

Statement of Government Policy

12 September 2017



In the Statement of Government Policy presented on 3 October 2014, the Government laid out its plans for the entire electoral period. This Statement of Government Policy primarily concerns the 2017/18 Riksdag session.

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

The challenges of our time are critical: the serious nuclear threat from North Korea, the humanitarian disaster in war-torn Syria, the climate change crisis, famine in East Africa and Yemen. Uncertainty and insecurity are taking a toll on people around the world. The need to work together to build sustainable peace and resilient societies is clearer than ever. This means that Sweden's efforts must increase too.

Sweden has a year and a half remaining on the UN Security Council. Respect for international law, democracy, human rights, conflict prevention and confidence-building measures are guiding our work.

Our security policy remains firmly in place. Our non-participation in military alliances serves our country well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe.

More women are needed in UN peacekeeping operations and at the negotiating table when peace agreements are concluded. Sweden's efforts to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights continue. The world's first expressly feminist foreign policy will continue to deliver.

A strong European Union in which everyone takes their share of responsibility increases security and the ability to address major global challenges. Sweden is working to ensure that the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union is orderly. We need an EU that remains strong and united. In November, the President of the European Commission and I will host a summit on fair jobs and growth. Workers must not be pitted against each other in Europe.

Strong Nordic cooperation is an integral part of our international engagement.

Sweden is pushing for the goals of the 2030 Agenda to be achieved. Over the next year, new milestone targets will be developed in the environmental objectives system. The goal of one per cent of GNI to

aid will be achieved in 2018. Stronger action is needed to prevent armed conflicts and meet the pressing humanitarian needs around the world.

The countries of the world have a joint responsibility for displaced people. The EU needs to finalise a new common asylum policy that is humane and based on solidarity. The right to asylum must be safeguarded. Immigration in Sweden must be regulated. The Government's work to improve the return system continues. Processing times will be shortened. Those permitted to stay must be able to start working or studying much sooner.

The largest Swedish Armed Forces exercise in 20 years is currently under way, involving 20 000 Swedish soldiers and officers, some 40 government agencies and broad participation from several countries. Sweden's defence capabilities are being developed.

Our bilateral and multilateral defence and security cooperation is deepening. As national military service is reintroduced, 6 000 young men and women are now being called up for enrolment and others have voluntarily signed up to the Swedish Armed Forces. Early next year, the first recruits will begin their basic training. This makes me proud.

The security situation has deteriorated. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia's aggression against Ukraine violate international law and challenge the European security order. International terrorism and climate change pose threats to us all. We are more susceptible to disruptions in critical infrastructure.

Information security is a priority. The Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Security Service are being given tools to stop the outsourcing of sensitive information. The new national security strategy will be implemented. Our country must be secure in a new era, too.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the parties represented in the Riksdag that have contributed to broad agreements on stronger

total defence, energy policy, a climate policy framework and measures to combat terrorism.

Security is something we build together – in Sweden and globally.

Rachel Carson, author of the ground-breaking book *Silent Spring* from 1962, once wrote:

*Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth
find reserves of strength
that will endure as long as life lasts.
There is something infinitely healing
in the repeated refrains of nature –
the assurance that dawn comes after night,
and spring after winter.*

Rachel Carson opened people's eyes, but she also gave people hope. We can cause problems, we humans. But, when we decide to, we can also put things right again. We can adapt.

Climate change is happening here and now. Water shortages in Sweden, the Lucifer heatwave in Europe, the drought in the Horn of Africa, Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma scare us. Extreme weather events follow in the wake of climate change. The climate cannot wait. Societal transformation must be accelerated to safeguard opportunities for future generations.

Sweden now has a new climate policy framework with a progressive Climate Act. It outlines the objectives and the direction for future governments and guarantees a continuing high level of ambition in addressing climate change. During this electoral period, the budget for environment and climate will more than double. The Climate Leap will be strengthened. Around the country, charging stations for electric cars are popping up in more and more places. Solar cells glisten on the roofs of many private houses, and there will be more.

