contribute to efforts to promote equality between women and men, and that concern matters other than pay or other terms of employment. The prohibition of discrimination does not apply if an employer's actions represent an endeavour to promote gender equality in working life.

124. The prohibition of discrimination in the Act is supplemented by rules concerning active measures. In simple terms, the active measures can be said to be targeted at the treatment of employees and others as groups, not as individual cases. The active measures are intended to constitute a driving force and to encourage further action to combat discrimination. All employers and education providers are obliged to work on active measures. When the distribution of women and men is not more or less equal in a certain type of work or in a certain employee category at a place of work, the employer should make special efforts when recruiting new employees to attract applicants of the under-represented sex. The employer should attempt to ensure that the proportion of employees from the under-represented sex gradually increases. For employers, work on active measures include working with pay surveys in order to discover, remedy and prevent unfair gender differences in pay and other terms of employment.

125. Government financial contributions to non-governmental organisations comprise another element in the fight against discrimination. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, a government agency, administers applications for government subsidies in accordance with four ordinances, all of which aim to promote equal rights and opportunities. Subsidies are available for local initiatives to combat discrimination implemented by anti-discrimination offices, for example. There are about eighteen anti-discrimination offices nationwide that offer assistance to individuals who believe they have been discriminated against on any of the grounds covered by the Discrimination Act.

126. In 2008, Sweden ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Swedish Agency for Participation promotes the systematic and effective implementation of disability policy at all levels of society and with monitoring, evaluating and analysing the efforts of government agencies, municipalities, regions and other actors to meet the national disability policy goals.

127. Disability organisations are consulted on various matters by the Government and government agencies. The Government also has a Disability Delegation, which is the Government's main forum for consultation and dialogue with the disability movement. The Government supports disability organisations financially through the Ordinance (2007:7) on central government grants to disability organisations.

128. The national goal for disability policy takes the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities as a starting point and aims to achieve equal living conditions and full participation for people with disabilities in a society based on diversity. This goal will contribute to greater gender equality and consideration of the children's rights perspective. To achieve the national goal, the implementation of disability policy targets four areas: the principle of universal design, accessibility shortcomings, individual support and solutions for individual independence, and preventing and countering discrimination. These four areas are interdependent. The aim is that together they will contribute to an accessible and equitable society regardless of functional capacity.

129. In September 2021, a strategy for systematic monitoring of disability policy from 2021 to 2031 was adopted. The strategy stipulates that disability policy must be monitored by a number of designated government agencies and that the Agency for Participation must support them in their monitoring work. The purpose of the strategy is to follow up disability policy based on the national goal.

130. The Instrument of Government stipulates that public power must be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual. The provision in the Instrument of Government on protection against discrimination states that no act of law or other provision may imply the unfavourable treatment of anyone because they belong to a minority group by reason of ethnic origin, colour, or other similar circumstances, or on account of their sexual orientation. The phrase 'other similar circumstances' includes the notion that people could be divided up and classified according to race. Furthermore, under the Instrument of Government no act of law or other provision may imply the unfavourable treatment of anyone on grounds of gender, unless the provision forms part of efforts to promote equality between men and women or relates to compulsory military service or other equivalent official duties.

131. As mentioned previously, the ECHR was incorporated into Swedish law in 1995. Under Article 14 of the Convention, the enjoyment of rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention must be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. Sweden has not adhered to Protocol 12 to the Convention on a general prohibition of discrimination. Consequently, that Protocol has not been incorporated into Swedish law.

132. The Swedish Criminal Code contains two provisions directly concerning contempt or discrimination on grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression; one relating to agitation against a population group, the other to unlawful discrimination. The Criminal Code also contains a specific clause which states that, when assessing the penalty value of an offence, it is considered an aggravating circumstance if a motive for the offence was to insult a person or a population group on grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression or another similar circumstance. The provision is applicable to all categories of offences.

133. Protecting the rights of the national minorities – Jews, the Roma, Sweden Finns, Tornedalians and the Sami (who are also recognised as an Indigenous people) – as well as the rights of other minorities such as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, is a continuous duty. The Government's national minorities policy encompasses issues related to the protection of, and support for, the national minorities and aims to strengthen the national minorities and provide the support needed to keep the national minority languages alive.

134. The Sami were first recognised by the Swedish Parliament as an Indigenous people in 1977 and with the introduction of the National Minority Act in 2000 the Sami were also recognised as a national minority. In 2007, Sweden supported the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Since 2011, the Sami people are also recognised in the Constitution, which prescribes an obligation for the Government to promote the opportunities of the Sami people to preserve and develop their culture and communities. The Sami Parliament, which was established in 1993, plays a crucial role in implementing the right to Sami self-determination. The Sami Parliament is both the representative body of the Sami people and a national government agency on Sami issues with a mandate to engage in community planning and monitor consideration of Sami needs. In March 2022, a new Act on Consultation on Matters concerning the Sami People entered into force. The Act requires the Government, government agencies and, as of March 2024, also municipalities and regions to consult the Sami Parliament and/or other Sami organisations on certain issues concerning the Sami people.

