



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture

# Government Offices takes part in Pride 2018

Published 18 July 2018

The Government Offices will take part in Stockholm Pride for the 14th time. Advancing equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people is a priority for the Government. Taking part in Pride is one way of increasing awareness about the Government's work.

The Government Offices will take part in EuroPride Park Stockholm to raise awareness about the Government's policies with regard to LGBTI people. EuroPride visitors will be able to meet several ministers in the Government Offices tent, test their LGBTI knowledge in a quiz and hear about what it's like to work at the Government Offices.

EuroPride is an international event attracting visitors from across Europe. This year, EuroPride 2018 is being jointly organised between Sweden's two Pride festivals, Stockholm Pride and West Pride, and will take place in Stockholm on 27 July–5 August and in Gothenburg on 14–19 August.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# More culture to more children and young people

Published 16 April 2018

In the spring amending budget for 2018, the Government is proposing that the Swedish Arts Council receive SEK 10 million to go to culture for children and young people as a temporary initiative during 2018. The funding supplements the comprehensive grants towards culture for children and young people already provided by the Swedish Arts Council. The initiative is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

"To be able to sing, draw, dance and access culture from an early age is important for all children, regardless of where in the country they live. With this initiative, we are strengthening the important work carried out by the Swedish Arts Council and other actors throughout the country," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

A central objective of culture policy is to promote the opportunities for children and young people to access high quality arts and culture, both in rural areas and in larger towns and cities, and to increase the opportunities for their own creativity. It is particularly important to reach more target groups.

The funds will constitute a complement to the comprehensive funding currently allocated by the Swedish Arts Council. The new funds raise the level of ambition in order to give more children and young people the possibility to access arts and culture and stimulate their own creativity. The Government will provide more information on how the assignment to the

Swedish Arts Council will be formulated at a later date.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The Government enhances support to smaller cinemas throughout the country

Published 11 April 2018

In the spring amending budget for 2018, the Government is investing an additional SEK 15 million in 2018 to provide temporary enhanced support to smaller cinemas and film festivals. This is a boost in addition to the investment of SEK 25 million being made annually in 2016–2019. The investment is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

“Culture throughout the country is a priority issue for me. There has been great demand for the funds we have already earmarked for cinemas in smaller towns and to film festivals. We will therefore provide an additional SEK 15 million to this initiative this year,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

The Swedish Film Institute will be tasked with deciding on the details of how the support will be used, based on the needs of the target group. This could entail an increase in the amount of support provided per application, or of making support available to broader target groups. It could also entail enhanced support to other actors that contribute to a dynamic film culture throughout the country, such as film festivals.

This is one of several investments in Swedish film and film production the Government has made during this electoral period.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The new media support scheme

Published 13 March 2018 Updated 13 March 2018

The Government has presented a bill on media support to the Riksdag. The bill proposes introducing a supplementary new media support scheme while preserving the existing press subsidy scheme.

The bill will include proposals to supplement the existing press subsidy scheme with a new technology-neutral and platform-neutral media support scheme to help innovation and reinforce local news coverage in areas currently with little or no journalistic coverage. The media support scheme is based on the model proposed by the recent independent Media Inquiry commissioned by the Government.

## Introducing two new forms of technology-neutral media support

The new media support scheme will be open for all general news media without any restrictions as to platform, technology or form. The aim of the scheme is to strengthen democracy by supporting a diversity of general news media with editorial content of high quality. This will help to increase the accessibility of independent news coverage in all parts of the country. One part of the scheme is support intended to give incentives for new initiatives from general news media to provide local news coverage in areas currently with little or no journalistic coverage. The practical details of this support will be designed to promote long-term engagement. A maximum allocation of SEK 1 million per designated area is proposed (normally such an area would be the same as a municipality). The new media support scheme also includes expanded innovation and development support. Subject to the approval of the European Commission, the full scheme will enter into force on 1 January 2019.

## Expanding and extending existing press subsidies

The existing press subsidy scheme has two parts: the main operational subsidy for newspapers and a small distribution subsidy for collaborative distribution schemes for printed newspapers. Both are allocated according to set tariffs which are determined according to size of circulation. It is proposed that the distribution subsidy increase by 50 per cent and that the operational subsidy within the same scheme increase by 10 per cent for high and medium periodicity newspapers. Subject to the approval of the European Commission, the scheme will be extended without any other changes from 1 January 2019.

## Increased appropriation for media support

The total budget of the two support schemes – the existing press subsidy scheme and the supplementary new media support scheme – will be raised by SEK 55 million for 2019 and by an additional SEK 55 million per year from 2020. The total budget, including the present press subsidy scheme, will be SEK 622 million ( $\approx$  EUR 62 million) in 2019 and SEK 677 million ( $\approx$  EUR 68 million) from 2020.



Article

# The Government is increasing the budget for culture by SEK 745 million

Published 17 October 2017

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government is increasing the budget for culture by SEK 745 million. This includes SEK 275 million to be invested in libraries and SEK 115 million in freedom of the arts. In addition, further investments will be made on democracy policy and anti-discrimination policy. The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

"This is the largest increase ever in the budget for culture that any Minister for Culture has presented. The increase in the culture policy share of the central government budget is a historic victory for culture, which shows that this Government is committed to giving priority to the role of culture in our society," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

## A selection of culture policy initiatives in the Budget Bill for 2018

### SEK 250 million for better libraries throughout the country

The Government proposes that SEK 250 million be allocated each year in 2018–2020 to increase the range and accessibility of library activities throughout the country. A total of SEK 25 million per year of this investment will be provided to the cultural cooperation model, which allocates funds to

libraries and activities to promote reading and literature.

[Link to press release](#)

## Digital library initiative to improve source criticism

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government proposes that the National Library of Sweden receive an extra SEK 25 million per year for three years. The aim is to improve people's digital skills and ability to critically appraise sources.

[Link to press release](#)

## SEK 115 million to enhance freedom of the arts

To enhance freedom of the arts throughout the country, the Government proposes an investment totalling SEK 115 million per year in the Budget Bill for 2018. This investment represents an increase of the grants and remunerations allocated directly to artists, independent performing arts groups and cultural publications.

[Link to press release](#)

## Sweden to get its first national stage for children and young people

The Government has decided to designate the 'Unga Klara' theatre company a national stage for children and young people. State support to the theatre company will amount to an estimated SEK 16.2 million in 2018, and then SEK 15.4 million per year.

[Link to press release](#)

## SEK 10 million to a national cultural school centre

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government proposes an allocation of SEK 10 million to the Swedish Arts Council from 2018 for the establishment of a national cultural school centre at the agency. This investment will be made to enable the Swedish Arts Council to serve as a national hub.

The Government intends to strengthen architecture and

## design for sustainably shaped habitats

Architecture and design affect people every day. In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government presents a proposal of increased funds to strengthen and develop the architecture and design area, and work on sustainably shaped habitats, of SEK 28 million per year in total for 2018–2020, and of SEK 5 million from 2021.

## Government is investing in free genealogy research

The Government proposes that appropriations to the National Archives be increased by SEK 10 million from 2018 so the fees to access digital archive material can be removed. This will make some 100 million digital archive images freely available, reducing costs for private individuals who conduct genealogy or area research.

[Link to press release](#)

## Ingmar Bergman centenary initiatives

On 14 July 2018, Ingmar Bergman would have celebrated his 100th birthday. He was one of Sweden's internationally most renowned and important artists ever. The Budget Bill for 2018 proposes allocating grants to the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Ingmar Bergman Foundation, the Fårö Bergman Centre Foundation and the Swedish Film Institute for initiatives to highlight the centenary nationally and internationally.

[Link to press release](#)

## The Government invests in new Nationalmuseum

The Government proposes that the Nationalmuseum be allocated SEK 65 million for 2018 and SEK 42 million per year from 2019. The one-time increase of SEK 23 million for 2018 is related to the increased costs in connection with Nationalmuseum's move into the renovated premises at Blasieholmen.

## Conservation of cultural heritage to receive an additional SEK 25 million

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government proposes an increase of appropriations to the conservation of the cultural heritage by SEK 25 million a year from 2018. This investment means that the Government will improve conditions to enable cultural environment initiatives to address important objectives. Examples include the establishment of cultural reserves and making cultural environments accessible.

## Investment in digital broadcasts in the performing arts

The Government proposes that SEK 15 million per year during 2018–2020 be allocated to the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Royal Opera and the Swedish National Touring Theatre for investment in digital broadcasts of performances.

## A selection of media policy initiatives in the Budget Bill for 2018

### SEK 110 million for new media support

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government proposes allocating SEK 55 million to prepare an increased and long-term investment on local journalism and news coverage through a new form of media support starting in 2019. An additional SEK 55 million will be allocated from 2020.

### Allocations to film will remain at the same level

The Government proposes that an additional SEK 25 million per year be allocated to film from 2020. This means the level of allocations to film will remain the same after 2019, when the special initiative on cinemas in rural areas and small towns is concluded.

## A selection of democracy policy initiatives in the Budget Bill for 2018

### Investments totalling SEK 85.1 million ahead of the 2018 general elections and the 2019 European Parliament elections

The percentage of people voting rose in the last three general elections. The

same is also true for the past two European Parliament elections in Sweden. At the same time, large differences remain in voter turnout between different groups in the population and electoral districts. In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government therefore proposes a number of measures totalling SEK 85.1 million to raise interest and participation in the 2018 and 2019 elections.

## **The Government to invest additional millions to safeguard the democratic dialogue against threats and hate**

The democratic dialogue must not be limited by threats and hatred. The Government is therefore strengthening preventive efforts to safeguard the democratic dialogue against threats and hate by an additional SEK 5 million annually in 2018–2020. This is a further increase to the SEK 5 million per year for the period 2017–2020 that was allocated in the Budget Bill for 2017.

## **The Government wishes to support security-enhancing measures in civil society**

Special measures will be conducted to support civil society's continued opportunities to spread knowledge, mobilise and strengthen capacity in human rights efforts, and to protect democracy.

## **A selection of initiatives in the Budget Bill for 2018 on anti-discrimination policy, Sami policy, and the policy on national minorities**

### **The Government proposes strengthened anti-discrimination initiatives**

Discrimination must be combated. The Government therefore wishes to strengthen anti-discrimination efforts by increasing appropriations to the Equality Ombudsman by SEK 10 million, which is an increase of 9 per cent compared with the current appropriation level. The Government proposes the allocation of an additional SEK 15 million to local anti-discrimination offices, which is double the previous amount.

### **Strengthened support to the Sami people and national minorities' culture**

The Government proposes a considerable increase of support from the Sami Parliament and the Swedish Arts Council to the Sami people and the national minorities' culture. For the first time, the Government will also allocate long-term funds to children and young people's films in minority languages.

## **Investments in more administrative municipalities for Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami**

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government proposes that new municipalities join the administrative areas for Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli. To fund this, appropriations will be increased by SEK 16 million in 2018 and by SEK 20 million per year from 2019.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Ingmar Bergman centenary initiatives

Published 22 September 2017

On 14 July 2018, Ingmar Bergman would have celebrated his 100th birthday. He was one of Sweden's internationally most renowned and important artists ever. The Budget Bill for 2018 proposes allocating grants to the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Ingmar Bergman Foundation, the Fårö Bergman Centre Foundation and the Swedish Film Institute for initiatives to highlight the centenary nationally and internationally.

“The importance of Ingmar Bergman to Swedish cultural life cannot be overestimated, either in Sweden or abroad. This is why we must preserve, promote and share his legacy,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

This initiative involves the following.

- The Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Ingmar Bergman Foundation and the Fårö Bergman Centre Foundation will be allocated a total of SEK 8 million in 2018.
- The Swedish Film Institute will be allocated SEK 5 million from 2018 and an additional SEK 10 million from 2019 for preserving Ingmar Bergman's film heritage.
- Starting in 2019, it is proposed that the Fårö Bergman Centre Foundation receive annual support.

The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Digital library initiative to improve source criticism

Published 22 September 2017

The Government proposes in the Budget Bill for 2018 to give the National Library of Sweden an extra SEK 25 million per year for three years. The aim is to improve people's digital skills and ability to critically appraise sources.

“At a time when more and more people are unable to differentiate between fact and opinion, we all need to be equipped with a better ability to critically appraise sources. Libraries play a particularly important role in this,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

Under the Library Act, libraries should promote the development of democratic society by contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and the free formation of opinion. Public libraries should also promote knowledge about how to use information technology for knowledge acquisition, learning and participation in cultural life.

The initiative means that in 2018–2020 the National Library will support regional library activities in their efforts to make greater use of the opportunities offered by digital transformation and open available knowledge.

The initiative will enter into force on 1 January 2018.

The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# SEK 250 million for better libraries throughout the country

Published 22 September 2017

The Government proposes that SEK 250 million be allocated each year in 2018–2020 to increase the range and accessibility of library activities throughout the country. A total of SEK 25 million per year of this investment will be provided to the cultural cooperation model, which allocates funds to libraries and activities to promote reading and literature. The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

“Now, as the icy winds of polarisation and deliberate disinformation blast against us, we need welcoming spaces full of knowledge and guidance. Those who are serious about important concepts like freedom of opinion need to ensure that libraries are open, accessible and staffed. The Government is now demonstrating its firm belief that libraries are a guarantee for a living democracy,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

The Swedish Arts Council will be instructed to implement the initiative and allocate the funds.

Over time, the number of public libraries and library branches has declined, which is an alarming trend. At the same time as the number of libraries is declining, there has also been a drop in the number of visits and physical loans, and proportion of the population who are active borrowers.

More libraries will enable more people to borrow books and read

newspapers. It will also give more people access to other library activities, such as 'language cafés', reading-promotion activities, lectures and exhibitions.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Government invests in free genealogy research

Published 22 September 2017

The Government proposes that the appropriation to the National Archives be increased by SEK 10 million from 2018 to abolish fees to access digital archive material. This will make some 100 million digital archive images freely available, reducing costs for private individuals to conduct genealogy or area research.

“Our ancestral history is part of our shared cultural heritage. Genealogy research has become a popular movement that makes our cultural heritage tangible and brings it to life. People’s curiosity about their own background can also make it easier to understand and learn from our history,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

In its cultural heritage policy bill, the Government held it to be contradictory that the National Archives charges for access to archive material at the same time as it has been tasked by the Government to promote open data in central government administration.

There has long been a desire for archive material to be freely available.

The digital material that will be made freely available through the Government’s initiative can also be used in a variety of digital products and services. It is suggested that the proposal enter into force on 1 January 2018.

This investment is part of the Budget Bill for 2018, which is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Sweden to get its first national stage for children and young people

Published 21 September 2017

The Government has decided to make the ‘Unga Klara’ theatre company a national theatre institute for children and young people as of 2018. State support for the theatre company will amount to an estimated SEK 16.2 million in 2018, and then SEK 15.4 million per year. This means that state support to Unga Klara will be more than doubled compared with today.

“It’s fantastic that Sweden is finally getting a national stage for children’s and young people’s performing arts. A lot of people have been working hard for a long time to make this happen,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

This is the first theatre company focusing exclusively on children and young people to receive the status of a national institute. By making Unga Klara a national theatre institute, the Government is working to give children and young people in Sweden access to high-quality and pioneering theatre throughout the country. In its remit, Unga Klara is to cooperate with other actors that contribute to this aim. Unga Klara’s work on theatre for children and young people – which is in many ways unique and pioneering – has for many years now made the theatre an institute of national interest with the opportunity to be a leading institute in its area, like other national stages.

The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Investments in more administrative municipalities for Finnish and Meänkieli and Sami

Published 20 September 2017

The Government proposes in the Budget Bill for 2018 that new municipalities join the administrative areas for the national minority languages of Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli. To fund this, the appropriation will be increased by SEK 16 million in 2018 and by SEK 20 million per year from 2019. The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

“The results of the process initiated when the Government took office are now being seen. More and stronger administrative municipalities are central to the Government’s policy to strengthen the rights of national minorities and live up to what is stated in the law,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

New administrative municipalities joining the administrative areas will mean enhanced rights for national minorities around Sweden. This applies to preschools, elderly care, language, culture and empowerment opportunities for more people.

The appropriation will increase as of 2018. The Government will now examine the requests to be included in one or more administrative areas ahead of 2018 that were submitted to the Government Offices by 1 April 2017.

## **Administrative areas**

The administrative areas offer enhanced protection of the Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli languages. In these areas, individuals have the right to use their minority language in contacts with government agencies and have access to preschools and elderly care in their minority language. Municipalities, county councils and regions in these administrative areas receive government grants to cover the extra costs entailed by the legislation.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# SEK 115 million to enhance artistic freedom

Published 20 September 2017

To enhance artistic freedom throughout the country, the Government proposes an investment totalling SEK 115 million per year in the Budget Bill for 2018. This investment represents an increase of the grants and remunerations allocated directly to artists, independent performing arts groups and cultural publications.

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“Cultural freedom and independent cultural practitioners are essential to all free societies. In a world where those in power are restricting the conditions for independent artists, the Government is moving in the opposite direction,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

The package to enhance artistic freedom includes the following.

- Grants and remunerations allocated directly to artists will be increased by SEK 60 million per year. Some of this funding may also be allocated to innovative activities under the Culture Bridge project.
- The Swedish Arts Council’s appropriations to independent performing arts groups will receive an additional SEK 25 million per year.
- Independent actors in the area of visual art and design will receive an additional SEK 12 million per year.
- The Public Art Agency Sweden’s support to artistic design of the shared

environment will receive SEK 10 million per year.

- The Swedish Arts Council's support for publishing literature and cultural magazines will be increased by SEK 8 million per year.

The Budget Bill for 2018 is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture

# Ending Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Published 29 June 2017

Op-ed by Swedish Minister of Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke and Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, Huffington Post 29 June 2017 The safety of journalists is deteriorating across the globe. Journalists and media workers are victims of censorship, pressure, threats, physical abuse, violent attacks or mortal violence. Tackling this challenge successfully calls for political will and intensified cooperation. We call on all governments to join UNESCO in a renewed and stronger commitment to defend freedom of expression.

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is a priority of the Swedish government. The issue is at the top of the national agenda as well as in Swedish development cooperation across the world. Sweden works hand-in-hand with UNESCO, and the leadership of the United Nation is essential to successfully address a complex, sensitive and global challenge affecting most countries.

In this, special attention and resources must go to women journalists and media workers. Women face specific forms of threats, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence, both online and offline, with deep impact in terms of self-censorship and the ability of women journalists to carry out their chosen profession.

At the core of the problem is impunity. It is unacceptable that human rights continue to be violated today and still meet with impunity. It is unacceptable that journalists and media workers are being kidnapped, tortured and killed and that perpetrators are not held accountable. We cannot accept impunity

for serious crimes, which, in addition to being tragic in themselves, threaten to weaken societies by curbing peoples' right to free expression and information.

Over the last ten years, 845 journalists and media workers have been killed across the world. This means that one journalist or media worker has been killed on the job every four days over the last decade. In more than nine out of ten cases, the perpetrators of these crimes go unpunished. According to figures reported to UNESCO by Member States, in the majority of cases, there is no information on any judicial follow-up.

This has to end, and the only way is for all governments to make ending impunity an absolute priority. This means ensuring judicial follow-up. It means strengthening laws, training legislators and law enforcement agencies. It means ensuring quality journalist education and supporting media organisations, including measures that protect individual and freelance journalists.

To support national action, UNESCO is spearheading the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The Plan encompasses all key actors -- States, UN agencies, civil society organizations, media agencies and experts with a view to deepen cooperation and intensify action at national level.

On 29 June, all of these actors are meeting in Geneva to set new commitments to take forward the UN Plan of Action. In addition to action at the global level, the Swedish government will shortly present a national action plan to protect journalists, media workers, artists and elected officials, within the scope of safeguarding democratic debate.

We need more governments to adopt national plans for comprehensive action, guided by the principles of three Ps -- prevention, protection and prosecution. In this, UNESCO is supporting individual countries in establishing journalist safety mechanisms, such in Colombia, and in reinforcing the capacities of judges and legal professionals -- successful experience in Latin America will soon be replicated in African countries. In addition, security forces should be trained on obligations connected to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, as UNESCO has done in Tunisia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Iraq and recently in The Gambia.

Lastly, we must join forces to raise awareness. In 2013, the United Nations designated November 2 as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. In a short time, this annual occasion has contributed to putting the issue of impunity higher on both the international and national agendas.

Awareness of freedom of expression and impunity have also increased by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 of the 2030

Agenda, calls for peaceful and inclusive societies with effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

We need strong action to protect journalists and media workers. We must all stand up today to defend the women and men who as journalists defend our rights and freedoms. If we cannot protect them, then our democracies and societies are at grave risk. Journalists and media workers are the backbone of healthy society and functioning democracy, and they play a crucial role in ensuring good governance and the rule of law.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Waldemarsudde to be independent of Nationalmuseum

Published 18 April 2017

In the 2017 Spring Budget, the Government proposes that the Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde art museum be separated in organisational terms from Nationalmuseum. This change will give Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde better opportunities to operate in accordance with the provisions in Prince Eugen's will. The proposal is expected to enter into force on 1 July 2017.

This issue has been under investigation and preparation for a long time. By separating Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde from Nationalmuseum, the Government is resolving the organisational problems that have existed since the state took over responsibility in 1995. In future, the museum will be included in its entirety in the foundation, and the funding that currently goes to Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde via the agency Nationalmuseum and Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde will instead be channelled via appropriation 8:3 Grants to certain museums.

The agency's name will be changed from Nationalmuseum and Prins Eugen's Waldemarsudde to Nationalmuseum.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# School elections initiative inspires young voters

Published 18 April 2017

In the spring amending budget for 2017, the Government is allocating SEK 5 million to the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society to make preparations for school elections in connection with the 2018 national general election and the 2019 European Parliament election. The initiative will benefit a large number of pupils; approximately 1 800 schools took part in the school elections ahead of the 2014 parliamentary elections.

School elections offer a concrete experience of what it is like to vote, and provide schools with the opportunity to discuss the democratic system and the principles of democracy. The initiative will target pupils in upper secondary school and the higher grades of compulsory school in connection with the elections in 2018 and 2019. Special focus will be placed on making school elections available in schools located in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

Since 2002, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has received funds to coordinate school elections in connection with parliamentary elections. The year 2014 was the first time the Agency coordinated school elections ahead of European Parliament elections.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry of the Environment

# A forum for shaping the future of the Baltic Sea region

Published 16 November 2016 Updated 16 November 2016

Creating a common future based on trust and dialogue is necessary for the prosperity and security of the Baltic Sea region. This was Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's message when he delivered the opening speech at the 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The overarching purpose of this year's Forum was to encourage a discussion about how the Baltic Sea region should equip itself ahead of future challenges and opportunities from a 2030 perspective and within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Strategy Forum was held at The Brewery Conference Centre in Stockholm on 8–9 November and brought together a record number of participants – over 1 300 people from all over the Baltic Sea region. The participants represented the political level, the business sector, academia and civil society.

## From social entrepreneurship to EU-Russian cooperation

During two intensive days, some 40 political seminars, workshops and other activities were held focusing on digital and social entrepreneurship, EU-Russian cooperation, bioeconomy, circular economy and sustainable seas.

This was the seventh Strategy Forum in a row, and the first to be held in Sweden. The Forum was hosted by the Swedish Government together with the Nordic Council of Ministers, in close cooperation with the European

Commission. In addition to the Prime Minister, participants from the Government included Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Rural Affairs Sven-Erik Bucht, Minister for Infrastructure Anna Johansson and Minister for the Environment Karolina Skoog.

## Common security

In his opening speech, Mr Löfven stressed the importance of cooperation that is both a driving force and forward-looking.

"We are here because we want to have our own hands on the rudder, and not simply be steered by events elsewhere. We are here to shape the future of the Baltic Sea. So welcome to Sweden, welcome to Stockholm, and welcome to the incredibly important work we have ahead of us.

"I am a firm believer in the idea of common security. Common security is a term coined by one of my predecessors, Olof Palme, and is based on the idea that we must cooperate across national borders and create a common future built on trust and dialogue. Which is exactly what we are doing here today," said Mr Löfven.

Speech by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven at the Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region



Article from Ministry of Culture

# New reading initiative will get more children and young people to read

Published 22 September 2016 Updated 22 September 2016

The Government is investing a total of SEK 60 million over four years in reading promotion initiatives in the area of culture. Initiatives will also be carried out in the schools sector. The aim is to improve reading skills and increase reading among children and young people throughout the country. The initiatives are part of the Budget Bill for 2017, which is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

The importance of reading comprehension and the ability to assimilate written information cannot be overstated. Through reading, we learn to understand the way other people think, to reflect, draw conclusions and construct arguments. From an early age, literature and reading experiences are important for building up language and reading skills.

Even if, on the whole, reading habits among the Swedish population are stable, there are some worrying trends. There are large differences between different population groups and the proportion of young people who read regularly is decreasing. In addition, the reading skills of Swedish pupils have deteriorated noticeably over a fairly short period of time. The Government therefore proposes the following initiatives in the area of reading promotion:

## Bokstart (Book Start)

The reading promotion initiative Bokstart, which was launched by the Swedish Arts Council, will receive an additional SEK 10 million annually between 2017 and 2020. The additional funds means that the initiative can

be extended to include more regions and that it can be more clearly linked to preschool. Bokstart is a collaboration between child health services and public libraries, aimed at stimulating young children's language development. The initiative was expanded in 2016 to cover five areas in different parts of the country.

## Läslov (Reading holidays)

The Government proposes that SEK 5 million be committed annually between 2017 and 2020 to reading promotion activities during school holidays. To support the initiative Läslov vecka 44 (reading holiday week 44), which was launched by Läsrörelsen (the Reading movement), the Government wants to provide support to reading promotion activities ahead of and during school holidays. There is also a need for literature and reading promotion initiatives in the national minority languages.

