European Commission

Public administration characteristics and performance in EU28:

Sweden

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1 SIZE OF GOVERNMENT

Swedish public finances are as reported in table 1 in balance and in relative terms stable during the period. The comprehensive and universal Swedish welfare state produces a comparatively large public sector. During the period of 2005 to 2015, total expenditures expressed as shares of GDP varies due to fluctuations in GDP. Demographic factors cause growing costs for welfare services such as medical services, care and education respectively. These types of welfare services are provided by the regional and local government levels which consequently report larger expenditure increases than the state level does. In 2015 local and regional governments' expenditures equalled 24 percent of GDP (in 2005 22 percent). Public expenditures are dominated by consumption, e.g. salaries, and social transfers (within the social security system that covers e.g. pensions; unemployment; sick leave, and parental leave). These types of expenditures vary with demographic developments and with the economy at large, i.e. with levels of employment. While state level public investments decreased during the period of 2005 to 2015, local level investments in e.g. welfare provision increased (Statskontoret 2016a).

Table 1: General government budget data

SWEDEN	2010	*EU 28 Rank*	2015	*EU 28 Rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Total expenditures (in % GDP)	51.22	*9*	50.27	*8*	-0.95	*+1*
Central government share (%)	60.91	*20*	59.29	*21*	-1.62	*-1*
State government share (%)						
Local government share (%)	47.40		49.79			
Public investment (in % GDP)	4.51	*12*	4.22	*11*	-0.29	*+1*
Debt in % GDP	37.63	*9*	43.94	*6*	+6.31	*+3*
Deficit in % GDP	-0.1	*2*	0.2	*2*	+0.3	*0*

***Sources**: AMECO, Eurostat*

Table 2: Public sector employment*

SWEDEN	2005	*OECD EU18 rank*	2011	*OECD EU12 rank*	Δ Value
Total public sector employment in % of total labour force	28.60	*3*	26.20	*2*	-2.40
	2005	*OECD EU21 rank*	2011	*OECD EU19 rank*	Δ Value
General government employment in % of total labour force	28.40	*2*	26.00	*1*	-2.40
			2011	*OECD EU17 rank*	
Central government share of general government employment			18.03	*15*	

***Sources**: OECD- Government at a glance*

**According to the OECD, public sector employment includes public corporations, while general government employment excludes public corporations.*

The employment data in table 2 above can be complemented with statistics from Statistics Sweden (2016) reporting that 32 percent of the Swedish working force is publicly employed. Looking in more detail we find that about 6 percent of the workforce is employed in central government (most of them in state agencies) while 25 % of the total Swedish workforce works in local and regional government. During the period of 2005–2014 the number of public employees has increased by 1 percent (Statskontoret 2016a). The slight increase can be found in central government and at the county council level. A decrease can be found at the municipal level. We should, however, keep in mind that private providers of welfare services have increased during the same period.

Table 3. Public sector employment in Sweden 2015

	Number of employees	Number of employees with monthly salary*	Full year equivalents
(1) General government employment	1 350 000		1 079 000
thereby share of central government (%)	18.5		20
thereby share of state/regional government (%)	19.3		19.3
thereby share of local government (%)	62.3		60.6
(2) Public employment in social security functions**		68 000	
(3) Public employment in the army.		27 000	
(4) Public employment in police		28 000	
(5) Public employment in employment services	14 000		12 000
(6) Public employment in schools including day-care		320 000	
(7) Public employment in universities	75 000		61 000
(8) Public employment in hospitals***		192 000	
(9) Public employment in core public administration****			371 000
(10) Core public administration employment in %			34

***Sources**: Arbetsförmedlingens Annual Report 2015; Arbetsgivarverket; Polismyndighetens årsredovisning [Annual report] 2015; SALAR; Statistics Sweden; Skolverket.*

