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## **COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

### **2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Sweden**

#### *Accompanying the document*

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the  
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

### **2025 Rule of Law Report The rule of law situation in the European Union**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Sweden, the level of perceived judicial independence continues to be very high among the general public and is now high among companies. The Government presented proposals amending the Constitution to further strengthen judicial independence, in particular as regards judges' appointments, disciplinary procedures, and establishing a more independent court administration agency. The debate on strengthening safeguards to ensure independence in the nomination of lay judges is still ongoing but has not yet led to any changes. The Swedish courts were granted increased financial resources to deal with an increase in cases and to increase security at courts. Swedish judges' salaries are set within the parameters of a collective agreement between the National Courts Administration and the trade union representing judges, and reviewed annually based on an individual assessment. Initiatives related to the right to an effective remedy are on-going, including as regards the threshold to qualify for legal aid. The justice system continues to perform efficiently despite a peak of incoming cases in 2024.

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that Sweden is one of the least corrupt countries in the world. New legislation on limitation periods has now entered into force while the Government continues to review criminal legislation in relation to corruption. The investigation and prosecution of corruption continues to achieve results, although addressing foreign bribery remains a challenge and law enforcement are concerned by a possible underreporting of corruption cases. The obligation for agencies under the Government to prevent corruption is now clarified in law, while some gaps in asset declaration for public officials remain. A committee recommended reforms to the political party financing framework and introduction of rules on lobbying, while there hasn't been any follow-up so far on the evaluation of the rules on revolving doors. Measures are taken to address the risk of infiltration of the public service by organised crime through corruption, such as the adoption of legislation to strengthen background checks of municipal employees.

The independent national regulatory authority, the Swedish Agency for the Media, deals with an increasing variety of tasks. The Government is preparing to renew the periodic public service mission with new rules for independence of public service media. The access to documents framework has been adjusted to counter the misuse of transparency by organised crime. The overall conditions for journalists remain favourable and the Swedish Agency for the Media has been tasked to monitor the safety of journalists.

Some stakeholders express concern about the acceleration of legislative preparatory work which they consider poses challenges to public participation. The Government presented a proposal amending the Constitution to provide a framework to better deal with serious crises. It also presented a proposal to strengthen the procedure for amending the Constitution. The National Human Rights Institution has obtained an A-status accreditation and the Parliamentary Ombudsmen discharge their mandates effectively. There were further steps on the legal framework for the funding and operation of civil society organisations, which entered into force in 2025. The civil society space remains open.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, concerning the recommendations in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden has made:

- No progress on ensuring that the nomination system of lay judges safeguards their independence, taking into account European standards on judicial independence.
- No progress on ensuring the appropriate follow-up to the evaluation of the rules on revolving doors.
- No further progress on strengthening the fight against foreign bribery, by amending the existing legal definitions to improve on the prosecution of, and final judgments in foreign bribery cases.
- Significant progress on continuing efforts to ensure that the reforms to the legal framework for the funding and operation of civil society organisations do not unduly affect civil society engagement.

On this basis, and considering other developments that took place in the period of reference, it is recommended to Sweden to:

- Ensure that the nomination system of lay judges safeguards their independence, taking into account European standards on judicial independence.
- Strengthen the fight against foreign bribery, including through amending the existing legal framework and improving enforcement.
- Ensure the appropriate follow-up to the evaluation of the rules on revolving doors.

## I. JUSTICE SYSTEM<sup>1</sup>

### Independence

**The level of perceived judicial independence in Sweden continues to be very high among the general public and is now high among companies.** Overall, 76% of the general population and 74% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2025<sup>2</sup>. Among the general public, the perceived judicial independence has slightly decreased in comparison with 2024 (78%), although it is higher in comparison with 2021 (71%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has slightly decreased in comparison with 2024 (75%), although it is higher in comparison with 2021 (71%).

**The Government presented proposals amending the Constitution to strengthen judicial independence, including by establishing a more independent court administration agency.** To set up such an agency, on 29 April 2025, the Government presented constitutional<sup>3</sup> amendments based on a 2023 report of an all-party committee of inquiry on strengthening the protection of democracy and the independence of the judiciary (‘2020 committee of inquiry’)<sup>4</sup>. The new court administration agency is designed to be more independent from the Government than the current National Courts Administration, notably in terms of being headed by a Board – where the majority of members are or have been judges – and that Board would appoint the agency’s director<sup>5</sup>. A decision to remove a Board member (other than at own request) could be taken only by the Parliament with at least three-fourths of the voters and more than half of the members of the Parliament having to vote in favour. The nomination procedure for the Board members will be laid down in legislation. In that respect, in its 2023 report, the 2020 committee of inquiry proposed that a specific nomination procedure should be introduced to ensure that the courts have a significant influence over the composition of the Board and the Government may only appoint a person who has been proposed for the role of member or a deputy<sup>6</sup>. The new agency would essentially have the same tasks as the National Courts Administration. The constitutional amendments also cover issues on retirement of judges of the Supreme Courts and other judges<sup>7</sup>, laying down a range for the number of the judges at the Supreme Courts, and a

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of the institutional framework for all four pillars can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Figures 50 and 52, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 49 and 51, 2023 EU Justice Scoreboard. The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).

<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Constitution consists of four fundamental laws: the Instrument of Government, the Act of Succession, the Freedom of the Press Act and, the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression.

<sup>4</sup> Swedish Government (2025f), and Swedish Government (2023b),.

<sup>5</sup> The Board would appoint the Director of the new agency, rather than the Government as is presently the case for the National Courts Administration. Swedish Government (2025f).

<sup>6</sup> The 2020 committee of inquiry considered that the courts should nominate two candidates per one vacant Board position for the judiciary, out of which the Government should appoint one of the two candidates. Swedish Government (2023b).

<sup>7</sup> The Committee of Inquiry proposed that the Constitution should provide that Supreme Court judges can be removed from office only if they have reached a statutory retirement age and not apply retroactively. On application from a Supreme Court judge, the new courts agency would be able to decide upon a higher retirement age. The Committee of Inquiry considered that the proposals for the Supreme Court judges should also apply to other judges. The retirement age will be laid down in law. Swedish Government (2025f), and Swedish Government (2023b).

special joint composition with judges of both Supreme Courts<sup>8</sup>. For the constitutional amendments to be adopted, the Parliament must pass two identically worded votes in favour by simple majority with a parliamentary election between both votes; the next regular election is foreseen in September 2026. The legislative amendments should enter into force on 1 January 2027 and the constitutional amendments on 1 April 2027. The Government will present the relevant legislative amendments after the constitutional proposal.