## All of Sweden reads with children

The Government has appointed a delegation tasked with compiling the reading promotion measures carried out in and outside schools within the framework of the initiative Hela Sverige läser med barnen (All of Sweden reads with children). The aim is to help give all children and young people more equal opportunities to develop an adequate reading ability and to stimulate their desire to read.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Continued efforts for a Sweden that stands together – Government to invest SEK 132 million

Published 21 September 2016 Updated 21 September 2016

The Government is mobilising efforts to foster an open and democratic society. Initiatives within the framework of ‘a Sweden that stands together’ were presented in the 2016 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill. This work will continue with additional initiatives for a society with open meeting places, more local cultural activities and an enhanced civil society, as well as measures against discrimination, extremism, threats and hate. A total of SEK 132 million is being committed in the Budget Bill for 2017 and the autumn amending budget for 2016. The initiatives are included in the Budget Bill for 2017 and the autumn amending budget for 2016, which are based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

The Government will address the challenges facing Sweden with increased investments for an open and democratic society. A Sweden with widening gaps and increased segregation risks becoming ever more polarised when meeting places and points of contact between different people disappear.

Our country is characterised by pluralism and diversity, which represents a

major resource, but we are also vulnerable to mistrust between groups. This mistrust can also be exploited by racist and violent extremist movements.

Those who make their voices heard, such as journalists, elected representatives and cultural practitioners, are all too often subjected to hate and threats. There is a risk that the hardening tone in the public debate will silence voices that should not be silenced, and media developments lead to an increasing number of media consumers being in information bubbles where their own opinions are only confirmed, rarely challenged.

## Investments for a Sweden that stands together

To curb the trend towards a more divided society, the Government is investing in a Sweden that stands together. The investments aim to improve access to clubhouses and community centres (particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas) to increase knowledge about violent extremism and radicalisation and how they can be prevented, and to strengthen children and young people as critical media users.

The Budget Bill for 2017 also contains an action plan to safeguard the democratic dialogue against threats and hate. The public sphere must be protected from online hate. Journalists, politicians and cultural practitioners must be able to work without being subjected to threats and hate. The autumn amending budget commits SEK 35 million to civil society and religious communities to strengthen their activities that focus on asylum seekers, and for the introduction of new arrivals.

Investments in the area of culture also aim at a cohesive and open Sweden. The Government's proposals include providing funds to the National Historical Museums and the National Museums of World Culture to improve the prospects for a knowledge-based and reflective historiography. Furthermore, it is proposed that the cultural cooperation model be reinforced so that more people in Sweden have access to a free and dynamic culture life.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# A living and shared cultural heritage

Published 21 September 2016 Updated 21 September 2016

The Budget Bill for 2017 contains several initiatives and reforms to safeguard an open and accessible cultural heritage. The proposals include committing resources to digitisation of the Swedish film heritage and to more museums so as to promote democracy and increase participation. The initiatives are included in the Budget Bill for 2017, which is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

The basic idea behind the Government's cultural heritage policy is that cultural heritage is constantly being developed and shaped jointly by people. Everyone is to have the right to help shape our cultural heritage. Together with other reforms, including in the area of culture, cultural heritage policy will also contribute to an inclusive Sweden that stands together.

## Museum agencies promote democracy

The National Historical Museums and the National Museums of World Culture will each receive SEK 4 million per year over a period of four years to improve the prospects for a knowledge-based and reflective historiography. The way people use history and cultural heritage is an important force in the democratic development of society. At present, our society can be characterised as increasingly polarised. It is therefore important that the state museums have resources to contribute to a Sweden that stands together.

## Possibility for civil society to apply for new support in

## the cultural heritage field

The Government will develop and strengthen the grant to cultural environment conservation to enable support to be provided to civil society actors in the field of cultural heritage, such as the Swedish Local Heritage Movement. The involvement of civil society is an important prerequisite to reach many people throughout the country. To accomplish this, SEK 3 million will be allocated to the grant annually over a period of four years.

## Increased investment in more accessible film heritage

The current initiative to digitise our film heritage will receive an additional SEK 2.5 million from 2017. A total of 141 films were already digitised between 2014 and 2015. Thanks to digitisation, more films from the common film heritage can be screened in Sweden and abroad, and preserved for the future.

## National Museums of World Culture's work with threatened cultural heritage

The National Museums of World Culture will receive SEK 1.3 million from 2017 to develop a long-term project aimed at promoting the protection of threatened cultural heritage in, for example, Syria and Iraq. Ongoing international conflicts have resulted in the widespread destruction of priceless relics and illegal trade in cultural objects. The National Museums of World Culture have established contacts with international actors, and have good prospects of developing this work.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The Government is investing in better conditions for culture

Published 21 September 2016 Updated 21 September 2016

In the Budget Bill for 2017, the Government is investing in better conditions for culture by strengthening the performing arts and increasing the public lending right. The purpose of the Government's increased investments is to provide more culture for more people throughout the country. The initiatives are part of the Budget Bill for 2017, which is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

## SEK 259 million to strengthen music throughout the country

The Government is strengthening the performing arts by providing a total of SEK 259 million in 2017–2020. This reinforcement is intended to secure a broad range of high-quality music and good access to music activities throughout the country. In this way, culture will be able to reach more people. The main part of this reinforcement will be distributed within the cultural cooperation model. The Swedish Arts Council and the county councils will therefore pay particular attention to music in their grant allocation. Part of the reinforcement will also be allocated to the Royal Opera and Drottningholms Slottsteater.

In addition to this investment in music, the Government is strengthening the entire cultural cooperation model by providing a total of SEK 120 million in 2017–2020.

## Better conditions for cultural creators

The Government's agreement with authors' organisations will mean a significant reinforcement of the public lending right also in 2017. The public lending right was raised this year as well.

For 2017, the total public lending right is expected to amount to approximately SEK 156.8 million, which is an increase of SEK 7.8 million compared to 2016. The appropriation for compensation and grants to artists will be almost SEK 15 million higher next year than in 2016. The appropriation will total SEK 395.5 million.

Individual cultural creators are important parts of cultural life. To retain a living and vibrant cultural life, it is important for all cultural creators to have reasonable working conditions. The Government sees a continued need to analyse and review the conditions for cultural creators.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The Government is investing in more local culture throughout the country

Published 21 September 2016 Updated 21 September 2016

The Government proposes that an additional SEK 120 million in total be allocated over four years to the cultural cooperation model, a model that gives the county councils greater responsibility to allocate certain central government grants to local and regional cultural activities. The purpose of this investment is to create a more equitable cultural offering throughout the country and to give more people access to culture. This investment is part of the Budget Bill for 2017, which is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

Access to a free and vibrant cultural life is a prerequisite for an open society that promotes participation and democracy. One of the fundamental ideas of the Government's efforts to build our society is that cultural life needs to be accessible for more people and throughout the country.

The Government considers that reinforcing culture locally and regionally – both within the framework of the regional institutions' activities and within the non-institutional cultural sphere – is also important in light of the growing gap between urban and rural areas.

The Government therefore proposes allocating an extra SEK 30 million per year to the cultural cooperation model in 2017–2020. The extra resources

will go to more regional and local culture and provide greater opportunities for regional priorities and a diverse cultural offering.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# More films to more people

Published 21 September 2016 Updated 21 September 2016

The Government is proposing new initiatives so that more films reach more people. By abolishing classification fees, strengthening the initiative to digitise our film heritage by SEK 2.5 million annually and increasing the film subsidy by SEK 20 million from 2019, the Government is taking a yet another step toward this goal. The initiatives are included in the Budget Bill for 2017, which is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

The Government's goal is that more films reach more people. Swedish films are to be a natural and accessible choice for audiences. They are to be distributed and screened in various screening formats throughout the country. Film is a key art form in modern society. It reaches the majority of people regardless of age and background, and thus has a unique impact. Film as an idiom helps to both describe and challenge the times we live in – to entertain and question.

## Classification fees to be abolished

To enable more films to reach more people, the Government wants to abolish classification fees in 2017. In the Budget Bill, the Government announces that such a proposal will be presented in autumn 2016. Once the fees disappear, costs for film distributors will decrease by SEK 3–4 million per year. This will free up resources that the film industry can use for other purposes, such as increased funds for the promotion of films or for investments in the production of new films. Abolishing the fees will also make it possible for distributors to age rate more films. Small distributors of non-mainstream films in particular have not always had the financial means

to have their films age rated. If more films are submitted for classification, more films can also be made accessible to children and young people under the age of 15.

At present, film distributors pay a classification fee so that the Swedish Media Council can set an age rating on the films screened in cinemas for children under the age of 15.

## A more accessible film heritage

The Government proposes increasing the current funding to digitise our film heritage by SEK 2.5 million annually from 2017. Just as new films can provide new insights into our present time, films from the common film heritage can provide useful insights into the lifestyles, values and issues of other times. It is therefore important that the digitised film heritage is preserved for the long term and can be screened for more people in Sweden and abroad.

## Increased film support

It is proposed that the new film policy be strengthened by allocating an additional SEK 20 million annually in film support from 2019. Making a film takes time. It requires long-term and stable economic conditions.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture

# Investment in a new Swedish-Jewish museum

Published 15 April 2016 Updated 15 April 2016

It is proposed that the Jewish Museum in Stockholm receive a contribution of SEK 1.5 million in 2016 for the establishment of a new Swedish-Jewish museum. This is proposed in the Government Bill 'Spring Amending Budget for 2016' following an agreement with the Left Party.

The new museum will focus on Swedish-Jewish history and highlight questions about the conditions of integration. The Government considers that the State should contribute funds for this initiative so as to promote dialogue and opportunities for learning.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# More resources for libraries and access to civic information safeguards open society

Published 15 April 2016 Updated 15 April 2016

The Government is investing SEK 11 million to promote libraries as meeting places for the free formation of opinion, information exchange and opportunities for shared knowledge, and to advance the accessibility of literature and civic information. This is proposed in the Government Bill 'Spring Amending Budget for 2016' following an agreement with the Left Party.

It is proposed that SEK 10.5 million be allocated to public libraries. The aim is to strengthen the role of libraries as important meeting places, where people with different backgrounds and circumstances can meet and access knowledge, literature and culture. Libraries have adapted their activities in various ways so as to better support refugees and people who have recently come to Sweden. SEK 0.5 million will be set aside, for example, for the purchase of literature.

## More people should be able to access civic information on their own terms

People who have recently come to Sweden have a great need to quickly access literature and civic information. The Swedish Agency for Accessible Media is being tasked with advancing accessibility to easy-to-read literature and civic information for groups of people with reading difficulties who do not have Swedish as their mother tongue. In the Spring Amending Budget for 2016, the Government is proposing that the Agency's allocation be increased

by SEK 500 000 for this assignment.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# A concerted effort for a Sweden that keeps together

Published 15 April 2016 Updated 15 April 2016

In the spring budget for 2016, the Government is focusing on safeguarding our open society and democracy, and combating polarisation, racism and violent extremism. SEK 31.5 million will go to measures in 2016 for a Sweden that keeps together. This is proposed in the Government's spring budget for 2016 following an agreement with the Left Party.

Today, there is risk of an increasingly divided society. There are groups and organisations in our country doing all they can to set various population groups against each other, and that view people with a background from other countries as the main problem in society. It is also far too common that politicians, journalists and other opinion-makers are subjected to hatred and threats.

For this reason, the Government is focusing efforts on a Sweden that keeps together – where a diversity of opinions and lifestyles can meet and enrich each other; where democratic conversations can be held in an open social climate and respect for the value of all people and efforts to combat racism and discrimination are key. Sweden is, and has long been, an open country, receptive to knowledge, culture, lifestyles and innovations from around the world. At a time when these values are under threat, it is more important than ever to defend them.

## Increased support for work to combat violent extremism

The advance of violent extremism and terrorism is a serious concern, and

people are worried about terrorist attacks and extremist violence. The Government is therefore investing an additional SEK 18 million in 2016 in efforts to combat violent extremism. SEK 8 million will go to measures taken by municipalities together with civil society. SEK 10 million will go to preventive work in schools, using the 'Kungälv model'. This work focuses mainly on young people who are in or near violent extremist environments.

## **Everyone should be able to take part in the democratic conversation**

Polarisation risks creating a tougher climate for discussions. When people are silenced or become silent due to threats and hatred, it becomes a threat to democracy. There is a great need to safeguard the democratic conversation so as to ensure that everyone can take part without anxiety or fear. The Government is therefore preparing an action plan to guard against threats to the democratic conversation. SEK 3 million will be provided in 2016 for preparatory data collection on threats and hatred.

## **More support for civil society efforts to combat racism and similar forms of hostility**

Civil society organisations are central actors in creating conditions for a Sweden that keeps together. In the shadow of developments over the past year, including arson at asylum centres and racist murders, the Government sees a need for concerted efforts in 2016. SEK 7 million will be devoted to civil society efforts to combat racism and similar forms of hostility, and to special initiatives to strengthen public preparedness to manage crises with racist overtones.

## **The Living History Forum must reach more people**

The Living History Forum will be allocated an additional SEK 3.5 million in 2016. The aim is to provide better conditions for the authority to reach many places in Sweden and people in various social groups. The Living History Forum can reach more people through regional projects, and thus more forcefully promote work on democracy, tolerance and human rights.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# SEK 10 million for work to combat violent extremism

Published 25 September 2015 Updated 25 September 2015

**The Government proposes enhancing efforts to combat violent extremism with an additional SEK 10 million.**

With the new remits given to the National Coordinator in 2015, the Government has considerably strengthened efforts to protect democracy against violent extremism. It is now proposed that this reinforcement be made long-term. The reason is the worrying growth of extremism and terrorism in Sweden and the world. In Sweden, there are violent rightwing and leftwing extremist groups that are active. In the EU's neighbourhood and throughout the world, a number of armed conflicts are raging that create breeding grounds for violent extremism and terrorism, both in these countries and outside them. Several EU countries are also experiencing increased polarisation where racist and xenophobic parties have gained stronger support.

The proposals and the strategy that the National Coordinator has been tasked with drawing up, and the pilot project for a national helpline, can be implemented and further developed with the help of this additional SEK 10 million.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Support for religious communities' security work

Published 25 September 2015 Updated 25 September 2015

The Government proposes giving continued support for security-enhancing measures among religious communities through the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities. SEK 7 million will be allocated.

Freedom of religion is key in Sweden. It must be a given that everyone is able to practise their faith without having to fear threats and violence.

Developments around the world have led to an increase in threats and hatred directed at religious targets.

Religious buildings and other institutions, such as schools, are vandalised. People who wear obviously religious symbols are also at risk of being exposed to threats, violence and harassment purely on the grounds of their religious affiliation.

The judicial authorities are ultimately responsible for public order and safety, but the Government considers that an important supplement to the work of these authorities is to provide continued support for security-enhancing measures among religious communities through the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# More people are to be given the opportunity to attend municipal schools for music and the arts

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government is investing SEK 100 million per year in promoting low fees for municipal schools for music and the arts. This is proposed in the Government's Budget Bill for 2016 following an agreement with the Left Party.

There are several obstacles to attending municipal schools for music and the arts, one of which is high fees. This is why the Government wants to help secure low fees for municipal schools for music and the arts. The aim is to make municipal schools for music and the arts more accessible and equitable.

The Swedish Arts Council will be tasked with administering and distributing the grant.

## Background

In the 2014 Statement of Government Policy, the Prime Minister announced that a national strategy for schools for music and the arts would be drawn up. An Inquiry Chair, Professor Monica Lindgren, has been tasked with drawing up a proposal for a national strategy for municipal schools for music and the arts.

One important part of the remit is to survey and describe the municipal schools for music and the arts and identify obstacles to attending. We already know that the fees are not the only obstacle to attending;

socioeconomic background and geographical differences also mean that not all children have the same opportunities to take part in activities. The conclusions of the Inquiry will provide important material for the Government's future deliberations.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Free admission to certain state museums

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

Following an agreement with the Left Party, the Government proposes that, starting in 2016, the appropriation for state museums be raised by SEK 80 million to introduce free admission at certain state museums.

The Government considers that equal access to our shared cultural heritage should be seen as a democratic right and that it is important for as many people as possible to feel that the museums are there for them.

The reform introducing free admission to state museums that was implemented in 2005 and 2006 enabled many more groups in society to have access to our shared cultural heritage. It is now time once again to open up state museums for everyone.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture

# Nationalmuseum will receive SEK 2 million to enhance culture in the regions

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government is providing Nationalmuseum with an additional SEK 2 million per year from 2016 to strengthen the museum's regional presence.

This investment is to improve access to and participation in culture throughout the country. Enhanced regional cooperation may help to spread the museum's art and collections and make them more accessible. The investment may enable regional cooperation with the county museum Jamtli in Östersund and the establishment of a Nationalmuseum North.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The Government is supporting plans for a national migration museum

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government proposes that Malmö Municipality be given a grant for a feasibility study into the prospects of establishing a national democracy and migration museum. The grant should also be used for an international academic conference in Malmö in spring 2016 to provide the starting point for the feasibility study. The proposal is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

Migration has been a relevant topic throughout history as people in all periods have had cause to move to new areas, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Famine, war, persecution and lack of jobs are some of the reasons forcing people to leave their local communities. During the 1800s and early 1900s, approximately 1.5 million Swedes chose to emigrate to find a better life. Since the Second World War, people have come to Sweden to find protection or because they have been offered work. Many of these people settled in or passed through Malmö and they carry valuable stories of their experiences that can contribute to greater understanding for the conditions of migration and democracy.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Reorganisation of film policy

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government proposes that, as of 2017, the State is to take overall responsibility for national film policy. The State will end the Film Agreement, which has for a long time financed and governed parts of state film policy.

To finance the reorganisation, the Government is setting aside SEK 25 million in 2016 and SEK 235 million a year in 2017 and 2018. This includes a special investment of SEK 25 million per year during the period 2016–2019 to strengthen smaller cinemas in rural areas and small towns.

Film in all its forms is one of the most important forms of expression of our time. It is an art form that reaches the majority of people, irrespective of age and background. Sweden is a small market for films. Without joint investments it is impossible to maintain Swedish film production at a high level.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Cinemas throughout the country

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government proposes investing SEK 25 million per year during the period 2016–2019 to strengthen smaller cinemas in rural areas and small towns. This investment is part of the Government’s larger investment in the reorganisation of film policy.

Cinemas are important meeting places that play a key role in the distribution and screening throughout the country of films, as well as concerts and operas, for example.

Despite positive developments thanks to digitisation, cinemas in rural areas and small towns face major financial challenges. Financial margins are narrow and these businesses are often run fully or partially by volunteers.

This investment is intended to promote screening activities and contribute to the distribution and screening of films throughout the country.

A dynamic cultural life is a key part of democracy. The Government prioritises investments that enable everyone in all parts of the country to experience cultural life.

The proposal is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Work to continue on a national plan to combat racism

Published 21 September 2015 Updated 21 September 2015

The Government, in agreement with the Left Party, is strengthening efforts to prevent and combat racism and similar forms of hostility. SEK 20 million is being set aside for a period of four years (2016–2019) for projects in this area to be brought together and systematised within the framework of a national plan.

The Government is investing a total of SEK 20 million over a period of four years to strengthen efforts to prevent and combat racism and similar forms of hostility. By bringing together and systematising projects within the framework of a national plan, the Government will lay the foundation for long-term and results-oriented efforts to combat racism and similar forms of hostility.

During the autumn, Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke will, in the context of an Action against racism, meet relevant actors in various parts of the country to talk about the challenges that exist in the area and what measures are needed. This will form an important part of the material for the national plan that will be drawn up. SEK 5 million per year will be provided during the period 2016–2019.

## Action against racism

During the autumn, Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke will host awareness-raising activities for the general public and dialogues with vulnerable groups on racism and similar forms of hostility in various locations throughout the country. Representatives of civil society, politicians and officials will take part in the activities, which are part of the ongoing

work in this area, but are also intended as preparation for the national strategy that is being planned.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The Government is strengthening efforts to combat discrimination

Published 21 September 2015 Updated 21 September 2015

The Government is strengthening efforts to combat discrimination at national, regional and local level through increased support to the Office of the Equality Ombudsman and the anti-discrimination offices. A total investment of SEK 12 million is proposed. The proposal is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

To improve the prospects of combating discrimination and to ensure that more individuals have their rights safeguarded, the Office of the Equality Ombudsman will receive SEK 10 million permanently. Local anti-discrimination centres, known as anti-discrimination offices, will receive a permanent additional injection of SEK 2 million, as action is needed from civil society organisations at regional and local level.

The anti-discrimination offices play an important role in combating and preventing discrimination at local level. As civil society actors, they also have other possibilities than those of a government agency to support and help individuals. There are indications, for example, that it may feel strange for some people to contact a government agency and that they would rather turn to a local contact for advice.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# The Sami Parliament and Sami culture

Published 21 September 2015 Updated 21 September 2015

As of 2016, the Sami Parliament's administrative appropriation will be raised by SEK 2 million. The state grant for Sami culture will also increase by SEK 1 million per year. The Government is proposing this in agreement with the Left Party in the Budget Bill for 2016.

The purpose of the investment is to give the Sami Parliament greater opportunities to play an active role in work on future Sami policy. The day-to-day work also needs to be strengthened to provide good conditions for meeting the demands and expectations placed on the Sami Parliament, and for the Sami Parliament in other respects to have resources for its own raised ambitions.

The Government is also permanently increasing the grant for Sami culture by SEK 1 million. The aim is to promote a dynamic Sami culture and create better conditions for the Sami art scene and cultural life. The Sami Parliament, which is the administrative authority for Sami culture, has the task of deciding how to allocate the state grant.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture

# Preparing a library strategy for all of Sweden

Published 01 June 2015 Updated 01 June 2015

**SEK 23 million is being allocated in 2015–2018 to produce a strategy for the Swedish library system.**

The public library system is intended to promote the development of democratic society by contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and the free formation of opinion. A library should also be a meeting place that promotes democratic dialogue and fosters the ability to select information and engage in critical analysis and source criticism. The Government intends to instruct the National Library of Sweden to draft a strategy to promote cooperation and quality development throughout the Swedish library system. This task will also include continuing the work of making eBooks available via the national Libris catalogue. SEK 5 million will be allocated for this purpose in 2015. The allocation is projected to increase to SEK 6 million per year in 2016–2018.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Lower voter turnout among people with impairments

Published 15 May 2015 Updated 15 May 2015

Voter turnout was somewhat lower among people with impairments compared with the rest of the population in both the European elections and the parliamentary elections in 2014.

In the elections to the European Parliament, voter turnout was 49 per cent among those with impairments, compared with 53 per cent in the rest of the population. For the parliamentary election, the equivalent proportions were 85 and 88 per cent respectively.

Voter turnout varies according to type of impairment. The lowest voter turnout was among those with severely impaired mobility, at 64 per cent for the parliamentary election and 30 per cent for the European election respectively, compared with 88 per cent and 53 per cent respectively for those without impaired mobility.

“It is important that all voters are given as equal conditions as possible to make use of their right to vote in general elections, irrespective of impairments,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

Statistics Sweden has investigated voter turnout among people with impairments in the European election and the parliamentary election in 2014. The study is the first of its kind and the results are important in order for the Government to gauge the need for future initiatives to facilitate the participation of people with impairments in future general elections.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Roma inclusion – a conference on the right to inclusion

Published 15 May 2015 Updated 15 May 2015

For two days on 22–23 April 2015, representatives of Roma organisations, politicians, experts, officials, pupils and teachers came together in Luleå to discuss human rights, minorities and majorities, and terms such as ‘a multicultural society’ from the perspective of the Roma situation.

The conference was organised by Norrbotten County Council and Luleå Municipality, together with the association Romani kvinnans rätt i samhället (Roma women’s rights in society). The discussions focused on basic values, prejudices and how our norms and structures can seem inclusive or exclusive to different groups.

## The strategy on Roma inclusion remains in place

Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke was one of the speakers at the conference. In its statement of government policy, the Government made it clear that anti-Ziganism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Afrophobia have no place in our society. This is the first time the term anti-Ziganism – and thus the situation of the Roma in Sweden – has been mentioned in a statement of government policy. Just over three years ago, the previous government presented a strategy for Roman inclusion with the overarching objective that a Roma person who turns 20 in 2032 is to have the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma person.

“I want to state clearly that the strategy objectives remain in place and the Government will continue to work on creating the conditions for the inclusion of the Roma in society,” said Ms Bah Kuhnke, adding:

“Since I took up my role as minister, my staff and I have met many Roma representatives and organisations. The impression I have taken from these meetings and from agencies’ reports of their work on the strategy is that progress is being made on achieving the strategy objectives, but there are several challenges remaining.”

## Government setting aside SEK 58 million

The Government therefore announced, in the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill, that the financing of an initiative for Roma inclusion will continue. This means that the Government will set aside SEK 58 million for activities linked to the strategy over the coming four years.

“How this funding will be allocated during the next phase of the strategy is something we will come back to. We need to look at other reports that are due to be submitted to the Government, we must analyse the needs, and above all, we need to continue to have a dialogue with Roma civil society about what we should do next and how,” said Ms Bah Kuhnke.

## Five pilot municipalities

Luleå is one of five pilot projects at municipal level and is a key part of the strategy’s implementation. The other pilot municipalities are Linköping, Gothenburg, Malmö and Helsingborg. It is at local level that a real difference can be made in the everyday life of Roma people, helping to change established expectations, attitudes and structures. One fundamental challenge lies in bridging the trust gap between the Roma minority and the majority society. This should happen in cooperation with the Roma themselves. Work on this is now in its third year and the aim is, in line with the strategy, to further develop efforts on Roma inclusion and to investigate how they can be spread to other municipalities around the country.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Creative Schools initiative supplemented to include preschool

Published 13 May 2015 Updated 13 May 2015

The Government wants to create conditions for professional artistic and cultural activities for children in the very early years. The Government therefore proposes increasing the allocation to the Creative Schools initiative by SEK 10 million for 2015. This investment will go to professional cultural activities in preschools.

The Government believes it is important for children to experience various cultural expressions as young as possible and to be given the opportunity to grow with cultural creation. The possibility to access culture and express themselves through their own creation is to be a part of every child's life and everyday experience in preschool. In expanding the initiative to include preschool, the Government considers that the appropriation should also be raised correspondingly for the period 2016–2018.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Culture placed on the map with the cultural cooperation model

Published 13 May 2015 Updated 13 May 2015

On Friday 17 April, some 40 county council and regional politicians gathered for a dialogue meeting with Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke and State Secretary Per Olsson about the cultural cooperation model.

