

Statement of Government Policy

10 September 2019



In the Statement of Government Policy presented on 21 January 2019, the Government laid out its plans for the entire electoral period. This Statement of Government Policy primarily concerns the 2019/20 Riksdag session.

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses,
Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Swedish Riksdag,

Sweden is our place on Earth.

Generations before us have built one of the richest and fairest countries in the world. Our task is to build a stronger nation – one that can make the transition to a new era. We must ensure that our children inherit a sustainable, safe and equal society.

Our country – characterised by natural beauty, openness and hardworking people – has enormous opportunities. Only by working together can we realise Sweden's potential.

We deal with the problems we face together, not each on our own. Global warming, health care waiting times, violent crime, inequality in education and a more divided society are shared problems. We can – and will – solve them together.

Around the world, political forces that promote intolerance, isolation and simple answers to complex social problems are on the rise. Sweden has chosen a different path. We stand up for values that have made Sweden strong: community, social equality, openness and equality between women and men.

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In an uncertain world, our foreign policy must safeguard our country's security.

Sweden's security policy remains firmly in place. The stability and security of northern Europe is enhanced by our military non-alignment. Sweden contributes to common security through dialogue and cooperation – within the framework of the European Union, bilaterally and through international organisations.

Our country's defence capability continues to be strengthened. A defence policy bill based on the Defence Commission's reports will be presented in 2020. There is now broad support for its financing.

The transatlantic link is being safeguarded and our defence cooperation deepened, not least around the Baltic Sea. Providing and receiving operational support will be quicker within the context of Finnish-Swedish cooperation.

Security in Sweden's neighbourhood has deteriorated. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine are clear violations of international law and the European security order. We support the EU sanctions while we also have contacts and dialogue with Russia and Russian society.

Sweden is facing new forms of threats and challenges. The implementation of the national security strategy continues. A national cyber security centre will be set up next year.

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Membership of the European Union is a cornerstone for Sweden and a clear part of our national, European and global endeavours.

A new legislative period is now beginning in the EU. Sweden is working for a strong and effective Union: a citizen's EU that supports the creation of more jobs with fair conditions. An EU that contributes to security and is a leader in environment and climate action. We will work to uphold respect for the Union's values.

Increased risk of a full-scale trade war underscores the necessity of Sweden being a voice for free, sustainable and fair trade. Global trade must be based on order and rules – not on the right of might.

Sweden will continue to work to ensure that the UK's withdrawal from the EU takes place in an orderly manner. There is preparedness

to handle a no-deal withdrawal. The UK's withdrawal heightens the need for active and offensive Swedish action in the EU.

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The fight against terrorism is global. It must be fought at home and in close cooperation with other countries in Europe and the world. It must be fought within the framework of the rule of law.

A review is being conducted of the body of criminal law legislation to fight terrorism. Collaboration with a terrorist organisation will become a punishable offence. We are seeing that criminals and terrorists are trying to find new ways of channelling money to support their activities. This will be countered through the continued tightening of legislation.

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In cooperation with other Member States, Sweden is working for a Common European Asylum System in which Member States share joint and fair responsibility for displaced people.

Swedish migration policy must be legally certain, effective and humane. The policy must have broad support. A cross-party committee of inquiry has been instructed by the Government to present proposals on a long-term sustainable migration policy. The right to asylum must be safeguarded.

Giving persons eligible for subsidiary protection and refugees the same right to be reunited with their children, partner or parents in Sweden is a humanitarian reform that also contributes to integration.

The Swedish Migration Agency should once again be able to rapidly handle asylum applications from people from 'safe countries of origin'. An independent review of medical age assessment methods will be conducted.

A successful fight against war, terrorism and global warming is necessary so that fewer people are displaced.

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Our generation is the first that can end poverty around the world and the last that can end global warming. Sweden must be at the vanguard for the 2030 Agenda.

The democratic dimension of our development assistance will be strengthened.

Sweden promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights globally and thus access to safe abortions. This is an expression of our feminist foreign policy.

Sweden remains committed to its high ambitions for climate financing.

The Government's work on the Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth will continue.

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Mr Speaker,

As Mikael Wiehe sings:

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Från Ales stenar | [From Ale's stones] |
| till norra Lappland | [to northern Lappland] |
| från Bohus klippor | [from Bohuslän's rocky shores] |
| till Gotlands raukar | [to Gotland's sea stacks] |
| Landet, det tillhör dig och mig | [this land belongs to you and me] |

We must hold our country together and we must ensure that the conditions for living a good life are available throughout Sweden.