**The Government presented a proposal amending the Constitution to further strengthen judicial independence, in particular on judges' appointments and disciplinary procedures.** On 29 April 2025, the Government presented proposals for constitutional amendments<sup>9</sup>. The constitutional amendments strengthen judicial independence by providing that the Government can appoint judges only after a proposal from a special body, such as the Judges Proposal Board, where a majority of its members are or have been permanent judges. At present, all permanent judges are appointed by the Government upon a recommendation by the Judges Proposals Board. The Government is not bound by the Board's proposal but cannot appoint a person who has not first been heard by the Board<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the 2020 committee of inquiry proposed that a Disciplinary Board for Judges should be established and consisting of a majority of members who are or have been judges. The Government's constitutional amendments extend the right to judicial review in case of dismissal by a body other than a court. In such judicial review, only permanent judges may take part. It is further proposed that should a dismissal be decided by any other authority than a court, a majority of its members must be or have been permanent judges<sup>11</sup>. As one part of that process, on 13 May 2025, a committee of inquiry presented a report for future legislative provisions on disciplinary procedures for permanent judges, establishment of a Disciplinary Board for Judges and adjustments to the Judicial Proposals Board. The report has been referred for public consultation until 26 September 2025<sup>12</sup>. The work on the different strands is expected to be completed once the legislative amendments enter into force on 1 January 2027 and the constitutional amendments on 1 April 2027.

**Although the debate on the nomination system for lay judges continues, there was no progress made on the 2024 recommendation<sup>13</sup>.** Lay judges in Sweden are nominated exclusively by the political parties and elected by municipal councils or county council assemblies<sup>14</sup>. A national debate on the role of political parties in the nomination process of lay judges is ongoing. The link between the lay judges and the political parties that nominate them has given rise to public concern about perceptions of lay judges' independence and impartiality in some cases. The Swedish National Courts Administration noted that each year

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<sup>8</sup> This may be appropriate, for example, if EU law is unclear in a particular area or a question arises as to whether the Supreme Court or the Supreme Administrative Court are entitled to deal with a particular case.

<sup>9</sup> Swedish Government (2025f) Strengthening the protection of the independence of courts and judges.

<sup>10</sup> If the Government intends to appoint a person not proposed by the Board, it has to refer the matter back to the Board. 2020 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> According to the new constitutional provision, where a judge has been removed from office otherwise than by a decision of a court, they are entitled to a judicial review. The same applies where a judge has been suspended from his or her duties, ordered to undergo a medical examination or disciplined. The court considering the case consists of permanent judges only, with a majority of members who are or have been judges on any other deciding body.

<sup>12</sup> Swedish Government (2025j).

<sup>13</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Sweden to "ensure that the nomination system of lay judges safeguards their independence, taking into account European standards on judicial independence".

<sup>14</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 6.



a few instances attract media attention, and serious irregularities can lead to a mistrial<sup>15</sup>. Many stakeholders argue for a change of the nomination system<sup>16</sup>. The Government has not taken any specific steps to implement the recommendation of the 2024 Rule of Law Report<sup>17</sup> and therefore no progress has been made.

## Quality

**The digitalisation of justice in Sweden continues to be at a very good level overall.** There are procedural rules allowing digital technology in courts in civil, commercial, administrative, and criminal cases, as well as online information about the judicial system for the general public<sup>18</sup>. Efforts are ongoing to ascertain how legal information can be provided to the public in a digital, uniform, secure and efficient manner based on the users' needs<sup>19</sup>. In 2024, the Swedish National Courts Administration also took further steps towards making the case management process completely digital, by introducing the ability to sign judgments and decisions digitally<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, some gaps remain on digital solutions to conduct and follow criminal proceedings. These gaps include the possibility for victims and defendants to access their ongoing case electronically, accessing first instance court judgments online, or arrangements for machine readability of judgments<sup>21</sup>.

**The Swedish courts were granted increased financial resources for the period of 2025-2027 to deal with an increase in cases and to increase security at courts.** This increase in resources was part of a broader investment in the entire justice system. The additional resources for the courts are meant to manage an increase in cases and to increase security in the courts<sup>22</sup>. Stakeholders in the judicial system consider that the financial resources for the period 2025-2027 are sufficient<sup>23</sup>. The National Courts Administration expects that most of the courts will use the additional funds for further recruitments and investments in security<sup>24</sup>. To strengthen the security of the courts, the National Courts Administration also submitted a proposal to the Government for a constitutional amendment to enable background checks during the recruitment phase for court employees to reduce the risk of criminal infiltration and irregularities<sup>25</sup>.

**Swedish judges' salaries are set within the parameters of a collective agreement between the National Courts Administration and the trade union representing judges, and reviewed annually based on an individual assessment.** In October 2024, the European

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<sup>15</sup> National Courts Administration (2025), written input.

<sup>16</sup> Country visit Sweden, Judges Association, Bar Association, Swedish Institute for Human Rights, Civil Rights Defenders and the Swedish Section of the International Commission of Jurists. The Swedish Lay Judges Association considers that the challenges concerning the perception of lay judges' independence and impartiality could be addressed with better training of lay judges and the political parties that nominate them. Country visit Sweden, Swedish Lay Judges Association; ENNHRI (2025).

<sup>17</sup> Swedish Government (2025a) written input.

<sup>18</sup> 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, figure 40 and 41.

<sup>19</sup> The National Courts Administration submitted a report to the Government on 28 May 2025. National Courts Administration (2025a).

<sup>20</sup> Swedish Government (2025a), written input, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, figures 46, 47 and 48.

<sup>22</sup> Swedish Government (2024f). From 2025 to 2027, their budget will increase from approximately EUR 744 million to EUR 799 million (SEK 8.2 billion to SEK 8.8 billion).

<sup>23</sup> Country visit Sweden, Judges Association, National Courts Administration, Prosecution Service.

<sup>24</sup> Each court is its own Government agency, and consequently has its own budgetary responsibility and can use the resources as they see fit. National Courts Administration (2025), written contribution.

<sup>25</sup> Swedish Government (2024a).

Association of Judges adopted a resolution, urging the Swedish Government to replace the existing salary system with a system which fully excludes any possible impact on judicial independence, in line with well-established international standards<sup>26</sup>. Swedish judges' salaries are set within the parameters of a collective agreement, between the trade union representing judges the National Courts Administration for newly appointed judges, but are then subject to review on an annual basis between the judge and the responsible court president<sup>27</sup>. A survey commissioned by the Swedish Judges' Association highlighted the challenges of Swedish judges related to the existing salary system<sup>28</sup>. The Swedish Judges' Association considers that this remuneration system is not transparent and is vulnerable to interference through the remuneration of (individual) judges. The Swedish Judges' Association considers that the system has not alleviated problems with recruitment of judges, which was the intention of its introduction in 2005.