135. Gender equality should be an integral part of all relevant policy areas. Men's violence against women is an issue of gender equality and of the full enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights. Sweden's commitments within the framework of efforts on the part of the UN, the EU and the Council of Europe are a cornerstone of the Government's work.

Combating men's violence against women, all kinds of intimate partner violence and domestic violence – including honour-based violence and oppression and violence in same-sex relationships – and prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes will remain a priority.

136. In 2014, Sweden ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention). In November 2016, a national strategy for preventing and combating men's violence against women that covers the period 2017–2026 was adopted. In terms of its scope of application and specific measures, the national strategy is largely harmonised with the Istanbul Convention. In January 2018, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency was established. The Agency is responsible for follow-up, analysis, coordination, knowledge and support based on the gender equality policy goals, including the goal to prevent and combat men's violence against women, honour-related violence and oppression, and prostitution and human trafficking. The Agency administers applications for government grants in accordance with three ordinances, all of which aim to promote gender equality. Grants are available for local initiatives to promote the participation of women and girls in the democratic process and in community life, for example, especially in areas with socioeconomic challenges.

137. The objective of the Government's policy is for older people to age safely and maintain independence, be able to live an active life and have influence in society and over their everyday life, be treated with respect, have access to good health care and social care and be offered equal and equitable health care and social care. Ensuring the rights of older people will remain a priority for the Government.

138. The objective of the Government's migration policy is a responsible and restrictive policy that provides temporary protection to people who are in need of protection in accordance with the minimum level that follows from EU law and the binding international rules that Sweden has undertaken to follow, including the right to asylum. Furthermore, the goal is a policy that maintains controlled immigration, reduces irregular migration to Sweden and the EU, contributes to the return of people who lack grounds for protection or for some other reason are not legally entitled to stay in Sweden, ensures effective labour immigration that contributes to Sweden's competitiveness, prevents, detects and remedies fraud and abuse and stimulates repatriation. The Swedish Aliens Act contains a system of procedures and appeals in a two-party process. This system aims for transparency and provides opportunities for oral hearings. The Swedish Migration Agency is the first instance for applications concerning residence permits and asylum. Its decisions can be appealed to one of the four migration courts. Following a further appeal by the parties, leave to appeal can be granted by the Migration Court of Appeal. Leave to appeal will mainly be granted if a case is believed to provide guidance (precedent-setting rulings) about the application of the Aliens Act. If leave to appeal is granted, the Migration Court of Appeal will examine the appeal on its merits. The Aliens Act contains rules to ensure that the Migration Agency's decisions comply with requests, decisions and judgments of the international bodies that are competent to examine complaints from individuals. Regarding the grounds for recognition of refugee status, the Aliens Act includes well-grounded fear of persecution because of race, nationality, religious or political belief, gender, sexual orientation or other membership of a particular social group. Individual assessments of the grounds for asylum are always made in each case.

139. Since 2008, the county councils have been obliged to offer adult asylum seekers subsidised health care to a certain extent. This includes a free health examination, medical and dental care that cannot wait, including emergency care, gynaecological care and maternal and prenatal care. Care provided under the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act is free of charge. In 2013, the same right was also extended to adults who are in Sweden without the necessary permits or legal support. The county councils are entitled to offer adults care up to the same level as residents and citizens of Sweden. Children and young people up to the age of 18 are offered full health care provision (subsidised and often free), including regular dental care, regardless of their migratory status.

140. The system for labour migration is employer-led and demand-driven. Migrants who are admitted are given access to a wide set of rights and may be accompanied by their family immediately. The legislation provides a three-month transition period during the validity of a work permit in case migrants lose their job or not are satisfied with their employer. During

this period, the migrant is allowed to remain in Sweden and look for a new job. Since the introduction of the current labour migration system in 2008, the Government has introduced a number of measures aimed at preventing exploitation of labour migrants.

141. The municipalities are responsible for the reception of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and for appointing a legal guardian and providing them with accommodation, schooling and care. Municipalities are compensated financially for doing so by central government. Upon arrival, a UAM is temporarily placed in a nearby municipality, but is relocated shortly thereafter to a municipality assigned by the Migration Agency.

142. Integration policy covers the introduction into society of newly arrived immigrants, compensation provided to municipalities for refugee reception and the promotion of integration.