A major redistribution based on the different conditions that exist in our country will be put in place before the end of the year. Regardless of whether you live in Vellinge or Vilhelmina, you should have the same right to home-help services – distances in your municipality should not determine this.

As a part of the green tax shift, 850 000 Swedish citizens, primarily in Norrland and north-western Svealand, will receive a tax reduction as compensation for the long distances and to make it easier to live in these parts of the country.

To continue to combat the closing of rural shops, the special operational subsidy to grocery shops will be increased.

Service offices, where several government agencies offer services to citizens, are an effective way for central government to maintain a presence in more places. New service offices will therefore be opened. I can already announce that service offices will be placed in a number of towns, including: Storuman, Torsby, Vansbro and Åsele.

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The Swedish business sector's ambitious climate commitments are impressive. Local engagement, innovative business operators and tough climate requirements produce results. New environmental technologies and innovations give us the possibility to export products and services that the world demands. This is how new jobs are created.

Food retail, mining and minerals, and cement are examples of industries that have produced roadmaps to become fossil-free. An exciting and globally unique development of carbon dioxide-free steel production is now under way in Luleå.

Sweden's raw material resources must be used more effectively and sustainably. Permit examination processes and regulatory frameworks

need to be reviewed so that consideration is given to both social benefit and local environmental impacts when a project is examined.

The work with the National Innovation Council continues. The Government will launch four strategic partnership programmes for the electoral period and begin work on a new research bill.

Simpler rules will give more people around the country the chance to start a business. The amount of share capital required will be reduced.

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Swedish nature, Swedish food and Swedish destinations are some of our country's greatest assets.

Times are good for Swedish tourism. Since the turn of the millennium, employment in the tourism and hospitality industry has increased by more than 40 000 people. A national strategy will strengthen the tourism and hospitality industry as an important job and growth engine for the entire country.

Swedish farmers produce world-class produce. The competitiveness of Swedish agriculture will be strengthened through continued investments in the food strategy and an effective farming package.

By pollinating plants, bees play an important role. This is now threatened. Measures are needed to improve the habitat of bees.

A sustainable and growing forestry sector contributes to jobs, growth and climate benefits. Sustainable forests and varied natural environments can increase biological diversity.

Work on the national forest programme continues and the Government is working to strengthen ownership rights and sustainability in Swedish forests. Forests owned by the state will be managed sustainably.

The conditions for the green industries are high on the Government's agenda.

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A functioning housing market is a precondition for both people's security and for a dynamic labour market.

Last year, the greatest number of apartments was completed since 1973. At the same time, 240 municipalities report a shortage of housing. The Government intends to gather all actors in the housing market around the common interest of securing a continuing high rate of construction.

The investment subsidy is to be focused and made more effective, and be targeted at student housing and right of tenancy housing with reasonable rents throughout the country. We are simplifying building regulations and reviewing the rental system. Climate declaration requirements and the increased use of wood in construction can contribute to society's transition.

Shore protection regulations are to be fundamentally overhauled. Increased differentiation will take account of varying levels of access to lakes and shorelines around the country, as well as population density and development pressure.

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The adopted national plans for infrastructure, including investments of SEK 700 billion in roads and railways throughout the entire country, will be implemented in full.

The Government is improving road maintenance and will now make the biggest railway investment of modern times. New main lines for high-speed trains will be constructed.

It will become easier to book trips abroad by train and it will be possible to travel by night train to several European cities.

Emissions from aviation will be reduced.

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Expanding digital infrastructure is an important part of the efforts to make the entire country grow and for public services to reach the entire population.

The energy agreement forms the basis for Sweden to continue to have a robust energy system and reasonably priced electricity in the future.

The capacity to transfer electricity will be improved to meet growing demand.

The significance of renewable energy sources is now growing rapidly. Wind power is contributing an increasing share of the energy supply. A solar energy revolution is taking place in Sweden. The solar panel subsidy has made it easier and cheaper for homeowners around the country to produce their own electricity.

More and more electric cars are driving on Sweden's roads. The charging infrastructure will be expanded to facilitate the electrification of the vehicle fleet.