**Initiatives related to the right to an effective remedy are on-going.** In January 2025, an all-party committee tasked with investigating issues relating to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms delivered its report on possible amendments to the Constitution<sup>29</sup>. In particular, it noted that Swedish law does not contain a generally applicable rule on the right to judicial review at constitutional level<sup>30</sup>, whereas such provisions are included in the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The committee proposed that the right to judicial review should be enshrined in the Constitution<sup>31</sup>. Another issue linked to effective remedy has been explored since the Government mandated an inquiry in 2024<sup>32</sup> to examine specific questions related to legal assistance, including as regards the review of the threshold for legal aid under the Legal Aid Act. The threshold for legal aid in civil cases has not been adjusted to inflation since 1999 and, as a result, the number of persons qualifying for legal aid has steadily decreased in the past decades<sup>33</sup>. As regards administrative courts, stakeholders have pointed out that particular challenges exist with regard to effective judicial redress<sup>34</sup>. These concern, in particular, the fact that based on a ruling of the Supreme Administrative Court<sup>35</sup>, individuals do not get their costs reimbursed in the administrative court procedures, even if they win their case, but need to start a new court procedure in the general courts to this end. The inquiry will also consider whether, in certain cases, individuals should be able to obtain reimbursement of legal costs in the context

<sup>26</sup> European Association of Judges (2024), Resolution concerning the Remuneration of Judges in Sweden.

<sup>27</sup> The salaries are based on a collective agreement between the National Courts Administration and the Trade Union representing judges which states that remuneration may never be based on grounds contradictory to the interest of independence regarding the application of the law. The agreement sets minimum levels of pay. Swedish Government (2020), written input, pp. 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Swedish Government (2025b).

<sup>30</sup> The right to judicial review is laid down in individual laws, for example in the Code of Judicial Procedure, the Administrative Procedure Act and the Administrative Procedure Act, as well as in a large number of sectoral laws. Swedish Government (2025i), p. 68-69.

<sup>31</sup> Swedish Government (2025b).

<sup>32</sup> Swedish Government (2024b).

<sup>33</sup> In addition, individuals that qualify for the aid have to pay a legal aid fee between 2% and 40%. 2023 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 9. The threshold for the amount of earned income remains at SEK 260 000 per year. The average salary in Sweden in 2023 was approximately EUR 43 464 (SEK 478 800). Dagens Juridik (2025), "The Legal Aid Institute is a castle in the air and a threat to the rule of law 2.0".

<sup>34</sup> In this context, stakeholders referred to a report noting that public authorities or private bodies conferred a public function can also exclude the possibility of a judicial review or obtaining compensation for damage from the state for administrative decisions that were ruled to be illegal. Centrum for Rättvisa (2025), Report: No chance against the authorities?; ENNHRI (2025).

<sup>35</sup> Judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 4 March 2022, case 6184-19.



of a case before an administrative court. .. The inquiry report should be submitted by 1 August 2025.

## Efficiency

**The justice system continues to perform efficiently despite a peak of incoming cases in 2024.** The number of incoming civil and commercial litigious cases has remained comparatively low in 2023, while the number of incoming administrative cases remains the highest among EU Member States. The estimated time needed to resolve litigious civil and commercial cases at all court instances remains comparatively short (in 2023, 157 days at first instance, 108 days at second instance and 150 at third instance). The estimated time needed to resolve administrative cases at all court instances was among the lowest among the Member States (in 2023, 83 days at first instance, 72 days at second instance and 86 at third instance). The clearance rate for civil and commercial litigious cases has decreased (97% in 2023 compared to 102% in 2022) yet improved for administrative cases (105% in 2023 compared to 103% in 2022). The number of pending litigious civil and commercial cases at first instance is one of the lowest among Member States<sup>36</sup>. According to the National Courts Administration, in 2024, the courts had the highest ever number of incoming (507 851, an 8% increase compared to 2023) and decided cases (504 398, a 6% increase compared to 2023)<sup>37</sup>. The increase in cases has been most marked at the Supreme Court, where the number of pending cases has continued the negative trend (2 774 pending cases at the end of 2024 as compared to 1 041 pending cases at the end of 2020)<sup>38</sup>.

## II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

**The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that Sweden is one of the least corrupt countries in the world.** In the 2024 Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International, Sweden scores 80/100 and ranks fourth in the European Union and eight globally<sup>39</sup>. This perception has deteriorated over the past five years<sup>40</sup>. The 2025 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 51% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 69%) and 12% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 45% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 63%) and 16% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 35%). Furthermore, 29% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 36%), while 51% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 33%)<sup>41</sup>.

**The 2024-2027 Action Plan against corruption and undue influence is the main strategic document in the fight against public sector corruption and continues to be implemented.** The ‘Action Plan against corruption and undue influence 2024-2027’ was adopted in July

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<sup>36</sup> 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, figures 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 13.

<sup>37</sup> National Courts Administration (2025), The annual report for 2024 is submitted to the Government.

<sup>38</sup> Swedish Supreme Court (2025), Activity report of the Supreme Court, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> The level of perceived corruption is categorised as follows: low (above 79); relatively low (between 79-60), relatively high (between 59-50), high (below 50).

<sup>40</sup> In 2020 the score was 85, while, in 2024, the score is 80. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points); is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

<sup>41</sup> Data from Special Eurobarometer 561 (2025) and Flash Eurobarometer 557 (2025).

2024<sup>42</sup>. The Agency for Public Management, with its expanded and more permanent anti-corruption role, is implementing the main workstrands. These include further analysis of how Government agencies and local government implement their anti-corruption obligations, as well as study work on the perception of corruption of government employees<sup>43</sup>. Linked to the new Action Plan, the Government has asked the OECD to conduct an integrity review<sup>44</sup>. Civil society is satisfied with the broad consultations to prepare the Action Plan as well as its expanded scope<sup>45</sup> where the private sector was not involved<sup>46</sup>. A governmental Anti-Corruption Forum will propose recommendations by the end of 2025 on how to strengthen the Government's policy to prevent corruption<sup>47</sup>.

**New legislation on limitation periods was adopted and the Government continues to work on reviewing criminal law legislation in relation to corruption.** A law proposed by the Government in November 2024 to extend limitation periods for serious crimes – notably, from ten to fifteen years for serious bribery offences<sup>48</sup> was adopted by Parliament in February 2025 and entered into force in April 2025<sup>49</sup>. The law also ensures that the imposition of an imprisonment sentence is not subject to limitation periods. The new confiscation regime that entered into force in November 2024 includes the possibility to confiscate unexplained wealth. The committee of inquiry established in February 2024<sup>50</sup> with a broad mandate to review criminal law legislation on corruption, continues its work. It is expected to present its recommendations by the end of July 2025.

**While the work of the relevant committee is ongoing, there has been no further progress on the recommendation concerning the fight against foreign bribery in the absence of improvement on the legal definitions and the prosecution of foreign bribery cases<sup>51</sup>.** Legal limitations, including as regards the definition of foreign bribery and the liability of legal persons persist and hinder enforcement, as again highlighted by the OECD in December 2024<sup>52</sup>. Amending the applicable legislation in relation to foreign bribery is one of the objectives of the committee that will examine criminal law legislation in the fight against corruption<sup>53</sup>. Both the OECD and civil society doubt that enforcement difficulties can be addressed without legislative change<sup>54</sup>. Difficulties to gather the necessary evidence, and complex mutual legal assistance requests with some third countries further hamper enforcement<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, as the legal definitions of foreign bribery remain limited and there

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<sup>42</sup> 2024 Rule of Law report, Sweden, pp. 12-13.

