

Statement of Government Policy

30 November 2021



Statement of Government Policy delivered by
Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Riksdag,

One person, one vote – everyone’s equal right to participate and steer the society we live in. It is society’s most fundamental expression of the equal value of all people.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the recognition of this right.

In 1921, for the first time in Sweden women and men alike were able to exercise universal and equal suffrage in elections to the Riksdag.

This right cannot be taken for granted. It must be reinforced again and again by each successive generation.

Honourable Members of the Riksdag,

In ten months, we will once again celebrate democracy as the Swedish people go to the polls.

Let us together impress upon yet another generation of voters the importance of using their democratic voice.

“All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people. Swedish democracy is founded on the free formation of opinion and on universal and equal suffrage. [...] Public power shall be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual.”

It is written thus in our country’s constitution.

Sweden must continue to stand on this same bedrock of democracy for the next 100 years.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

Government policy in the coming years will be distinguished by vigorous action to counter three serious societal problems.

Firstly: leaving no stone unturned to reduce segregation and combat the ruthless criminality that currently threatens all of society.

Secondly: driving the green industrial revolution through investments throughout the country. In this way, emissions will be reduced and the jobs of the future will be created in Sweden.

Thirdly: taking back control of the welfare system so that everyone who works in it has the decent and fair conditions needed to do their job. In this way, we can ensure high quality in schools, health care and social care throughout the country. Out of respect for everyone who works and who has built up our country, we must have secure social insurance and pensions.

Sweden will move forward, step by step, reform by reform.

Because Sweden can do better.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

As of November this year, 290 shootings have taken place in this country. They have cost 42 people their lives. Many of them were young boys, children.

Shootings in gang conflicts are not isolated cases. They are organised, and are rooted in a society where the gaps and differences between living conditions are too wide. Economic, linguistic and normative gaps. This serious violence threatens to poison all of society. It undermines trust between people and it weakens confidence in the future. It turns people in our country into crime victims, casualties and mourners.

There are residential areas in Sweden that are characterised by overcrowding and a housing black market, where organised crime operates as landlord, bank and employer. Where the law enforcement system is closed out and the gangs create their own rules. Where children are recruited directly into

criminal lifestyles in which bombings and shootings are everyday occurrences.

This cannot continue. Swedish society must be stronger than that.

To stop the violence, perpetrators must be prosecuted. Criminal policy will be overhauled.

More severe penalties have been imposed for more than 70 offences. Some 30 acts that previously were not punishable have been criminalised. A historic expansion of the entire Swedish judicial system is under way. We are well on our way to meeting our target of 10 000 more police employees. A comprehensive expansion of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service is under way and the capacity of the courts is being significantly reinforced.

Essentially every law enforcement agency has been given new tools, more employees and greater authority.

Now we are going even further.

Even more severe penalties will be imposed for gang-related offences. The possibility of using secret coercive measures to prevent serious crime is being investigated.

There will be tougher penalties for perjury, obstructing the course of justice and protecting a criminal. It should not be possible to threaten witnesses into silence; instead they should receive the support they need to safely fulfil their duty.

It will be easier to detain people who are suspected of serious offences. At present, the presumption of detention applies to those suspected of offences with a minimum penalty of two years' imprisonment – this will be reduced to one year and six months' imprisonment.

Anyone who commits multiple offences should be punished more severely. Reduced sentences for young people aged 18–20 who commit serious offences will be abolished. Penalties should better reflect the severity of offences, even when the perpetrators are young. The Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act is under review.

Society must act more resolutely towards young people at risk and more measures should be possible even without parental consent.

More gang members and young people at risk must be taken into care and benefit from social measures. A national youth crime board system like that in Denmark will be investigated.

Violent crime and the power exercised by criminal elements are a threat to the public support and democratic legitimacy on which our legal order is based. They must be fought with everything our democratic society has.

Mr Speaker,

Every year, around 15 women are murdered by their former or current intimate partner. The Government has ensured permanent funds and grants to prevent men's violence against women and to protect the victims. Possibilities to also strengthen the protection against psychological violence provided under criminal law are being investigated. There will be more severe penalties for violence and other forms of abuse in intimate relationships.

Twenty years ago, a year before she was murdered, Fadime Sahindal stood here in the Riksdag and said:

“Regardless of your cultural background, it should be a given that you can have both your family and the life you want for yourself.”