The cultural cooperation model is an important reform that the Government is supporting, and an initial step in this work is reinforcing the model with SEK 15 million. This reverses the cut decided by the Riksdag in the central government budget for 2015. Ms Bah Kuhnke was able to communicate this important restoration of the appropriation during the meeting, which focused on national and regional cultural policy on the basis of the cultural cooperation model. “Art that is not free is meaningless and this is the whole point of the cultural cooperation model. It is important that decisions are taken close to the people living in every part of Sweden.” These were the words of Ms Bah Kuhnke as she opened the meeting, and she stressed the fact that she wanted to listen to the regions’ experiences, thoughts and ideas about the future of the model.

## Culture has become more important through the cultural cooperation model

The day could be summed up with the words ‘no detailed control but preferably long-term political signals’. And also with the fact that culture has a value in itself but that it is of benefit in other contexts such as health care, schools, tourism, etc. At the same time, it is dependent on other sectors, such

as public transport, to reach an audience. One of the positive aspects of the model that was highlighted is that it promotes a clear shared responsibility for culture on the basis of regional needs. It has also contributed to greater cross-sectoral cooperation, e.g. with schools, and neglected areas, such as dance, have been focused on. However, it is important to be aware that the model is resource-intensive and an administrative burden, and to ensure that the dialogue with central government must continue to develop.

### **A few voices from the meeting:**

## **Culture should not just be something on the side**

*Maria-Louise Rönmark, Municipal Commissioner in Umeå and Chair of the Culture and Recreation Committee of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, stressed the importance of not setting too strict parameters:*

There is a balance to be struck between creating culture for its own sake and it giving energy to society in other areas. Municipalities and regions that invest in culture get better research, better health, more creativity and better growth, both economic and social.

The meeting was about how we should continue to work on the model and about continuing to develop the dialogue and aim for an infrastructure that provides the conditions for long-term work. Long-term plans must also apply to culture.

The cultural cooperation model requires trust between the parties, and dialogue, communication and long-term thinking are key aspects. The model also needs to be free from micro-management. Regarding the development of the appropriation that was discussed, we have a joint responsibility to continue to raise the issue.

The dialogue meeting provided us with energy and confidence in the future, and it shows that we want to do something together. This is what I will take with me in my role as Committee Chair at the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

## **Some way to go on the model**

*Lars Nordström is Chair of the Regional Executive Committee and Chair of the Västra Gotland Culture Committee. He was one of the first to be*

*involved in designing the cultural cooperation model:*

The cultural cooperation model has begun to take shape but a great deal remains to be done. There are still uncertainties as to the division of roles between the regions, the Swedish Arts Council and the Ministry. Who decides what and who will require a detailed account? The model will preserve the cultural sector around the country if central government does not provide additional funding corresponding to the increase in costs. We would also like to see long-term thinking in the approval of grants as many cultural activities have to be planned five years in advance. The atmosphere at the meeting was positive, but we had hoped for more scope for a general discussion, for example about cooperation with central government.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Culture strengthened in Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

Published 11 May 2015 Updated 11 May 2015

In the Government's Spring Fiscal Policy Bill, initiatives are presented that are intended to strengthen the conditions for creativity, participation and diversity in Sweden. The Government's initiatives include increasing the allocation to the Creative Schools initiative, drafting a national library strategy and initiating an extensive education campaign about racism and intolerance.

"This is a budget that means more culture for more people. In reality it means that more children and young people will have the chance for early contact with culture. Libraries will also receive the recognition they deserve, and the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill also means that regional culture will regain the resources that were lost last autumn," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

## Creative Schools initiative supplemented to include preschool

The Government proposes increasing the allocation to the Creative Schools initiative by SEK 10 million for 2015. This investment will go to professional cultural activities in preschool. By expanding the initiative to also include preschool, opportunities are created for professional artistic and cultural activities for the youngest of children. The Government's assessment is that the allocation should also be increased by the equivalent amount annually in 2016-2018.

## Preparing a library strategy for all of Sweden

SEK 23 million is being allocated in 2015-2018 to produce a strategy for the Swedish library system.

The Government proposes that the National Library of Sweden be instructed to draft a strategy to promote cooperation and quality development throughout the Swedish library system. This assignment will also include continuing the work of making eBooks available via the national Libris catalogue. Therefore, SEK 5 million will be allocated for this purpose in 2015. It is estimated that the allocation will subsequently be increased by SEK 6 million annually in 2016-2018 for this purpose.

## Major education campaign about racism and intolerance

SEK 25 million will be set aside in 2015-2017 to implement an education campaign about racism and different forms of intolerance. The Living History Forum will be assigned this task, in cooperation with the National Agency for Education, and include awareness-raising initiatives about racism and similar forms of intolerance, such as Afrophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Ziganism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia. The aim is to create an equal society characterised by respect for the equal value and rights of all people and to promote democracy.

## Work for Roma inclusion remains a priority

The overall goal of the strategy for Roma inclusion, which is in effect until 2032, is that Roma who turn 20 years of age in 2032 are to have the same opportunities in life as non-Roma. The Government's work on the strategy for Roma inclusion therefore remains important and will be allocated SEK 13 million annually for the period 2016-2019.

## Ongoing culture initiative in Million Homes Programme areas

The Swedish Arts Council and the Public Art Agency Sweden will receive a total of SEK 2 million to prepare a culture initiative in the Million Homes Programme areas. The Government will subsequently contribute a total of SEK 170 million to the initiative in 2016-2018.

Access to cultural activities and a stimulating living environment are crucial to both our wellbeing and democratic participation. This funding will support cultural initiatives from local civil society organisations that want to become involved in the development and artistic configuration of their neighbourhoods.

## Cultural cooperation model to receive additional SEK 15 million

The Government proposes raising the allocation to regional cultural cooperation models by SEK 15 million. The Government's ambition is for culture to reach more people throughout the country and be more equal. Regional culture plays an important role in this.

The aim of the cultural cooperation model is for regional priorities and variations to have a greater impact, and to promote cooperation among state, regional and local actors.

## Re-election in Båstad Municipality

SEK 14 million is being allocated in 2015 to conduct a re-election to the municipal council in Båstad Municipality. The Election Review Board has decided to hold a re-election in Båstad Municipality following an appeal against the 2014 election results. The re-election will be held on 10 May 2015. Funds will therefore be allocated to the Election Authority for its costs, and to government subsidies to the municipalities for their participation.

## Increased support to faith communities' security management

In 2015, SEK 7 million will be allocated to the increased security management of faith communities. Following the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, there has been an increase of vandalism and threats targeting various faith communities and their representatives.

Freedom of religion is central in a democracy and it is very important that all citizens have the opportunity to practice their religion.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Culture initiative started in Million Homes Programme areas

Published 11 May 2015 Updated 11 May 2015

The Government wants to invest in culture in the Million Homes Programme areas by giving the Swedish Arts Council and the Public Art Agency Sweden a total of SEK 2 million to prepare a culture initiative.

The Government then wants to develop the initiative by allocating a total of SEK 170 million during the period 2016–2018 for the creation of meeting places for cultural activities, for people's own creativity and for the artistic design of the residential environment in these areas.

Access to cultural activities and a stimulating living environment are crucial to both our wellbeing and democratic participation. Equal access to culture is a priority for the Government. Regardless of where you live, you should be able to access culture and experience a stimulating living environment. The Government wants to draw attention to and support the diverse commitment that exists in many Million Homes Programme areas throughout the country. This funding will support cultural initiatives by local civil society organisations that want to become involved in the development and artistic shaping of their neighbourhoods.



Article from Ministry of Culture

# Government investing in a sustainable media policy for the future

Published 11 May 2015 Updated 11 May 2015

Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke has appointed Anette Novak as Inquiry Chair for the inquiry into ‘A media policy for the future’ (ToR 2015:26). The Government has also presented the Bill ‘State support for the daily press’ to the Riksdag.

“Anette Novak’s background as a publicist and innovator provides her with important skills to lead the work of drawing up a media policy that will function long-term. Her experience of working in the media world far beyond the boundaries of Stockholm is another asset in the assignment, which is to provide better conditions for local journalism,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

The Government has also presented the Bill ‘State support for the daily press’ to the Riksdag. The Bill contains proposals aimed at creating greater incentives for daily newspapers with operational subsidies to increase their readership revenue and promote technological development and the development of business models.

“These changes mean that we are using press subsidies to provide the conditions for journalists to fulfil their role in our democracy. In the longer term we will need to further review and adapt press subsidies, but now a lot of newspapers are being given the chance to survive, especially those active outside the major cities,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

**What will happen next?**

- The Press Subsidies Council will be phased out and its tasks should be incorporated into the Swedish Broadcasting Authority. A council for press subsidies should be established as a special decision-making body within the Swedish Broadcasting Authority. This organisational change is to be complete by 1 July 2015.
- The Press Subsidies Council is to present proposals for new support for innovations to the daily press by 15 May 2015. The aim of this support is to provide the conditions for the long-term development of electronic publishing services. This support could enter into force in 2016.
- The Government intends to report back with proposals on subsidies for the press in major cities and subsidy levels for high and medium periodicity newspapers in the Budget Bill in the autumn.
- The Inquiry is to present an analysis of the needs for initiatives by 31 October 2015. Proposals for new media policy tools are to be submitted by 30 April 2016.



Article

# Major educational project against racism

Published 27 January 2015 Updated 27 February 2015

Holocaust Remembrance Day was 27 January. In cities in Europe and around the world, the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau was commemorated. Throughout Sweden, demonstrations and seminars were arranged to commemorate one of the darkest chapters of human history.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance still exist today. There are representatives of Sweden's Riksdag who question whether it is possible to be both a Jew and Swedish. Around Sweden and Europe, the Jewish minority often lives in fear of putting on a yarmulke or in some other way showing their religious affiliation. At the Government's meeting with the Jewish minority, Jewish representatives spoke about parents who choose not to allow their children to take part in Jewish school activities out of fear for their safety.

"We see how racism and intolerance are increasing in society, and the dire consequences this has. For this reason, the Government will carry out a national education campaign, targeted towards pupils in compulsory school and upper secondary school, about different forms of racism and intolerance throughout history and today," says Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

This Thursday, the Government will instruct the Living History Forum to carry out an educational project called *Detta behöver vi förstå* (This we must understand) during the period 2015-2017.

To carry out this task, an additional SEK 5 million will be allocated to the Living History Forum in 2015. In 2016 and 2017, the Forum will receive an

additional SEK 10 million annually.

"Anti-Semitism spreads hate and fear, and limits people's personal freedom and their opportunities to express their beliefs and their opinions. The fact that it exists in our society today is nothing less than a failure, but also a reminder that we must step up our efforts against racism and intolerance," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture

# Opinion piece by Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister and Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy

Published 27 January 2017 Updated 27 January 2017

Opinion piece in Svenska Dagbladet on International Holocaust Remembrance Day by Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister (S) and Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy (MP)

Hédi Fried, author and Auschwitz survivor, wrote: "Can anyone say when something begins? Grains of sand are added to grains of sand, and before you know it there is a pile of sand in front of you."

Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, when we remember one of humanity's greatest crimes against itself. But knowing the terrible things that humanity is capable of compels us to do more than just remember. Racism, anti-Semitism, antiziganism, hate against LGBTQ people and prejudice against people with disabilities are still an ongoing scourge. This misanthropy limits freedom for the individual and cohesion among us all. It finds expression in everything from physical violence on our streets, to threats and conspiracy theories on social media.

It also exists in Swedish politics. There are members of the Swedish Riksdag who openly question whether Jews can be regarded as Swedish. Proposals, motivated by anti-Semitic notions, have been submitted to limit the freedom of the media. On an almost daily basis, political actors are exposed for spreading racist ideas, openly or in secret. Grains of sand are added to grains of sand.

The principle of the equal value of all people must never be compromised. Democratic values in Sweden must be defended, deepened and strengthened for the future. The Government is therefore implementing a national plan to combat racism, as well as similar forms of hostility and hate crime. The Living History Forum is rolling out an extensive educational initiative to reach Swedish schools and professional groups, such as employment agents, social workers and police employees. The Swedish Research Council has begun a survey of racism in the Swedish labour market. The Research Bill outlines major investments in research involving racism and xenophobia, and faith communities are receiving increased support for interfaith dialogues around the country.

At the same time, more work is required to strengthen security for vulnerable groups and people. Everyone must be able display their religious affiliation or identity openly and proudly in public. This is the duty of democratic society. Religious communities will therefore receive extra funds for security-enhancing measures to strengthen security around religious and cultural activities. The Swedish Police Authority has also been tasked with strengthening efforts against hate crime, and now has the capacity to investigate and combat hate crime in all regions of Sweden, with special hate crime groups in the three metropolitan regions.

This work must never stop. Therefore, we are today presenting three further measures:

1. Greater security at schools. School must be a secure place for all pupils and staff, regardless of religious affiliation. Children should never have to worry about hate crime or intolerance at their school. The Government will therefore further support security at schools identified as having a threat situation.
2. More effective measures against anti-Semitic hate crime. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention is being tasked with conducting an in-depth study of anti-Semitic hate crime. Using this as a base, efforts against anti-Semitic hate crime will be strengthened and made more effective.
3. New international forum. Two decades will soon have passed since the major Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust which, in the Stockholm Declaration, set out the basis for international cooperation on remembering the Holocaust. Never forgetting means always reminding ourselves. The Government therefore intends to host a second international forum in 2020, 20 years after the first, to honour the victims, follow up the work and, together with other countries and

organisations, continue to develop the initiatives to prevent new crimes against humanity.

Finally, we want to underline that your efforts are also needed. Never tolerate hate or threats, regardless of who is targeted, question conspiracy theories and false rumours, seek understanding where others try to spread contempt. The defence of democracy is a responsibility shared by all democratic citizens.

Those of us who live in Sweden must be able to feel secure and free, regardless of which culture we are part of, which god we believe in, or who we love. We must therefore see every grain of hate and intolerance in Sweden, and prevent them from ever gaining a foothold. Today, and every day, those of us who defend democracy have a duty to remember the Holocaust and through our actions say: "Never again."

Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister (S)

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy (MP)



Opinion piece from Ministry of Culture

# Pioneering Freedom

Published 05 December 2016 Updated 05 December 2016

The Huffington Post, 2 December 2016. Opinion piece by Ms Alice Bah Khunke, Minister for Culture and Democracy and Ms Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General.

250 years ago the world witnessed the passage of the first Freedom of the Press Act, enacted by the Swedish Parliament, covering modern-day Sweden and Finland. This was the first act to constitutionally protect press freedom, almost two centuries before the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, some 120 countries have followed this example and enacted similar legislation - ensuring the public's right to know, empowering journalists and bolstering freedoms across the board.

Today, more than ever, we must renew this pioneering spirit.

Freedom of expression, press freedom and freedom of information are ends in themselves — the free flow of ideas and opinions, as well as debate and critical examination, creates a wealth of ideas and drives innovation and positive change. They are vital for accountability and transparency. They are pillars of democracy, the rule of law and good governance. They are foundations for more inclusive and sustainable development, and, in empowering every woman and man, they are also forces for intercultural dialogue and peace.

For this, we need wider access to information and enabling media environments. Media pluralism is essential for all voices to be heard, to allow all to participate in sharing the diversity of cultural expressions, opinions, stories and information. This is an engine for widening opportunities to overcome inequalities, while strengthening the foundations of democratic institutions. And these rights must stand both offline and online - the digital revolution must also be a rights revolution.

Safety for journalists is essential, as key users of the right to information, enhancing accountability on behalf of the public and promoting a culture of openness and transparency in Government and across all sectors.

The stakes are high. Over the last ten years, 827 journalists have been killed in the line of duty. In 2014-2015, 59 percent of them were working in countries affected by conflict - and almost 90 percent of them were local journalists. These killings are but the tip of the iceberg of arbitrary detention, intimidation and harassment, where female journalists are particularly targeted.

These figures, from UNESCO's most recent report on the safety of journalists, highlight the tragic risks facing journalists. The situation is made worse by impunity. In nine out of ten cases, those responsible for killing journalists are never punished. This creates a vicious circle that poisons all society.

This cannot stand. In 2015, all countries agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - this includes a target "to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements."

Everyone has a role to play in taking this forward. Governments must pursue swift investigations into crimes against journalists and bolster freedom of information legislation. Judicial systems and security services should be trained on freedom of expression. National monitoring and protection mechanisms should be considered. Media organizations must ensure international and local staff have the right training and resources, to enhance their safety. We need every voice to be heard - especially those of women, who remain under-represented in news-making, decision-making, and media ownership. Journalism education must be strengthened, because the highest professional standards of journalism are essential for the news media industry to be seen as representative and credible.

Working with Sweden, UNESCO is spearheading these goals across the world, starting in crisis situations and countries in transition. This is the importance of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which UNESCO is leading for the safety of journalists. We are championing the fight against impunity by raising the red flag every time a journalist is killed and calling for justice. Every year, September 28 marks the International Day for Universal Access to Information. The 250th anniversary of the Freedom of the Press Act in

Sweden reminds us of the long road we have travelled to promote freedom of expression. Inspired by Sweden, we need every country to introduce access to information legislation.

Dag Hammarskjöld once said that "freedom from fear could be said to sum up the whole philosophy of human rights." Today, more than ever, we must stand up to fear, to allow everyone to seek information and speak out. This is a basic human right - it is a fundamental freedom that strengthens all society.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

# Strengthen the right of LGBTQ people to be themselves

Published 12 February 2016 Updated 12 February 2016

Opinion article, Newspaper Expressen, 8 february 2016  
Legislation must keep pace with developments in society. The Government therefore plans to implement changes that aim to offer the same conditions for everyone, regardless of their choice of partner and type of family, write five government ministers.

People have the right to be themselves in all areas of life. This includes the right to live with the person you love and to have your family formation treated with respect. Efforts to break old norms that limit people from fully living their lives must continue. This applies particularly to policies for the rights of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ people).

Proactive organisations in civil society and courageous politicians before us have helped to move the situation of LGBTQ issues in the right direction. Society is constantly evolving, and perceptions of parenthood, family, gender and the rights of the child in the family evolve with it. Today, there are numerous family constellations other than the traditional nuclear families: single, friends with children, step-families or families with several mothers or fathers. Our social systems must also meet the needs of these families.

Legislation and its application must keep pace with developments in society. It must accommodate various ways of forming a family and ensure the right of all people to good health. The Government is therefore planning to implement changes that aim to offer the same conditions for everyone, regardless of the choice of partner and type of family that each of us chooses

to live with:

- Parental support and family law issues in social services need to be more modern, equitable and gender equal. Family constellations vary and have different needs. In light of this, the Government has concentrated responsibility for these issues at the Family Law and Parental Support Authority. An important task for the Authority is producing knowledge support for relevant actors so that these, in turn, can provide better support and guidance to parents and children.
- Families can take many different forms, but when the parental insurance system was designed, it was still based on the idea of a nuclear family with two co-habiting parents. The living conditions of families with children have changed over time.

More than one in five children grows up in a family constellation other than one including both their biological parents. The inquiry on parental insurance that is now to be conducted has therefore been tasked with identifying problems and investigating possibilities for facilitating the use of parental insurance by different family constellations.

- There are currently large health disparities between different groups in society. To close the avoidable health gaps within a generation, the Government has appointed a commission for equitable health. We know that LGBTQ people in general have poorer health and young LGBTQ people are particularly vulnerable with regard to mental health. In its work, the commission will therefore take into account health disparities between LGBTQ people and the rest of the population.
- The treatment of LGBTQ people in health and medical care is unequal across the country. Unfortunately, in their contacts with different authorities, individuals are sometimes doubted and treated ignorantly. This leads to LGBTQ people in some cases refraining from seeking care.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with analysing care and treatment of intersex people (persons whose gender cannot be determined due to biological reasons) and implementing measures in the various areas of activity of social services. The objective is to raise awareness of LGBTQ people's living conditions and the various forms discrimination can take. The National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden will also review how issues concerning the health of young transgender people could be highlighted within the

framework of other mental health initiatives.

- There have been several high-profile cases where information was registered in the population registration regarding a person who had changed gender in such a way that the link between individuals, such as a child and a parent, was lost. The Swedish Tax Agency has now been tasked with describing what has been done or will be done to prevent problems that may arise.
- Current regulations regarding paternity and parenthood are based on heterosexual marriage. There is reason to review whether the regulations should be updated and for this reason, the Government intends to appoint an inquiry in the spring to conduct a review of the legislation.

These are some of the initiatives the Government is now implementing. We know there is a lot left to do. Discrimination, inequitable treatment and violence are still part of daily life for many LGBTQ people all around the country. This is never acceptable. The Government will continue its efforts to strengthen the possibility for LGBTQ people to fully be themselves in all areas of life.

Gabriel Wikström  
Minister for Health Care, Public Health and Sport

Åsa Regnér  
Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality

Morgan Johansson  
Minister for Justice and Migration

Alice Bah Kuhnke  
Minister for Culture and Democracy (Green Party)

Annika Strandhäll  
Minister for Social Security (Social Democratic Party)



Opinion piece from Ministry of Culture

# Strengthening our efforts to combat violent extremism

Published 09 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

Dagens Nyheter 9 januari 2015 An attack has taken place. Creating conflict is the modus operandi of extremism, both in Sweden and in France. It is especially serious when this violence targets freedom of speech. We are now intensifying our efforts to map threats posed by violent extremism, and to take preventive action against such extremism, writes Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke (Green Party).

A great deal has already been said and written about Wednesday's appalling terrorist attack on the French magazine Charlie Hebdo. Some people feel that condemnation and demonstrations are meaningless displays that do not have an impact on those who despise democracy so much they would attack it.

However, our collective display of abhorrence and rejection shows the power of democracy. We do this by collectively showing that terror and violence is never a solution or a way forward. By coming together, we demonstrate that our society has not given in to terror.

Fear is both the terrorist's aim and method. Not just today, but also in the long term. The attack against the editorial office in Paris was not just meant to spread death here and now. The attackers also wanted to send a threatening message to all future journalistic activities. The goal is to create unease that subtly creeps up on journalists, the press and ultimately freedom of speech.

In our part of Europe, we have had our fair share of attacks against democracy. The attacks in recent years against mosques and synagogues in Sweden are one example. The attacks by Nazis against the demonstration in Kärntorp is another. Journalists who are threatened by both right-wing and left wing extremists due the subjects they cover and report on is yet another. What all these attacks have in common is that they try to scare people into silence and refrain from democratic involvement.

As a group, journalists are particularly exposed to threats, harassment and violence, in some instances with fatal consequences. According to the International Federation of Journalists, 118 journalists were murdered last year. One of these was Swedish journalist Nils Horner. According to Reporters Without Borders, violence against journalists has also become more systematic, brutal and raw than before.

At the same time we see how extremism and polarisation is growing stronger in the EU. In many areas – including Sweden – xenophobic parties are taking seats in parliament and other elected assemblies. In many countries, these parties have also succeeded in shifting the political debate so that serious restrictions on the free movement of people in the EU have been introduced, as have even higher walls against those fleeing from war and terror. In Sweden, however, we can boast a broad consensus in the Riksdag that has closed that path – something we can all take pride in, regardless of party affiliation.

If we are to continue to be an open, tolerant and proud country, we need to strengthen society's security system against the destructive force of terrorism. The solution is more and stronger democracy, both in Sweden and in the EU. France is not alone in this – joint efforts are needed to defend continued democracy in Europe.

In his Statement of Government Policy, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated that it is through the engagement of many people that we can prevent anti-democratic ideas from gaining a foothold in our country.

The Government will regularly propose concrete proposals of measures to help strengthen the democratic process and prevent more people falling into in situations where extremism can take root and grow.

The Government has presented a number of measures for the year ahead:  
- The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has been instructed to survey and analyse existing knowledge about threats, violence and harassment against individuals with duties or positions of particular importance to democratic society. Those covered by the survey are active

journalists, elected politicians and officials, and people active in the judicial system and other relevant public authorities. We hope that the data from the Council will provide us with an adequate picture so that we can propose concrete countermeasures at local and national level. The Council will present its findings in March 2015.

- High priority is given both to efforts against recruitment to extremist environments and support to those working to help people leave these environments. In 2015, SEK 5 million will be invested in measures against violent extremism by organisations and municipalities. This work deals with both countering recruitment and providing help to those who wish to leave the extremist environment.

- Extensive preventive efforts against violent extremism will be coordinated by the Government's special coordinator, Mona Sahlin. For example, in 2015 the Government plans to introduce an action plan on preventing people from taking part in foreign fighting.

- During the year, the Government will prepare a national strategy against Islamophobia. Intensified information campaigns will help us strengthen society's common resilience against distrust and fear.

The role of a free press in democracy must not be underestimated or taken for granted. An independent and free press ensures a strong democracy, in which power is both examined and discussed. Freedom of expression also includes the right to publish social satire targeting all kinds of figures of authority, both religious and political.

There are no simple solutions to difficult problems. This means that we cannot rely on simple populist proposals for solutions. In the same way that more lock and alarm systems do not solve society's problems with criminality, we must not believe that a repressive policy which limits democracy will be able to prevent future terrorist attacks.

The basis for our being able to seriously drive off extremism and violence is a society with reduced social gaps, more jobs and increased participation.

Creating conflict is the modus operandi of extremism. Democracy's response must be to create scope for a variety of voices and opinions.

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Culture

# Alice Bah Kuhnke to chair meeting of Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture in Oslo

Published 31 October 2018

Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke will chair the meeting of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture in Oslo on 31 October. The meeting is being held in connection with the annual session of the Nordic Council, where the Nordic Council prizes are also awarded. Sweden holds the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2018.

Among the topics the Nordic culture ministers will discuss is the importance of culture for maintaining and revitalising small languages, including the national minority languages. The role that Sami and Greenlandic cultural operators have played in this will be highlighted. This discussion is a follow-up to a workshop on language revitalisation organised within the framework of the Swedish Presidency in September 2018.