<sup>43</sup> Country visit Sweden, Agency for Public Management and Ministry of Finance; and Swedish Government (2025), written input, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Swedish Government (2025), written input, p. 3. In essence, an integrity review is a broad review of the country's preventative anti-corruption policies.

<sup>45</sup> Country visit Sweden, Transparency International.

<sup>46</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 12-13.

<sup>47</sup> Country visit Sweden, Agency for Public Management.

<sup>48</sup> Gross giving of a bribe and gross taking of a bribe.

<sup>49</sup> Swedish Government (2025), written input, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> 2024 Rule of Law report, Sweden, pp. 13-14.

<sup>51</sup> The 2024 and 2023 Rule of Law Reports recommended to Sweden to 'strengthen the fight against foreign bribery, including through amending existing legal definitions and improving on prosecution and final judgments of cases'.

<sup>52</sup> Sweden's insufficient action leaves companies unpunished for foreign bribery offences, says OECD Working Group on Bribery. OECD (2024a), p. 7 and OECD (2024b).

<sup>53</sup> 2024 Rule of Law report, Sweden, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> OECD (2024a), p.4, OECD (2024b) and Country visit Sweden, Prosecution Service and Transparency International.

<sup>55</sup> OECD (2024a), pp. 29-30 and Country visit Sweden, Prosecution Service.

is no improvement in the prosecution of foreign bribery cases, there has been no further progress on the recommendation made in the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

**The investigation and prosecution of corruption continues to achieve results, although law enforcement is concerned by the possible underreporting of corruption cases.** The Prosecution Authority and the Police Authority consider that they have a sufficient level of resources<sup>56</sup>, although issues over the staffing and performance of the Police Authority's intelligence unit in corruption cases remain<sup>57</sup>. These authorities continue to have a generally good cooperation and achieve results in the fight against corruption. Data from the National Council for Crime Prevention indicates that, following an increase in reported bribery cases in 2023, reports have decreased to 76 cases for passive bribery and 67 cases for active bribery in 2024<sup>58</sup>. In 2023, prosecutions were initiated for 166 bribery offences and 50 convictions were obtained in bribery cases, with one resulting in imprisonment<sup>59</sup>. The Police assumes that the actual number of corruption cases is much higher but is underreported, citing a lack of incentive to report such conduct, for example at local level or in the private sector<sup>60</sup>. In addition, the phenomenon of "corruption brokers" – where brokers act as middlemen searching for bribes – is on the rise<sup>61</sup>. A new financial intelligence centre, based on the cooperation between the Tax Authority, the police and the Economic Crime Authority was set up on 1 April 2025 to better combat fraud, money laundering and the criminal economy. The authorities expect that the new setup could also help detect corruption<sup>62</sup>. Sweden joined the European Public Prosecutor's Office in 2024 and the prosecutors report good cooperation<sup>63</sup>.

**The obligation for agencies under the Government to prevent corruption is now clarified in law, while some gaps in asset declaration for public officials remain.** Sweden relies on a strong culture of transparency, where ethical guidance is decentralised, and each individual ministry and Government agency is responsible for its own ethical guidelines<sup>64</sup>. The obligation for each agency to implement a corruption prevention policy is now more clarified in law<sup>65</sup>. A handbook summarising guidance for top-level officials on topics such as conflicts of interest, restrictions when leaving office and rules on travel is available<sup>66</sup>. The ethical guidelines for all civil servants of the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*) remain under revision without a clear timeline<sup>67</sup>. Asset declaration obligations of ministers and state

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<sup>56</sup> Country visit Sweden, public prosecution service and Police Authority. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, pp. 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, pp. 14-15 and Country visit Sweden, Public Prosecution Service.

<sup>58</sup> In 2022, there were 80 reports on passive bribery, whereas in 2023 the number of reports on passive bribery was 115. For active bribery, there were 90 reports in 2022 and 146 in 2023. National Council for Crime Prevention (2025) and Public Prosecution Service (2025).

<sup>59</sup> Overall, there were 72 convictions and 2 cases that resulted in imprisonment for all corruption offences including bribery and trading in influence. Ibidem.

<sup>60</sup> Police National Anti-Corruption Unit (2024) and Country visit Sweden, Police Authority.

<sup>61</sup> This includes for example in the motor vehicle inspection sector or the financial sector (lending). Police National Anti-Corruption Unit (2024) and Country visit Sweden, Police Authority.

<sup>62</sup> The centre should be fully operational by 31 December 2027. Swedish Government (2025), written input, p. 4 and Country visit Sweden, Ministry of Finance and Economic Crime Authority.

<sup>63</sup> Swedish Government (2025), written input, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, pp. 16-17.

<sup>65</sup> Regulation clarifying the responsibilities of government managers in the prevention of corruption. It entered into force on 1 July 2025.

<sup>66</sup> GRECO Fifth evaluation round – second compliance report, recommendation ii, paragraphs 14-22.

<sup>67</sup> Country visit Sweden, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance

secretaries<sup>68</sup> do not include information on significant liabilities or information on their spouses and some dependent family members<sup>69</sup>. Various categories of officials, including senior law enforcement officials, do not need to declare assets<sup>70</sup>. The Government does not plan to further amend the asset declaration regime<sup>71</sup>, despite the pending recommendation of GRECO<sup>72</sup>.

**An all-party committee of inquiry recommended to introduce lobbying rules, including a transparency register.** There are still no rules on how to engage with lobbyists and on disclosure of lobbying contacts, as also noted by GRECO<sup>73</sup>. An all-party committee mandated to consider whether there is a need to strengthen transparency regarding contacts between political decision-makers and lobbyists<sup>74</sup> recommended in May 2025 that the Government should introduce – for the first time – clear rules on lobbying. In particular, it recommended introducing a transparency register where lobbyists would need to register their contacts with the political level three times per year<sup>75</sup>. The Government will examine the report and announce a possible follow-up in the future.

**There has been no progress to follow up on the inquiry on rules on revolving doors, as the Government has not announced any action in response to the report of the committee<sup>76</sup>.** The Government continues to reflect on the results of the inquiry and has not yet taken any position on future legislative (or other) changes to the rules on revolving doors<sup>77</sup>. A committee of inquiry concluded in 2023 that the rules on revolving doors, while fit for purpose, should be amended, for example to extend the transitional restrictions to a wider scope of individuals namely heads of Government agencies, and to allow for the possibility to widen the scope to lower-level employees executing critical functions<sup>78</sup>. In 2024, the Board for the Examination of Transitional Restrictions received a total of three reports. The Board did not impose restrictions concerning the content of the future employment in any of these cases<sup>79</sup>. Given that the Government is still examining the follow-

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<sup>68</sup> Ministers and state-secretaries are required to declare their financial interests; the declaration needs to be supported by statements from banks and/or stockbrokers. These are checked by the Government Offices and may be provided to the public upon request (GRECO Fifth evaluation round – compliance report, recommendation viii, paragraphs 50-52).