***Comments**: *Employees with a monthly salary have a pre-set monthly salary paid out every month. Having a monthly salary does not automatically mean that you are employed full time, but is supposedly a more stable position than e.g. being employed by the hour in an ad hoc manner. **This number represents an inclusive definition of state level social security functions since also state level health care and hospital care*

*are included. ***Here we have defined hospitals broadly but not included care giving or dental care. If care giving and dental care is including the total is 457 000. ****Lacking perfectly comparable data for all categories, we have chosen to exclude the most inclusive account, Number of employees, when we calculate the size of the core public administration (i.e. columns 9 and 10 respectively). Using the category that includes all with a monthly salary most probably to a lesser degree overestimates the true number, since sporadic employment (hours) is left out. This said, the reader should note that to be able to estimate the size of the core public administration we had to combine the two other categories, i.e. employees with a monthly and full time employment equivalent. This overestimates the number and share of employees outside the core public administration.*

2 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

2.1 State system and multi-level governance

2.1.1 The government system and the distribution of powers across territorial levels

Sweden is a unitary, but highly decentralized, parliamentary state. Besides the national governmental level, local self-government, through municipalities and county councils/regions (*primärkommune*r and *landstingskommuner/regioner*), is described in the constitution (Instrument of Government, Ch. 1). Democratic assemblies are elected at the national, regional and local government levels. A highly proportional electoral system co-exists with a (growing) multiparty system. On the national level, minority governments are common (Wockelberg 2015). Subnational governments are found on two territorial levels, the regional level with 20 self-governed units (county councils/regional councils) and the local level with 290 municipalities. The two subnational government levels are of equal standing, i.e. one territorial level cannot control the other (Montin 2015).

The power distribution between the centre and local and regional government is not easy to describe in a clear-cut way. From within an international perspective, Swedish local self-governance is comparatively strong (Lidström 2015). Besides being defined in the constitution, there are however quite weak constitutional safeguards for municipal powers. The national parliament has the ultimate power to abolish local and regional governmental privileges and the judicial system lacks a way (i.e. a constitutional court) for subnational government levels to raise complaints over national government actions that disrespect their autonomy (Lidström 2015). Moreover, while both local and regional governments have the right to collect taxes, the central government redistributes parts of their tax revenue within the so-called *Robin Hood* taxation system. The national level's interest in local and regional government performances is fuelled by the fact that they are the main provider of many welfare services including health care (regional level), and social care and education (local level). With the provision of welfare output comes large expenditure and (to a varying extent) a central political interest in the quality and cohesiveness of the services. Hence, as illustrated in table 4 below, central government legislates, regulates (i.e. state agencies regulate) and monitors policy areas where the local and regional government levels conduct mandatory tasks (Montin 2015; Feltenius 2015; Niklasson 2015; Lidström 2015).

To fully understand the power distribution across territorial levels it is wise to include three main developments of the last decades into the analysis. First, public management reforms aimed at marketization of social care systems and local level education has brought new types of actors and relationships to the fore. Second, the need for cooperation and network governance at the local and regional levels should be noted.

And third, the Swedish EU membership has provided local and regional governments with a new central node and infrastructure for decision-making and implementation, and hence with the possibility to engage directly with EU level organisations (Montin 2015; Lidström 2015; Niklasson 2015; Feltenius 2015; Edwardsson & Wockelberg 2013; Wockelberg 2014).

Table 4. Tasks and responsibilities on government levels

Government level:	Legislation	Regulation	Funding	Provision
Central government				
Defence	X	X	X	X
External affairs	X	X	X	X
Internal affairs	X	X	X	X
Justice	X	X	X	X
Finance/tax	X	X	X	X
Science & research	X	X	X	X
Economic affairs	X	X	X	X
Education	X	X	X	X
Environmental protection	X	X	X	X
Public utilities	X	X	X	X
Social welfare	X	X	X	X
Health	X	X	X	X
Regional government				
Defence				
External affairs				
Internal affairs				
Justice				
Finance/tax			X	
Science& research				
Economic affairs			X	X
Education				X
Environmental protection				
Public utilities			X (transport)	X (transport)
Social welfare				
Health			X (main task)	X (main task)
Local government				
Defence				
External affairs				
Internal affairs				
Justice				
Finance/tax			X	

