



Office for Administrative Affairs

Communications policy for the Government Offices

Introduction

This policy is aimed at employees of the Government Offices and serves as guidance in the day-to-day work. The policy is the common starting point for the Government Offices' communication activities and for the ministries¹ when they formulate their communicative objectives and strategies. The policy deals with both internal and external communication. Naturally, the policy does not affect the constitutionally protected freedom of communication.

Why the Government Offices needs to communicate

The Government governs the state. The task of the Government Offices is to prepare government business and in other respects assist the Government and its ministers in their activities. This is set out in the Instrument of Government. The Government Offices must be an effective and competent instrument for the Government in its task of governing the state and implementing its policies. Communication has an important role in this.

The Government Offices is to base its work on the fundamental values of central government administration, namely democracy, the rule of law and efficiency. Democratic governance requires communication. How well a democracy functions is determined to a great extent by the citizens' knowledge and access to facts, assessments of consequences, positions and arguments. Transparency, knowledge and dialogue help create understanding and legitimacy. The citizens are our employers. Our activities must therefore

¹ In this policy, the Prime Minister's Office and the Office for Administrative Affairs are treated as ministries.

be transparent to them. In other words, the Government Offices has a democratic responsibility to communicate externally.

There are also requirements regarding external communication at government agencies, such as the principle of public access to official documents, the Language Act's requirement of simple, comprehensible and considered writing, and regulations on making information accessible to people with disabilities. Another example is the Instrument of Government's requirement that the Government must collect opinions when preparing matters for decisions. The extent of the Government Offices communication remit is not always self-evident.

There is a dividing line between the Government Offices and other central government agencies. A basic rule is that responsibility for communication flows from responsibility for activities. When responsibility for an activity is transferred to an agency, communication responsibility for the issue in question follows. A prerequisite for this to work is that good dialogue is established between the Government Offices and the agencies concerned, within the framework of normal agency governance. There is also a dividing line between Government policy and party politics. The Government Offices communicates the Government's policy. Communication by the Government Offices is based on the mandate to assist the Government and ministers in their roles as government representatives and, consequently, not as party representatives.

External communication primarily concerns Government policy and the work of the ministers. The Government Offices sometimes also needs to communicate externally about its activities, for example regarding employer issues.

Good internal communication is required so that Government Offices staff can carry out their work in an efficient manner. Good internal communication is an important part in the management and governance of the organisation and in the Government Offices' internal preparatory processes. It helps to increase skills and creates motivated and committed employees, which lead to better results in activities.

What the Government Offices communication should contribute

Communication objectives are linked to operational objectives

The Government's political priorities are broken down into operational objectives at ministry level together with objectives for the ministry's other activities. Internal and/or external communication objectives are linked to these operational objectives .

Overall objectives

The overall objectives for communication in the Government Offices are based on the agency's overall task to support the Government in governing the state and implementing its policies.

The objectives are that *external* communication should:

- give a clear, cohesive and explanatory picture of the Government's work and policies;
- contribute to the impact of Government decisions;
- strengthen confidence in the Government and the Government Offices as institutions;
- promote open dialogue; and
- support the Government and the Government Offices in the event of serious incidents and emergencies.

Internal communication should:

- create conditions for Government Offices employees to feel included and motivated and to enable them to carry out their tasks in an efficient and competent manner; and
- contribute to the Government Offices as an organisation functioning efficiently and appropriately, in normal day-to-day activities and in response to serious incidents and emergencies.

The Government Offices' target groups for communication

The Government and the Government Offices deal with issues that cover all sectors of society and therefore need to communicate with different actors such as private individuals, the Riksdag, government agencies, regions, municipalities, the media, companies and stakeholder organisations – at both national and international level. The possibility of acting in Sweden's interests and influencing the image of Sweden abroad means that the Government and the Government Offices need to communicate with the

whole world around them. How this communication is to be formulated and in which language depends on whom the Government Offices is to communicate with in each individual case. The message and methods need to be tailored to the different needs and knowledge of the groups. Internal communication is directed at employees at the Government Offices, in Sweden and at missions abroad.

How the Government Offices communicates

All communication in the Government Offices is based on the overall communication objectives and a set of core values of openness, objectivity, comprehensibility, relevance and topicality. The meaning of these core values is described in greater detail below.

Openness

Public access and transparency must characterise all activities. Openness is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. The concept of openness encompasses being accessible, listening and inviting debate and dialogue.

This means:

- making important information public, where possible and appropriate, before it is formally requested;
- making information available quickly, while always respecting the applicable rules and ensuring that the content is correct;
- using dialogue as a complement to information; and
- ensuring that information is accessible to all, taking account of those who need extra support to be able to access information.

Objectivity and comprehensibility

One prerequisite for credible communication is that it is objective, comprehensible and placed in context. Communication should be linked to the mandate of the Government and the Government Offices. It must be adapted to the relevant groups. Messages should be designed and channels chosen based on an analysis of the groups' different needs and knowledge.

This means:

- the language is simple, clear and proper, and presented in an informative way;
- the focus is on explaining policy, its context and practical significance for those concerned;

- communication is based on the mandate of the Government Offices to assist the Government and ministers in their roles as government representatives and, consequently, not as party representatives; and
- communication is adapted to the needs and knowledge of the relevant groups.

Relevance and topicality

Communication should be topical, based on the priorities of the Government and the Government Offices, and be relevant to the groups concerned. Communication should contribute to achieving operational objectives in a resource-efficient manner.