<sup>69</sup> 2022 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> As regards senior public officials, if it is necessary with regard to the existence of inside information within an authority, the Government may decide that the authority's management must report their holdings of financial instruments. In such cases senior public officials at central level such as heads of central executive authorities, Secretaries-General, Directors-General, etc are covered. The authority may, in turn, decide that other employees and contractors that have access to inside information as a part of their employment must be covered by the same reporting obligations. See also 2024 Justice Scoreboard, Figures 60, 61, and 62.

<sup>71</sup> Country visit Sweden, Ministry of Justice.

<sup>72</sup> Reconfirmed in the GRECO Fifth evaluation round – Second Compliance report. The GRECO Fifth Evaluation Round – Addendum to the Second Compliance Report confirmed that recommendation viii on the control of asset declarations was implemented, while the recommendation vii on the inclusion of significant liabilities and declarations for spouses and dependent family members remains to be implemented.

<sup>73</sup> Reconfirmed in the GRECO Fifth evaluation round –Second Compliance report.

<sup>74</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, pp. 17-18 .

<sup>75</sup> 2023 Transparency Committee

<sup>76</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Sweden to “ensure the appropriate follow-up to the evaluation of the rules on revolving doors”.

<sup>77</sup> Country visit Sweden, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance.

<sup>78</sup> 2024 Rule of Law report, Sweden, p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Board for the Examination of Transitional Restrictions for Ministers and State Secretaries (2025).

up to its conclusions, there has been no progress on implementing the recommendation from the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

**An all-party committee of inquiry recommended reforms to the framework for political party financing to increase transparency.** An all-party committee recommended reforms following a review of the transparency of financing of political parties<sup>80</sup>. The committee recommended to completely prohibit anonymous donations and foreign contributions. It also recommended to introduce an obligation for parties to cover expenses, assets and debts (and not only income) in their financial disclosures<sup>81</sup>. The inquiry does not see the need to strictly regulate donations of trade unions to political parties, while providing some options on how this could be achieved, in line with its mandate<sup>82</sup>. The Government will now examine the report and announce a possible follow-up in the future. The Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency (*Kammarkollegiet*), responsible for the oversight of political party financing, opened a total of 10 enforcement cases in 2024<sup>83</sup>. The political party financing disclosures remain publicly available on the website of the Agency.

**The 2021 Whistleblowers Act continues to be implemented, although some issues are noted with corruption-related reports<sup>84</sup>.** The Police Authority received few whistleblower reports in relation to corruption allegations. The Authority considered that the general quality of reports was low – i.e. there is rarely sufficient actionable information for the Police to start an investigation<sup>85</sup>. Civil society considers that more awareness-raising is needed, as people often report unrelated labour issues instead of submitting actionable whistleblower reports<sup>86</sup>.

**Measures are being taken to address the risk of infiltration of the public service by organised crime through corruption, such as the adoption of legislation to strengthen background checks of municipal employees.** Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU show that 32% of companies in Sweden (EU average 25%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender or a public procurement contract in practice in the last three years<sup>87</sup>. 64% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review bodies (administrative courts) as very or fairly good<sup>88</sup>. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Sweden reports 11% of single bids for 2023 (EU average 29%). Public procurement remains one of the main corruption risk areas, which is being addressed in the new Anti-Corruption Plan<sup>89</sup> and the committee of inquiry focused on criminal law reforms related to corruption<sup>90</sup>. According to businesses, high local and regional subsidiarity results in fragmented public procurement processes, and the system shows an overall lack of transparency<sup>91</sup>. For the Government, addressing the possible infiltration of organised crime actors in the public service continues

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<sup>80</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, pp. 18-19.

<sup>81</sup> 2023 Transparency Committee.

<sup>82</sup> 2023 Transparency Committee.

<sup>83</sup> The Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency (2025), pp. 69-70.

<sup>84</sup> Act on Protection of Persons who Report Wrongdoings, 2021:890.

<sup>85</sup> Country visit Sweden, Police Authority and Special Investigations Department.

<sup>86</sup> Country visit Sweden, Transparency International.

<sup>87</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 557 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2025). This is the same as the EU average.

<sup>88</sup> Figure 59, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>89</sup> See above under section II.

<sup>90</sup> One of the issues under discussion is how to better address corruption in public procurement. Swedish Parliament (2024).

<sup>91</sup> Country visit Sweden, Swedish Confederation of Industries.



to be a major strategic priority<sup>92</sup>. Local authorities are particularly vulnerable due to their smaller scale despite a still large amount of funds managed<sup>93</sup>. This is a focus of the National Council for Crime Prevention<sup>94</sup>. Legislation to strengthen background checks of municipal employees and allowing further exchange of information among agencies to prevent such infiltration came into force on 1 June 2025<sup>95</sup>. Further analyses are ongoing to identify the extent of the risk<sup>96</sup>.

### **III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM**

**The independent national regulatory authority, the Swedish Agency for the Media, deals with an increasing variety of tasks.** The Agency considers to have adequate resources for its operations. Its financial resources were increased in 2024 to address new functions, including those deriving from the Digital Services Act<sup>97</sup>. It has also started new tasks linked to the promotion of media and information literacy and the safety of journalists. In parallel, the Agency has received and processed applications for financial support under the Media Subsidies Act and has been tasked to analyse the impact of the support<sup>98</sup>. The envisaged temporary support scheme helping current affairs and news journals to adapt to new digital market conditions has been discarded. This is because a public consultation revealed a need for more permanent support with a larger scope<sup>99</sup>. The MPM 2025 continues to maintain a very low risk regarding the independence and effectiveness of the media authority<sup>100</sup>.

**The Government is preparing to renew the periodic public service mission with new rules for independence of public service media.** The Government is working on the upcoming renewal of the public service mission 2026-2033. A Government bill on a new Public Service Act, including amendments to the existing Radio and Television Act was submitted to the Parliament in May 2025<sup>101</sup>. The objectives of the new Act include to further clarify the remit of the public service mission, financing, the appointment of board members and the chief executive officer, and the conditions for content not directly related to television or radio broadcasting in the terrestrial network<sup>102</sup>. The reform also aims to align the national legislation with the European Media Freedom Act, including in respect of independence

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<sup>92</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, pp. 15-16 and Swedish Government (2025), written input, pp. 3-5.