She concluded by urging us all to see all of the girls who are denied that right in the name of honour. “I hope that you won't turn your backs on them.”

Support in the Riksdag is broad, and the Government's direction is clear: honour-based oppression has no place in our country. All forms of equality apply equally to all. Honour-based oppression must stop.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

More severe penalties have had an effect. More hardened criminals are now serving sentences. But much broader efforts are needed to break the segregation that leads to poverty and hopelessness and fuels gang crime.

Every minister in the Government that takes office today will be tasked, within their area of responsibility and with the support of the relevant

government agencies, with leaving no stone unturned in bringing an end to gang crime and segregation.

The Government will gather representatives from the municipalities where the violence is worst and segregation the most pronounced to work together to combat criminality.

Many parents, teachers, social workers, local police, sports associations and volunteers today stand in opposition to these criminals, spreading hope in the darkness. But many more need to get involved.

We must all pull together. For this reason, I also want to turn to everyone in Sweden. No one individual can break segregation or stop the shootings or the gangs on their own. But everyone can do something. Where volunteer patrols or similar activities are organised, get involved if you can. Help out in local sports associations so that there are recreational activities for our children and young people. Stay and talk for a few minutes with someone who needs to improve their Swedish to enter into Swedish society.

I would like to urge Sweden's employers: before bringing in low-skilled workers from other countries, remember that there are many long-term unemployed people in Sweden who want nothing more than to find a job.

When all of society mobilises – that is when we can build back Sweden's security together.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

There is nothing more fundamental than having a job to go to; nothing is so essential to becoming part of society. Those who are out of work must meet clear expectations, but also many and good opportunities to find work.

Young people coming to Sweden must complete an upper secondary education and move on to working life or higher education.

If you already have professional skills that are in demand, you must learn Swedish as quickly as possible and take one of the available jobs.

If you are a little older and lack the right skills, you can start with subsidised employment, helping out in our society with work that otherwise does not get done.

With this labour policy strategy, the Government has contributed to creating a quarter of a million new jobs and halved the integration time for new arrivals. And despite the pandemic and the worst economic downturn since the Second World War, a larger proportion of people born abroad are working today than in 2014.

Sweden makes clear demands but also offers opportunities. This works, and we will continue with this approach.

Everyone who can work should work. Having a job and your own income gives you the freedom to decide for yourself how you want to live and with whom. This applies equally to all, regardless of your gender or where you come from.

Integration must be improved based on sound knowledge. Inquiries will be appointed on clearer activity requirements of a certain number of hours per week for those receiving social assistance. On placing demands on those receiving a permanent residence permit with regard to language skills and knowledge of Sweden. On the possibility of establishing State-run reception centres where asylum seekers will live and take part in an introduction to Swedish society during their initial period in Sweden.

The quality of Swedish for Immigrants education will be improved. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate will inspect programme providers. More adults will be able to combine vocational education and training with Swedish language courses so as to find a job more quickly.

New start job opportunities will be expanded and labour market entry agreements introduced.

Labour law will be reformed in accordance with the agreement concluded by the social partners.

Sweden's entrepreneurs create jobs and contribute to our country's prosperity. It should be easy to start and run a business in Sweden, and it should also be easy to get into an education or training programme.

The Adult Education Initiative is creating thousands of paths that lead to work throughout the country.

Higher vocational education, regional vocational adult education and folk high schools are now being expanded to provide additional education and training places. Health care training programmes provided both at higher education institutions and remotely is being expanded, and health care will have better conditions to create the practice-based places that these programmes require.

Sweden has one of the most comprehensive student finance systems in the world. A rapidly changing labour market requires the acquisition of new skills. Now Sweden will have one of the world's best career transition assistance schemes. With the implementation of the social partners' agreement, our competitiveness will be strengthened and workers will be given security in this transition.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

“We have kept 1.5 alive. But the pulse of 1.5 is weak.” This was how Alok Sharma, President of COP26, summarised the results from Glasgow.

The clock is ticking.

If the world cannot tackle the climate crisis, the consequences will be colossal. Ambitions must be raised, the pulse must quicken, the world must succeed.

With its green welfare state, Sweden chose to take the lead. International confidence in us increases as Swedish innovations and solutions are exported around the world. A global climate race is under way, and Sweden is in the leading pack.