Science and research				
Economic affairs			X	
Education			X (main task)	X (main task)
Environmental protection			X	X
Public utilities			X (main task)	X (main task)
Social welfare			X (main task)	X (main task)
Health			X	X

***Comment**: Local government can issue locally binding regulations in some areas.*

The Swedish system is commonly described as having an *hour glass-shape*, with a narrow, regional waist and the reason why is clearly illustrated in table 4. Looking at the distribution of power as in legislative and regulative mandates on the one hand and financing and provision on the other, one could be tempted to perceive local governments as implementing agencies rather than self-governed entities. While there are constitutional safeguards for local self-government, the formal and practical capacity for the national government to control local governments is evident. The relationships across territorial levels is however sometimes described as a negotiated order (Feltenius 2015; Montin 2015), a reasonable conclusion due to the national government's dependency upon local government for the implementation of welfare functions.

2.1.2 Intergovernmental cooperation

As in many Western mature welfare states, the need for coordination across territorial and sectoral borders in contemporary Sweden is identified as necessary in order to deal with complex issues and increasing demands for sustainable policies in many areas. As will be further developed below, the state sector is described as fragmented with drain pipe-modes of operation and organisations but most state agencies are involved in both compulsory and voluntary horizontal cooperation (Johansson 2017). As a means for pooling resources and to solve common problems the local and the regional government levels coordinate their operations. One of the features of regional policy is network governance (Jacobsson & Sundström 2015; Sundström 2015).

Swedish national governments use various policy tools to coordinate processes across levels and sectors. Recently, temporary so called national coordinators or tsars have been mandated to accomplish pushes and pulls towards coordination in many policy areas. The title national coordinator (*nationell samordnare*) can hide a broad set of missions and mandates, as well as different organizational arrangements. There are three main types of national coordinators: negotiators, analysts and instigators (Statskontoret 2014c). A national coordinator is commonly appointed when central government needs many actors to coordinate their efforts to solve a complex problem. A coordinator works outside the regular state apparatus (agencies), but has some type of organizational base within the state apparatus, either within the government offices or in the form of an investigating committee which is a type of temporary state agency. The working methods and end products of coordinators vary, but a main theme is that coordination should be voluntary. A recent evaluation of national coordinators gives a mixed impression. The flexibility of the coordinators' mandates have been discussed both as an asset and as a problem (e.g. for transparency) (Riksrevisionen 2016).

Coordination activities are not dominated by the national level but could more reasonably be described as a negotiated order with strong informal dimensions. Coordination across levels is accomplished through strong partisan ties that exist between elected representatives. Importantly, it is also organized in close collaboration between Swedish governments on the one hand and the private organisation the Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) on the other hand.

Contemporary analyses tend to bring up SALAR as a very important actor in the multi-level system and note its status as private organisation to a large extent funded by the state (Montin 2015; Feltenius 2015).

2.1.3 Swedish multi-level governance and its main challenges

In order to facilitate efficiency and e.g. equal and fair treatment, the state sector has been centralized through mergers of state agencies. What is described as a sectoral drain pipe-mode of operations is often identified as problematic when state agencies are called upon to coordinate with each other or with local authorities to solve problems that cut across policy areas and levels (Niklasson 2012; Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg 2016a).

While Swedish local governments on average are large rather than small from a comparative perspective (Lidström 2015), they vary a lot in size and hence in resources across the 290 municipalities and 20 county/regional councils. Scale, as inhabitants or tax revenue, is an often-debated issue. The national government's redistribution of tax revenues and (to a limited extent) supportive funding of local or regional government activities are ways to even out possibilities and performances across local and regional governments (Feltenius 2015). The contemporary migration situation is a clear example of the types of coordination challenges the multi-level system faces. In short, while national policy goals and standards often (but not always) aim at homogeneity in output and outcome, resources and challenges vary across and within the different territorial levels.