The ministers will also discuss the process for selecting one or more joint Nordic cultural projects by 2021. Previous projects include Nordic Cool 2013 in Washington DC and Nordic Matters 2017 in London. Also, a report containing conclusions from the Nordic Cultural Political Summit in Malmö on 8–9 May 2018 will be discussed.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Prime Minister Stefan Löfven presented the Swedish programme for the 2018 Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers

Published 01 November 2017

The 69th Session of the Nordic Council is taking place in Helsinki between 31 October and 2 November. Sweden is represented by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Nordic Cooperation Margot Wallström, Minister for the Environment Karolina Skog and Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

At the opening of the Nordic Council's session in Helsinki on 31 October, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven presented the priorities of the 2018 Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Sweden's Presidency programme, entitled 'An inclusive, innovative and secure Nordic region' is based on three themes.

The first theme, 'An inclusive Nordic region', focuses on the Nordic social model whose hallmarks are trust, equality, gender equality and openness. The starting point is a number of challenges that the Nordic countries share in these areas.

The second theme, 'A sustainable and innovative Nordic region', focuses on Nordic innovation as a driving force for sustainable social transformation. Engagement in environmental issues is, and historically has been, strong in

the Nordic countries, but considerable efforts are needed if we are to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda both in the Nordic region and globally.

The third theme is 'A secure and open Nordic region'. Here, the focus is on cooperation on broad security issues, with security and openness as the watchwords.

In 2018, Sweden will also lead the work of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and coordinate informal Nordic and Nordic-Baltic foreign and security policy cooperation (N5 and NB8). The ambition is to find points of contact between these forms of cooperation and all countries in the Baltic Sea region to strengthen regional cooperation horizontally.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Culture

# Alice Bah Kuhnke presents Per Anger Prize

Published 19 October 2017

At 13.00 on Thursday 19 October, Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke will present the Per Anger Prize to women's rights activist Gégé Katana Bukuru, in honour of her work for human rights and women's rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The prize ceremony will take place at Södra Latin Upper Secondary School in Stockholm.

The Per Anger Prize is an international prize instituted in 2004 by the Swedish Government to promote initiatives supporting human rights and democracy. This year's prize winner, Gégé Katana Bukuru, is the Secretary-General of the Solidarity Movement of Women's Rights Activists (Solidarité des Femmes Activistes pour la Défense des Droits Humains, SOFAD) in Uvira, Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Culture

# Kieran Long new director of ArkDes

Published 09 February 2017 Updated 10 February 2017

The Government today appointed Kieran Long as the new director of ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design. Mr Long will take up his position on 18 April 2017.

"Kieran Long is an internationally renowned leader in the field of architecture and design. The fact that he wants to lead ArkDes is a recognition of both this national centre and Sweden's strong position in the sector. This is a very good start to a year that will continue to strengthen the role of culture in building our society," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Ms Bah Kuhnke.

"I am so excited to have the opportunity to direct the National Centre for Architecture and Design and I believe it can build on its strengths to become one of the most important places in Europe for the discussion of the relationship between design and public life. Its collection, its spaces and its national role in leading the debate about architecture and design provide a unique opportunity. I hope I can bring an international perspective to the Swedish debate and help ArkDes continue to be an exciting visitor experience, a place of research and study and a place of debate about how we will live in the future," says Mr Long.

## **Kieran Long**

Kieran Long has extensive experience in the field of architecture and design, museums and exhibitions. Since 2013 he has been Keeper of the Department Design, Architecture and Digital at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and has previously worked at the Venice Architecture Biennale and the Royal College of Art. Mr Long has also worked as an architecture critic for several publications and has been a television presenter for the BBC

since 2009.



Press release from Ministry of Culture

# The Government is investing in a Sweden that keeps together

Published 15 April 2016 Updated 15 April 2016

In the spring budget for 2016, the Government is investing SEK 44 million in safeguarding our open society and democracy, and combating polarisation, racism and violent extremism. This is proposed in the Government's spring budget for 2016 following an agreement with the Left Party.

"We need to invest in a Sweden that keeps together. In the Government's commitment to building our society, we therefore give priority to investing in culture throughout the country, and efforts to combat polarisation in society. Civil society and libraries have a key role in the ambition to create meeting places," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

## Increased support for work to combat violent extremism

The advance of violent extremism and terrorism is a serious concern, and people are worried about terrorist attacks and extremist violence. The Government is therefore investing an additional SEK 18 million in 2016 in efforts to combat violent extremism. SEK 8 million will go to measures taken by municipalities together with civil society. SEK 10 million will go to preventive work in schools, using the 'Kungälv model'. This work focuses mainly on young people who are in or near violent extremist environments.

## More resources for libraries safeguards open society

It is proposed that SEK 10.5 million be allocated to public libraries. The aim is to strengthen the role of libraries as important meeting places, where

people with different backgrounds and circumstances can meet and access knowledge, literature and culture. Libraries have adapted their activities in various ways so as to better support refugees and people who have recently come to Sweden. SEK 0.5 million will be set aside, for example, for the purchase of literature.

## **Everyone should be able to take part in the democratic conversation**

Polarisation risks creating a tougher climate for discussions. When people are silenced or become silent due to threats and hatred, it becomes a threat to democracy. There is a great need to safeguard the democratic conversation so as to ensure that everyone can take part without anxiety or fear. The Government is therefore preparing an action plan to guard against threats to the democratic conversation. SEK 3 million will be provided in 2016 for preparatory data collection on threats and hatred.

## **More support for civil society efforts to combat racism and similar forms of hostility**

Civil society organisations are central actors in creating conditions for a Sweden that keeps together. In the shadow of developments over the past year, including arson at asylum centres and racist murders, the Government sees a need for concerted efforts in 2016. SEK 7 million will be devoted to civil society efforts to combat racism and similar forms of hostility, and to special initiatives to strengthen public preparedness to manage crises with racist overtones.

## **The Living History Forum must reach more people**

The Living History Forum will be allocated an additional SEK 3.5 million in 2016. The aim is to provide better conditions for the authority to reach many places in Sweden and people in various social groups. The Living History Forum can reach more people through regional projects, and thus more forcefully promote work on democracy, tolerance and human rights.

## **More people should be able to access civic information on their own terms**

People who have recently come to Sweden have a great need to quickly

access literature and civic information. The Swedish Agency for Accessible Media is being tasked with advancing accessibility to easy-to-read literature and civic information for groups of people with reading difficulties who do not have Swedish as their mother tongue. In the Spring Amending Budget for 2016, the Government is proposing that the Agency's allocation be increased by SEK 500 000 for this assignment.

## Investment in a new Swedish-Jewish museum

It is proposed that the Jewish Museum in Stockholm receive a contribution of SEK 1.5 million in 2016 for the establishment of a new Swedish-Jewish museum. The new museum will focus on Swedish-Jewish history and highlight questions about the conditions of integration. The Government considers that the State should contribute funds for this initiative so as to promote dialogue and opportunities for learning.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Prime Minister Stefan Löfven to attend Nordic Council in Reykjavik on 27–28 October

Published 27 October 2015 Updated 27 October 2015

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven will be in Reykjavik on 27–28 October for the annual session of the Nordic Council. His schedule includes meetings with the Nordic prime ministers, the Nordic Council Presidium and the three self-governing territories of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. Subjects including migration, climate, the environment and Syria will be on the agenda.

On Tuesday 27 October, the Prime Minister will take part in the award ceremony for the Nordic Council prizes.

While in Reykjavik, Mr Löfven will also attend a meeting of the Nordic and Baltic prime ministers, focusing on security policy cooperation in our neighbourhood.

In connection to the Nordic Council session, the Nordic–Baltic heads of government will also meet the Prime Minister of the UK within the Northern Future Forum.

Attending alongside Mr Löfven will be Minister for Strategic Development and Nordic Cooperation Kristina Persson, Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist, Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson, Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke and Minister for International

Development Cooperation Isabella Lövin. For details of the respective programmes, please contact the relevant press secretaries.

## Press briefings

### Wednesday 28 October

11.15–11.45 Press conference with the Nordic prime ministers.

Venue: Harpa – Kaldalón

14.00–14.30 Press conference with the Nordic and Baltic prime ministers.

Venue: Harpa – Kaldalón



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Culture

# SEK 25 million to cinemas outside metropolitan areas

Published 22 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government proposes investing SEK 25 million per year during the period 2016–2019 in strengthening smaller cinemas in rural areas and small towns. The proposal is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

“Cinemas outside the metropolitan areas are important if we are to have a dynamic cultural life throughout the country. This proposal can improve the finances of existing cinemas and increase the chances of more cinemas opening,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

A dynamic cultural life is a key part of democracy. Cinemas are very important as a cultural meeting place and for the distribution and screening of films throughout the country.

Despite positive developments thanks to digitisation, cinemas in rural areas and small towns face major financial challenges. Financial margins are narrow and these businesses are often run fully or partially by volunteers.

The funds will be allocated by the Swedish Film Institute.



Press release from Ministry of Culture

# Introduction of free admission to state museums

Published 21 September 2015 Updated 22 September 2015

The Government proposes in the Budget Bill that SEK 80 million be set aside for the introduction of free admission to certain state museums. The proposal is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

"The treasures held at museums belong to us all, the collections are there for us. This is why it is self-evident that we also ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access what we own together. Free admission will also make it easier for new groups to visit the museums," says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

The reform introducing free admission to state museums that was implemented in 2005 and 2006 enabled many more groups in society to have access to our shared cultural heritage.

Free admission will apply at the following state museums:

- The Army Museum
- The Museum of Ethnography
- The Swedish Air Force Museum (Flygvapenmuseum) in Linköping
- The Hallwyl Museum
- The Swedish History Museum
- The Royal Coin Cabinet
- The Royal Armoury
- The Naval Museum in Karlskrona
- The Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (Medelhavsmuseet)

- Moderna Museet in Stockholm and Malmö
- Nationalmuseum
- The Swedish Museum of Natural History
- The Maritime Museum
- Skokloster Castle
- The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design (ArkDes)
- The Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg
- The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Östasiatiska museet)



Press release from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs,  
Ministry of Justice

# Combating vulnerability and begging – no one should have to beg

Published 17 August 2015 Updated 17 August 2015

On June 24, the Government presented a package of measures for vulnerable EU citizens staying temporarily in Sweden. The initiative aims to combat vulnerability and begging. The long-term goal is that no one should have to beg in Sweden.

The package of measures contains actions to promote cooperation within the EU and especially with Romania and Bulgaria, clearer rules in Sweden and close cooperation with civil society organisations.

“Today, the Government will present a first package of measures for vulnerable EU citizens in Sweden. It is a step on the road to reducing vulnerability and begging. The goal is that no one should have to beg,” says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

## The three reform areas:

- increased cooperation within the EU, especially with Romania and Bulgaria
- clearer rules in Sweden
- close cooperation with civil society organisations.

## Important measures in the package include:

- Within the framework of the cooperation agreement with Romania,

continue work on development of welfare, children's rights and gender equality.

- Play an active role towards the European Commission in tackling the issue and promote EU efforts on Roma inclusion.
- Support Romania via the Cohesion Fund, the Social Fund and the Regional Development Fund.
- A government assignment to the Police to propose measures to stop violence against vulnerable EU citizens staying temporarily in Sweden. The assignment report is to be presented by 30 November.
- Supplementary terms of reference to the inquiry into trafficking in human beings about protection provided by criminal law against exploitation of vulnerable people who have come to Sweden.
- Better management of unlawful settlements on public and private land. An inquiry will analyse how landowners' possibilities to obtain help with measures in the event of prohibited settlements can be improved.
- Better cooperation and regular meetings with civil society organisations working with vulnerable EU citizens.

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson and Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke took part in the press conference.



Press release from Ministry of Culture

# Culture strengthened in Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

Published 15 April 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

In the Government's Spring Fiscal Policy Bill, which is being published today, initiatives are presented that are intended to strengthen the conditions for creativity, participation and diversity in Sweden. The Government's initiatives include increasing the allocation to the Creative Schools initiative, drafting a national library strategy and initiating an extensive education campaign about racism and intolerance.

“This is a budget that means more culture for more people. In reality it means that more children and young people will have the chance for early contact with culture. Libraries will also receive the recognition they deserve, and the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill also means that regional culture will regain the resources that were lost last autumn,” says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

## Creative Schools initiative supplemented to include preschool

The Government proposes increasing the allocation to the Creative Schools initiative by SEK 10 million for 2015. This investment will go to professional cultural activities in preschool. By expanding the initiative to also include preschool, opportunities are created for professional artistic and cultural activities for the youngest of children. The Government's assessment is that the allocation should also be increased by the equivalent amount annually in 2016–2018.

## Preparing a library strategy for all of Sweden

SEK 23 million is being allocated in 2015–2018 to produce a strategy for the Swedish library system.

The Government proposes that the National Library of Sweden be instructed to draft a strategy to promote cooperation and quality development throughout the Swedish library system. This assignment will also include continuing the work of making eBooks available via the national Libris catalogue. Therefore, SEK 5 million will be allocated for this purpose in 2015. It is estimated that the allocation will subsequently be increased by SEK 6 million annually in 2016–2018 for this purpose.

## Major education campaign about racism and intolerance

SEK 25 million will be set aside in 2015–2017 to implement an education campaign about racism and different forms of intolerance. The Living History Forum will be assigned this task, in cooperation with the National Agency for Education, and include awareness-raising initiatives about racism and similar forms of intolerance, such as Afrophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Ziganism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia. The aim is to create an equal society characterised by respect for the equal value and rights of all people and to promote democracy.

## Work for Roma inclusion remains a priority

The overall goal of the strategy for Roma inclusion, which is in effect until 2032, is that Roma who turn 20 years of age in 2032 are to have the same opportunities in life as non-Roma. The Government's work on the strategy for Roma inclusion therefore remains important and will be allocated SEK 13 million annually for the period 2016–2019.

## Ongoing culture initiative in Million Homes Programme areas

The Swedish Arts Council and the Public Art Agency Sweden will receive a total of SEK 2 million to prepare a culture initiative in the Million Homes Programme areas. The Government will subsequently contribute a total of SEK 170 million to the initiative in 2016–2018.

Access to cultural activities and a stimulating living environment are crucial

to both our wellbeing and democratic participation. This funding will support cultural initiatives from local civil society organisations that want to become involved in the development and artistic configuration of their neighbourhoods.

## **Cultural cooperation model to receive additional SEK 15 million**

The Government proposes raising the allocation to regional cultural cooperation models by SEK 15 million. The Government's ambition is for culture to reach more people throughout the country and be more equal. Regional culture plays an important role in this.

The aim of the cultural cooperation model is for regional priorities and variations to have a greater impact, and to promote cooperation among state, regional and local actors.

## **Re-election in Båstad Municipality**

SEK 14 million is being allocated in 2015 to conduct a re-election to the municipal council in Båstad Municipality. The Election Review Board has decided to hold a re-election in Båstad Municipality following an appeal against the 2014 election results. The re-election will be held on 10 May 2015. Funds will therefore be allocated to the Election Authority for its costs, and to government subsidies to the municipalities for their participation.

## **Increased support to faith communities' security management**

In 2015, SEK 7 million will be allocated to the increased security management of faith communities. Following the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, there has been an increase of vandalism and threats targeting various faith communities and their representatives.

Freedom of religion is central in a democracy and it is very important that all citizens have the opportunity to practice their religion.



Press release from Ministry of Culture

# The Government invests in culture and democracy

Published 23 October 2014 Updated 17 May 2015

“The extensive cultural initiatives presented today show that the Government prioritises culture. A living cultural life – accessible to everyone – provides education as well as cultural and intellectual stimulation, and helps deepen our democracy.” So says Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke following the Government’s presentation of the Budget Bill to the Riksdag today.

## SEK 252 million increase in culture budget

In its Budget Bill, the Government proposes increasing the budget for culture in 2015 by SEK 252 million compared with 2014. This includes the appropriation’s price and wage indexing, which amounts to some SEK 41 million. The entire budget for culture comprises SEK 7.1 billion.

“The Government’s policy for culture is clear: it is to create the conditions – a fertile ground – in which free culture can grow,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

## Free admission to state museums

Free admission will be introduced for state museums that are government agencies. In its Budget Bill, the Government proposes that SEK 80 million per year be allocated to the reform from 2015.

The Government intends to introduce free admission to the relevant museums in spring 2015. The exact date on which the reform will be

introduced has not yet been determined.

More information as to which state museums will offer free admission can be found in the press release below.

## A national library strategy to be developed

The Government proposes that a national library strategy be designed to promote cooperation and quality development throughout the library system. A total of SEK 10 million will be allocated annually between 2015 and 2018 for this purpose. Of these funds, the Government expects SEK 6 million to be allocated to the National Library of Sweden for the development of a national library strategy and to make eBooks accessible via the national catalogue Libris.

“A national library strategy will mean that cooperation between all of Sweden’s libraries can be deepened. It is important that everyone, in both urban and rural areas, has good access to the collected resources of our libraries,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

SEK 4 million will be allocated to the Swedish Arts Council’s reading promotion efforts in cooperation with the library system.

## SEK 400 million to be invested in schools for music and arts

The Government wants to give children and young people equal access to culture and cultural activities. It therefore proposes that a total of SEK 400 million be allocated in 2015–2018 to strengthen municipal schools for music and arts. The funds will allow schools for music and arts to reduce their fees. The Government intends to provide information on the design of the initiative at a later date.

“Schools for music and art are vital for children and young people to have an opportunity to focus on aesthetics and creativity. They must therefore be of high quality and accessible to everyone. In light of this, I am very pleased that the Government is now presenting extensive initiatives for schools for music and art,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

The Government also intends to appoint an inquiry tasked with developing a national strategy for schools for music and arts.

## Cooperation for culture in schools

The Government proposes providing an extra SEK 25 million to the Creative Schools initiative in 2015, bringing the total amount to SEK 199 million. SEK 30 million will subsequently be added annually between 2016 and 2018. The Government proposes that the Creative Schools initiative be broadened and deepened, and that an opportunity be created for municipal culture schools to act as a partner with, for example, compulsory schools.

“Education and culture are linked. Collaboration between culture schools and compulsory schools should therefore be strengthened. Greater opportunities for collaboration will mean that the services offered by culture schools will also be of benefit to compulsory schools. Aesthetics and creativity in schools promote learning, development and creative thinking,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

## SEK 230 million to culture initiative in Million Homes Programme areas

The Government will invest a total of SEK 230 million between 2015 and 2018 in cultural activities in Million Homes Programme areas and artwork in housing environments in these areas, of which SEK 50 million will be allocated for 2015. The initiative is meant to promote local civil society organisations’ actions to develop cultural activities.

“All people, regardless of background, place of residence or stage of life, have the right to a rich and diverse cultural life. This initiative is an expression of our ambition to make culture available to everyone,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

## SEK 20 million provided to performing arts alliances

Performing arts alliances help increase the social and economic security for freelance culture workers.

The alliances in theatre, dance and music will be given an additional SEK 20 million from 2015, which means an increase from SEK 62 million to SEK 82 million. The additional funds mean that the number of employees can be increased.

A characteristic feature of the labour market for theatre, dance and music

practitioners is few permanent positions and a large proportion of time-limited commissions. Performing arts alliances were established to improve the conditions for performing artists by providing professional actors, dancers and musicians with employment and remuneration during periods in which they lack employment in the performing arts.

“Free culture workers often work under tough conditions. The Government’s initiative makes it possible for more culture professionals to work under better conditions,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.

## SEK 25 million to education campaign against racism

The Government expects a total of SEK 25 million to be provided to the Living History Forum between 2015 and 2017 to conduct a major education campaign, together with the National Agency for Education, on various forms of racism throughout history and today. The campaign will target all compulsory and upper secondary schools. SEK 10 million will be provided in 2015.

## Protecting democracy against violent extremism

SEK 16 million will be allocated annually between 2015 and 2018 for measures to protect democracy and take preventive action against violent extremism.

The measures include preventing radicalisation and recruitment to combat abroad, strengthening the task of the national coordinator and providing support to civil society. Several civil society organisations do important work to promote democratic awareness, counteract radicalisation and promote defections from violent extremist organisations.

“Preventing and combating extremism require long-term and persistent democracy efforts. When people feel a sense of meaning and participation, there is less risk that they will be attracted to extremist messages,” says Ms Bah Kuhnke.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the ALMA Award ceremony 2018

Published 29 May 2018

Stockholm, 29 May 2017. Check against delivery.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Jaqueline Woodson,

Daring to stand firm when everything around us is changing is difficult. Being true to our convictions – to who we are – when everyone around us seems to expect something different, requires all our courage. This is something that many of us are struggling with right now. Myself included. To find the strength and to dare, we need good role models. Someone who leads the way and shows that it is possible.

Astrid Lindgren is one of my role models. I sometimes ask myself what she would say, if she could see what Sweden and the world is like today. A world where so many of the values she held high are threatened: the wonder of nature, the beauty of the seasons, the equal worth of all people, and the right to live in peace and freedom.

I ask myself this, even though I know the answer. Because over the last few years, through her diaries and letters that have been published, we have been able to learn more about the profound reflections, the razor-sharp skill of the writer, and the human maturity that lie behind one of the world's most prominent bodies of work of all time. She is, and will remain, a role model – when we doubt and when we despair.

Jaqueline Woodson,

It is a very special pleasure for me to be with you today. This is actually the second time in just a few weeks. The first was in New York, where we met and were able to sit and talk. The little foretaste I've had of your work

already means a great deal to me.

Just like Astrid Lindgren, you stand firm. You don't abandon your readers – you stay by their side. Not by answering their questions, but by showing them – through your stories – how different life can be. And that it's ok. Your message is: “You exist. Your thoughts and feelings are real – and that's ok.”

If we can impart this feeling to our children and to young people, I am sure that more will dare to look beyond self-criticism, stifle their fear of being left out, and have confidence in their convictions. Then we will dare to defend what is essential in our lives: freedom and the right to be who we are.

Today is your day, Jaqueline. You have been awarded the most distinguished prize a writer of children's and young adult literature can receive. On behalf of the Swedish Government, I offer you our warmest congratulations and look forward to following your work in the future.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Opening Address by Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke at the Dag Hammarskjöld and the United Nations Seminar on 16 May

Published 18 May 2018

Berlin, 16 May 2018. Check against delivery.

Excellencies, Ambassadors, dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege to address the UN Security Council – in a speech about the need to prevent sexual violence in conflict. I am now on a tour in Europe – by train! Yesterday I visited the Militärhistorisches Museum in Dresden, and was guided through the exhibition Gewalt und Geschlecht, violence and gender, a brave exhibition about us, and what we as human beings do to each other.

Before the visit to the museum I had a meeting with the First Deputy Mayor of Dresden. We talked about the challenges we face in Dresden and Germany as well in as in cities like Stockholm, Ludvika and in other parts of Sweden. The fact that polarization, and lack in trust and distrust among the many, cast shadows over our democracies and are or at least should be on top of all leaders' agendas.

We are here today to discuss and learn from each other's experiences. This seminar offers an excellent opportunity to advance international peace and security.

In 1954, former Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, stated that "the United Nations was not created to bring us to heaven, but to save us from

hell". Since Sweden became a member of the UN, active participation has been a natural part of Swedish foreign policy.

The organization has, with combined efforts by its Member States, helped to prevent catastrophic wars that preceded its founding. Extreme poverty has fallen to an historic low. Life expectancy continues to climb. Millions of people are reached every year with life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations is a central arena for Sweden's efforts to combat global challenges. Sweden contributes substantial resources to the UN but our commitment does not stop there.

We also want to contribute to reforms. We want to help to make the UN more effective, transparent and fit-for-purpose. We want the UN to do more, to be better and more pertinent to the important fight for peace world-wide. A better, more relevant UN will earn its trust from the public and the organization can rise to the global and pressing challenges that we as a society face today.

That's why we contribute to the UN and why strong support for the UN must continue.

I am happy and proud that the Swedish Embassy and the United Nations Association of Germany here in Berlin join forces on this interesting topic today.

Since Sweden chairs the Nordic Council of Ministers this year, and we are right now in a Nordic space, I would also like to say a few words on the need for strong Nordic cooperation, at home and internationally – not least at the UN. I know that the Nordic countries share many priorities at the UN, such as human rights, disarmament, climate change and gender equality. Together we can work for a stronger UN.

I know that the Nordic countries will continue to be voices of integrity and solidarity – in the spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld, who unfortunately lost his life while serving us, the United Nations.

I am also glad that the Dag Hammarskjöld Collection - his archives with letters and documents - is since 2017, included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Collection was donated to Kungliga Biblioteket -The National Library of Sweden - in accordance with his will. The Collection

documents the work and influence of Hammarskjöld and shows the Government official as well as the private person. It covers a significant period of UN history and is of great importance for the understanding of the post second World War history and the Cold War. I am proud that the Collection now has the status as a Memory of the World and that it is available and free to read - for everybody.

Dag Hammarskjöld once said that: "Only they who keep their eyes fixed on the far horizon, will find the right road."

To that I would like to add that if we know where we are coming from, we know where we are and - we know where we are going!

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the 17th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Published 17 April 2018

Agenda item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Monday April 16th 2018 Nordic statement Delivered by: Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy of Sweden Check against delivery.

Thank you Chairperson,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark together with Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country Sweden.

What does it mean to be forced to forsake your heritage, to be forced to speak another language than your own? Indigenous peoples all over the world has been exposed to racism as well as human rights violations and abuses through history and to this day. As state representatives we must listen, engage and act to pave the way for a better future.

For us, the Nordic countries, promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples remain longstanding priorities. We are committed to do our part to ensure the realization of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – a milestone in recognizing the status and rights of indigenous peoples.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has pointed out on several occasions: establishment of formalized procedures that give indigenous peoples the opportunity to participate and the ability to genuinely influence decision-making in issues that concern them is crucial.

At the UN, efforts to enhance Indigenous Peoples' participation are a concrete way to make their voices meaningfully heard. The Swedish government is currently drafting a proposal for a more comprehensive procedure for consultations between public authorities and the Sami people.

One measure to implement the declaration has been taken by Norway, Finland and Sweden in the negotiations of a Nordic Sami Convention. The proposed convention is under consideration at the Sami Parliaments in our respective countries and we hope for a positive outcome.