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Mr Speaker,

A person who has reached their 100th birthday has, during their lifetime in Sweden, seen democracy take root, industrialised society develop, gender equality improve conditions for women and the transition to a knowledge-based society change the country.

Now we once again face major transitions.

July this year was the warmest on record. Greta Thunberg has become the voice of a generation when she demands that we listen to the scientific advice and take action. Global warming threatens to fundamentally change the conditions for human life on earth. We need to adapt to the changes already taking place. In two weeks, these issues will be in focus at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York.

Meanwhile, Sweden must create and develop jobs and welfare in a time of tough global competition and rapid technological advancements. We must leave no one behind as we build our new society.

Our country will be the world's first fossil-free welfare nation. This will have an impact on all parts of society and permeate policy. A climate action plan will be adopted.

A robust green tax shift has been initiated and will increase over the years ahead. A Swedish state green bond will now also be introduced.

Sweden will have achieved net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. This will require major technical advancements. The Green Industry Leap provides support to companies all the way from research and innovation projects to demonstration facilities and full-scale production.

We will cope with the transition and we will do so in the same way as before: together.

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Our children should grow up in an environment free from toxic substances. The Government is pushing for a global agreement on chemicals, stricter rules in the EU and necessary regulations at home.

The Government will take further action to reduce the use of plastics. The spread of microplastics must be controlled. The use of single-use plastics will be further reduced.

This year saw the first ever emergency ban on large parts of cod fishing in the Baltic Sea. The Government is listening to scientific advice and will work to ensure the recovery of cod stocks. The oceans we leave to our children must have growing fish stocks. Seabeds must be protected and eutrophication must end.

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Mr Speaker,

The international economy is now slowing down, which is having an impact on the economy here at home. In the labour market, we continue to see a high level of employment, but also a recruitment problem, not least in the welfare sector.

Central government debt as a percentage of GDP is at the same level as in 1977. A low level of debt gives us strength should the economy slow down even further – strength that many countries lack.

The Government wants to use the scope for reform to get more people into work, increase the number of police officers, strengthen our welfare system, improve pensioners' finances and stimulate a robust climate transition.

The austerity tax will be abolished as of 1 January 2020.

A bank tax will be introduced to fund investment in defence.

Efforts to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance continue unceasingly. When tax avoidance is transnational, efforts to combat it must also be transnational.

On average, pensioners have received SEK 1 600 more to spend every month compared to 2014. We will now continue to strengthen the financial situation of pensioners. Next year, the guarantee pension and the ceiling of the housing supplement for pensioners will be raised. The unfair tax on pensions will continue to be phased out.

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Mr Speaker,

Equipping people with knowledge is crucial to coping with the transition of society.

Sweden had one of the highest-performing and most equitable school systems in the world. We will reach that level again. Today, 31 000 more people work in the school system than 5 years ago, preschool groups are the smallest they have been since 1992 and teachers' salaries have increased. We have laid the foundations for better learning outcomes.

There are no shortcuts to raising the level of knowledge in the Swedish school system. The focus must be on knowledge and an environment conducive to learning. Opportunities to receive support in smaller study groups will be reviewed, and high-performing pupils will be given better opportunities to go further in their learning. School outcomes for boys require special attention.

A national plan for security and a conducive study environment in school will be drafted, and a ban on mobile phones during lessons will be introduced. For those schools that wish, an opportunity to set grades from year four will be introduced.

Schools must be a meeting place for pupils from different backgrounds. The Government is taking the first steps towards a moratorium on the establishment of independent compulsory and upper secondary schools with a denominational focus.

The key to a strong knowledge-based school system is an increased number of knowledgeable and competent teachers and more staff who can assist teachers. Initiatives to counter the shortage of teachers are needed. Opportunities to study to become a teacher alongside work in school will be expanded. More people with higher education should be able to change careers and become teachers. Central government support to employ teacher's assistants will be increased.

The Government will improve teacher education, and the attractiveness of the teaching profession will be increased. Proposals from the Schools Commission will be implemented. The Government is initiating the establishment of a professional programme for teachers and school heads. To increase equivalence, central government support to schools where the conditions are most challenging will be enhanced.

Continued measures are needed to improve the ability of schools to accept pupils with neuropsychiatric disorders.

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While there are more than 100 000 job vacancies in Sweden, 350 000 people are unemployed. To deal with the skills deficit, education must be better designed to meet the needs of society.