Groundwater resources need to be surveyed and drinking water protected. Wetlands will be established and restored. A drive is now under way to protect the seas and oceans. Plastic, pharmaceuticals and nutrients must not destroy our oceans. Protection of marine areas will be expanded. The Baltic Sea and the North Sea must be clean and healthy.

Sweden is demonstrating leadership on action to implement the Paris Agreement. We are showing that it is possible to combine ecological sustainability with welfare, equity and development.

Mr Speaker,

Following the 2014 election, the Government inherited a deficit of SEK 60 billion. This has now been turned into a large surplus. Unemployment has been pushed back. An additional 200 000 people are in work. Employment is at its highest and dependence on compensation systems at its lowest since before the crisis of the 1990s.

The Swedish economy is in a completely new situation. We now have the means to both pay off national debt and invest in a stronger future for Sweden.

Together we will fight the climate change crisis and environmental threats.

Together we will fight insecurity and inequalities.

Together we will future-proof jobs and welfare.

Now it is time to build our future.

The gaps between urban and rural areas must be closed. It must be possible to work, run a business and benefit from public services whether you live in Visby, Vårby gård or Vittangi.

There must be opportunities throughout our country for cultural participation. Culture makes people grow and strengthens democracy. Reduced fees and lower thresholds for municipal art and music classes are giving more children the opportunity to express themselves through words, images, sounds and movement. The 'Unga Klara' theatre company will become a national theatre institute for children and young people. The Royal Opera, the Royal Dramatic Theatre and Riksteatern (the Swedish national touring theatre) will receive funds for more digital broadcasts of theatre and music performances. Conditions for artists will be improved. A new media policy will be presented for media pluralism and freedom throughout the country.

In Sweden, it must be possible to find housing when moving for work or study. Not since the days of the Million Homes Programme has there been as much construction taking place as there is today. The Government's investment support is now providing more rental housing with reasonable rents. The use of wood in housing construction will be increased. This will help mitigate the effects of climate change and create jobs throughout the country.

The trend towards centralisation will end. The largest relocation of government agencies in more than a decade is now under way. At least ten new local service centres will be opened to offer integrated services from several government agencies. In the coming year, a new rural development policy will be drawn up.

Our forests will be protected and also contribute to development. A national forest programme will be presented to enable our forests to contribute to the growth of the bio-based economy. More natural forests will be protected and greater consideration will be given to nature conservation in managed forests. Companies in the tourism and hospitality industry will be stimulated. Value added tax for nature guides will be reduced. Food production is growing and creating new jobs. Thirty per cent of Sweden's agricultural land will be organically managed by 2030.

Sustainable forests and diverse natural environments can improve biological diversity.

Infrastructure connects the different parts of the country. It must be possible to both travel sustainably and arrive on time. Record investments are being made in railways and road maintenance. A national transport infrastructure plan for the period up to 2029 will be adopted. New, modern main lines for high-speed rail links will be built. Travelling by train should be faster than driving and cheaper than flying. Broadband expansion will continue at a rapid pace.

Sweden's economic strength must benefit everyone, throughout the country.

Sweden must stand together. Crippling unemployment and hopelessness pave the way for criminality, polarisation and extremism. This must not be tolerated anywhere in our country. To people living in suburbs, industrial towns or rural areas, I say this: we will change this trend together.

The manner in which newly arrived immigrants are integrated into the workforce and communities will mean the difference between poverty and confidence in the future for tens of thousands of people, and will affect all our futures.

The Delegation against Segregation is starting its work. Municipalities, county councils, regions, government agencies, organisations, researchers and those living and working in socially vulnerable areas will work together. Resources for the schools and pupils with the greatest needs are increasing considerably. The modernisation of the areas built during the Million Homes Programme will continue.

Where needs are greatest, support will be strongest.

Mr Speaker,

There is no place for organised crime in Sweden. Society must always be stronger than the gangs. Next year, this century's biggest investment in Swedish police gets under way. Sweden cannot afford to have police officers leaving the profession. The Swedish Police Authority has received a new assignment to improve career and development opportunities for police officers together with the trade unions.