In Denmark, the Act of Greenland self-Government has facilitated the transfer of a long range of competences and responsibilities to the Self-Government and ensures consultation procedures regarding regulation relevant to Greenland. The Act furthermore describes Greenland's access to independence, stipulating that if the people of Greenland takes a decision in favor of independence, negotiations are to commence between the Danish Government and Naalakkersuisut regarding the introduction of independence for Greenland.

Human rights defenders, particularly those working to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, are increasingly under attack around the world. According to the organization Front Line Defenders, more than 300 human rights defenders were murdered in 2017. A majority of them were engaged in the defense of land, environmental and indigenous peoples' rights. At the same time, the levels of impunity remain alarmingly and unacceptably high.

Attacks on human rights defenders must come to an end. A clear message on this was sent in December last year when the General Assembly by consensus adopted a Norwegian-led resolution reaffirming the importance of the work done by human rights defenders.

As many others, we have noted with great concern reports on the current situation for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We reiterate our strong support for this mandate as well as the other special procedures mandate holders under the authority of the UN Human Rights Council. We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for her consistent engagement to strengthen the promotion and protection of the rights of

indigenous peoples.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on Strengthening the Implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

Published 30 June 2017

Geneva, 29 June 2017. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleagues,

I am truly honoured and proud to be here. I thank UNESCO and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for organising this key initiative and for the invitation. I am also hopeful to see such a broad representation at this meeting, since this is an issue we need to address in broad alliances. My name is Alice Bah Kuhnke and I'm the minister of Culture and Democracy in Sweden, which includes responsibility for media policy, but also to safeguard our human rights.

Freedom of expression is the foundation of every free nation. It makes sure that critical voices can be heard, that our ongoing conversation includes different perspectives, that what we take as a given can be questioned. Freedom of expression is a basic human right, but it is also a fundamental part of a democratic society. This needs to be repeated.

I believe that the democratic and open society is at risk. Not long ago, freedom of expression and democratic values were being strengthened in many countries where they previously had been limited. The path towards

more freedom appeared ever brighter.

But over the last few years we have seen the opposite development in many parts of the world. In the name of countering terrorism, freedom is set aside and prejudice takes its place.

I believe in the rule of law, of safeguarding our freedoms and our human rights, because these are the values that we are defending from terrorists. We as democratic societies should resist, and fight back, not do them a favour.

There are also other obstacles to free speech. As you well know, the 2017 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters without Borders shows an increase in the number of countries where the media freedom situation is very grave and highlights the scale and variety of the obstacles to media freedom throughout the world.

In all, the situation has worsened in nearly two thirds of the 180 countries in the Index.

According to the same index, my country Sweden has climbed to second place. And yes, it is true that we have freedom of speech and free press in Sweden. However, we are also witnessing problems. We are experiencing a harsher debate climate. Journalists, artists, elected officials and authors are threatened and attacked for their works and their opinions. Women journalists are more targeted than others, often simply for being women. The situation has a chilling effect on the possibilities to express opinions, on the public watchdog role of journalists and on public debate in general.

The Swedish government is a feminist government, the first one in the world! Bringing the situation of women journalist to the top of the international agenda is one of my priorities. We need to show greater determination in our attention to women journalists and women media workers. In Sweden and around the world, women face specific forms of threats including sexual harassment and gender-based violence, both online and offline, with deep impact in terms of self-censorship and the ability of these women to carry out their chosen profession.

Journalists and the press are targeted by those who feel threatened by freedom of expression and transparency. Threats against journalists lead to self-censorship which poses a major threat to democracy. In order for the media to be able to fulfil its' corner stone role in a democracy, journalists, media workers, bloggers, media organizations and individuals must be able to

discuss and debate issues freely and safely.

Internet and social media platforms are empowering citizens to fully use their right to freedom of expression and access to information to disseminate opinions, information and news. And we have to bridge the digital divide and realise women's rights online. New technology is an enabler of democratic development, but this means we have to tackle its negative aspects such as disinformation, propaganda and a harsher debate climate.

Some weeks from now, I will present a national action plan to protect journalists, media workers, artists and elected officials, who use freedom of expression as their most important tool. This plan will present a number of actions by the Government to tackle the negative development we have seen in Sweden over the last few years, to ensure a continued democratic debate.

Sweden works closely with UNESCO on how to develop and strengthen the UN work to improve the safety of journalists and fight impunity worldwide. In this regard, I would like to highlight the UNESCO' report on "World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development". As you well know, it is the only UN report that covers these issues in a long term perspective. This becomes even more relevant in the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. We look forward to the third World Trends report being launched in November.

Cooperating with UNESCO has also benefitted our domestic work and the Swedish Government encourages other states to do the same. It would give power to the movement if more governments were to adopt national plans for comprehensive action. Sweden encourages others to join this exercise and will be happy to share our experiences.

Dear colleagues, distinguished participants,

At the core of our deliberations today is the need to strengthen our efforts to address the urgent situation that journalists are facing all over the world. It is unacceptable that – still in our days - human rights and fundamental rights continue to be violated and met with impunity in several countries. It is unacceptable that journalists and media workers are being kidnapped, tortured and killed – and the perpetrators are not held accountable.

Women media workers are facing a double vulnerability and are frequently victims of intimidation, threats and violence. We cannot accept impunity for

these crimes that in addition to the tragedy in itself also threatens to weaken our society by curbing peoples' right to freedom of expression and information.

The role of the state is to guarantee and further these rights, not to hamper them or diminish them. Those of us who truly believe in these values have no time to rest; we have to get up on our feet and help others to get up.

We need to constantly remind ourselves what is at stake. The values that once were so crucial in shaping our societies – freedom, human rights, equality and science. I cannot think of anything more important to fight for, than that. So let us fight together!

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the ALMA Award ceremony 2017

Published 31 May 2017

Stockholm, 29 May 2017. Check against delivery.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Erlbruch,

Everyone who has children close to them or works with children knows that they have to try and keep up with them.

Hunger and thirst, tiredness and excess energy. As an adult, you have to be there with a helping hand, a slice of bread, a glass of water. Stroke their back to settle them.

You also have to be prepared for the deepest existential questions.

Lingonberry jam or tomato ketchup on meatballs leads to a discussion about why people actually like different things. Tying shoelaces leads to a discussion about why most people have two legs but some of us don't. Why and how? And why do we even exist? I often think with gratitude of all the teaching staff who work with our children and young people. Who, while cutting apples into slices, are asked questions that philosophers have devoted thousands of years to finding answers to, or who quickly have to change the plans for a maths lesson because a question has come up that cannot be set aside.

In my work as Minister for Culture, one of the most important issues is ensuring that these teachers and children have books, libraries and, not least, librarians close at hand. We all know that books are a fantastic source of knowledge, but also that literature can help us get to grips with concepts. Books are there when we adults do not have the energy, do not have any answers, or perhaps do not dare to answer. Every child must have the opportunity to find their way to books, and librarians are invaluable in this

regard. Mr Erlbruch – you dare to write and draw! You are brave in many ways, and in this respect your writing is reminiscent of Astrid Lindgren's. Your work reflects what children's lives are like – they contain the light-hearted and the deeply existential, side by side. We are in awe of the incomprehensible, we find happiness in small pleasures and we become angry over injustices.

In one of your books – *Duck, Death and the Tulip* – you speak to the reader about that thing called death, which follows us everywhere, however hard we try to push it away. That thing called death – which we adults often find so difficult to talk about especially to children. Without offering any answers, you tell it like it is: even when we are no longer alive, the lake is still there.

Everything is the same, but completely different, because we are not there. We feel deep sadness when thinking about this. But you, Mr Erlbruch, have managed with your story to give every individual a feeling of immeasurable importance. Being able to do this without hiding the truth is nothing but great art. I hope and believe that more and more people will read your book when questions about sadness, longing and our very existence need to be discussed.

Today, Mr Erlbruch, I would like to congratulate you on receiving this important prize, and to thank you on behalf of children and adults alike.

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at Stockholm Internet Forum

Published 31 May 2017

Stockholm, 17 May 2017. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues!

I am very honoured and proud to be here this morning. I thank Lennart Båge and Sida for the invitation and the possibility to address this truly international Forum. A warm welcome to Sweden and to Stockholm!

Freedom. It is the best word I know. It is what guides me in my work as a politician and Minister for Culture and Democracy in the Swedish Government. Freedom for the media, the free and independent arts, the freedom of individuals to become who they want to be without discrimination. Freedom of speech, even when it hurts. Countering arguments of populists with the arguments of a free society where we all can access information, build our own opinion, where we all can live freely.

Not long ago, many of us felt that freedom of expression and democratic values were being strengthened in many countries where this previously had been limited. The path towards more freedom appeared to be guaranteed. But over the last few years we have seen the opposite development in many parts of the world. This is true not at least for Europe and its neighbouring countries, where we certainly did not expect this to happen. Where we promised each other that this would not happen, again. The development is deeply worrying.

We are guaranteeing the freedom of speech and the free press in Sweden. Not all politicians in the Swedish Parliament agree on this, but the majority still stand strong. However, we are witnessing more problems. We are experiencing a harsher debate climate and increasing threats in the Swedish debate.

Journalists, artists, elected officials and authors are threatened and attacked for their works and their opinions. Today more than before. It is unacceptable, not only because of the personal consequences, but they may also have a chilling effect on the freedom of expression, on the public watchdog role of journalists and on public debate in general. It is a critical challenge for us, to safeguard the democratic and open society, which I believe is at risk.

The media has, as we all know, a vital role to play in promoting transparency and accountability. Whether it is scrutiny of the performance of the government, revealing corruption or reporting on crimes, the media has to be able to do its' work in an open way. Threats on journalists can lead to self-censorship and that it is a major threat to democracy which is high on my government's agenda.

The media must be able to operate in an environment free of fear. Journalists must be able to investigate important issues and express informed opinion without fear of prosecution. In order for the media to be able to fulfill its' corner stone role in a democracy, journalists, bloggers, media organizations and individuals must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely and safely.

In this context we also urgently need to join forces and step up against the specific challenges faced by female journalists. It is alarming that female journalists are increasingly being abused online. The Swedish government is a "feminist government", the world's first officially feminist government. Later today, you will hear from my dear colleague, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ms Margot Wallström, addressing what Sweden does globally as a feminist government. Bringing the situation of female journalist to the top of relevant international as well as national agendas is one of our priorities.

Sweden works closely with Unesco on how to develop and strengthen the UN's work with a view to improve the safety of journalists worldwide and on the issue of impunity. I wish to take this opportunity to highlight Unesco's never-ending efforts and tireless work on these very important issues of mutual concern.

The media landscape is changing rapidly, creating both opportunities and challenges for freedom of expression and media freedom. In many countries the media is shifting – or has already shifted – from traditional newspapers and TV to digital distribution channels. Social media is playing a big part in this fast-growing revolution, often being the main arena for communication

and public debate.

Internet and social media platforms are empowering citizens to fully use their right to freedom of expression and access to information to disseminate opinions, information and news. New technology is an enabler of democratic development. But we have also seen how technology can be used to spread disinformation and act as channels of hate and threats.

Disinformation risk undermining trust in established media and institutions, and promoting the spread of online echo chambers, where conspiracy theories and half-truths become the perceived truth. But how come this has not been addressed or reported is a question that then will be asked?

Disinformation erodes citizens' trust in institutions on which democratic societies are built. That is why, now more than ever, tools and learning about critical thinking and source criticism must be on the political "to do-list".

Dear colleagues, distinguished participants, The goal for me as minister for culture and democracy is to safeguard the democratic right to information, in a way that complies with the needs of the person. This is a matter of democracy, a matter of human rights and also of course a matter of access to culture. In the world that we share today all countries need to return to the core values of humanism, democracy and inclusion as expressed in the fundamental human rights. In this work access to information, the right to free speech, the right to express oneself without censorship or threats of violence is truly fundamental. It cannot be underlined enough.

The role of the state must be to guarantee and further these rights, not to hamper them or diminish them. Those of us who truly believe in these values have no time to rest; we have to get up on our feet. Our voices are needed; let's make the best use of them.

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the announcement of the 2017 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award laureate

Published 05 April 2017

Stockholm, 4 April 2017. Check against delivery.

Friends – both here and in Bologna,

Children must be allowed to be children. This very much goes without saying. We adults have to meet children where they are, not the other way round. And this sounds easy.

But what does it really mean to meet children where they are? How do we know what they can and cannot manage? It feels natural to want to protect children from the difficult things in life. We want them to be surrounded, for as long as possible, by all that is beautiful and kind, to fill them with goodness.

Few advocates for the best interests of children can match Astrid Lindgren, who we are remembering here today. In her books we dive into idyllic environments and we get a sense of an ever-present warm embrace. But she also writes about death, loneliness and grief.

Astrid Lindgren said that "Death and love are the big things that people experience; they interest people of all ages. We mustn't scare children so much that they get into a state of anxiety, but they need to be roused by art as much as adults do."

Seldom has the power of art felt as relevant as it does right now. We are living in uncertain times and the consequences of what is happening in both

global politics and our own country are difficult to foresee. It is not at all easy being adult and explaining things to our children, let alone reassuring them. We can hardly reassure ourselves.

A lot of the children's and young people's literature that is written today offers exactly what Astrid Lindgren talked about: it evokes feelings and thoughts, it changes perspectives. It shows us that the answers are not in the simple solutions. That anger can inspire action that makes the world a better place. That tears are not just an expression of grief but also of the ability to feel empathy. Literature can instil courage and strength so that each and every one of us dares to make a difference.

This is the literature we are celebrating here today. Literature in the spirit of Astrid Lindgren that provides inspiration and courage to live life to the fullest, assert yourself and also take responsibility.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the inauguration of the Göteborg Film Festival 2017

Published 30 January 2017 Updated 30 January 2017

Göteborg, 27 January 2017. Check against delivery.

Friends and film-lovers,

Being here with you tonight marks for me the end of a very intensive and emotional couple of days in Gothenburg. Today, 27 January, is Holocaust Remembrance Day, marking the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp exactly 72 years ago.

And it is at moments like these that I think with enormous gratitude about culture. And about film, which reflects people's fates so well; tells stories that have not yet been told; documents and compiles. The story of us, of what came before and what is to come.

Racism and nationalism are tightening their grip in Europe and the world at the moment. Authoritarian leaders are stepping forward and presenting simple solutions to complex problems. Fundamental conditions for a democracy, such as respect for facts, freedom of the press and the equal value of all people, are flagrantly ignored. This is happening in countries that until very recently felt very close to ours.

But this trend is a complex one, and alongside the very worrying path some countries have chosen there is a greater openness and commitment to the equal value of all people. And the variety of films the Gothenburg Film Festival is presenting over the coming days really shows this. I have read the festival programme and I can see how it captures our time. Social exclusion, belonging on one's own terms, religion and vulnerability are portrayed from various starting points.

The choice of 'religion' as the festival theme is both brave and perfectly natural. And it was high time for Sápmi to receive attention as a film region in a coherent way.

Artistic director Jonas Holmberg will discuss the possible midlife crisis the festival may be experiencing as it turns 40. In my view, if there has been a crisis, the festival has got through it. This festival shows the maturity one likes to see in a 40-year-old – not anxious, but forward-looking; with a certain authority but firmly rooted in the present. Celebrating the festival's 40th birthday by showing the opening film simultaneously at 40 cinemas for SEK 40 per ticket is very much in line with this, and very elegant!

This is a new year and a new film policy has taken effect. As Minister for Culture and Democracy, I have great expectations for what it will lead to. Of course, many challenges remain and there are no simple solutions to the challenges facing the Swedish film industry. We are many that are convinced that a change was necessary and I am also being met with an enthusiasm for the new policy, as well as a satisfaction that the fundamental aspects of film policy have been discussed.

The film festivals have always been key actors for spreading a broad range of films – and this is something you are demonstrating very clearly today.

As we all know, 84 countries are represented by the 457 films being shown this week. It is great to see film-makers, audiences, artists, politicians and debaters meeting and discussing different issues, experiences and with the Gothenburg Film Festival as the backdrop. This enriches cultural expression in Swedish film. And it enriches our entire country.

With these words I would like to wish you the best of luck and declare the 2017 Gothenburg Film Festival open.

Thank you.



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the AIPCE Conference

Published 11 October 2016 Updated 11 October 2016

Stockholm, 6 October 2016. Check against delivery.

Free and independent media is a foundation of democracy and rule of law. Every day we have to protect the role of journalists in preserving democracy and defending freedom of expression. In order to be a democratic society we absolutely have to safeguard free speech and freedom of the press.

This year, we're celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Swedish Freedom of the Press Act. It is a long tradition to be very proud of, but the freedom of the press cannot be taken for granted.

Free media needs protection and support from the government, but most of all they need freedom from the government. The big question for me, and for the Swedish government, is how to best strengthen journalism and media, especially in times of economic restraints, convergence and when local media is having difficulties, without interfering with the freedom of the media. The content of media should never be scrutinized by the state.

The Swedish Press Council now celebrates 100 years. It is the oldest tribunal of its kind in the world. This self-disciplinary system is not based on legislation. It is entirely voluntary and wholly financed by four press organizations. It's a system that has been serving the Swedish press well for a hundred years, and a good example of how media can handle ethical questions entirely without interference from politicians.

The confidence in the journalistic profession and the trust from the public are key factors. For the citizens, access to objective information about the world is a key factor in making conscious decisions and forming an opinion on complex matters. The role of the journalist and journalism is becoming more and more important.

The development during these last few years is really worrying. I am talking about the serious problems we see here at home where threats and even sometimes acts of violence against journalists have increased. Research shows, as you may know, that one third of all journalists in Sweden report having been threatened over the last twelve months. For many of them, it has become part of everyday life, and has in some way affected decisions taken concerning their work. This is totally unacceptable. The threats may lead to self-censorship which in itself is a major threat to democracy.

Right now there are several initiatives here in Sweden to counteract threats and violence against journalists and artists. The Swedish association of journalists, the Swedish publishers (Utgivarna), the Swedish Writers' Union and the Swedish PEN, to mention some, are doing an important work in this field.

The Swedish government and my ministry are currently working on an action plan to prevent threats and violence against artists, politicians and journalists. My goal is to have this action plan, which will be systematic, in place next year. I have met with representatives from the Swedish media sector during this year to discuss these matters.

But the problems occur not only here in Sweden, there are also grave threats globally. We don't have to travel far to find places where the freedom of speech is limited. A few years ago it would have been considered outrageous, but now it is commonplace. From all over the world we get reports of impunity, silencing and even murders of journalists. I find these trends extremely worrying. The fight against threats directed at journalists, authors and artists has to be fought every day.

The topic that will be discussed is about if the freedom of the press is under pressure in Europe.

We have had an extremely important debate and discussion in Europe and the EU the last few years about independence of media and press and freedom of expression. This discussion has been fuelled by sudden and worrying changes in media legislation and the treatment of public service media in European countries.

I was in Belgrade a year ago, and had several meetings with journalists, bloggers and NGOs about the freedom of the press. Several of them told me deeply worrying stories.

In other words, this is not only a problem for Serbian journalists, but also a reality that we – Europe – need to handle.

The discussion is crucial in a time of radically changing media landscapes and political and economic strains for Europe.

And what is needed, here as well as abroad is more action than words.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Closing statement by Alice Bah Kuhnke Baltic Pride 2016 International Human Rights Conference

Published 04 July 2016 Updated 04 July 2016

Vilnius, 17 June 2016. Check against delivery.

Dear organizers and participants of the conference,

My name is Alice Bah Kuhnke, I am the Minister for Culture and Democracy. I am responsible for LGBTI-equality in the Swedish Government.

This is my first Baltic Pride, so I am honoured by the invitation to deliver this closing speech of the conference. The possibility for discussions on how to advance LGBTI rights is of highest importance in these times, therefore I hope you have had a fruitful conference.

One of the most important missions for me and the Swedish Government is to strive to for an inclusive, diverse society, where everyone can live their lives in freedom, and have their rights promoted and protected.

This vision is as simple as it is complex. You know this better than anyone. What should be the fundamentals of a society are so difficult to achieve. It is incredibly frustrating! Don't you agree?

We are at a crossroads in Europe, where we have a choice. We can choose to go in the direction of darker paths, or we can build inclusive and diverse societies. I know what I and the Swedish Government wants, but we are all concerned about how many other countries there are that want to go in the other direction.

Over the last decades we have seen progress in many countries in Europe and in other parts of the world when it comes to equal rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual persons, such as increasing recognition of same sex relationships. We have also, as you know, seen a much needed focus on the equal rights of transgender and intersex-persons, where several countries have adopted progressive laws setting the standard at a new high.

Yet, many challenges remain. One thing is clear - much of the progress made for LGBTI-equality would not have come about if it wasn't for civil society organisations pushing the agenda forward. And brave people taking a stand for human rights. People like you.

In my own country, Sweden, we have made quite a journey during the last decades. Almost thirty years ago, Sweden became the first country to recognise de facto cohabitation relationships of same sex couples. But it would take another seven years before a formalised legal framework was introduced in terms of civil partnership for same sex couples.

And in 2009 The Marriage Act was amended so that it is now gender neutral. We are now reviewing the regulations of parental leave to be better adapted to families in all their forms.

Our law for gender recognition was set up in 1972, at the time a state of the art law – but now not really modern. The enforced sterilization was ended a few years ago after a long struggle from brave individuals and civil society organisations. Recently, the Swedish Government announced that we will open the possibility for people who were forced to get sterilized under the law, will be able to seek compensation from the state – as far as I know we are the first government in the world to make that kind of a decision.

The debates around these changes were at times loud and inflamed so these changes certainly did not come about without opposition. However after they were introduced they were rather quickly accepted.

Today, existing LGBTI rights are not controversial in Sweden. But it has been a struggle. And every time we have changed a law there have been voices saying that the change will affect society in a negative way. Some even seemed to think that the world would come to an end. Yet, here we are. We've proven them wrong time and time again.

Since this conference is arranged within the framework of Baltic Pride, I am very happy to be part of the march tomorrow.

Pride marches are important in a democratic society as they show a society's capacity to stand up for and protect civil rights.

Pride marches create an opportunity for human rights defenders and LGBTI-organisations to put the spotlight on human rights of LGBTI-persons. And it can't be mentioned enough, civil society play a vital role in democratic countries. Civil society organisations are important in giving LGBTI-rights a voice, and they are equally important as drivers for change in our efforts to combat the violations committed everyday based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBTI-equality is about human rights. The Swedish government's position is perfectly clear: Human rights are universal and apply to all, regardless of who you are or whom you love.

Everyone must be able to live their lives in freedom irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. It is a matter of human rights.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in too many countries around the world.

States have a duty to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all persons without discrimination. This includes the human rights of LGBTI-persons. It is not a question of opinion or morals – human rights are universal and apply to all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

The development on LGBTI-issues within the EU is not always straight forward. Significant steps have been made, but there is much more that ought to be done.

For us, it is very important to say that the EU is not a cooperation where you can pick and choose. You cannot only be in the union for the economic benefits and skip the promotion of joint values.

This means that all EU countries should take a joint responsibility for people who are fleeing to our continent. And you should safeguard that LGBTI persons can use the freedom of movement like everyone else. This means that we should strive for increased LGBTI equality in all its aspects!

Again, you cannot pick and choose!

Because, respect for human rights and dignity, and the principles of freedom,

democracy, equality and the rule of law, are the common values of the European Union. This is stated in the Treaty of the union and in the EU:s Charter of fundamental rights.

In the EU foreign policy there are guidelines for EU-delegations and Member States, for the promotion and protection of all human rights of LGBTI-persons. This is in order to make our work in this field more operational and systematic. From a Swedish perspective we see that this is not only needed for EU's foreign policy but also internally.

We need to build alliances and work together, governments and civil society organisations.

We also need to work together to highlight the different forms of discrimination – racism and populism is rising in Europe and in other parts of the world. Some leaders even justify racism in the name of LGBTI equality. This can never be accepted and we should never let the advancement of LGBTI rights be hijacked by other agendas.

Let me finish by saying that I would like to congratulate the organizers' that have been able to gather so many committed and knowledgeable persons under this roof. I wish you all the best in your future work. We need you.

A lot has happened, but a lot challenges remain in order to secure human rights for all, and to secure the possibility to be yourself fully, to be the one you know in your heart that you are.

I would like to end with a quote by Tennessee Williams:

"What is straight? A line can be straight, or a street, but the human heart, oh, no, it's curved like a road through mountains."

Thank you.



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the Nordic Lutheran Bishops Summit

Published 01 July 2016 Updated 01 July 2016

Visby, 28 June 2016. Check against delivery.

Dear Bishops, ladies and gentlemen. It is very inspiring for me to meet you all. In many perspectives you represent tradition, faith, and, not the least, future.

In your hands lie such great possibilities to shape our Nordic Countries, and, with these possibilities, also a great responsibility. The way you, and every priest and welfare worker within your parishes, speak and act, both at a national level and in the local communities, has a great impact on our common way forward. Actually, in many cases, you are the ones who have the best possibility to find and create this common path, where everyone can be included, listened to and inspired to share the political, cultural and religious space in our part of the World.

As in all the Nordic countries, Government and Church have walked a long path together in Sweden. In some way you could say that we were married – at least we lived intimately together for over 400 years. But then, as in many relationships, we came to the conclusion that we were better of separated. The separation in the year 2000 is often referred to as the "divorce" between State and Church.

But actually our separation is not definite, as in many relationships that has been we have ways to take responsibility together, even when we are apart. The Church of Sweden still has public responsibilities in some areas, ruled by laws and contracts between the Church and the government. One of them really matters two us all, sooner or later, namely funerals. Another is the

sacred cultural heritage.

Since the separation, the Church of Sweden is the owner and the manager of the sacred cultural heritage. But still, the sacred cultural heritage belongs to us all, whether we are members of the Church of Sweden or not. That's why we think it is important that the Church of Sweden receives a monetary compensation from the state with the aim to make it possible for the Church to preserve the sacred cultural heritage in accordance with the Heritage Conservation Act.

I must say the Church of Sweden is doing a very good job concerning the sacred cultural heritage. The Church is taking a great responsibility not only in preserving it; As the Government, the Church is also focusing on how to use and to develop the cultural heritage and how to make it accessible and relevant for more people with different backgrounds.