143. The goal of Sweden's integration policy is to ensure equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background. This goal is to be achieved primarily through general policy measures for the whole population, supplemented by targeted support for the introduction of newly arrived immigrants¹ who have a residence permit (and their families) during their first years in Sweden. The reception of newly arrived immigrants is a responsibility that is shared between the national, regional, and local levels. In April 2024, a new goal for Sweden's integration policy was proposed, which is pending the parliamentary process.

144. The key objective of the introduction programme is to speed up the introduction of newly arrived immigrants into working life and the community. Through the introduction programme, all newly arrived immigrants are given professional support to learn Swedish, find work and support themselves and become acquainted with the rights and obligations that apply in Sweden as quickly as possible. The public employment service Arbetsförmedlingen is the agency that coordinates the introduction programme. A dialogue between Arbetsförmedlingen and the newly arrived immigrant results in an introduction plan that is based on their educational background, previous work experience and need for training and other initiatives. Active participants in the introduction programme are entitled to introduction benefit for a maximum of 24 months. The introduction plan is individualised and normally includes activities to prepare the participant for employment, Swedish language courses and a civic orientation course that aims to foster a basic understanding of Swedish society. The municipalities are responsible for providing the Swedish language courses and civic orientation courses. The municipalities are also responsible for providing housing for newly arrived immigrants and introduction initiatives for newly arrived immigrant children in schools and preschools.

145. The goal of Sweden's regional development policy is dynamic development with greater local and regional competitiveness for a sustainable development in all areas of the country. The policy is based on the regions' capacity for action, but central government also has obligations. A basic premise in this area is that women and men, regardless of ethnic and cultural background or sexual orientation, must have equal opportunities to develop in all areas of the country. Political measures that promote equal opportunities for housing, employment and welfare in all areas of the country, the provision and development of skills in all areas of the country, innovation and regeneration and entrepreneurship and business development in all areas in the country, and accessibility in all areas of the country through digital communication and transport systems are required in order to enhance regional sustainable development. The measures should be adapted to both local and regional differences and conditions. There is a continued need for initiatives targeting geographically defined areas that are considered to be in need of special measures in order to strengthen their potential for sustainable development.

146. A new aim for the policy area of anti-exclusion has been decided on: reducing the number of people living in exclusion, combating parallel social structures, emphasising

¹ In Sweden the term newly arrived immigrant is used to describe a person who has been granted humanitarian, international or subsidiary protection during the period in which they are entitled to attend the introduction programme. This is normally two to three years after being granted a residence permit.

personal responsibility for participation in society, and improving people's security and life opportunities. To combat exclusion, three key areas have been identified that need to be addressed: learning the Swedish language, employment and self-sufficiency and full participation in Swedish society.

147. The Equality Ombudsman, www.do.se, also has duties that include raising awareness and disseminating knowledge and information about discrimination and the prohibition of discrimination among both those at risk of discriminating against others and those who are at risk of being subjected to discrimination. The Ombudsman offers guidance to employers, higher education institutions, schools and others and helps develop useful methods on their behalf. A further task is ensuring, through awareness-raising initiatives, that everyone knows their rights. In addition, the Ombudsman is required to draw attention to human rights issues and encourage debate concerning these. The Ombudsman also has special responsibility for reporting on new research and international developments in the field of human rights and discrimination.

148. The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, www.barnombudsmannen.se, also disseminates information concerning the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Key duties of the Ombudsman include participating in public debate, promoting public interest in key issues and influencing the attitudes of decision-makers and the public. The Ombudsman maintains regular contact with children and young people. Each year, the Ombudsman submits a report to the Government that addresses the situation of children and young people in Sweden.

149. The Living History Forum is a Swedish government agency that works with issues related to tolerance, democracy and human rights in both a national and international perspective, using the Holocaust, crimes against humanity committed by communist regimes and other crimes against humanity as a starting point. It is specifically tasked with increasing and deepening knowledge of antisemitism, antigypsyism and other forms of racism and intolerance, focusing on the link between history and the present. The Living History Forum uses methods and tools such as exhibitions, workshops and teaching materials to reach its key target group of young people. The intention is to equip people with knowledge for the future, the goal being to strengthen their desire to work to promote democracy and the equal rights and value of all. The Living History Forum also conducts surveys of attitudes related to different forms of intolerance in schools and society, facilitating understanding of reasons for intolerance and its extent and geographical distribution and thus enabling efforts to combat such attitudes. The Living History Forum works closely with researchers working in areas such as antisemitism, antigypsyism and other forms of racism in Swedish society. The Forum also publishes other types of reports and material, notably on its website: www.levandehistoria.se.