This means:

- prioritising based on the operational objectives and the needs and knowledge of the groups concerned;
- continuously monitoring external developments, and;
- continuously updating existing information.

Division of communication responsibility in the Government Offices

All Government Offices employees communicate in way one or another internally and externally, and are personally responsible for this. A prerequisite of good communication is that it is coordinated and well-reasoned. This is achieved via a clear division of responsibilities. Below is an outline of the responsibilities and duties of the functions most affected by communication issues.

Prime Minister's Office

The Prime Minister's Office has the ultimate coordination responsibility for both internal and external communication. This includes responsibility for the overall communication priorities and being a sign-off point for cross-ministry and cross-agency communication issues. Communication is coordinated with the support of the head of communications at the Government Offices.

Heads of press services/press secretaries

The role of the press secretary is tied to the Prime Minister's Office, but operates within the ministry. The press secretary's mandate is to:

- support the minister in their role as a media spokesperson;

- initiate, coordinate and arrange their minister’s media contacts;
- develop communication strategies and communication plans for their minister; and
- plan this communication in close cooperation with the communication function and policy departments.

Office for Administrative Affairs

Head of communications at the Government Offices

Under the permanent secretary, the head of communications at the Government Offices is responsible for the Government Offices’ communication activities, except for those concerning the Swedish Foreign Service. In particular, the head of communications must promote development and uniformity within the Government Offices regarding communication issues.

The head of communications’ mandate includes:

- coordinating internal and external communication at the Government Offices;
- developing and embedding annual overall priorities in the communication area;
- when necessary, preparing matters together with the political leadership at the Prime Minister’s Office;
- identifying, coordinating and pursuing inter-agency communication development;
- taking responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of the Government Offices’ inter-agency communication activities;
- taking responsibility for the function of press contact for the Government Offices as an agency;
- when necessary, initiating inter-agency communication skills development activities;
- assuming editorial responsibility for the news from the entire Government Offices on Klaranätet and the home pages on regeringen.se and government.se; and
- working to ensure good internal communication to support the leadership and management of the entire Government Offices.

Government Offices Communications Division, the Government Offices coordinated communication function

The Government Offices Communications Division is responsible for providing communication support to the Prime Minister's Office, the ministries and the Office for Administrative Affairs. The division coordinates and supplies external and internal communication regarding the Government's work and the Government Offices' activities. The division develops and manages the Government Offices' coordinated communication channels and the Government Offices' graphic profile. The division manages the correspondence that is registered or kept organised in ministry letter functions.

The Communications Division works partly with inter-agency communication support and partly with operational communication support in the relevant ministry.

The inter-agency communication support will:

- be strategic and operational support to the head of communications at the Government Offices;
- in collaboration with the head of communications at the Government Offices, be the communication function of the Prime Minister's Office and the Office for Administrative Affairs;
- be responsible for technical and practical assistance with, for example, press conference broadcasting, webcast interviews and events;
- be responsible for development of the Government Offices' websites;
- provide internal consultative and practical assistance to the entire Government Offices; and
- procure and manage framework agreements in the communication area whenever common resources do not meet needs.

Head of communications

There is a head of communications at every ministry who leads the Government Offices' communication concerning their ministry. They will assist the ministry leadership on communication issues. The heads of communications are part of the Office for Administrative Affairs' organisation. However, this does not apply to the head of communications of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Ministry-specific communication support will contribute to achieving the objectives of communication activities, both internally and externally. Their tasks include:

- strategic and operational work with the ministry’s internal and external communication;
- assisting the ministry through active involvement in planning, implementation and follow-up of all parts of the communication process;
- offering consultative assistance on communication issues to departments and leadership within the ministry;
- responsibility for the ministry’s part of the Government’s external websites and Klaranätet; and
- responsibility for ensuring that ministry communication activities are followed up and evaluated.

Ministries

The ministries are responsible for communicating their respective issues in accordance with the overall guidelines and priorities. It is their responsibility to inform the head of communications at the Government Offices about issues that need to be coordinated, notify them of common development needs and important issues, and contribute to purposeful development of communication activities in the entire Government Offices. A number of functions within the ministries are responsible for this. Below is a description of tasks and responsibilities of the functions within the ministries concerned with communication issues.

Ministers and state secretaries

As a member of the Government, the minister, assisted by the state secretary, has special responsibility for communication within their area of responsibility. The head of ministry, and their state secretary, also have special responsibility for internal communication.

The minister and state secretary are responsible for:

- establishing communication priorities within the minister’s area of responsibility;
- ensuring effective working methods between those involved in communication activities;

- deciding where lines are to be drawn between the minister’s role as government representative and as party representative in communication issues; and
- ensuring good internal communication to support the leadership and management of the ministry.

Managers and principals

Responsibility for policy issues includes responsibility for the communication aspects of these. Communication responsibility therefore corresponds to line responsibility. The tasks of the principal with line responsibility are to:

- identify communication needs at an early stage – on an ongoing basis and in activity planning – in consultation with the head of communications, and plan activities based on these;
- ensure that published information about the department’s issues is correct and up-to-date;
- produce background material for communication on their specific issues, internally and externally;
- be able to provide facts and background information when requested by media and other interested parties;
- ensure that employees are given the opportunity for relevant skills development in the area of communication;
- work specifically for good internal dialogue between relevant functions at the ministry and within the Government Offices; and
- contribute to good communication with staff members so as to support good leadership and management of the ministry.