<sup>93</sup> Country visit Sweden, Economic Crime Authority and Public prosecution service; and Police National Anti-Corruption Unit (2024), p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> In framework of the plan, the Agency for Public Management will carry out work regarding the protection of local elected officials and the prevention of corruption through internal control mechanisms at local and regional level. The Agency for Public Management and National Council for Crime Prevention will support the work against undue influence in the public administration. It will do so by creating and evaluating support materials and increasing awareness of the phenomenon, and report to the Government on its work by May 2026 Country visit Sweden, Agency for public management and Swedish Government, written input, pp. 3-5.

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Justice (2024) and Ministry of Justice (2025b).

<sup>96</sup> The National Council for Crime Prevention published a report on how system-threatening actors use illicit influence against politically elected representatives. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR) has been given a similar task regarding regions and municipalities and submitted a report in March 2025.

<sup>97</sup> This increase was by approximately €562 900 (SEK 6.2 million).

<sup>98</sup> Swedish Agency for the Media (2025a), Swedish Agency for the Media (2024b) and Swedish Agency for the Media (2025b); Swedish Government (2025h).

<sup>99</sup> Swedish Government (2025c).

<sup>100</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Sweden, p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Swedish Government (2025g).

<sup>102</sup> Swedish Government (2025a), written input, p. 10.



requirements. The Government bill also includes proposals on guidelines, conditions and funding for public service media in 2026–2033<sup>103</sup>. While the objectives of the reform are generally welcomed, public service media in Sweden have expressed concerns about some of the preliminary proposals made by the dedicated parliamentary committee's report<sup>104</sup>, as they see risks to their independence. These are related to the sufficiency of the public service media's future funding and ensuring an unbiased analysis of their productivity, impartiality and efficiency<sup>105</sup>. Other stakeholders have asked for more thorough consideration of the sustainability of financing<sup>106</sup>. Increasing statements regarding an alleged lack of impartiality in public service media were mentioned as a growing risk<sup>107</sup>. The MPM 2025 continues to report a very low risk concerning the independence of public service media<sup>108</sup>.

**The Government plans to reform the licensing of commercial radio channels.** The Government continues to work on a proposal aiming to set conditions for revoking broadcasting licenses where there is a risk to national security<sup>109</sup>. In parallel, a Government bill has been submitted to the Parliament that aims to reform the licensing of commercial radio channels. The proposed amendments in the Radio and Television Act aim to improve the long-term sustainability of commercial radio operations and support independent media by having the same tendering procedure for the licensing of both analogue and digital commercial radio channels. The new rules would also replace the current upfront broadcasting fee with an annual fee based on the market value of the licence and is largely supported by Swedish media stakeholders<sup>110</sup>. A mapping prepared by the Swedish Agency for the Media and research carried out by an academic knowledge centre show that media ownership of radio, television, streaming and daily newspapers is becoming increasingly concentrated<sup>111</sup>. The MPM 2025 continues to give a high-risk score for the plurality of media providers in Sweden<sup>112</sup>.

**The access to documents framework has been adjusted to counter the misuse of transparency by organised crime.** Legislation on access to documents generally guarantees wide availability of information and the MPM 2025 maintains a low risk in the field of protection of the right to information<sup>113</sup>. New exceptions to the right to information have been introduced to the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act to counter the misuse of transparency by organised crime and further amendments are under discussion<sup>114</sup>. Journalists considered that the amendments have collectively, to some extent, decreased the traditionally high level of transparency<sup>115</sup>. In November 2024, an inquiry presented its report on enhanced protection of personal data in the area of freedom of the press and freedom of expression,

<sup>103</sup> Country visit, Ministry of Culture.

<sup>104</sup> Swedish Government (2024c).

<sup>105</sup> Country visit, Swedish Television (SVT), Swedish Radio (SR) and Swedish Educational Radio (UR); SR (2024); Public Media Alliance (2024).

<sup>106</sup> Swedish Union of Journalists (2024), Swedish Financial Management Agency (2024).

<sup>107</sup> Country visit Sweden, Media ombudsman and SVT.

<sup>108</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Sweden, p. 19.

<sup>109</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 21; Country visit, Ministry of Culture and the Swedish Agency for the Media.

<sup>110</sup> Swedish Government (2025e), Swedish Government (2025a), written input p. 10-11; Country visit, Ministry of Culture.

<sup>111</sup> Swedish Agency for the Media (2024a); Nordicom (2024).

<sup>112</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Sweden, pp. 15-16.

<sup>113</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 22; 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Sweden, p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> Swedish Government (2025k); Swedish Government (2024g); Swedish Government (2024d).

<sup>115</sup> Swedish Union of Journalists (2025); Country visit, Swedish Union of Journalists.

proposing constitutional amendments regarding the private sector search services that publish personal data. This concerns personal data available about violations of the law, as well as individuals' addresses, telephone numbers, marital status and other data relating to their personal circumstances<sup>116</sup>. Sweden has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents<sup>117</sup>.

**The overall conditions for journalists remain favourable and the Swedish Agency for the Media has been tasked to monitor the safety of journalists.** Due to its constitutional protection, the MPM 2025 deems the protection of freedom of expression to carry a low-risk score in Sweden. Furthermore, journalists in Sweden have generally good working conditions<sup>118</sup>. To support journalists further, the Swedish Agency for the Media has been officially assigned an ongoing task to monitor journalists' safety<sup>119</sup>. In autumn 2024, it held seven dialogues with relevant stakeholders<sup>120</sup>. A specific report on the state of play regarding the safety of journalists was adopted, mapping relevant research, legal and societal initiatives<sup>121</sup>. The Government continues to financially support the non-profit organisation Victim Support Sweden to offer help to journalists and other media workers who need protection<sup>122</sup>. In addition, the Government has decided to increase its support to organisations that support independent journalists around the world, including through the Reporters Shield, an international initiative<sup>123</sup>. Since the 2024 Rule of Law Report, two new alerts have been recorded on the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists<sup>124</sup>. They concern the vandalism of the building of the Swedish Public Broadcaster SVT and a protest outside the home of a Swedish journalist. The Mapping Media Freedom monitoring report has identified nine alerts<sup>125</sup>. Besides the above-mentioned incidents, these alerts concern surveillance and harassment of certain journalists with threatening emails and vandalism of the reception area of the editorial offices of three private newspapers. The police and media publishers have continued their cooperation to prevent crimes against journalists, with calls to do more<sup>126</sup>.

#### **IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES**

**Some stakeholders express concern about the acceleration of legislative preparatory work, which they consider poses challenges to public participation.** In 2024, the Government launched 304 public consultations on legislative initiatives. The average deadline for these public consultations was 12.7 weeks<sup>127</sup>. As required by the Constitution, the Government refers a report of a committee of inquiry for public consultation to relevant

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<sup>116</sup> Swedish Government (2024h).

<sup>117</sup> Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (CETS No. 205), also known as the *Tromsø Convention*, entered into force on 1 December 2020.

<sup>118</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Sweden, p. 11.

<sup>119</sup> Swedish Government (2025a), written input p. 11; Swedish Agency for the Media (2025c).

<sup>120</sup> Country visit Sweden, Ministry of Culture; Swedish Agency for the Media (2025b).