The sacred cultural heritage is a great resource in making an including society. The Swedish government wants to see a Sweden with many stories to be told and different voices to be heard – an including use of cultural heritage. The sacred cultural heritage houses the common heritage in many ways - more ways than many of the secular Swedish recognise. 400 years of marriage between state and church have had an substantial impact. There is a lot to learn and recapture from this history.

People from other parts of the world sometimes know our past better than ourselves.

I've heard of a person from from the Middle East, a refugee, that could tell the guide at a Swedish museum the meaning of the biblical paintings they were looking at. For her it was a living story being told on the painting. To the many secular Swedish people this was definitely not a living cultural heritage. The common cultural heritage is not static, it is developing as people use it, and as we share stories with each other it will be enriched, as will the society.

However, the Swedish Church and the government work together in other areas as well, areas where we share values and objectives, and where the Swedish Church has gained a position of major civil society stakeholder.

As an independent voice, the Swedish Church has taken a stand for equal rights and the equal value of everyone, both by campaigns and debate, in media, in the streets and in the face to face talks to uncountable people in our society.

One matter, crucial to the Swedish society and close to my heart, is the way we welcome and care for people who come to our country in need and vulnerability. People who have sacrificed everything to escape civil war, persecution and oppression.

As you all know, the world is experiencing the greatest migration since the end of World War II. A year ago, this became more and more visible also to us in the Nordic countries. Last year, 163 000 people applied for an asylum in Sweden. That's more than twice as much as in 2014.

70 000 of these were children. We actually know that even more people came to us, people that didn't seek asylum but still needed our help when they arrived.

The situation was the most intense in October and November, when nearly 80 000 asylum seekers sought a safe haven in our country. The capacity of Swedish authorities was at the point of exhaustion, and there was an acute need for beds, blankets, food and human care.

I have talked of this many times, but it still moves me and fills me with great pride to think of the way the civil society organisations in Sweden gathered forces and stepped in, quickly and with impressive strength. Thousands of people from all parts of Swedish society volunteered and were mobilised, both by long time established organisations and by new initiatives responding to the situation. In all this, the Swedish Church stood out as one of the bravest, strongest and most dedicated helper we ever have witnessed.

Like no other organisation I can think of, The Swedish Church reaches out to all parts of Sweden. Parishes all over the country engaged in assisting the refugees, by distributing food and clothes, offering temporary housing in parish buildings, supporting people by listening and giving advice. In many places, The Swedish Church coordinated the local efforts and cooperated with other civil society organisations. In some parts of Sweden, the town church became the local centre for help and contacts.

The whole of The Swedish Church is flourishing with many admirable initiatives, such as language cafés, choirs and sport activities, spreading hope and meaning amongst asylum seekers. And much of this is still going on today. Cooperation has included people and organisations from all parts of society, regardless of religious affiliation, and many new contacts all over our society have added to mutual understanding and respect.

To contribute to their achievements, the Swedish government last December

granted extra funds to NOG:s, educational associations, the sports movement and faith communities for their efforts for migrants. The Swedish Church received the largest sum amongst faith communities.

I remember very well a visit to the church of Saint Catherine in Stockholm in November. Together with the Mosque of Stockholm, the parish offered food, clothes, a shower and a place to sleep, to several hundred people, day after day, for months. Volunteers from the church and the mosque worked side by side. This great tragedy also brought people together, from different parts of Europe and from different parts of our own society.

This was by no means a unique example. Parishes of The Swedish Church all over the country have initiated interfaith networks and activities, both before, under and after the refugee situation last year. As Minister for issues regarding faith communities, my top priority is to enhance interfaith dialogue.

I believe in the good forces created when people meet face to face and get to know each other. The Swedish government is doing all that we can for a Sweden that keeps together. I see interfaith cooperation as a key element to that aim, and I see The Swedish Church as a key partner in making this possible.

We are indeed officially divorced, and even if more can be done with our relationship we work together better than ever!

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Opening address by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the 12th international conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research

Published 30 June 2016 Updated 30 June 2016

Stockholm, 29 June 2016. Check against delivery.

Dear friends, as the minister of Culture and Democracy and on behalf of the Swedish government, I am honored to welcome you to Sweden and to Stockholm for the 12th international conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research, which is taking place in a Nordic country for the very first time.

Apart from everything the conference has to offer, I am happy that you are here at such a wonderful time of year, which must surely enhance your enjoyment of the visit.

Now, allow me some pride in stating that this small country of Sweden has a long history of research in many fields and that we hold a position as a research nation. Since the beginning of the 1990s civil society has increasingly been the main concern for a number of academic institutions, among them of course your host for this conference, the Institute for Civil Society Studies at Ersta Sköndal University College.

This is very important, as the contributions of civil society, and the role it played in our society, was for a long time overlooked. My opinion is that this has changed, for the benefit of all of society.

Swedish civil society organizations, foundations and representatives have been deeply involved in and contributed enormously to the creation of this conference, as, I might add, has the Swedish government. It has been carried

out in a spirit of cooperation, which we value a lot.

Given this context, in what way can Sweden and Stockholm be of interest to all of you researchers from other countries? Well, we also tend to be proud of the fact that Swedish civil society stands out in international comparison both in terms of number of membership associations and share of active citizens among the population.

The civil society has built our society. Most decision-makers in Swedish politics have some background in civil society – including myself.

We also have a quite low degree of professional staff and a focus as much on voice as on service, in our civil society.

And here I take the opportunity to stress the Government's view of civil society as a pluralistic political and ideological arena where individual opinions, religious beliefs and political positions can be formulated and developed, and get the chance of being expressed in action. This is a fundamental part of any real democracy.

But let me at the same time underline that the possibilities and limitations on civil society in relation to the state as well as to the other spheres of society are not carved in stone. Nor can it, in any simple way, once and for all be defined. It is changing, since our societies change.

In Sweden recently we have seen how civil society adapts quickly to changing situations. Last year the number of asylum seekers in Sweden increased dramatically, from 81 000 in 2014 to nearly 163 000 in 2015. Only during October and November, nearly 76 000 persons applied for asylum. This was a challenge for our structures.

In the efforts of central and local government to master the situation we are deeply impressed and dependent of the important support of organized civil society as well as the great amount of spontaneous individual input, both with regard to first reception and the more long-term work of integration and inclusion. But here we still have a lot to learn, not least from the experiences of other countries.

One important lesson that we've learnt during these times, is how important it is with strong voices from civil society. I mentioned this earlier, but I want to make sure you heard me – we want a civil society that challenges the Government to do more, to do better. We want their strong critical voices.

When other countries want to silence civil society when they raise their voices, we invite them to the table. It is what any responsible Government should do – in my opinion.

Finally, of course in order for us politicians to make better decisions on regulations for civil society, the dialogue between research, civil society and the public sector are necessary. In this way this conference is contributing to the creation and strengthening of contacts between academia and practice, which we believe to be value to all involved.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the Museums in Times of Migration and Mobility conference

Published 03 June 2016 Updated 03 June 2016

Malmö, 25 May 2016. Check against delivery.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

I am honoured to be here in Malmö and to have the opportunity to address you all before you start this conference. From the government's point of view this conference is something that we have impatiently awaited for a long time. Today we start a cross-sector initiative concerning a momentous issue of our time.

It is quite obvious that this conference, which will be the scientific outset for what is planned to be a museum of migration, is held here in Malmö and that the initiative is taken by the City of Malmö. Malmö is - and now I risk to offend someone - Sweden's gateway to the rest of the world. For a long time Malmö has welcomed people from all over the world. It is a young and vibrant city that in no way pretend that the future doesn't hold any challenges or difficulties.

Quite the opposite; in a time of radical change, possibilities are identified and implemented in a quite impressive speed. This was not at least shown during last year when Sweden welcomed 163 000 refugees to Sweden. In many regions, and especially the Malmö region the systems were stretched to their limits.

I am proud of what many Swedes have done and are doing for all the people fleeing war and persecution. Even though the needs are immense, Sweden as a small country has been able to offer many refugees safety and shelter and maybe some peace of mind. Finally they might feel safe. But are they at

home? No, that is something different.

Home is a place to leave and a place to come back to. Home is where you keep your most loved objects and where you feel safe with your loved ones. A home bears our memories and it is a place to rest and feel safe.

The Swedish author Viveka Sjögren explains this in an exquisite and beautiful way in her children's book "Om du skulle fråga Micha" (If you would ask Micha). With colourful pictures and few words she gives the reader a nuanced story of fleeing and finding a new home, and she does it from a child's perspective. How a piece of torn wallpaper, still bearing the smell of the old home, becomes the most precious belonging to someone who has no other choice than to create a new home, this time starting from nothing.

But of course, no one comes from nothing. We all hold cultural assets that make us who we are. Millions of Swedes have their roots in other countries than Sweden. A museum that gathers all the different aspects of migration is therefore something that will be of importance for all citizens of Sweden.

The idea of creating a museum, an independent institution with various types of missions with migration as the main theme will be an important step to actually recognize migration as a major part of Swedish history and cultural heritage. A museum has the ability to seize the different aspects of the past and present and be relevant in many ways. If this becomes reality in Malmö it will be the first of its kind in Europe. And for me as a politician it would be an important step on the road to build a more inclusive society.

But it is not my task as a politician to get involved in details about which aspects should be reflected, no, that is something that should grow in a continuous dialogue, with no political interference. Museums are and shall remain knowledge institutions. We sometimes see small tendencies of politicians, also on local level, who make comments on what is shown in museums or who like to dictate how sensitive topics connected to identity or cultural heritage should be approached. This is not acceptable in any way.

So dear friends, I will not stay for this conference, but I urge you to use this unique opportunity, when we have the pick of the researchers on migration issues on one place, to put your heads together and use all your brilliance to create something unprecedented. Grasp this opportunity.

Thank you and good luck!





Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at The Forest of Venice exhibition

Published 31 May 2016 Updated 31 May 2016

Venice, 26 May 2016. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentleman, representatives from the press,

I am very thankful for the invitation to open the press preview of this exciting exhibition The Forest of Venice. Allow me to especially thank Kjellander + Sjöberg and Folkhem, who are the producers of this exhibition. Also big thanks to The Swedish Institute, Swedish Wood, Sveaskog and Martinsons who have all supported the exhibition.

I am grateful to be here at the biennial during this years theme - Reporting from the front – because it focuses on issues that are very important to me. Today, Europe faces many urgent challenges. Across the sea, people are leaving their homes out of fear. Across Europe and many other places too, we see cities and countries leading the way to accommodate new homes and new beginnings.

In an urbanised world architecture has become the living environment on which we depend so much in our daily lives. Quality in architecture has become crucial to the quality of life.

Architecture is not only a shared environment; it is also necessarily an output of collective effort. Architecture require that we work together, make a plan – to start from and to guide the work. My hope is that the process of building should always originate from, and support, the needs of human beings.

We have to share a feeling of responsibility that what we produce will eventually, in part or in whole, be given away to others to utilize. It must function in the present as well as for future generations. And the big challenge is, of course, the climate change.

I believe that we are all here today because we also share a vision of a climate smart, resilient and sustainable future. A vision in which forests play an important role.

Coming from the north, we are used to harsh environments. Our houses have to be strong and resilient to keep the cold out. Our houses have predominantly been built and heated by wood for centuries. We have a long history and craftsmanship of building wooden structures.

However, wood is not only good for the cold and stormy weather. The beauty of wood is that it is breathable and suitable for all types of weather and climate. Wood is climate smart. And building with wood is not limited to small houses for single households. Today we build high apartment houses in central locations. An increased number of wooden constructions contributes to reducing emissions as it replaces less climate-efficient materials.

Today forests cover approximately two thirds of Sweden and they provide multiple products and services. Thus, you can say that forests are an important part of our natural and cultural heritage.

I hope you all will be inspired by this exhibition. I hope that you will see the transformative change for the world's climate, future architecture and urban planning that forests and wood can bring about for our common habitat.

Enjoy the exhibition!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the opening of the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2016

Published 31 May 2016 Updated 31 May 2016

Venice, 26 May 2016. Check against delivery.

Excellencies, Dear friends,

We live in a rapidly changing world – with many anxieties. Capital flows freely across borders, people flee from their native countries, established democracies are challenged by division and political extremists, authoritarian regimes are rolling back freedom of expression. And last but not least: Climate threat presses for changes on all levels of society. This seems to be a time of transgressions of a sort that forces us to reconsider the fundamentals of society and of human values.

The Nordic exhibition in this biennale puts forth important architectural work seen through the lenses of three themes: Foundational, Belonging and Recognition.

These themes seem to me to be addressing crucial questions of this disturbed time. In an urbanised world architecture has become the living environment on which we depend so much in our daily lives. Quality in architecture has become crucial to the quality of life. And in this fluid age architecture may have a pertinent contribution by the sheer fact of its slowness, its relative permanence, its "longue durée": being a more still point in the rapid flow of Time.

Architecture is not only a shared environment; it is also necessarily an outflow of collective effort. To make it we have to work together, make a plan – to depart from and to guide the work. We have to decide on and apply methods we agree on. We have to negotiate and we have to invest.

There is also a distinct feeling of responsibility that what we produce will, in part or in whole, be given away to others to live and use. It must function now and in the long run.

But the design is more than function. The final articulation involves formal choices, giving the work a profound cultural meaning. The Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa speaks of architecture as an impure and messy discipline, being on the one hand a practical, utilitarian craft and on the other an art. Even if messy, he holds that: "Significant architecture makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings. In fact, this is the function of all meaningful art. "

But has this become an invalid perspective? In a situation when urbanisation and urgent needs in society have to be addressed on a scale without precedents. How do we still speak about human values and practise architecture to its full potential when the main focus seems to be on quantity and speed?

Looking ahead and looking for hope are among the expectations of this year's biennale. We are in a continuing process of building and rebuilding this society, whether we like it or not. And to do this we need to understand the movements inside our society, what defines our belonging, what values are at stake and, in my mind especially important, what constitutes fairness in the living environment.

My hope is connected to the idea that in the process of building we should always depart from and support the needs of the human being. And look at architecture not as something in itself, abstracted from its beginning, but as a process that serves the human needs at its origin. This implies processes of broad engagement, mutual respect and profound dialogue.

To build is to be involved in what has been called a "wicked problem". It is to place oneself in what might seem to be a jungle/maze of agendas and dilemmas. For a wicked problem there is not one evident solution. And yet one has to decide, to make a decision that not only solves the problem but one that brings new values to its inhabitants. Not a solution we can live with, but one we would want to live with. This is the sign of excellence of the architect.

And we must see to that the emblematic ladder of this Biennale doesn't turn out to be the new ivory tower. To be honest, I am ambivalent about this image of a perspective from above. But the ladder implies the dual

movement of climbing and descending. Of course we have to rise above the immediate flow of circumstances, to get the bigger picture. But lots of problems built into the structures of modern cities seem to stem from a too high-flying perspective.

Given all these complexities it is perhaps not so surprising that we must get ourselves into a Therapy – as is proposed in this Nordic exhibition. This means not looking at things from a detached bird's perspective but to start down below, with an inner dialogue. "Know thy self", as the Delphic maxim goes. It will stand as a counterpoint to an "all-knowing" perspective. As I understand it, the introspective Subject on the couch is or should be Society itself, with all its conflicting layers.

And in this process: let's not forget to put that hope into the work we do. Without hope the work won't move forward.

With this I declare the Nordic Pavilion of the 2016 Biennale opened!



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the 2016 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award ceremony

Published 31 May 2016 Updated 31 May 2016

Stockholm, 30 May 2016. Check against delivery.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear laureate Meg Rosoff,

Taking care of small children can be exhausting. They don't sleep, they don't eat, they constantly make a mess – and they take a surreal amount of time to get dressed. But of course; they are small, soft and they smell nice.

And it is amazing to discover the world in their company, they point out the obvious things that we had forgotten but love to get to know again; how fluffy a bumblebee is or how fun it can be to mess with clay.

With teenagers in the family things are slightly different. They leave us more time, they get dressed and organize their own social life. But they confront us with something that is not as easy to wipe off as it is to clean sticky fingers or to dry tears after a scrubbed knee.

They confront us with questions about life and pure existence; who am I? Can I be whoever I want? Where is my place in the world? Teenagers pinpoint the essence of life in a way that can be quite painful for us adults. And as adults we still remember how strong these feelings could be and how devastating the consequences of our action could appear. The self-centeredness of teenage life makes us embarrassed.

Teenage-years are a bit like no man's land. No one is invited to come close and there are no clear sign posts for direction. It is comfortable for the rest of us to keep it on a certain distance. And it can be awfully difficult to dig into our teenagers' emotions since it forces us to reflect on our own lives.

Someone who doesn't fear this is this year's laurate of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award; Meg Rosoff.

Dear Meg Rosoff, you are brave enough to dive into teenagers' minds and you create a world where they are the most important persons. A world where a young boy causes natural disasters in the world depending of which girl he falls in love with. You point out that having "Imaginary Companions" is not necessarily something that can be useful only for small children. Your main characters struggle with the same issues that all teenagers do, but they find new, unconventional and creative ways to deal with them.

Death, love and identity; you avoid none of these questions that parents might fear when saying good night to their teenager after a full day at work. You are certainly not making life comfortable.

Just like Astrid Lindgren, Meg Rosoff does not fear the most difficult questions in life. Despite Astrid Lindgren's often idyllic scenery, questions about life, love and death always lie under the surface. Meg Rosoff handles these questions in a unique and unpredictable way – and that is one reason why her work is loved by so many and why she today is being awarded the largest prize for literature for children in the world.

Meg Rosoff's work echoes the message in the work of Astrid Lindgren; "Ask all the questions, declare all your fears, I will not provide you with the answers but I will stand by your side". This is the way that also Astrid Lindgren's authorship has worked for millions of children around the world. Both Lindgren and Rosoff have also been champions in making young people look upon book reading as a perfectly normal and fun thing to do.

Dear Meg Rosoff, you give our young ones strength to be who they want. Their search for identity can be painful, but it is extremely important for society as a whole that everyone can live their full potential. To become citizens with democratic values who are eager to defend their freedom or fight for it.

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at a hearing on anti-Gypsyism

Published 19 May 2016 Updated 19 May 2016

Stockholm, 18 May 2016. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, Members of parliament,

It is an honour for me to be here today and to introduce the subject for discussion during the hearing this morning.

Let me start with the words of Rosa Taikon, the famous silversmith, Roma activist and sister of the Swedish human rights icon, Katarina Taikon. She describes the ban on Roma entering Sweden from 1914 to 1954 like this:

"We were considered a despicable and inferior race. Roma who survived persecution by the Nazis weren't permitted to enter the country following the end of the Second World War. Roma received no help or support as survivors. The entry ban also tells us something about how undesirable we Roma who were already within Sweden's borders were. It is outrageous that nothing much has actually changed in terms of the antiziganistic and negative notions about Roma since the time when we were banned from entering the country. How is it possible that Roma are, even today, so undesirable?"

This quote can be read in the White Paper on Abuses and Rights Violations Against Roma in the 20th Century called the "The Dark Unknown History". This and other policies against Roma during the last century, described in the White Paper, are indeed a dark part of my country's history.

The White Paper, published by the Government two year ago, is intended to give recognition to victims and their relatives, help raise awareness of anti-Gypsyism and increase understanding of the situation of the Roma minority.

Fortunately, The White Paper has been very well received. Roma people, authorities and majority population have shown great interest in it. This is very encouraging – broad support means that we are well placed to increase knowledge about our history, of which anti-Gypsyism is a part.

Therefore, the White Paper plays an important role in Sweden's efforts to fully include Roma in society and to fight the racism and discrimination faced by Roma today. A greater understanding of our history will enable an effective development of long-term initiatives for Roma inclusion.

And let me be clear about one thing: anti-Gypsyism is a form of racism and therefore incompatible with the values that a democratic Europe stands for. Sweden is concerned that the precarious situation of Roma has worsened within Europe. And that anti-Gypsyism is not something that Sweden is free from. Not at all.

It is important that political leaders in Europe recognize and condemn acts of discrimination and hatred against Roma with the same clarity as other types of racism are condemned.

The Swedish Government has an integrated approach in its work against anti-Gypsyism and for Roma inclusion. Measures are carried out in several areas, such as employment, education, health and housing.

The fundamental starting point for the implementation is a strong human rights perspective.

In line with this we are implementing a targeted long term strategy for Roma inclusion since 2012 with an ambitious and proactive goal: a Roma who turns 20 years of age in 2032 will have the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma.

Some progress can be seen after the first four years of work. For instance, Roma mediators have been trained and employed within the areas of education, work, social services and health. They have contributed to Roma pupils attending school to a greater extent, to Roma enrolling at local public employment offices and getting jobs and to bridging the trust gap between Roma and the public sector.

In this context, it is important to stress the significance of participation and influence of Roma civil society at all levels. Their experience, knowledge and skills are crucial if we want to succeed in this endeavour.

But we are very aware of the challenges that remain. Therefore, during this spring we are upgrading the strategy with new funding and measures to expand the activities to new areas of work.

At the same time we are awaiting the final report of the Commission against anti-Gypsyism that very soon will be presented to the Government.

The Commission, chaired by Mr Thomas Hammarberg and comprised by a majority of Roma representatives, has spent two years fighting anti-Gypsyism in society through various efforts. The Commission has contributed to highlight the widespread prejudices against Roma and the increased discrimination experienced by the group.

One of the Commission's achievements is the publication of education material based on the White Paper, which they have disseminated widely to all schools in Sweden and other relevant places of work.

Furthermore, the Government is currently preparing a national plan against racism and hate crime. We believe that it is important to make visible the different forms of racism, their nature and particularities, so our fight against racism and hate crime can be more effective.

For that reason, the plan includes measures against afrophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsyism, islamophobia, racism against Sami people, homophobia and transphobia.

The element of recognition and participation is important in this process. During the past autumn I had several dialogue meetings with representatives of groups that are victims of different sorts of racism. Their experiences and proposals have been a very important contribution to the preparation of the plan.

Around forty years ago Katarina Taikon told leading politicians in Sweden the following words:

"You KNOW! And nobody will tell me that you do not know these people are persecuted because of their heritage. It is your duty to understand it! "

We're all in this room in powerful positions in our respective countries. My message to us today is to listen to the words of Katarina Taikon, do our duty and keep working for full respect for the Roma people's human rights.

I would like to end wishing you fruitful discussion today. My hope is that this

hearing will increase the knowledge about the situation of Roma today, the anti-Gypsyism that still exists in Europe, to speed up action on Roma rights and inspire change.

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at MTM's conference "Take Part"

Published 19 May 2016 Updated 19 May 2016

Stockholm, 17 May 2016. Check against delivery.

Your majesty, dear friends, I too would like to welcome you to Stockholm and Take Part! I am thrilled to be here and to have the opportunity to address you all before you start this conference.

The Swedish Agency for Accessible Media, MTM today's host, receives its mandate from the Swedish Parliament as well as the Government and the Ministry of Culture.

That mandate is to ensure that people with reading impairments can access literature, daily newspapers, and community information, regardless of reading ability, regardless of literacy and regardless of disabilities.

Easy access to information is also the goal of the international DAISY Consortium that is co-hosting today's conference, well expressed in their motto "Creating the best way to read and publish".

Sweden has a long tradition of international cooperation regarding accessible solutions and technological developments. The DAISY system is as you all know a Swedish invention that became an international standard.

The title of the conference Take Part – Human Perspectives on Inclusive Publishing - reflects the focus of the conference: accessibility in a broad perspective, where democracy and accessibility are considered as prerequisites for full participation in society.

The link between technological development and functionality is vital to ensure that everyone has access to information based on the person's needs and functional abilities. The right to everyone to information and

participation is essential in an inclusive society

As you know, every two years the DAISY Consortium, in collaboration with the hosting country, organises a technical meeting in order to present new findings, analyse future needs of development, share experiences and deepen contacts with commercial actors in the field.

This year, 2016, the DAISY Consortium celebrates its 20th anniversary and you do it in the way you like the best, by organising a meeting where global skills assemble to share information and experience, to enhance a democratic society where information is accessible and where everybody can take part.

The goal for me as minister for culture and democracy is to safeguard the democratic right to information, in a way that complies with the needs of the person. This is a matter of democracy, a matter of human rights and also of course a matter of access to culture. All of which are central to me, and to the government.

The government is constantly working with accessibility. In the negotiations of EU-directives concerning web accessibility and the new general directive on accessibility that is currently being circulated. The new Swedish discrimination act now states that lack of accessibility is a form of discrimination.

We live in a time when all countries have to return to our core values of humanism, democracy and inclusion. In this work, equal access to literature and culture is fundamental. In a time where information is vital to be able to be an active partaker in society, access to information is fundamental. It cannot be underlined enough.

I once again welcome you here and I hope that you will have a productive and inspiring meeting!



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the announcement of the 2016 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award laureate

Published 05 April 2016 Updated 05 April 2016

Stockholm, 5 April 2016. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, here in Stockholm and in Bologna,

With her many books, Astrid Lindgren has given us unforgettable characters and unique stories. They are friends to return to throughout life. In much of her work, the feeling of home is very strong.

Either a home created by adults; like in the stories about Emil in Lönneberga and the children in Bullerbyn, or as in the books about Pippi Longstocking, a home created by a child and her imagination.

In Nils Karlsson Pyssling, the items that we connect to home are incredibly big; a bath can be taken in a tea cup and a meatball lasts a whole day. Still, Astrid reminds us of what makes a home; somewhere familiar, where we can rest and feel safe.

Research shows that the simple practice of sitting on someone's lap and being read to enhances a child's experience of literature. To feel surrounded by warmth and love makes it easier for the little ones to be brave enough to take on a new adventure. I believe it is the same thing with a home. A home is a place where we can relax and feel secure. It is also a place to leave and come back to.

Of course, today my thoughts go to all the children fleeing from war, coming to new countries, many of them are coming to Sweden. Finally they might

feel safe. But are they at home? No, that is something different.

The Swedish author Viveka Sjögren explains this in an exquisite and beautiful way in her book "Om du skulle fråga Micha" (If you would ask Micha). With colourful pictures and few words she gives the reader a nuanced story of fleeing and finding a new home, and she does it from a child's perspective. How a piece of torn wallpaper, still bearing the smell of the old home, becomes the most precious belonging to someone who has no other choice than to create a new home, this time starting from nothing.