2.1.4 Public administrative reform on different levels

The main themes in public administrative reforms since the 1970s are decentralization, marketization, managerialization and network governance. Decentralization and marketization has often been aimed at increased levels of user choice and service orientation. The fiscal crisis of the 1980s however also increased the interest in different types of marketization, both in form of de-regulation and reforms within the public sector. Management reforms have been implemented in the form of management by results and the managerialisation of public authorities. Network governance, finally, is more prominent on the regional level (Sundström 2015).

Central government has historically implemented administrative reforms allowing municipalities and county/regional councils increased autonomy over matters like their own organization. At the same time, national legislation regulates the subnational governments' fiscal autonomy in so much as defining a requirement on balanced budgets. Furthermore, while some marketization reforms are mandatory, i.e. municipalities must allow private providers of schools, some care related policies are constructed to allow municipalities and/or county councils to decide for themselves what model of provision to implement. This means that the role of local and regional government in some of the main reforms varies.

The Swedish school system was the target for extensive political reform in the early 1990s. The Social Democratic government launched a municipalisation and decentralisation reform, which gave the 290 local municipalities employer-responsibilities towards the teachers. The right-wing government that followed launched a market reform by introducing school choice and independent schools, and this opened the way to non-public providers to start schools financed with vouchers (*skolpeng*). The decentralization and marketization of the school education system has led to performance oriented ways of controlling schools and teachers, the empowerment of the "customer", i.e. the parents of the school pupils, and in addition to this a School Inspectorate has been launched to scrutinize schools and their staff. In the Swedish public debate the deprofessionalization of the teacher profession is today recognized and very much on the agenda. At the moment, there are even political and academic

commentators suggesting re-nationalization of the school system. At the very heart of this development lies the fact that Sweden's results in OECD's PISA-ranking has fallen abruptly ever since these rankings started out. Apart from decreasing school results, it is also asserted that these reforms have resulted in increased differences in the results between schools and in increased school segregation (SOU 2014:5; Ahlbäck Öberg et al. 2016; Molander 2017).

Transfers of policy issues from national government to the local levels are formally top-down processes. Furthermore, the state level was in relative terms early with the introduction of many of the NPM ideas that have been influential in Sweden. This said, we must note the fact that most municipalities and county/regional councils today have introduced NPM-style management ideas such as performance management (Montin 2015; Feltenius 2015; Hall 2012).

Returning to the issue of scale, national government initiatives to transform the organization of regions have repeatedly failed. The argument brought forward for mergers of both state agencies on the regional level and regional self-governed units is that larger entities are better equipped to meet the challenges that geography and demography puts on the public system. In this case, the national level is apparently neither willing nor able to push regions into mergers since the political cost involved is high. A top-down reform of the territorial organization of regional self-government would be an un-popular development from the perspective of important stakeholders, and so far, attempts to stimulate voluntary mergers have not been successful enough.

2.1.5 A decentralized unitary state

Table 5. The Swedish public sector system

State structure federal/unitary coordinated/fragmented	**Executive government** consensus/majoritarian	**Minister-mandarin relations** separate/shared politicized-depoliticized	**Implementation** Centralized/decentralized
Unitary Fragmented	Consensus	Separate Depoliticized	Decentralized

In sum the Swedish state system is unitary but decentralized. The welfare sector is regulated nationally but to a large extent funded and implemented (provided) at the regional and local levels. The county/regional councils are quite small and concentrate on health care, whereas the national and local levels are in relative terms larger. The varying possibilities for regional and local governments to implement the policies of the welfare programs and solve other problems call for coordination and collaboration. To some extent this is handled by top-down national level initiatives, but many types of collaboration are voluntary needs-based networking among municipalities and county/regional councils. Executive government is commonly described as consensual rather than majoritarian even though some would argue that Swedish minority government are operating in ways that have much in common with majority governments (Isberg 2011). The stability of *bloc politics* and successful ways of turning opposition into long term and stable support parties often have made minority government stable (Bale and Bergman 2006). The political system is however still, by need if not virtue, oriented towards cooperation rather than the type of polarized conflict that characterizes majoritarian systems. Minister-mandarin relations are separate and to a low degree politicized (this will be discussed further below). Finally, one distinct feature of the Swedish multi-level system is decentralization of implementation. Administrative dualism has for centuries been the organizational mode of national government, with a small government office and many, resourceful state agencies. Local self-government with strong implementation mandates in the welfare state programs completes this picture.