This investment will make a difference, and the entire judicial chain must therefore also be involved. Today, I am able to inform the Riksdag that the Government's budget contains additional investments of almost SEK 750 million to strengthen SOS Alarm, Swedish Customs, the Swedish Security Service, the Swedish Prosecution Authority, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority and the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. More crimes must be solved. It will be more difficult to be a criminal in Sweden.

Sentences for gross firearms offences will be tougher. The number of places available in institutional youth care will increase. New penalties are being proposed for young criminals. Protection of emergency services and medical personnel will be strengthened. Our joint message is: don't touch our heroes!

Drottninggatan, Stockholm, 7 April, 14.53.

Most of us clearly remember what we were doing that afternoon. Society rallied behind those working to help the victims. People opened up their homes. There were many of us who met and supported each other, sorrowful, yet resolute, who wanted to say: This is our city. Our country. No terrorist can take that away from us.

Let us remember the victims and honour their memory.

And let us fight terrorism with the full might of Swedish democracy. The Swedish Security Service must have access to signals intelligence in parallel with ongoing preliminary investigations. Participation in a terrorist organisation will be criminalised. A national centre to combat violent extremism will be established.

Sexual offences are an abomination. New legislation on sexual offences based on consent will be presented. Children are children. Sweden does not accept child marriage. Protection against child marriage will be strengthened. Travel abroad for the purpose of forced marriage will be stopped. So-called 'honour' crimes must lead to more severe penalties. Religious extremists must not gain ground in the public sphere, nor decide where women can go or what they wear.

Every woman in Sweden must be able to live as she pleases. Proud, upright, confident. Sweden must be safe for everyone.

Mr Speaker,

The Swedish labour market is strong.

Investments are increasing. Industrial manufacturing is returning home. Swedish exports are showing new record figures. Real wages are growing. Next year, unemployment is expected to fall below six per cent for the first time in almost ten years. The objective is to achieve the lowest unemployment rate in the EU by 2020.

In this situation, Sweden is facing two major challenges.

The first is that employers have difficulties finding people with the right skills.

There are more than 100 000 job vacancies and the list of shortage occupations is long. If unemployment is to fall further, even greater investments in education are required.

The Adult Education Initiative is being expanded to comprise almost 80 000 student places during the electoral period. Learning centres will be developed so that more students can undertake distance

learning. Student grants are being raised. The possibility of obtaining CSN loans for driving lessons is being introduced.

This is how we equip Sweden for the global and digital economy. Sweden is competing for the jobs of the future on the basis of knowledge and skills – not low wages. It must be worthwhile to work and it must be possible to live on your wages. Conditions in the Swedish labour market must be fair and decent.

This is the Swedish model.

The second challenge is shortening the path to jobs for newly arrived immigrants.

Sweden's employers can do a lot in this regard. It has never been as simple as it is now. Employment support is being combined and simplified. The number of 'extra jobs' is being increased. Support to companies that employ their first worker is being expanded.

An education and training obligation is being introduced. Those who do not have adequate skills to obtain a job during their introduction period will be required to undertake education and training.

Foreign-born women are needed on the labour market. Special efforts are being made to enable more women to find jobs. Parental benefit has been changed so that the bulk must be taken during the child's first years. Outreach activities are being expanded, as is the opportunity to learn Swedish during parental leave.

Efforts to ensure healthy workplaces and speedy rehabilitation are yielding results. The soaring sick leave rates have been halted. An agency for work environment awareness is being established. More measures for better working conditions and work-life balance are being examined. Barriers to people with disabilities will be torn down and more job opportunities created.

Everyone who can work should work. Everyone is needed in building our future.

Swedish industry will lead the way when climate change, globalisation and the digital transformation demand rapid adaptation. The National Innovation Council's strategic partnership programmes are launching a number of initiatives so that Swedish businesses can develop the attractive products of tomorrow and attract foreign investment. Swedish testing and demonstration facilities are being developed. The Government's export strategy is helping Swedish companies to secure business throughout the world. Sweden will be a pioneer for free and fair trade.

Industrial emissions must be reduced. The process industry will be provided with new support for innovative projects and green tech advances – a *Green Industry Leap*. A strategy is being drawn up for the transition to a circular and bio-based economy. Renewable energy production is being expanded.