We must not forget this. We, who everyday can go to a place that we call home, surrounded by things that bear our memories. We owe it to the refugees coming to Sweden, to help them feel at home with us, to get to know the country they live in.

Literature is an effective way to get to know the world. I very much appreciate the initiative taken by Swedish authors, publishers and libraries to introduce Swedish literature to children that have arrived in our country.

And today we celebrate a great day for children's literature; when the laurate of the world's greatest prize of literature for children will be presented. Last year, the ALMA- prize was awarded to the South African organization PRAESA which introduced me and millions of other to their outstanding work. I actually visited them this January and took part of the work carried out in a reading club for children in a township outside Cape Town. Now I am excited to experience this year's laurate.

I am very proud to leave the floor to the president of the ALMA-jury Boel Westin. Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at Paideia

Published 23 March 2016 Updated 23 March 2016

Stockholm, 22 March 2016 Check against delivery.

Your Excellences, Bruno Schulz fellows, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's attack on the capital city of Europe is an attack against European freedom. In the heart of the political melting pot terrorism tragically killed people but terrorism can never be allowed to win over democratic ideas, democratic values. Terrorism can never be allowed to kill the lifelong believe in the fight for democracy that the Swedish government, I and many with us work for every day.

Today we are gathered here to share and celebrate this ceremony and I honor the lost life's of today's tragically attack in Bruxelles by continuing doing this.

By acknowledging your contribution to the preservation, development and sharing of our common cultural heritage.

Not even a century ago, Jewish people and culture were seen much differently in Sweden. In 1922, Sweden was the first country in the world to establish an institute for racial biology, for the preservation of the so called Swedish race. Jewish refugees were stopped at the Swedish border and sent back to Nazi Germany, during the 1930:s and even when the second World War had started.

The foundation of Paideia in the year 2000 was a clear statement: Sweden is to be a country that helps rebuilding what the Nazis tried to rob from Europe and its Jewish people: their history, their literature, their science and their cultural heritage.

Sweden is also a country that learns its lesson, stopping racism and intolerance from spreading any further in our society of today. In 2003, we founded The Living History Forum, to fight for tolerance, democracy and human rights, using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point.

The task includes education against antisemitism, afrophobia, anti-Gypsyism, islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia.

Several other bodies are involved in our struggle against discrimination and prejudice. For example, the National Agency for Education is carrying through measures to raise the level of awareness in school of xenophobia and intolerance, spreading methods and training school staff.

Despite the efforts of the Government and many others, we see difficult times, at present and in the future. Anti-democratic and racist views are spreading again and influencing our public space, political debate and everyday life encounters. Once again, people experience risks connected to showing religious, often Jewish, affiliation, belief and traditions.

Acknowledging these risks, I still wish to take this opportunity to urge for openness. I strongly believe we can reach much further by being open. Maybe only by being open can we reach far enough.

This past year, Sweden has experienced the greatest stream of refugees since the Second World War.

Sweden would not have managed to meet their needs, had it not been for civil society organisations, not the least faith communities. The situation was particularly heavy in Malmö, where most refugees arrived. The local Jewish community expressed concerns, experiencing threats.

In such situations, I believe we have a choice. Should we protect what we fear is threatened by closing a circle around it and keeping it safe? Or should we defend it by showing it, sharing it and using it for an exchange of views with others?

The Jewish community of Malmö reached out a hand. One of the most active members of the community joined the Muslim organisers and worked tirelessly at the central station to help those arriving. What an achievement for people in need, and what an achievement for understanding and cooperation!

Every year, the commemoration of the Holocaust Remembrance Day absorbs and moves me. One of the messages from this year's commemoration comes to my mind: In his speech in the Great Synagogue of Stockholm, the Chairman of the Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, Aron Verständig, said he wanted to open the beautiful synagogue to everyone. Not only to the ones that love it, but also to the ones that hate it.

Dear Bruno Schulz fellows, you have now completed your studies at Paideia, and your mission continues throughout Europe. Your mission to revive a European Jewish voice and to contribute to a culturally rich and pluralistic Europe.

Take this opportunity also to reach out. Your achievements may enrich people regardless of faith or ethnic origin. We all need each other, now more than ever, to form a new open minded Europe.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the Women in the Creative Industries Day

Published 14 March 2016 Updated 14 March 2016

London, 9 March 2016. Check against delivery.

Distinguished members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to participate in this third edition of the Women in the Creative Industries Day, as part of this year's Women of the World Festival.

I am proudly standing in front of you today, as a Minister of a feminist government. In fact, you should all be proud, because the achievements of the brave collective struggle throughout history, which you in this room are all a part of, have paved the way for me to gain such an office. For that I am thankful, and inspired, although not at all satisfied.

As was mentioned in my introduction, I am Minister both for Culture and for Democracy. I have often been asked what the connection is between these two policy areas. This question has not one but many answers. Let me give you one that shines a light on the importance of our discussion here today.

The ideas, products, services and values generated in the culture and creative sectors are part of the solution to challenges facing society today. With that being said, it is important to admit, that this sector has almost the same inequality issues as the society it is part of. For example, not even a third of the managers in cultural and creative industries are women. Compared with the average of all business sectors, it is better, but far from satisfying.

The Swedish Government strongly believes in the importance that people

throughout the country and in all parts of society are offered opportunities to take part in arts and culture and to discover their own creativity. For it is a fundamental principle that arts and culture have a value in themselves, for every individual that makes contact with it. This is the core of what it means being Minister both for Culture and for Democracy.

To achieve gender equality in the cultural sector, the Swedish Government sees the importance of taking concrete measures to tackle current imbalances. Five government agencies in Sweden, representing different fields of art, carry a special assignment to work with methods to foster equality today. But we also need to mainstream gender issues in all sectors. So that when the children of today grow up to be professionals in the creative sector, they will have chosen the paths they want to tread, and not those paths others have put them on.

To get everybody on the same starting-point, we need knowledge of specific obstacles that a specific group encounter. Therefore I am looking forward to listen to you all today. I am so happy that a renowned cultural institution such as Southbank Centre is so committed to opening up new paths for everyone, regardless of sex and gender.

I am also happy that Southbank Centre will be the stage for a big Nordic cultural event all through 2017, where cultural actors from the Nordic countries will get the chance to dissect issues such as gender equality.

And lastly, I am extremely glad to be here today and to let myself be inspired of the great minds you have gathered.

Thank you all!



Speech from Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# High Level Segment of the 31st session of the Human Rights Council Geneva

Published 03 March 2016 Updated 03 March 2016

Geneva, 1 March 2016. Statement delivered by Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke.

Mr. Vice President, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address the Human Rights Council today. Ten years since its establishment, this Council still serves as the main UN human rights forum. This is an important opportunity to take stock of our achievements and look ahead to future challenges.

It is a great achievement that many people have seen their countries go through democratic transitions. Democracy beyond free and fair elections has taken important steps globally: if you are a woman active in politics, your chance of being elected to parliament have doubled compared to twenty years ago.

However, this development cannot be taken for granted. The Swedish Government is especially concerned by three tendencies that I will address today:

- firstly, shrinking democratic space for journalists and civil society,
- secondly, gender inequalities, as well as continued opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights,
- and finally, the human rights of persons in increased risk of vulnerability, such as persons belonging to minorities, LGBTI persons and migrants.

Mr. Vice President,

My Government is deeply concerned about the troubling situation regarding freedom of expression, and in particular freedom of the media.

Free and independent media is a foundation of democracy and rule of law. As such, the safety of journalists concerns all of us. Across the world, human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, publishers and union leaders work courageously and tirelessly to promote the rule of law and human rights.

We witness a continuing high number of reprisals, murders and other acts of violence committed against these human rights defenders, sometimes by States.

In addition, civic space is shrinking in many countries. Legal restrictions against the civil society have been imposed in more than 50 countries during the last years. A growing number of democratic activists are sentenced to years in prison on false allegations.

This year, the first Swedish Freedom of the Press Act celebrates 250 years. It still functions as a cornerstone of our legal system and a guardian of freedom of expression in Sweden.

We should all protect the voices of journalists and human rights defenders who demand their legitimate, universal rights every day.

I urge us all to expand the freedom of expression, freedom of the media and freedom for the civil society, in all states in this Human Rights Council.

Mr. Vice President,

Domestic violence against women remains a global plague. It is the most common form of violence against women and girls, affecting more than a third of all women. This means that over a billion women globally are victims of violence.

No country in the world, not even my own, is exempted. In Sweden, around 20 women die every year as a result of domestic violence. This is completely unacceptable.

I represent a feminist Government, for us the empowerment of women is a key priority. There is still a lot of work to be done. Our efforts emphasize the

enjoyment of human rights of women, increased access to resources and more representation for women.

I want to highlight the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is a cornerstone in the full realization of human rights and in our strife to ensure a better life for women and girls.

For instance, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second largest cause of death for 15-19 year old girls globally.

This must change. Sweden will continue to be a driving force for women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights. I urge you to join us in this work.

Mr. Vice President,

Racism, persecution of LGBTI-persons, discrimination of indigenous peoples and migrants require urgent action.

These acts are infecting our communities. It denies our equal value as humans and our human rights. It is an obstacle to development. It causes suffering for the individual.

I urge us all to combat this persecution wherever it is manifested. We cannot accept these acts.

My Government is committed to strengthen the protection of human rights – in Sweden and beyond. Allow me to mention a few initiatives:

- First, later this spring, the Government will present communications to the Swedish parliament covering Swedish priorities and policy on human rights, democracy and the rule of law – both nationally and in our foreign policy efforts. One important component is the proposal to Parliament to establish an independent national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles.

- Secondly, we are now developing our third national action plan on implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. It is built on broad consultations with actors in Sweden and conflict/post-conflict countries and will focus on women's inclusion and meaningful participation in peace processes. If elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in June, Sweden would be a strong advocate for the women, peace and security agenda.

- Thirdly, business and respect for human rights should be part of an active corporate social responsibility policy. That's why Sweden last year proudly became the sixth country in the world to adopt a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

In conclusion, let me end by saying that much has indeed happened during the 70 years since the UN was founded.

However, one important aspect remains. We as Governments still have the responsibility to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights for all, upon which we all have agreed. This is the obligation of every Government.

Let's address these urgent matters together.

I thank you, Mr. Vice President.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the opening show of Fashion Week

Published 01 February 2016 Updated 01 February 2016

Stockholm, 1 February 2016. Check against delivery.

I want to begin by thanking you for inviting me to come here. It is a great honor for me to open this spring's edition of Stockholm Fashion Week.

As Minister for Culture and Democracy – it thrills me a lot that fashion and design now plays an equally important role with other artistic fields. For what is fashion if not an artistic and creative expression?

When I was seven years old and experienced my first days at school, I found a hat at my granny's loft. It wasn't any hat, according to me, it was the most beautiful belonging one could possibly carry.

Not being like any other seven year old kid from the beginning, when sporting a big red hat to school – this was made even clearer to me by the older guys from sixth grade first thing as I entered the school yard.

That's a disgusting and ugly hat! Take it off, they shouted! If you don't take it off you will be punished. And beaten up I was.

After two weeks filled with constant shouting, threats and beating my mother asked me if I was not to take of the hat.

I told her the truth. The hat was quit missfitting, but still warm and still it was not as beautiful as I first considered it to be but that I could not take it off since this would mean that others decided for me what to wear and what not to wear. With pride I kept on carrying the damn hat until it had to be washed and then went into two pieces.

I believe fashion is a form of a universal language which allows constructing and deconstructing our identities, to play whatever role we want by shaping our look to show certain attitudes or values. It's always been amazing to me how quickly a piece of clothing can change how I feel, how I hold myself, and even how I act.

Fashion as a phenomenon is something that is very dynamic and in constant change, and especially in the globalized world we live in. And the Swedish fashion industry holds up well in the tough competition and has enjoyed great success both nationally and internationally. Fashion, form and design are elements that for decades characterized the rest of the world picture of Sweden.

Fashion sector employs a large group of people at all stages from production to design and marketing - but also all those who currently subsist on to write, analyze, shoot, commenting and blogging about fashion.

If the fashion industry has many challenges today, sustainability is definitively one of these. Today, people in rich countries are linked to people in poor countries through the commoditization and consumption of what is called fashion. As a former Secretary General for the organization Fairtrade I have spent much time taking part at the first level regarding the fashion production. I have cried in anger over the injustices as I have cried with joy when seeing what happens with consumers and a branch of industry when consciousness increases.

Sustainable fashion is a part of the growing design philosophy and trend of sustainability, the goal of which is to create a system which can be supported indefinitely in terms of human impact on the environment and social responsibility. I am thrilled that many fashion designers are now introducing eco-conscious methods at the source through the use of environmentally friendly materials and socially responsible methods of production. But this question constantly needs to be debated and challenged, which I am sure will also take place during this fashion week, when a large part of the Swedish fashion industry is concentrated.

Last but not least I hope that the Swedish fashion industry keeps on being brave so that seven year old girls far away from Stockholm can keep on being inspired and dare to dress their lust in whatever funny hat they like to without taking it of regardless of any given resistance. And with these final words I hereby wish you a fabulous fashion week that I now declare officially to be opened!





Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the Femdefenders Day Seminarium

Published 27 November 2015 Updated 27 November 2015

Stockholm, 27 November 2015. Check against delivery.

Dear friends,

the world is a dangerous place for young women. Especially for femdefenders.

Women who stand up for gender equality and peace are particularly at risk of being subjected to discrimination and violence. We call them femdefenders – the most courageous young women in the world!

On November 29th, it is the International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders – this is your day!

We are all here today to honour you.

You -“young women who march at the forefront demanding change” to quote Lena Ag, Secretary-General at Kvinna till Kvinna.

It is an honour to be among you.

Many young women all over the world are being discriminated, victimized, harassed and threatened because of their gender.

Their rights and access to both public space and their own bodies are restricted by family, by social norms of propriety, by religious rules, or by the fear of being sexually harassed.

In the new report “Femdefenders – Young women who tear down barriers” we learn about how young women who work for equality and peace are challenging power structures, and therefore face double risks of being exposed to discrimination, threats and violence. Despite of this, they refuse to give up – they keep on struggling to tear down barriers and work for change.

As these women witness in the report, there are a lot of obstacles that hinder young women from making their voices heard -sexual harassment, threats and hate speech. This is a great loss to our societies, as it reduces our chances of building a democratic, peaceful and sustainable world.

One brave human rights defender is with us here today, one of the Right Livelihood Award laureates: Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera from Uganda. She is awarded the Right Livelihood Award "...for her courage and persistence, despite violence and intimidation, in working for the right of LGBTI people to a life free from prejudice and persecution."

You are indeed an inspiration to all of us.

I will end my short speech here today by quoting some of you, the brave and wise young women featured in the report:

Zarine from Armenia says that “If we go round with our hearts full of hate, how will we ever be able to resolve the conflict?”

Leyla from Azerbaijan says “Very few people see young women as real people, we’re more like slaves to them. ”What can women do?” I’m so tired of that. I can do anything!”

Amanda from Sweden says in the report that her “hands and legs still shake with anger whenever I hear about women human rights not being respected”

Amanda, my hands and legs also shake when the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights are being violated.

But when I look at these remarkable young and brave women, I feel optimistic and encouraged.

You are power, hope and future!

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the panel discussion on complementarity

Published 24 November 2015 Updated 24 November 2015

Session of the Assembly of States Parties, ICC, The Hague, 19 November 2015. Check against delivery.

## Part 1: Ensuring access to justice for victims

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen, We are here today to discuss and learn from each other's experiences. Our topic is serious and important: How to address sexual and gender-based violence as crimes of international concern. I am honoured to discuss these matters with such distinguished participants.

When our Government assumed office in October 2014, we declared that we will be a feminist government.

As my colleague, Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs, has stated, this includes pursuing a feminist foreign policy. This means that we aim to strengthen the rights, representation and resources of all women and girls.

We will do so because gender equality is a goal in itself. But it is also essential for the achievement of our overall objectives, such as peace, security and sustainable development. This is why gender equality and human rights efforts must continue unabated.

Ladies and gentlemen, Let us be clear on the magnitude of the problem. Sexual and gender-based violence is a global structural problem that continues to plague every country on earth. Every country on earth. In my own country, Sweden, women and girls risk being a target of violence in

many spheres of society – in their homes, in the public sphere and in working life.

Sexual and gender-based violence can come in many forms. But if we do not dare to say that every country is plagued by this, we are fooling ourselves.

I believe that the patterns of discrimination underlying these crimes are the same both during peacetime and wartime. However, these crimes appear to be intensified during conflict.

It is a plague that exists in affluence and poverty.

It shows up regardless of culture or geographical location.

It will be found at the heart of wars, and in the most peaceful welfare societies.

At the global level, it is estimated that one out of three women are subjected to violence during her lifetime.

Behind that unacceptable piece of statistics you will find pain and suffering beyond our common imagination.

Our world faces extraordinary challenges in relation to the systematic and widespread use of sexual and gender based violence.

It has been taken to new horrific levels.

Sexual violence is not only condoned, but openly commanded as a strategy and as a method of warfare.

This calls for our attention and action and the main question is urgent: How can we address this problem?

First of all we need to realize that sexual and gender-based violence can indeed be prevented, stopped and prosecuted.

Political commitment is imperative to address both the violence itself and its root causes.

Because in societies where we do not address inequalities between women and men, or where we accept discrimination or negative attitudes or stereotypes, gender-based violence can be the ultimate consequence.

We must therefore take a firm stand and tackle discrimination, in all its forms, as a measure to address the issue at hand.

In 2015 it should go without saying that women's rights are human rights.

Ending sexual and gender-based violence and ensuring justice for victims is an issue of rights.

Survivors are not only victims but also rights holders entitled to justice and reparation, as well as protection and support.

The excellent report of the International Development Law Organization clearly points to the importance of breaking the silence and shame surrounding these crimes.

The stigma that is often attached to victims – both women and men – must be removed.

With silence, shame and stigma comes underreporting which shadows the true extent of the problem. It also prevents authorities from responding adequately.

It is consequently of vital importance to address this issue through strategic action and by raising awareness.

Courageous victims deserve nothing but our full respect and support. The shame belongs elsewhere.

Ladies and gentlemen, It is a major achievement that international criminal law now recognizes the gravity of sexual and gender-based crimes as serious international crimes.

The Statute of the ICC includes various forms of sexual and gender-based crimes such as rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, and other forms of sexual violence. Let me be clear: These are acts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The ICC Statute is a part of a broader movement underlining the impact of conflict on women, as well as women's important role in all phases of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and the rebuilding of war torn societies.

UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on

women, peace and security have been crucial. This progress also points to the fact that we need to address violence to enable women's full participation in all areas of decision-making.

We should acknowledge that international crimes often are especially complex.

They are likely to entail specific challenges in terms of investigation and prosecution.

In implementing the responsibility to prosecute the most serious crimes of international concern, states may need to assist each other in overcoming these challenges.

In this work, states are likely to benefit from the knowledge, practices and expertise of international and regional actors. In this regard I would like to highlight the excellent Policy Paper of the ICC Office of the Prosecutor.

It sets a new and more ambitious standard in all work on ending impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes.

This Policy serves as an inspiration and a guide to states. As co-focal points for complementarity, Sweden and Botswana have cooperated with the ICC Office of the Prosecutor.

The idea is to share the knowledge and practices of the Policy, and to facilitate exchange of experiences and practices among states and other actors.

During the summer, Sweden and Botswana facilitated two workshops on strategic action at national level in Guatemala and Uganda.

Both brought together key national stakeholders representing state and non-state justice actors, but also representatives of the ICC, the UN and regional organizations.

The workshops highlighted how joint and coordinated efforts by national authorities can be strengthened with the support of international and regional organizations and actors, including international development cooperation.

The importance of strong and active civil society organizations, not least women's and victims' rights groups, was evident during the workshops.

This is something I want to highlight especially – without a courageous civil society, that dare to address the issues, our challenges would be even greater.

The workshops also showed how the partnerships and networks of these groups can contribute to ensuring effective access to justice for victims.

Many valuable lessons were drawn, but I will not be more specific here and now.

However, you should be looking forward to listening to my co-panellists: Ms Thelma Aldana, Attorney-General of Guatemala, and Mr Mike Chibita, Director of Public Prosecutions of Uganda. They will present the workshops in more detail.

Ladies and gentlemen, The Security Council recently adopted a new Women, Peace and Security resolution (2242). It builds further on the ground breaking resolution 1325.

Let us use this resolution as an opportunity to do better and step up our efforts to advance the rights, representation and resources of women. As a representative of a feminist government, I can assure you that we are fully committed to work even harder and build strong partnerships. The question is to ensure justice for victims of sexual and gender-based crimes.

The answer is to make sure that shame and punishment is due where shame and punishment belong. Thank you.

## Part 2 - Enhancing empowerment of victims

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen, We are discussing here today: Ensuring access to justice and the empowerment of victims.

I believe they are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. It is hard to achieve one of them without the other.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the main priorities of our feminist foreign policy is to strengthen women's access to resources.

During 2014, only 35 percent of economic support in post-conflict recovery programs went to women. The rest, needless to say, ended up with the other sex.

To achieve real change, political commitments need to be accompanied by sustainable financing with measures to address root causes of violence.

Sweden vows to continue promoting women's social, political and economic empowerment.

We will continue to counter narratives that reinforce negative gender roles.

And we will also continue to support organizations working to engage men and boys in the pursuit of gender justice.

Recent good practice from conflict-affected countries show the importance of engaging men and boys to prevent sexual and gender-based crimes from being committed in the first place.

Ladies and gentlemen, Sweden applies a broad approach to the empowerment of victims. We try to connect international expertise and practitioners with development cooperation, national justice mechanisms and civil society.

Let me give a few examples of how joining forces can contribute to empowering victims to access justice.

In Guatemala, we are working with partners – including the Attorney General's Office – to strengthen capacity of national investigations and prosecutions of serious sexual and gender-based crimes.

We also provide support to the UNDP transitional justice program, and to Unicef.

We address the empowerment of victims through supporting civil society organizations, including women's rights and victims' organizations.

One example is our support to the work of the civil society organization Kvinna till Kvinna in Iraq and Syria.

Their work is crucial in building networks of women at the grassroots level that drive change bottom-up. In this way, responses to sexual and gender-based violence are strengthened.

Our support to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims amounts to 4 million euro during the last three years. The result is the empowerment of victims of sexual and gender-based crimes in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of

the Congo.

As a main donor to UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, we are supporting victims in a range of different countries worldwide.

Let me take just an example: UN Action has funded the deployment of Women's Protection Advisers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a new national strategy to combat gender-based violence was launched during a UN Action inter-agency mission last year.

The UN Team of Experts has also provided assistance to the Central African Republic to improve investigations of sexual and gender-based crimes.

The panel of judges in Guinea has also been supported by the Team of Experts

This has resulted in indictment for crimes allegedly committed during the events of September 28th in 2009, including sexual violence. Organizations such as Justice Rapid Response should be utilized as a means to strengthen national capacity through the rapid deployment of expertise.

I am pleased that Justice Rapid Response has strengthened its cooperation with UN Women.

Let us also welcome that a separate roster for experts on the investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes has been launched.

Ladies and gentlemen, Sustainable solutions and measures to address root causes of violence are necessary.

As some of you might know, Sweden is committed to allocating 1 percent of our GDI to development cooperation.

Let me also assure that gender equality, as well as women's rights and empowerment, will remain top priorities in our development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

To conclude: If our common commitment is to be taken seriously, we need to make sure that women's voices are being heard.

The needs and realities of women living in conflict and post-conflict

countries must influence our decisions.

We must pledge to continue to work together with international and regional organizations. With states, civil society organizations, and not least with affected women and men themselves.

And our goal will remain the same: To empower women to claim their rights.

Because women's rights are human rights.

Thank you.



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the seminar "The Hero Factor Against Extremism"

Published 12 November 2015 Updated 18 November 2015

Stockholm, 11 November 2015. Check against delivery.

Two weeks ago a young man with a sword in his hand walked into the school Kronan in the town of Trollhättan and killed a young boy and another young man in what the police suspect to be an attempt towards these human beings based on the color of their skin.

Violent extremism is a serious problem for democratic societies. When people use and legitimise violence as a political method, terrorism can develop and democracy is then under an urgent threat.

However, extremism does not originate from vacuum, which means that we must tackle the breeding grounds of extremist groups on an early stage.

In august, the Swedish government adopted an action plan with 21 measures in order to make Sweden more resilient and better prepared to prevent violent extremism. The aim of these measures is to improve our knowledge of violent extremism and develop preventive initiatives and methods.

The Swedish government has also presented a new counter-terrorism strategy with a strong focus on prevention.

The link between radicalization and violent extremist actions is complex, but we know that extremism thrives in societies where racism and undemocratic attitudes are wide-spread.

When a person feels that he or she doesn't belong in his or her country or city – when he or she feels marginalized – violent ideologies function as an

engine that give a sense of purpose and belonging to that individual.

Regrettably, many extremist groups are experts at using some young peoples' search for meaning, redemption and revenge to target these individuals with violent and antidemocratic messages via the internet and social media. The extremist groups aim to attract these young people with ideological material such as images, symbols, music and films, by using popular media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

It is therefore crucial that young people have the tools to critically question extremist messages and propaganda, both on the internet and outside. In this respect, I'm very glad that we have the privilege to hear a bit more about how the Swedish Media Council works with improving the media and information literacy of children and young people, at the end of this seminar.

Unfortunately extremist groups sometimes succeed to convince others that using violence and seriously harming or killing human beings is an act of heroism.

Whereas most of us look at Anders Behring Breivik, the brothers Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, and Anton Lundin Pettersson as violators of human rights and criminals, there are others who regard them as heroes. Even if violent extremists generally don't attract widespread support, they are of concern to society as a whole since their violence targets the core of our democratic systems.

This underlines all too well the need for children and young people to be able to see alternative paths in life that form a sharp contrast to the extremists' propaganda.