The Green Industry Leap and the Climate Leap set the course and will be developed. More than 300 000 new homes have been built since 2014, and sustainable construction is being promoted. And as Sweden now invests its way out of recession following the pandemic, it is through a robust green restart of the Swedish economy.

Throughout the country, a green industrial revolution is under way. Fossil-free steel production. Battery factories. Electric heavy goods vehicles. This is reducing emissions and creating tens of thousands of new jobs – throughout the country.

The pace will be stepped up further. But there is a risk that necessary investments will not happen because the market considers them too risky. Swedish industry must be able to phase out fossil fuels. Green state credit guarantees will be expanded to SEK 50 billion next year.

Sweden today has an innovative and competitive business sector and skilled workers who are ready to adapt to the new jobs that are emerging. The Government therefore proposes a new government-financed skills initiative for the climate transition.

A new national electrification strategy will identify how the capacity of our electricity networks can be rapidly expanded and electricity production from clean, renewable and cheap energy sources can increase. Efforts to expand offshore wind power are an important part of this.

There must be good conditions for living and working throughout the country. The level of ambition in regional policy will be raised. Major investments in competitive and environmentally sustainable agriculture will be made within the framework of the Rural Development Programme. Investments in broadband are increasing substantially. Clear coverage demands are being made of operators. The special operational subsidies for grocery shops will be made permanent.

Shore protection measures will be more differentiated. It will be easier to build in rural areas, and shore protection will be strengthened in highly exploited areas. Areas of special significance for animal and plant life will be preserved. Forest ownership rights will be strengthened. This will lay the foundations for harnessing the forests' economic, climate and environmental potential to a greater extent.

A new national plan for infrastructure will be presented in the new year. New steps are being taken towards a modern, fossil-free transport infrastructure to enable people to transport both themselves and the goods that are produced.

Next year, Sweden will host Stockholm+50, a UN conference to help accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. The UN's first ever conference on the human environment was held in Stockholm 50 years ago. When Olof Palme welcomed world leaders to that conference, he observed with words that are as relevant today as they were then:

“Our future is common. We must share it together. We must shape it together.”

* * *

Mr Speaker,

The welfare system as a whole will be strengthened. It is the greatest redistributive power that exists. That is why it must not fall short. But if there is one thing that the pandemic laid bare, it is that the welfare system has its shortcomings.

The Swedish welfare system is borne up by its workers. They need more colleagues, the right training and better working environments.

This is a major undertaking, but it is not impossible.

Important steps have been taken. The Government has successively provided more money to municipalities and regions in recent years. Today, 100 000 more people work in the welfare system than in 2014. The children of the large generation of people born in the 1990s are now entering education. The many people born in the 1940s are entering their eighties and should receive the secure care they deserve.

For this reason, the general central government funding will be increased further. Cancer care, psychiatric care, maternity care and emergency service care will be prioritised as health care is expanded. Waiting lists will be shortened, health centres strengthened and continuity of care in general practice will be ensured for more people.

The work on new legislation on care for older people to boost quality and equality in care will continue. The right of all home-help service users to a dedicated contact person will be established in law. Those working in care for older people will have the opportunity to study on paid work time to

become an assistant nurse, and a recovery bonus has been introduced to allow for better working conditions.

The work for secure pensions is about respect for those who have helped to build our country. Pensions have been increased for those who have had a long working life with low pay. The housing supplement will be further increased. A structural reform to strengthen the incomes of the most disadvantaged pensioners in the long term will be presented. This will mean up to SEK 1 000 more each month. A security pension will be introduced so that people over the age of 60 who are physically worn out will not have to take out their old-age pension prematurely. Pensions need to be raised further. For this reason, payments into the pension system must increase. The issue will be laid before the Working Group on Pensions.

When you need society most, a strong society should be there for you. The Government has already eliminated the permanent gap between pensioners and wage earners. Taxes are now also being lowered substantially for people receiving sickness and activity compensation. The direction is clear. The tax gap between those with disabilities and wage earners is unjust. The guarantee benefit in sickness and activity compensation will increase. The Government will continue to strengthen the right to personal assistance.

Those who become ill should have support to quickly return to work. A comprehensive investment is being made to increase financial security in case of illness. The sickness benefit ceiling is being raised. Proposals from the sickness insurance inquiry will be implemented to allow more time for rehabilitation and increased flexibility for older people, on-demand employees and those on part-time sick leave.