The Adult Education Initiative will continue, and in 2020 is expected to cover 93 000 government funded places throughout the country. Municipal adult education will be developed into a base for national and regional skills supply.

The Government is investing in continuing professional development and further training for people midway through their careers.

Higher vocational education will be expanded and steps will be taken to facilitate mobility between higher vocational education and higher education institutions. Skills development by means of short

higher vocational education courses will be facilitated. Initiatives will be introduced to strengthen and develop distance learning.

Strengthening access to training places around the country makes it easier to continue studying and to live anywhere in our country.

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For companies to be able to recruit, there must be an effective labour market. Efficient job recruitment benefits both those seeking employment and employers who need staff. To better contribute to this, Arbetsförmedlingen (the Swedish Public Employment Service) will be fundamentally reformed. As an important complement, a new system will be developed in which independent actors match and equip jobseekers for the available jobs.

Regardless of where they live, assistance must be available to jobseekers who need help finding a job. Arbetsförmedlingen must be able to provide service while the reform is being implemented.

There is great potential for effective efforts at local and regional level. Cooperation between Arbetsförmedlingen, municipalities and employers already produces local job tracks in various parts of Sweden.

To avoid unnecessary layoffs when companies are hit by temporary difficulties, central government support for short-time work will be strengthened.

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It is taking less time for people who are new in Sweden to find a job. An intensive year with a language focus and vocational initiatives will be introduced for new arrivals who are thought to have the potential of finding work within one year.

Civic orientation for new arrivals will be enhanced and more focus will be placed on issues such as gender equality and human rights.

Changes will be made to the support available to asylum seekers who choose their own accommodation to reduce problems in areas with socioeconomic challenges.

The emergence of a parallel society will be counteracted through an efficient collaboration between public authorities, police controls and measures against human smuggling.

Working life should not lead to women and men being excluded prematurely due to stress, bullying or tasks that damage or wear out their bodies. A vision zero will apply to deaths at work. The Swedish Work Environment Authority will propose measures to achieve this. More work environment inspectors will be employed.

The social partners have considerable responsibility to reduce work-related ill-health. The Government will closely follow the work the parties have undertaken for healthier workplaces.

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Joakim Berg's text from the Kent song 'Elite' captures a feeling many people identify with:

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| Min släkt är full av hjältar | [My family is full of heroes] |
| Decennier av slit | [Decades of toil] |
| Brustna hjärtan, trötta leder | [Broken hearts, tired joints] |
| Deras stolthet bar mig hit | [Their pride led me here] |

Women and men have built a strong Sweden through decades of toil. Sweden is full of heroes. People who contribute every day to a stronger society through parenting, studies, paid work, entrepreneurship and volunteering.

Mr Speaker,

A general welfare system with high quality schools, health and social care services for all is the most important force for redistribution in our society.

The Government is appointing a welfare commission in which the central government, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and the employee organisations will together tackle the problems we see in Swedish welfare. The increasing proportion of elderly people poses new challenges for welfare.

Providing health and social care is one of society's most important tasks. A fixed contact in care of the elderly increases continuity and security. Employees in the welfare sector need to have a better working environment and their status needs to be raised. Assistant nurses will have a protected professional title and better working conditions.

The number of people involuntarily working part-time in welfare will be reduced. Efforts will continue to ensure that full-time work will be a right. Welfare technology will improve the working environment and increase quality, not cause more stress.

Disability policy and the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments will be enhanced. Personal assistance will be characterised by high quality and legal certainty. The right to assistance for breathing and tube-feeding will be safeguarded. Everyone who has the right to this should receive it.

Sweden will have sickness insurance that is secure, legally certain and comprehensible with a high level of trust among the population. The collaboration between public authorities must improve and the regulatory frameworks must be designed to ensure that everyone receives the support and the compensation they are entitled to.

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Sweden must have world-class health and medical care that is available to all. The Government is therefore making vigorous efforts to ensure more secure, accessible and equitable health and medical care.

We should be proud of the high quality of Swedish medical care. Every day, medical personnel save the lives of acutely injured and seriously ill patients. At the same time, primary care in particular needs to be developed further. It has unique possibilities to meet the entire health and medical care needs and promote good health. The Government will boost local health and medical care.

To improve continuity in health care, the right to the same doctor will be safeguarded. Patient contracts will give both the patient and health and medical care staff an overview of all of the planned care appointments.