Children and young people need good role-models to look up to – may they be real or fictive. What unites them is the hero factor – a unique quality to perform extraordinary deeds for the benefit of others. In the Swedish tradition we have heroes such as Bamse, Pippi Longstocking and Lisbeth Salander.

We are very happy to have invited Suleiman Bakhit here today. Suleiman Bakhit is a prevention and heroism expert. His work focuses on terrorism prevention for high risk youth in Jordan, by countering the violent extremists' narratives and mythology.

He will tell us about how heroism can be used as an antidote to extremism.

Welcome on stage, Mr Bakhit.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at the opening of the Stockholm International Film Festival 2015

Published 11 November 2015 Updated 11 November 2015

Stockholm, 10 October 2015. Check against delivery.

Dear friends,

We all know that very few things can be hidden when we look ourselves in the mirror. The reflection eliminates the picture we had in our head and shows us life just as it is. All the little things we might pretend don't exist, stare us blunt in the face from the mirror. Even though we are not all as bad as she is, it is just like Snowwhite's stepmother; the mirror confronts us with the truth.

This is an image of what Europe is struggling with today; our reflection in the mirror is brutally honest and doesn't show what we expected.

Dear film lovers,

I don't have to convince you of the fact that film as an art form is totally unique. As every other art form it has a fundamental value in itself. But its very strong impact and potential to reach a big audience makes film important also from a democratic perspective. Film can portray the present and past seen from different viewpoints and the audience can be small or large, without really saying anything about the relevance of a film.

I am impressed by the program of the 26th Stockholm International Film Festival. 190 new films from 70 different countries shows that Stockholm can indeed offer a festival of global importance. This also shows the potential of this art form to unite people from different countries and different cultures.

The Stockholm International Film Festival demonstrates courage and fulfils the ambition to be a truly contemporary festival in tune with the times. This is not at least clear from the list of participating guests. This year, Ai Weiwei, one of the most important and influential artists of our time, has accepted to present the Stockholm Impact Award. This is a clear recognition of the respect that this festival enjoys in the artistic world.

The fact that you this year have chosen to put the spotlight on one of the most burning issues of today – migration – also underlines the relevance of this festival. And since the Stockholm festival has activities all year around, what is shown during these intense weeks in November, will resonate during the whole year.

It is my conviction as minister for both culture and democracy that film can give good preconditions to strengthening freedom of speech and thereby help building a stronger democratic society. Consequently, the Swedish government proposes to introduce this as an objective for the new Swedish film policy.

Dear friends,

Europe's reflection in the mirror is not flattering.

In many ways it is an unpleasant picture. The shores of the Mediterranean have shown us destinies of children that waken our despair. Threats, violence, suspicion and fear meet many of those seeking shelter in Europe today.

But the picture also shows an enormous solidarity. People are putting their own needs aside and generously offer their time, means and compassion in their encounter with strangers.

Over the last few months I have repeatedly been overwhelmed by people's commitment and willingness to help. There are many forces of good who really want to turn this very difficult situation into something hopeful. At the same time, the brutality and lack of empathy shown by some, to people in their most vulnerable situations has been shocking.

The reflection in the mirror shows us a Europe not fully able to trust the guiding values that have made us strong. A Europe which hesitates as to whom should be included in our solidarity. And a Europe that falters before the responsibility that the rest of the world expects us to take.

I can understand that. I can see where the fear and anxiety comes from, even though I never will accept its outermost consequences. But I wish that we will see a Europe that will ultimately dare to stand strong and united in facing this challenge.

To help us achieve this, we need to be able to see ourselves in the reflection of others. As an art form, film has exceptional possibilities to offer such reflections.

From the Festival Program it is clear that many important experiences await the audience of the Stockholm Film Festival. I can't think of a more inspiring context than a film festival to discuss life and the world as it is today.

I am very proud to declare the Stockholm International Film Festival of 2015 open.

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Opening speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke, Sveriges ungdomsråd's national congress

Published 30 October 2015 Updated 30 October 2015

Stockholm, 29 October 2015 Check against delivery.

I'm very glad to see that so many committed young people from all parts of Sweden and from a number of other countries such as Spain, Denmark and Turkey have gathered here in Stockholm for this important conference.

The last few months have been extremely dramatic with tens of thousands of people fleeing from war and terror arriving at our borders, horrifying attacks on asylum accommodations and refugee centres around the country, and most recently the massacre at the primary school "the Crown" in Trollhättan. In this troubled time the work of youth councils in Sweden and in other countries are more important than ever. In particular the task of promoting democracy and the inclusion of all have never been more important.

Some of you come from Stockholm. Some of you come from other parts of Sweden and some of you have travelled here from other countries. Let me ask two questions:

How many of you did pass the Central train station on the way here and noticed all the refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan that seek shelter there? (Please raise your hands)

How many passed by a Roma migrant begging in the street, on your way here? (Please raise your hands)

Even though Sweden is situated in the remote northern outskirts of Europe we have never been isolated from the rest of the world – this we learn from our history. But today it stands clearer than ever that we are part of a global

context that we cannot isolate ourselves from. War and oppression in other parts of the world, leading to millions of people fleeing for their lives results in significant numbers of refugees arriving also to Sweden. The forecast says that somewhere between 140 000 and 190 000 refugees will arrive here only this year.

The many Roma migrants who beg in our streets and the many people fleeing from war and oppression in Syria and neighbouring countries forces us all to take a stand. Who do I want to be as a person? One that turns my back on people in deep need and distress or one that cares and do my best to support and be compassionate. The situation also forces our whole society to choose direction. For the government that I represent this choice is clear. Sweden will be a country that stands up for and provides a safe place for people in need and distress.

Sweden will without doubt face significant challenges receiving and taking care of the many refugees who have arrived recently and who will continue to come. To manage this in a good way, all parts of society have to work together and have important roles to play: the national government, authorities at various levels, the business sector and civil society.

Those who are new in Sweden should not only be provided with housing, income and education. It is also very important that they become part of the civil society and feel part of democracy. Many of those who arrive in Sweden right now are young. Here I think that The Swedish association of Youth Councils and the local youth councils has very good potential to make an important contribution.

I've been talking about Sweden as a part of the global community. The ongoing refugee crisis also shows how important cooperation within the EU is to meet common challenges. I was therefore very pleased when I saw that the theme of this conference is: "YOU and the EU - On European politics".

Finally, I want to thank you for inviting me to hold an opening speech at this conference. The program of the conference looks very exciting, and I am sure that the conference will give all of you lots of energy, knowledge and new ideas to take back to your important work with youth councils all around the country. Democracy needs to be protected and developed, more people need to be involved and we must do this together. All of you that are here today, as well as the rest of civil society in Sweden has an important role to play in this work.



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech by Alice Bah Kuhnke at Göteborg book fair 2015

Published 24 September 2015 Updated 24 September 2015

Göteborg, 24 september 2015. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, dear all,

Last Sunday, I was having breakfast with Predrag Blagojevic in Belgrade. He is a journalist and editor in chief for the newspaper Juzne Vesti. Predrag Blagojevic has devoted his life to stand up for freedom of speech in his home country. For that he has been assaulted, threatened and persecuted. I asked him; how can you bear this life? His answer scared me: “ I don’t know why I do this anymore.”

A book – as a physical item not more than a bunch of paper connected in a spine. But as a concept one of the most precious thing we know. A carrier of knowledge, of ideas, experiences and stories, well worth celebrating. As we do in Gothenburg today.

To me the book - may it be in the form of printed papers, digitalized bits of information of recorded voices - symbolizes knowledge, adventure, fantastic journeys, feelings of joy, passion and sorrow - all the complexity of life. Many times, the simple joy of reading a book is nothing more than a pleasure. Sometimes, when we least expect it, reading a certain book can be a life-changing experience.

Perhaps most of all, a book is one of the strongest symbols of the freedom of expression. The notion that anything can be written or said, no matter how much we dislike it. We don’t have to agree with the authors' political, moral or religious views - but we must at any time protect and safeguard everyone's right to express it. When those in power – anywhere in the world – start to limit freedom of expression, we are all affected and in the end - all on the losing side.

Not so long ago, many of us felt that freedom of speech and democratic values were being strengthened in many countries where this previously had been limited. The path towards more freedom appeared to be assured. But, sadly, in the last few years we have seen the quite opposite development in many parts of the world. Freedom of speech is again being limited, by those who wish to control information and by those who wish to remain in power long after their time. Journalists are imprisoned; authors and artists are threatened to silence. This development is of course extremely worrying – and dangerous. But as always, we can learn something from this; in fact we must learn. We can never take freedom of speech for granted. Freedom of speech has to be defended every day and every hour.

From history we also learn that dictators fear books as much as they fear individuals. Why? Because books collect our memories, they recreate the basis of our cultural identities and they live on when we die. The access to a library is a key to history. The destruction of a library is an efficient way to eliminate people's connection to that history.

In his book “The book thieves”, the Swedish author Anders Rydell gives us the story of how books were confiscated during the Second World War. The aim was to own the culture and history of the enemy, to rewrite history – for the enemy to remain an enemy also for future generations. After many years had passed, as part of his own research, Anders Rydell was able to bring one of the confiscated books back to the granddaughter of the rightful owner. This was a very emotional experience for the woman, since this book was the only belonging she had from her grandfather. This shows that a book can be more valuable than a piece of jewellery. A book is a part of a relation.

A few days ago I came back from the border between Serbia and Croatia. I wanted to see for myself the situation for refugees on the borders of Europe. This is of course an experience that I will never forget. People walking through Europe, having left everything they own and the horrors of war behind. They have nothing left, except memories – and the most recent of these memories are almost unbearable.

I hope that the stories of these people's lives will be told to generations ahead and my innermost wish is that their story will not end at the border of Serbia or Hungary. I wish that my grandchildren will come to learn how Europe, in 2015, jointly took the responsibility for people that needed safety and shelter, and provided them with the freedom and peace of mind that they deserve. Because if there is something that we can learn from the history of Europe and the rest of the world, it is that the destiny of one

people today, can be the destiny of another tomorrow.

Now, I am honoured to leave the floor to a writer and a journalist who, just like Predrag Blagojevic stands up for freedom of speech and has shown us how much one individual can make a difference. Masha Gessen, thank you for your courage, you are an inspiration to all of us.

With this, I declare the Gothenburg Book Fair 2015 – open!

Thank you!



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech at the ALMA Award ceremony

Published 02 June 2015 Updated 02 June 2015

1 June 2015, Stockholm Concert Hall Check against delivery.

Excellencies, representatives for PRAESA, ladies and gentlemen,

The literature heritage of Astrid Lindgren is very rich. Her stories will play a significant role for children generations ahead and I am sure that her unique way of describing and understanding childhood will inspire authors yet for a very long time. Her legacy is also her very brave and consistent work for children's rights and democracy.

Her most famous character, Pippi Longstocking, made her first public entry exactly 70 years ago, and has since then enriched and in a ground breaking way changed the world of children's literature. Pippi's birthday was celebrated here in Stockholm a few days ago. Pippi, is the strongest girl in the world, who dares to stand up for the the children, speaking her mind whether asked or not. A little girl with absent parents, but with a suitcase full of golden coins that she gives to those who really need them.

Thousands of little boys and girls came to meet the inimitable characters in the story, with freckles on their cheek and braids standing straight out from their small heads. Proud and brave children, just like Astrid Lindgren describes them.

If there is someone who shows that she believes in the capacity of children it is Astrid Lindgren, and she shows that time after time in her books. Always putting the child in the focus of each story. That does not mean she looks upon them as small adults, no, rather the other way around; the qualities of children is missing in adult life.

Today we celebrate the work of PRAESA which is truly conducted in the spirit of Astrid Lindgren. An organization sprung out of the anti-apartheid movement, drawing attention to the necessity of a language to gain personal and social development. Based on research, PRAESA establishes that a strong mother tongue improves the abilities to learn to read. PRAESA also encourages reading for the joy of it.

For me as a minister of both culture and democracy it is very encouraging to see PRAESA's successful work using culture to strengthen democracy. A wide range of culture, arts and literature that reaches both adults and children is a prerequisite for democratic development and for preserving democracy.

Our time is a time when everything we do has to have a purpose, even intangible values such as cultural expressions and experiences. But we have to remind ourselves where it all starts: with passion and pleasure. With no passion or no pleasure, we will never give our children an appetite for reading. An appetite for literature. PRAESA is working from that outset. I truly admire PRAESA's courage for pointing this out, it could easily have been replaced by necessity and measurable reasons that would please every politician in the world.

Dear representatives of PRAESA, I can't think of anything more meaningful than teaching and encouraging a child to read. To teach her each letter, one by one. To slowly make her read the letters together as words. To see the satisfaction in her face when words following each other in a sentence, makes sense. To encourage her to read a book and make her perceive that between every cover of a book hides a story for every child to discover and understand in its own way. Those are small miracles that we all can make happen in our everyday life.

Your work is much bigger than that. The task you have taken on includes giving children brought up in some of the most exposed areas in South Africa access to their own language and to literature. We all need literature; it broadens our minds, it enriches our fantasy, it makes our lives more interesting and it is a true pleasure. But for children brought up in a harsh environment it means something more, the literature becomes a place to escape to, many other worlds to explore. Literature can point out a new direction in life and show possibilities that can be difficult to discover on your own.

The day is not over when it is time to go to bed. Then it is time to read a

book. Another life opens up. The adventure continues, endlessly.

Dear PRAESA, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the Swedish government, for your devoted and professional work to point out these adventures out to the children, and thereby give them joy, courage and love.

Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech at the ISPA Congress 2015

Published 28 May 2015 Updated 28 May 2015

Malmö Live, 27 maj 2015 Check against delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen, friends of the arts,

Today is a special day because I have been given the opportunity to join you all from ISPA at the new Malmö Live. I feel both proud and honoured. And I would like to thank you and the organisers – Musik i Syd and the Danish Arts Foundation – for enabling us to come together here in Malmö, my home town. I was born here.

I know that the theme of the congress is ‘Building Bridges’. Building bridges is an important task in our society, particularly at present when there are unfortunately many dark forces calling into question the equal value of all people and diversity in our societies. This is an undesirable trend that we must address and combat.

Culture and the performing arts are important parts of our lives. It’s important for us as human beings. Theatre, dance and music accompany us all along our journey through life. From the very moment we are born until we leave our loved ones. The performing arts evoke joy, laughter, tears and insights, and the arts can help us to re-evaluate and think in new ways.

The core of culture is its free, independent and challenging force. Culture – and the performing arts in particular – can help us to come together as people, exchange thoughts and sometimes change opinions; they turn our everyday lives and our societies into places where we can all feel safe and where we dare to, and can, realise our dreams.

As minister in the Swedish government with responsibility for both culture and democracy issues, I am convinced – as is the entire Swedish

Government – that culture is essential to creating a sustainable democratic society where everyone has a place and can be heard and seen. This is what I am working for, both in Sweden and in our relations with the rest of the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Convention celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. Last week, the cultural sector of Sweden drew attention to the need for greater diversity through a special conference attended by UNESCO representatives and Swedish cultural actors.

All of you members of ISPA who are present today make a significant contribution to the positive force that culture exerts on us as individuals and on our societies.

I am certain that during this conference, you will share your experiences and your ideas and be curious about each other's activities. This is how new bridges emerge that provide scope for new artistic expressions, greater accessibility and greater diversity, so that the performing arts retain and strengthen the development capacity that we need in this world.

Finally, I would like to wish you all an interesting few days in the Öresund region.

Thank you.



Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech at the announcement of the 2015 laureate of the ALMA-award

Published 31 March 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

The National Library of Sweden 31 mars 2015 Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, in Stockholm and in Bologna,

To read a book as a child is something different to reading a book as an adult. A child experiences a book in its own way, with a curious mind and an open heart. Children are both demanding and grateful readers. That makes high quality literature for children extraordinary important.

I remember reading the book *Katitzi* by the Swedish author Katarina Taikon as a child. It is a book about a girl that did the same things as I did as a child; she fought with her siblings, she did really good things and she made mistakes, just like any other child. But some parts of her life were profoundly different from mine; she lived in a caravan and her family constantly had to move, she couldn't go to school. But what I remember most was that meeting suspicion and aversion was part of everyday-life for *Katitzi* and her family. *Katitzi* was a Swedish Roma-girl growing up in Sweden in the middle of the 20th century. Today, the experience I got from reading *Katitzi* still lives with me but when I read it today I understand it in a different way. I am glad that I still bear the experience of a young reader with me. Unfortunately the story of *Katitzi* still bear relevance today.

Young readers can be difficult to please. They are not impressed by the name of the author, they don't care if their mother has told them that "this is a very good book". Simply; if they don't like the book they will stop listening or stop reading. Therefore being an author for children and young people is

more difficult than writing books for adults. These authors open new worlds to our children and give them tools to understand and handle the world around them.

Being able to read gives you the opportunity to take part of the democratic society and a whole world of fantastic literature lies ahead of you. Authors of children's books creates an appetite for life!

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award honours one of the greatest authors of literature for children. Astrid Lindgren leaves no one untouched. She was a brave author with a big heart. During her lifetime she was active in the public debate, constantly standing up for those with a weak, or no voice of their own. Astrid Lindgren was a great author but also a great defender of civil rights, democracy and every child's right to be a child.

Now I am very proud to leave the floor to the president of the ALMA-jury Boel Westin who will present to us today's laureate. Thank you!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Culture

# Speech at the opening of Göteborg Film Festival

Published 23 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

Biograf Draken, Gothenburg 23 januari 2015 Check against delivery.

Good evening,

It feels good to be here and to have the opportunity to speak at the opening of the Göteborg Film Festival, which I have enjoyed in the past as a visitor - like many thousands of other people over the years.

Last summer I had reason to attend another film festival, in Croatia. After a generous reception from volunteer cinema enthusiasts and after checking in at a charming hotel, with drinks and food all around, we sat under the starry skies with bread and wine.

The whole thing was like a scene from a cliché romantic movie, like "Cinema paradiso". A warm summer night, bread, wine and colourful lights, laughter and intense discussions. One of the people who talked the most caught my attention. From a distance, he seemed interesting, inspiring, and yes, he sounded attractive. Close up, he turned out to be an extremely unpleasant person, a nationalist, male chauvinist, racist, homophobe, a self-satisfied damned fool with an ugly soul and - a film director.

Provoked and deeply disappointed, I spat out something about how far too many films lack perspective, about voices that remain unheard, people who remain unseen and who are not given any space. He gave a deep sigh, and with a stealthy look, asked whether what I was asking for was worth it - "at the expense of quality?"

I felt ashamed of myself and of the obvious fact that I had been living in the

naïve belief that 'film people' were consciously out to make the world a better place and that mindless talk about meaningless things was only the province of - politicians & Well, of course this was a few weeks before the Prime Minister had the good taste to phone me.

Fortunately, the successful politician is not the one who has the job of developing Swedish film policy. And fortunately, I'm not just sitting in my office doing that. No, the future of Swedish film policy will be based on the work that you - or at least the many representatives of many parts of the film sector - have done. During autumn, the Ministry of Culture has initiated and facilitated dialogue between authors, producers, distributors, cinema owners, television companies, internet actors and financiers. Swedish film policy must foster an open climate in which the diversity of stories and talents is the greatest asset of films of every type. But how can we get systems that identify all these different 'best projects'?

How sure can we be about our assessments and predictions? How can we ensure that we have robust and well-established production companies that manage - in times of success and setbacks alike - to maintain continuity and quality, while encouraging smaller and perhaps untested actors to participate in development and innovation? Development - both artistic development and the development of business methods and models - is essential for the long-term survival of the Swedish film sector and to ensure that filmgoers can enjoy a broad and high-quality range of films.

We need to continue to work on more technology-neutral forms of support. Media habits have changed dramatically in the past five years and we know that streaming and home cinema systems are increasingly part of people's everyday lives.

As you can tell, this truly is a tapestry of many patterns and many threads, to be woven into something that works, that is sustainable. In this process we have moved into a more intensive phase. Before long, we need to have the new film policy ready.

In the coming days of this festival we will have a chance to sink into our cinema seats and experience films in the company of others - and all around, before and afterwards, the conversations and discussions will go on. Make sure you squeeze into the seminars - that might be where it suddenly happens. We live in a time of great need for something to happen, for lots to happen that will take us away from the darkness that is spreading across Europe and the world. A world with more conflicts and more refugees than ever, more hate crimes and more extreme right-wingers gaining seats in our

parliaments, more of all those things that are the very opposite of what film can express - other perspectives, other customs, other people's lives, other situations.

As Jonas Holmberg earlier said during this festival, the documentary film "Vessel" by Diana Whitten will be screened. It's being screened because it's a good and important film. But it's also being screened as an act of solidarity with the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) and its magazine Ottar. The attack was an attack on the freedom of expression, an attack on the equal value of all people and an attack on our democracy.

It's far too easy to lose hope in life and the world. But that's not an option. We therefore need to seek strength and protect ourselves by laughing more, crying more, exploring ourselves more to challenges. We need to let our world be turned upside down more often. Quite simply, we need more of the Göteborg Film Festival.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that many of us need to use our various positions and platforms to work to enable film. Film criticism and lively public discussion of all forms of film have an important role to play. Healthy film criticism is one of the essential conditions for developing film as an art form and an understanding of film and the role it plays in society.

In conclusion, one important factor for film is the festivals - not least the Göteborg Film Festival.

I would like to thank all of you who have made it possible for us once again, for the 38th time, to gather here and kick off another festival days!

Now I look forward to enjoying both "Key Mirror House" and the opening short film "Audition"!

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement from Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Swedish statement at the UNSC Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

Published 16 April 2018

National statement delivered by Her Excellency Ms. Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy, on behalf of Sweden at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security: Preventing sexual violence in conflict through empowerment, gender equality and access to justice, 16 April 2018, New York.

Thank you, Mr President,

I align myself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, the Nordic countries and the Group of Friends on Women, Peace and Security.

Mr President,

Let me begin by thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pramila Patten, for their thoughtful interventions this morning, and for their leadership and concrete efforts to combat conflict related sexual violence. I want to extend a particular word of welcome and thanks to Razia Sultana. Your testimony underlines the critical importance of using all tools available to this Council to prevent and respond to conflict related sexual violence.

In my position as the Swedish Minister for Culture and Democracy – with responsibilities such as national human rights, civil society and the fight

against discrimination and racism – I have met women and girls, men and boys seeking asylum in Sweden, and listened to their testimonies. Stories about children in conflict areas, taken from their families, abducted, forced into sexual slavery – horrible atrocities.

But it doesn't stop there. During their journey to Europe, they were once again abused and harassed, including in refugee camps.

My role as Minister is to listen, to understand and – most importantly – to act. These testimonies, like Ms. Sultanas, cannot only be something we here are horrified by. The stories must become the starting point for action.

Regrettably, violence, oppression and systematic subordination still mark the daily lives of countless women and girls. Conflict related sexual violence brutalises and traumatises the victims and seeks to undermine and shatter communities and societies. Its impact cannot be overestimated. Addressing this scourge is a central part of the Security Council's work. Alarmingly, conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism has reached new levels. This is a core security challenge.

At the heart of this issue is the fundamental principle of women's full enjoyment of human rights, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights. The link between accountability and prevention is clear. Ensuring accountability and putting an end to impunity for violations and abuses against international law must be a priority for all of us, both inside and outside this Council.

When Sweden joined the Security Council, we set out two overarching priorities: Conflict Prevention and Women, Peace and Security. Therefore, we thank Peru for organizing this open debate, and welcome the focus in today's discussion.

Mr President,

Since 2014, Sweden has pursued a feminist foreign policy based on the "four R's" – rights, representation, resources and 'reality check'. This means that throughout our foreign policy – including peace, security, trade, humanitarian and development efforts – we are applying a systematic gender perspective. Without the inclusion of and respect for all, a sustainable peace can never be achieved. We know that gender equality makes societies more peaceful. The ongoing Stockholm Forum on Gender Equality will cover many of these critical issues and seek common solutions.

The Council needs to address the gender dynamics of the root causes of conflict. We must consider structural gender inequality as a critical element of the instability that hinders efforts to maintain or restore international peace and security. To achieve this, we need gendered conflict analysis, building on gender-disaggregated data and solid gender expertise. We also need to build alliances with brave civil society actors, who play an essential role in addressing conflict-related sexual violence and promoting gender equality. We fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Council considers the early warning signs of sexual violence in its monitoring of conflict situations.

Last year, the Security Council added the first ever separate designation criteria on conflict related sexual violence in the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic. However, having the criteria is not enough, sanctions committees also need gender expertise. This year, when the Council renewed the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic, it added language to respond to this need. Let's work together to include similar criteria in all relevant sanctions regimes.

Panels of Experts must also be mandated to report to the sanctions committees on conflict-related sexual violence, and in cases where there are still no separate designation criteria, we encourage the panels to report under the International Humanitarian Law and, or, human rights criteria.

To further inform country-specific considerations, we encourage Council Members, and the broader membership, to make full use of the documents and the meetings of the Security Council Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Mr President,

The importance of women in peacekeeping no longer needs to be justified. The evidence speaks for itself. With more female peacekeepers and police officers we can achieve more, and reach the whole population in a conflict area. Sweden is actively addressing factors that hinder the deployment of women peacekeepers, police, and corrections officers.

Women, peace and security is an integral part of pre-deployment training for all Swedish troops, and all deployed contingents have specially trained gender advisers. There are many good examples to be shared in this regard.

We welcome the enhanced focus on access to justice and its links to

prevention. This contributes to ending impunity as well as to ensuring victims' trust in accountable and effective criminal justice institutions.

As the Secretary-General's report highlights, the effects of sexual violence – including trauma, stigma, poverty, and poor health – can echo across generations. In response, we need to ensure socio-economic reintegration support to restore community cohesion. Survivors of sexual and gender based violence also must have access to the full range of livelihood, legal, psychosocial and medical services, including sexual and reproductive health services that are not subject to donor restrictions.

Mr President,

The focus of today's open debate shows that it is a broad agenda with many interconnected goals, and that no single actor can achieve them alone. This makes alliances so important, between states, regional and international organisations, civil society, women's organisations and others. We, the Security Council, need to show leadership. Not only today, but across all aspects of our work.

Thank you.