Municipal schools assume greater overall responsibility than independent schools, and they should also have adequate resources for this. Tax revenue intended for schools should go to schools. School admissions must be fair, providing equal opportunities and equal possibilities.

Reform by reform, step by step, the welfare system can be made stronger and more equitable, now and in the future. Likewise, it can be dismantled, step by step, reform by reform.

It is political will that decides.

It is possible to take back democratic control over the welfare system. Let us do so.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

When the pandemic hit our country, we came together across party lines to protect our people and Swedish jobs. I would like to thank the Riksdag parties that have engaged in constructive and solution-oriented cooperation with the Government during this electoral period, not least the Centre Party and the Liberal Party for their cooperation on economic policy.

The pandemic is not over. Global and equitable access to vaccines must be secured. New mutations of the virus are a worrying development. The trend is negative in a number of countries in Europe and around the world. Infection rates are beginning to increase in Sweden, too. The Government is preparing for the situation to worsen.

The single most important thing now is that vaccinations continue apace. Everyone over the age of 18 will be offered a third dose. Now we must reach the groups with low vaccination rates. There are major variations between regions. The methods that work best to reach as many people as possible must be spread. I want to urge the regions to learn from each other – and I want to urge everyone in Sweden to get vaccinated. We do it for our own sake – but also for each other.

Sweden must be well prepared. The Pandemic Act has been extended. The Government is prepared to take the necessary measures in the fight against the virus and will present a new action plan shortly. Further measures to maintain safe distances in public places will be necessary. As of 1 December, vaccination certificates will be required for certain indoor public gatherings and events with more than 100 participants, and a consultation on a proposal to require vaccination certificates at restaurants and gyms will take place shortly.

The communicable diseases legislation will be reviewed so that new legislation is in place ahead of future pandemics. New crisis legislation will be investigated.

I will also make organisational changes in the Government Offices.

The Crisis Management Coordination Secretariat, which was previously at the Ministry of Justice, will move to the Prime Minister's Office.

Thanks to responsible fiscal policy, Sweden went into the pandemic with its lowest national debt since 1977. The unemployment rate is now back to the same level as before the pandemic. And although Sweden has invested hundreds of billions of kronor in crisis measures to save jobs and businesses during the pandemic, our public finances are still strong. So strong, in fact, that shifting from a surplus target to a balance target is justified.

Culture will play a key role in society's restart. Culture takes us outside of ourselves and brings us closer together. A free and independent cultural sector is fundamental to any successful democratic society. Support to theatres, museums, visual arts and design, film, libraries, orchestras, concert halls and dance groups throughout the country will be reinforced.

We will also have diverse independent media and strong public service broadcasting throughout the country. Rapid technological and media developments are revolutionising access to information, but also risk increasing disparities and polarisation in society.

The budgetary appropriations for sport will substantially increase so as to boost participation, primarily among children and young people, and people with disabilities.

Our national minorities' cultures and language rights will be reinforced and the legal protection against discrimination will be enhanced. Early next year, the human rights institute in Lund will be established to promote and defend human rights at national level. Racism, hate crime and intolerance have no place in Sweden. Activities that counteract or prevent racism will receive increased support.

In March, Sweden will assume the Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Sweden's Holocaust museum will open next summer.

* * *

Mr Speaker,

Swedish foreign policy will safeguard Sweden's self-determination, Sweden's democracy and the security of the Swedish people. Promoting peace and

development is in Sweden's immediate interests, and benefits the rest of the world. It is therefore in Sweden's interests to encourage collaboration and dialogue between countries and stand up for an international legal order. Four areas will be particularly emphasised:

Firstly: cooperation must be strengthened in our immediate neighbourhood – in the Nordic region and the EU.

Various kinds of border barriers keeping the peoples of the Nordic region apart is an alien phenomenon. Free movement between the Nordic countries needs to be reinstated as soon as possible. Nordic cooperation is being deepened and broadened, with particular emphasis on joint crisis response. The Nordic and Baltic countries should lead the way in Europe and, together, be one of the world's most integrated, sustainable and digitalised regions.

European cooperation is crucial for Sweden. It's about jobs, since the EU is our most important market. It's about peace and security, both in our neighbourhood and further afield. But that's not all. The climate, migration, vaccines and fighting cross-border and organised crime – all of these can be better tackled in cooperation with others.