Considerable investment in electrification is being made in partnership with the Swedish automotive industry. The vehicle fleet needs to be modernised so that we can do away with petrol and diesel. An expanded bonus will make it cheaper to buy a low-emission car, and more costly to pollute. An electric vehicle premium will be introduced to encourage more people to use electric scooters or bicycles.

Climate adaptation forms the basis of tomorrow's jobs and prosperity. Sweden will be transformed into the world's first fossil-free welfare nation, and we are doing this with the help of our trusty old – yet ultramodern – industry.

Swedish industry has not invested this much since the financial crisis. At the same time, we know that booms and slumps come and go. Now is therefore the time to prepare and equip industry for future recessions. A competitive system for short-time work is being developed to secure industrial jobs. Security for small businesses and entrepreneurs is being reviewed and strengthened.

Investments in knowledge, from preschool through to vocational education and training to research, bode well for a competent Sweden when the competition stiffens.

Mr Speaker,

Now Sweden is growing. Many people have immigrated to our country. We are living longer, and more babies are being born. This is a sign of strength. The Swedish welfare state needs to be expanded.

Since the Government took office, 100 000 more people have been employed in welfare services. This makes Sweden more secure. By 2020, injections of additional resources to welfare will have increased by SEK 50 billion. Many more people can be employed in health, schools and social services.

For every new doctor, fewer seriously ill people will have to wait for an appointment. For every new assistant nurse, more elderly people will feel safe knowing that someone will come when they need them. For every new teacher, more children will be able to crack the code – understand the principle – to overcome a difficulty and feel that magical: *'Aha!'* This makes a difference every day. This goes before tax cuts.

This is how we will build welfare together – and a sustainable society for a new era.

A few weeks ago I met class 3A from Nälstaskolan at Berättarministeriet (the Ministry of Tales) in Husby. Berättarministeriet works with children to provide them with what is most crucial for their learning, namely mastering language, writing and storytelling. I was there as a volunteer. My job: to enliven, inspire and take the children's imagination seriously. Thank you for all the inspiration I received in return.

Learning requires reading. A reading-writing-arithmetic guarantee for the early years will be laid down in law. More school libraries will be staffed. Greater emphasis will be placed on source criticism. Compulsory schooling in Sweden will begin at age six. Special needs education will be strengthened and more special needs teachers will be

trained. Schools must provide a safe learning environment. All pupils must acquire more skills and knowledge.

Schools are no longer plagued by cutbacks. Despite the shortage of teachers and large year groups, the staff to pupil ratio is rising. The number of staff working in schools has increased by 20 000. Preschool groups are at their smallest for 25 years. Three out of four registered teachers in compulsory and upper secondary schools have received a substantial pay increase. More paths to becoming a registered teacher will be available. At last, more people are choosing to become teachers.

The Schools Commission has delivered the most thorough proposal for improving schools in Sweden in decades. It lays the foundation for an equitable school system and high learning outcomes.

School segregation must end. Schools must be a meeting place for pupils from different backgrounds. Newly arrived pupils will be more evenly allocated, including to independent schools. Major investments will continue to be made to ensure that all schools are good schools.

More young people must complete their upper secondary school education. The introductory programmes will be strengthened so that more people qualify for the national programmes. All national programmes will include aesthetic subjects. Vocational packages will be developed so that more young people without an upper secondary school qualification can choose a shorter programme that leads to a job. Vocational programmes are being enhanced and basic eligibility for higher education will be reintroduced.

If you ask people what is really important to them, most will say: *“Good health, and that my family is well and happy.”*

So when someone falls ill, there must be no doubt: care must be available when you need it. Waiting times are too long and must be shortened. More resources to health centres will enhance primary care. The patient contract will be further developed for patients with

significant care needs. Hospitals will specialise to be able to provide high-quality, state-of-the-art care. Where you live must not determine your chances of regaining your health.

A major women's health initiative is under way. Parents-to-be must be secure in the knowledge that maternity services are effective. Mental ill health is being experienced at ever younger ages. Young people suffering mental ill health must receive help at an early stage.