Mental ill-health is one of the major problems of our times. Early measures are important to reduce suffering and prevent minor problems becoming serious. To make it easier to get help, a new care form is being prepared for mild mental health issues. The queues for child and adolescent psychiatry will be reduced and school health and welfare services will be safeguarded.

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Mr Speaker,

The police received the call at 09.58 on a Monday morning. The woman in Ribersborg was 31 years old. She was shot dead in broad daylight when she was out with her little child. This unfathomable tragedy leaves no one in Sweden unmoved.

Violent crime causes immense suffering in our society. Boys are lured into a criminal career that ends either in death or long prison sentences. Relatives of crime victims are severely affected.

The violence perpetrated by criminal gangs is a threat to people's safety, to the sense of security in society, and ultimately to the rule of law and democracy. The ruthlessness towards victims is abhorrent. Combating this threat is one of the state's core tasks.

The fight against serious crime is long-term and will entail both successes and setbacks. Our goal is crystal clear: we will put an end to the violence.

The state can remove hardened criminals from the streets, but stopping the influx of young men to criminal gangs requires efforts by society as a whole. This is emphasised not least by the police. Schools, social services, local businesses and our civic organisations have important roles to play.

Municipalities are pivotal to crime prevention. Work has begun to give municipalities a statutory responsibility for this.

The Government will facilitate decisions regarding surveillance cameras and police access to digital evidence and encrypted communications to identify and track criminal activities.

The pilot project involving faster legal proceedings for certain petty offences will be extended and expanded to more parts of the country.

To combat cross-border crime, the Swedish Police needs to be given greater scope to operate in border areas. Camera surveillance using automatic vehicle and number-plate recognition will be considered.

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The Swedish Police will be tasked with strengthening their efforts to fight the illicit drug trafficking that finances much of the gang violence. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention will be tasked with examining the drugs market in Sweden to update the current state of knowledge.

Everyone who buys drugs must understand that their drug money supports criminal gangs and contributes to criminal activities.

Violence by right-wing and other ideologically motivated perpetrators must be taken very seriously.

Rape and other sexual offences must be combatted. The Government will propose continued tighter laws in this area.

The broad political consensus we have to continue reinforcing the rule of law is a strength. The Government is now taking the lead in gathering political decision-makers and other stakeholders to continue strengthening society in the fight against serious crime.

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Mr Speaker,

During this electoral period, Sweden will celebrate its 100th birthday as a democracy. The democracy we inherited from earlier generations must be even stronger when we pass it on.

Strong public service broadcasting combined with commercial media provide a diversity of independent media throughout the country.

Elected representatives and journalists must be given stronger protection under criminal law against threats and hate speech to enable them to fulfil their vital role in a democracy.

An independent institution for the protection of human rights will be established.

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Every child has the right to grow in curiosity and creativity. Music and arts schools must exist throughout the country. People who contribute time and effort to the sports movement and civil society organisations are key to enabling young people's involvement.

In 112 days' time, the Convention on the Rights of the Child will become Swedish law. Every child must be able to express their views and exercise their rights.

Legislation concerning parenthood will be revised to make it gender-neutral. This is part of the Government's efforts to strengthen the rights of LGBTI people.

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Racism has no place in Sweden; work under the national plan to combat racism continues. Sweden's national minorities and indigenous Sami people must be protected.

Hatred of Jews can be found in our history, in extreme right-wing groups, in certain left-wing groups and Islamist environments. We see antisemitism among adults and children who fled to Sweden from countries where hatred of Jews is fed by schools and state propaganda.

Combating antisemitism and remembrance of the Holocaust are the theme of the international conference the Government will host in Malmö next year.

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Sweden does not accept child marriage or oppression. 'Honour' crimes will receive harsher sentences, and a specific offence concerning child marriage will be introduced. Work to introduce a specific offence of 'honour crime' will continue.

Children and young people will have greater access to support and help from social services, without the consent or knowledge of a parent or guardian.

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Mr Speaker,

Just over six months ago, the Government took office after a policy agreement on the budget and several policy areas was reached between the Social Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party. Together, we are taking responsibility for harnessing our country's opportunities and solving the social challenges of our time.

Swedish politics is in a time of intensive reform.

A time to build a stronger Sweden – together.

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Government of Sweden

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