The EU is built on common values. EU Member States that do not respect human rights and democratic principles such as independent courts, academic freedom and media freedom should not receive EU funds unconditionally.

Sweden wants an open and more equal Europe, with better working conditions and greater gender equality. But the Swedish labour market model and our forestry must not be subject to exhaustive rules from Brussels.

Secondly: Sweden's 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. Sweden will not apply for membership of NATO. Sweden will not take a passive stance if another Nordic country or EU Member State suffers a disaster or an attack, and we expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. The EU is Sweden's most important foreign and security policy arena. Our ongoing term as Chair of the OSCE gives Sweden an opportunity to safeguard the European security order.

Sweden and the EU condemn Russia's military aggression towards Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea. The situation of the people who are stuck at the border between Poland and Belarus is unacceptable. Belarus's actions will be met with increased sanctions.

Thirdly: Sweden's security and development are best secured together with others.

The greatest challenges of our time – the climate, the pandemic, safeguarding democracy – are best tackled through multilateral cooperation, based on international law and the United Nations Charter.

In a welcome development, the United States is once again a constructive partner on these issues. The transatlantic relationship is essential to the security and prosperity of Sweden and Europe.

The conflicts of today demand the engagement of the rest of the world. Lasting peace between Israel and Palestine requires a two-state solution. Intractable conflicts continue to afflict the peoples of Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Yemen and Mali. Alleviating the humanitarian consequences of war and resolving conflicts in the long term requires regional and international cooperation. Development assistance must prevent and address climate change to a greater extent. The focus on democracy in development cooperation will continue, as will efforts to strengthen women's and girls' rights. An additional 70 million people are living in extreme poverty due to the pandemic. Sweden's official development assistance will be equivalent to one per cent of gross national income.

Fourthly: Sweden must be equipped to meet the major geopolitical, technological and economic shifts of our time.

Society's capacity to manage crises must be strong, in peacetime as in wartime. Sweden is deepening its defence cooperation with Finland and other Nordic neighbours, within the EU, with the United States and in partnership with NATO. Our national defence is being expanded. Five regiments and an air force wing are currently being re-established: in Falun, Sollefteå/Östersund, Arvidsjaur, Kristinehamn, Gothenburg and Uppsala. Civil defence is being strengthened. A new, updated national security strategy is being developed. Sweden remains a strong voice for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

China's growing role represents another of the great global changes of our time. Sweden and the EU will pursue an active policy in relation to China, based on our interests and values.

New migration legislation has entered into force in Sweden. It is well-balanced with a view to ensuring that Swedish migration policy is sustainable in the long term and provides a humane, legally certain and effective regulatory framework that is not materially different from migration policies in other EU Member States.

* * *

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Riksdag,

I began by speaking about Swedish democracy and 100 years of universal and equal suffrage.

We are democracy. We who live in Sweden, we who work here, we who are raising the next generations.

We must keep this in mind when we encounter each other in our day-to-day lives. I want us to treat each other with respect. It is we – all of us, together – who bear Sweden up.

Maybe we're standing in the health centre, syringes at the ready, steadily working our way through the people queuing for vaccines.

Maybe we're coming up with funny rhymes about bats and gloves to reduce the chaos in the preschool cloakroom now that the weather is getting cold.

Maybe we've got loads to do in the garage just now, because people have a tendency to leave it until the last minute to change to winter tyres.

We all contribute to the Sweden we love. And there are many of us doing our bit for democracy, in our coffee break, when booking a slot in the communal laundry room, on the construction site, often without even thinking about it.

When we speak out. When we demand respect. For ourselves, for our colleagues, or for an unknown fellow human being who is being treated unfairly. Trusting that others are doing the same for us. We cannot have a Sweden in which one group looks down on another.

The introduction of universal suffrage in 1921 was not the end of our democracy-building – it was the starting point.

The fight for democracy, for human dignity and respect, for every person's power to influence their day-to-day lives and our common society – that never ends.

We will take this fight with us in what remains of this parliamentary session as we take forceful action against crime, surge ahead in the climate transition and take back control of the welfare system.

We will take this fight with us into the election campaign in 2022 and onward into the coming decades.

Everyone has a responsibility. And everyone's efforts are needed.

The Sweden we will build together, with respect for each other, is a stronger Sweden.

* * *