Health care professions must be attractive. Working conditions are being improved. Additional training places are being created. The possible introduction of a professional status qualification for assistant nurses is being examined. Health care workers will be given the recognition they deserve.

Nothing represents the future better than our children. The autumn budget will prioritise the financial position of families with children.

To protect the child's right to their parents and to enhance gender equality, parental insurance is being modernised. Parental insurance must also work for contemporary families and not present an obstacle for women in the labour market.

Work on making the Convention on the Rights of the Child part of Swedish law on 1 January 2020 continues. A three-year national initiative to enhance knowledge of children's rights will be implemented. Children also have a right to breathe clean air. To improve air quality in our cities, municipalities will be given new opportunities to introduce low emission zones.

Sweden is to be the best country in the world to grow up in.

No one deserves our gratitude more than our older people. Those who built this country before us deserve respect, and they also deserve financial security.

A great deal has already been done: an increased housing supplement, cheaper dental care for older people, free primary care for people over the age of 85. We are now taking further steps. A national dementia strategy is being developed. The financial position of the most disadvantaged pensioners will be improved. Taxes have already been reduced for six out of ten over-65s. The goal is to completely abolish the unfair tax on pensions. New steps will be taken in the autumn budget.

This is not an act of kindness – it is our moral responsibility.

Welfare should be financed collectively and in solidarity.

Everyone with an income must do the right thing and pay tax. If they don't, the social contract of a welfare nation cannot be upheld. Tax evasion and aggressive tax planning are being combated. Social security systems will be better protected against cheating and fraud.

Tax revenues for welfare must go to welfare – not turned into unreasonable profits or transferred out of the country. During the year, a proposal will be put forward to limit profits in education and social services.

Our welfare system must be in order.

Mr Speaker,

In the middle of the field at the Birkenau extermination camp there is a red cattle truck. Livia Fränkel and her sister Hédi Fried arrived at Auschwitz in one of these on 17 May 1944. Packed together, without food and with very little water, they had travelled for three days and two nights.

In June this year, Livia and I were at Auschwitz-Birkenau together. That was the first time she had been back. *“I want to close the circle,”* she said. *“I want to say goodbye to my parents.”*

We have an obligation to remember, because if we do not remember the atrocities of history, violence and hatred can triumph again. And then another circle will close. On 1 May this year, approximately 500 neo-Nazis demonstrated in Falun. The Nordic Resistance Movement was present at Almedalen Week and it will soon gather in Gothenburg. This is frightening.

The Government is now concentrating efforts on a national action plan to combat racism and hate crimes. Support to enable school pupils to make history and remembrance trips will be reintroduced. In 2020 a new international conference on remembrance and education will be held.

There are groups in our country that are more afraid than ever. Security for minority groups and religious premises will be heightened. Work to strengthen the rights of transgender people will be intensified. Protection against hate and agitation crimes will be boosted.

The rights of the national minorities will be strengthened. A major investment will be made in the Sami Parliament. A new disability policy will point the way to a more equal society, where different backgrounds or circumstances do not determine people's ability to participate.

In country after country, polarisation is on the rise. Distrust of democratic institutions is growing, the media is being questioned, the rhetoric is harsher and facts are distorted. Our society's resilience to attacks from foreign powers and troll factories will increase. Exposure to threats and acts of hate directed at journalists, elected representatives, artists and opinion-formers is dangerous.

If there is one thing that each citizen should see as their duty, then it is this. Never accept the unacceptable. Speak out. Stand up for human dignity in public spaces and comment sections. Anti-democratic voices must never go unchallenged. Freedom of speech must be protected. Step up! We will do it together. It's in our hands!

Together we have built, and continue to build, Sweden as we want it to be. By showing respect, compassion and warmth.

Human dignity is fundamental.

Mr Speaker,

Our Government has led Sweden in a new direction. Our goal is a sustainable society imbued with a sense of community, where we care about each other and thus believe in the future. We will not leave our children and grandchildren to pick up the bill. This is how we want to continue to govern.

We will continue building our society. The direction remains unchanged:

investments not tax cuts,
equality not inequality,
together – not each on our own.

This is how we are building a future for everyone.

Government of Sweden

SE103 33 Stockholm

www.government.se