<sup>121</sup> Swedish Agency for the Media (2025c).

<sup>122</sup> Swedish Government (2025a), written input p. 11.

<sup>123</sup> Swedish Government (2024e); 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Sweden, p. 5.

<sup>124</sup> Council of Europe, Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists. Sweden has responded to one of the two alerts.

<sup>125</sup> European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Media Freedom Rapid Response – Sweden.

<sup>126</sup> Country visit, Swedish Publishers' Association, Swedish Union of Journalists.

<sup>127</sup> The shortest identified consultation period was two days, whereas the second and third shortest consultation periods were one week. The two longest consultation periods were 20 weeks long. Swedish Government (2025a), written input.

bodies, municipalities and counties, as well as from organisations and individuals<sup>128</sup>. Some civil society stakeholders are concerned that the pace of legislative change makes it difficult to have an overview of initiatives across different sectors, as well as impacting on the quality of legislation and due consideration for human rights. Stakeholders also considered that contrary to the established national practice, the terms of reference for inquiries increasingly tend to pre-determine the desired outcome of the inquiry<sup>129</sup>. Since February 2024, the Government also used shortened inquiry times for nine legislative initiatives considered urgent and politically important, which overall take about 10-12 months from the launch of an inquiry until a proposal is presented to Parliament<sup>130</sup>. As far as constitutional checks are concerned, in 2024, the Government submitted 118 legislative proposals to the Council on Legislation, which gave a negative opinion or seriously questioned 15 proposals. In four cases, the Government partially adjusted the proposals before them to Parliament, whereas in six cases the Government submitted the proposals without any adjustments<sup>131</sup>.

**Over two thirds of the companies surveyed in Sweden express confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection.** 76% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts<sup>132</sup>. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 68% of companies perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (the Competition Authority) as very or fairly good<sup>133</sup>. There are no judicial mechanisms in place at the level of the Supreme Administrative Court to ensure the implementation of administrative court judgments<sup>134</sup>.

**The Government presented a proposal amending the Constitution to provide a framework to better deal with serious crises.** On 5 June 2025, the Government presented proposals for constitutional amendments aiming to strengthen the constitutional preparedness and ensure an effective, democratic and legal governance in war and other severe crises<sup>135</sup>. The Government proposes, among other, specific rules on adopting provisions in serious

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<sup>128</sup> Swedish Government (2025a), written input.

<sup>129</sup> Liberties (2025), p. 20-21. Country visit Sweden, National Forum of Voluntary Organisations, Swedish Institute for Human Rights, Civil Rights Defenders and the Swedish Section of the International Commission of Jurists. In general, civil society organisations see a continued reduction in Government interest in civil society consultations. Forum (2025), written input. ENNHRI (2025).

<sup>130</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 25. The time for public consultations varies depending on the scope of the proposals and the urgency of the issue but is normally set to three months and the pre-legislative inquiry is normally shortened to six months. This procedure is used for initiatives that i) are considered urgent from a political perspective and could lead to significantly negative consequences for society if the Government would not act quickly, ii) can be managed through a well-defined assignment with a clear focus, and iii) need to be dealt with more urgently than within the time deemed necessary through the application of ordinary working methods. Swedish Government (2025a), written input.

<sup>131</sup> In the five remaining cases, the Government submitted a proposal that had been adjusted in accordance with the views of the Council on Legislation. Where it did not adjust the proposals based on the views of the Council on Legislation, the Government put forward arguments to the Parliament in support of its position. Swedish Government (2025a), written input.

<sup>132</sup> Figure 54, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. Only 8% and 5% of the surveyed investors respectively perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about the quality of the law-making process, and the quality, efficiency or independence of justice, respectively, as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

<sup>133</sup> Figure 60, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>134</sup> Figure 49, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. The data presented reflects exclusively the mechanisms in place at the level of the highest administrative jurisdictions; the same or other mechanisms may be in place at lower instance administrative courts.

<sup>135</sup> Swedish Government (2025l), Strengthened Constitutional Preparedness.

peacetime crises to be introduced in the Constitution, which would allow the Parliament, if needed, to grant the Government specific powers to adopt provision<sup>136</sup>. It is also proposed that the possibilities for the Parliament to convene in difficult situations should be strengthened. The proposal is based on an all-party committee report. The constitutional amendments should enter into force on 1 January 2027.

**The Government presented a proposal to strengthen the procedure for amending the Constitution.** On 29 April 2025, the Government presented a proposal on the procedure for amending the Constitution based on the proposals of the 2020 committee of inquiry. At present, the Parliament can amend the Constitution by passing two identically worded votes in favour by simple majority, whereby a parliamentary election (ordinary or early election) must be held between the first and second vote. To strengthen the protection of democracy and, in line with a proposal of the 2020 committee of inquiry, the Government proposed that more than half of the members of Parliament must vote in favour of the first and second vote (quorum) and a two-thirds majority in the Parliament should be required for the second vote to amend the Constitution. The proposal to amend these constitutional rules is based on a unanimously endorsed report of the 2020 committee of inquiry. The constitutional amendments should enter into force on 1 April 2027<sup>137</sup>.

**The National Human Rights Institution has obtained an A-status accreditation and the Parliamentary Ombudsmen discharge their mandates effectively.** The Swedish National Human Rights Institute has had adequate funds to carry out its ongoing level of operations, but it considers the funds would need to be gradually increased to allow it to completely fulfil its mandate<sup>138</sup>. In November 2024, the Institute obtained an A-status accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)<sup>139</sup>. In December 2024, the Government appointed two new members to the Institute's Governing Board<sup>140</sup>. However, the Institute expressed concerns that the Government's appointment process had not sufficiently safeguarded the Institute's independence. In accordance with the relevant legal provisions, the Swedish Bar Association, universities and colleges, and the Institute's Advisory Council were invited to submit nominations. The Government chose not to appoint any of the candidates nominated by the Advisory Council, and one of the individuals the Government appointed was not nominated by any of the nominating bodies. GANHRI recommended to Sweden to strengthen the protection of the Institute's independence by clarifying the rules for the appointment of Board members<sup>141</sup>. The Parliamentary

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<sup>136</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 21.

<sup>137</sup> Swedish Government (2025f), Strengthening the protection of democracy and the independence of the judiciary. The Government also proposed that the requirement to obtain an opinion from the Council on Legislation should be extended to include constitutional amendment proposals regarding fundamental freedoms and rights (presently this applies only to constitutional amendments in the area of freedom of the press and freedom of expression).

<sup>138</sup> The Swedish Institute for Human Rights was allocated approximately EUR 4.58 million (SEK 53.8 million) for the full year 2025. Swedish Government (2025), written input, p. 12. ENNHRI (2025).

<sup>139</sup> Country visit Sweden, Swedish Institute for Human Rights.

<sup>140</sup> Swedish Institute for Human Rights (2024a), The Government has appointed two new members to the Agency's Board of Directors. The Swedish Institute for Human Rights is led by a Governing Board consisting of the Director agency and seven other members; the latter are appointed by the Government for a period of five years. The term of two members expired at the end of 2024 and the Government appointed the new members for the period 2025-2029.

<sup>141</sup> Swedish Institute for Human Rights (2024b), The government's appointment process raises concerns about the institute's independence. The Swedish Bar Association refrained from nominating. The Governing Board did not make any judgement on the qualifications of the individuals appointed by the Government.



Ombudsmen consider that they have adequate resources and report good cooperation<sup>142</sup> with and adequate follow-up given by public authorities to their recommendations. In 2024, the complaints to the Parliamentary Ombudsmen increased by around 11% to 11 703 in total, the highest number in the history of that body<sup>143</sup>.

**On 1 January 2025, Sweden had 1 leading judgment of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, the same number as the previous year<sup>144</sup>.** At that time, Sweden's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 86% (compared to 90% in 2024; 14% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 3 years and 7 months (compared to 2 years and 7 months in 2024)<sup>145</sup>. The only leading judgment, pending implementation for 4 years, concerned insufficient safeguards in bulk signals-intelligence gathering<sup>146</sup>. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2024 there were no cases awaiting confirmation of payments (same as in 2023)<sup>147</sup>. On 16 June 2025, there were no leading judgments pending implementation left<sup>148</sup>.

**There was significant progress on the recommendation concerning the legal framework for the funding and operation of civil society organisations, which entered into force in 2025<sup>149</sup>.** On 1 January 2025, the rules concerning a new "democracy condition"<sup>150</sup> applying to the state's support to religious communities and to support from the General Inheritance Fund, entered into force. With this condition, the Government aims to ensure that organisations or associations that promote extremism, undermine democracy or act contrary to the fundamental values of society do not receive public funds. It has been working on introducing the new "democracy condition" in the grant regulations that regulate support to

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<sup>142</sup> Parliamentary Ombudsmen (2023) Report of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen, p. 18. In 2024 in two instances, the Parliamentary Ombudsmen have however criticised the Prosecution Authority and the Police Authority for having failed to live up to constitutional obligations to assist the Ombudsmen. Decisions in cases 2478-2023 and 5614-2023. In order for the Parliamentary Ombudsmen to fulfil their tasks, they need access to accurate and complete information. The Parliament's Constitution Committee underlined the importance of always complying with the constitutional obligation to provide the Ombudsmen with information and opinions at their and to assist them in their investigations.

<sup>143</sup> Parliamentary Ombudsmen (2024), Report of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen 2024, p. 10.

<sup>144</sup> For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

<sup>145</sup> All figures calculated by the European Implementation Network (EIN) and based on the number of cases that are considered pending at the annual cut-off date of 1 January 2025. EIN (2025), written input, p. 8-9.

<sup>146</sup> Judgment of the ECtHR, 35252/08, Centrum for Rattvisa v. Sweden, pending implementation since 2021.

<sup>147</sup> Council of Europe (2025), p. 157.

<sup>148</sup> Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

<sup>149</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Sweden to "continue efforts to ensure that the reforms to the legal framework for the funding and operation of civil society organisations do not unduly affect civil society engagement".

<sup>150</sup> MUCF (2024), On 1 January 2025, new conditions for democracy will begin to apply to those who apply for state grants. An organisation's purpose needs to be compatible with the values of a democratic society and it needs to be democratically organised, respect the ideas of democracy in its activities, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination. A grant may not be awarded if, in the course of its activities, the organisation or any of its representatives: 1) uses violence, coercion or threats against a person or otherwise violates a person's fundamental rights and freedoms; 2) discriminates against persons, groups or otherwise violates the principle of equality; 3) defends, promotes or encourages the behaviour under 1) or 2); or 4) opposes the democratic system of government. Support may also not be granted if one of its partner organisations, or a representative of the partner organisation, is acting in a manner referred to under 1). If an organisation, its representatives, its partner organisation or its representatives have acted in such a way that they do not meet the conditions of democracy, they can still be awarded a grant subject to specific reasons.

civil society<sup>151</sup>. Such conditions were outlined before in the various regulations on Government funding and the new rules aim to apply a uniform condition. The Government has also provided the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), with resources to support grant-giving bodies in providing grants in a uniform way and to meet the needs of civil society<sup>152</sup>. Stakeholders have highlighted that it will be important to ensure that the new rules are implemented in a predictable and objective manner<sup>153</sup>. Considering that the new rules regarding the funding and operation of civil society organisations came into force and are being progressively implemented, there has been significant progress.

**The civil society space remains open.** Sweden is considered to have an open civic space<sup>154</sup>, which is overall functioning well<sup>155</sup>. However, stakeholders have expressed concerns related to the increasing uncertainty in public funding, notably in view of the defunding and funding cuts to certain organisations<sup>156</sup>.

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<sup>151</sup> Swedish Government (2025a), written input, p. 13-14.

<sup>152</sup> ENNHRI (2025)

<sup>153</sup> Country visit Sweden, National Forum of Voluntary Organisations, Swedish Institute for Human Rights and Civil Rights Defenders.

<sup>154</sup> According to the rating by CIVICUS. Ratings are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

<sup>155</sup> Country visit Sweden, National Forum of Voluntary Organisations, Civil Rights Defenders, Swedish Institute for Human Rights.

<sup>156</sup> As reported already in the 2024 Report, stakeholders referred to the continued impacts in view of the defunding of certain organisations and funding cuts to organisations involved in development cooperation student associations, or consumer associations. 2024 Rule of Law Report, Sweden, p. 27. ForumCiv (2024).



## Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order\*

\* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2024 Rule of Law report can be found at [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en).

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## **Annex II: Country visit to Sweden**

The Commission services held virtual meetings in February 2025 with:

- Agency for Public Management
- Civil Rights Defenders
- Economic Crime Authority
- Swedish Judges Association
- Media Ombudsman
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Justice
- National Council for Crime Prevention
- National Courts Administration
- National Forum of Voluntary Organisations
- Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen
- Office of the Prime Minister
- Police Authority, including Special Investigation Department
- Prosecution Service
- Secretariat of the Constitution Committee
- Supreme Administrative Court
- Supreme Court
- Swedish Agency for the Media
- Swedish Bar Association
- Swedish Confederation of Industries
- Swedish Educational Radio (UR)
- Swedish Institute for Human Rights
- Swedish Lay Judges Association
- Swedish Publishers' Association
- Swedish Radio (SR)
- Swedish Section of the International Commission of Jurists
- Swedish Television (SVT)
- Swedish Section of the International Commission of Jurists
- Swedish Union of Journalists
- Transparency International

\* The Commission also met the following organisations in a number of horizontal meetings:

- Amnesty International
- Araminta
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy
- European Youth Forum,

- International Commission of Jurists
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- JEF Europe
- Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association.
- Transparency International