2.2 Structure of executive government (central government level)

2.2.1 Machinery of government – administrative dualism

A prominent feature of the national executive organization is its administrative dualism. The government offices on the one hand are comparably small with 4500 employees, of which a smaller portion (about 200) is politically recruited. Many governmental functions are delegated to the approximately 345 state agencies. The Government offices are since 1997 organized as one agency, *Regeringskansliet*. This organization is divided into Ministries. Together, the Government Offices host about 100 units, which specialize in different policy task (Persson 2015). The ministries' top manager is a member of the cabinet, a minister. Ministries could host more than one minister and many portfolios. Ministers have a small politically recruited staff, the highest-ranking person is a State Secretary (*statssekreterare*). The large number of staff is however recruited on merit-based criteria. The two-top ranking merit based posts in a ministry are designated to legislative and administrative issues.

Table 6. The Government Offices

Ministry	Number of Employees 2015
Prime Minister's Office	170
Ministry of Employment	127
Ministry of Finance	501
Ministry of Defence	137
Ministry of Justice	393
Ministry of Culture	141
Ministry of Environment and Energy	211
Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation	494
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs	263
Ministry of education and research	225
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1 263
Office for Administrative Affairs	609
Total	**4 534**

***Source**: Government Offices, www.regeringen.se/regeringskansliet/, accessed 2017-03-26*.

2.2.2 Centre of government coordination

The need for central government to coordinate the executive is underlined by both political and organizational factors. Using the distinction between internal/external coordination, as well as between horizontal and vertical coordination, Persson (2015) shows how both the needs and mechanisms in use varies across types of governments. Many Swedish governments have historically been single party, minority ones (Wockelberg 2015) which calls for external coordination with opposition parties. What has been labelled contract parliamentarism has had practical effects on the government offices, e.g. in terms of Social democratic governments hiring political staff appointed by the support parties to facilitate coordination of policy processes within the ministries (Bale & Bergman 2006). Moreover, Swedish coalition governments have the need to coordinate across partisan lines and have developed structures staffed with political appointees to avoid decision overload at the ultimate top of the political organization. While inner cabinets and sub-committees are uncommon in Swedish governments in general, party leaders in coalition have formed such structures to solve conflicts that have not been resolved on lower levels (Persson 2015).

There are also factors that make coordination a necessity and everyday activity in all types of Swedish governments, not only in coalition ones. Governmental power is formally collective and decisions are made in a weekly meeting. The need for collective decision-making and collective responsibility for decisions make coordination and horizontal negotiations within the government offices important. As soon as a policy issue involves more than one ministry, a procedure for joint preparation commences. There is also a joint drafting procedure for bills and some other important issues. Besides the joint procedures described here it is apparent that the Ministry of Finance, as in most systems, is powerful due to its position in the budget process. And, of course, the Prime Minister (PM) is the most important actor in the collective. The Swedish EU membership (1995) is often described as increasing the need for coordination between ministries. Scholars have shown that the EU membership has both centralized powers to the PM and his/her office and opened an arena for more individual action for most ministers (Persson 2015; see also Johansson & Tallberg 2010; Johansson & Raunio 2010). While the needs for horizontal coordination between ministries are perceived as great, the effectiveness of the measures undertaken to accomplish this can be questioned. Persson points our attention to factors such as strong ministerial cultures and weak political leadership within the central government organization. A reform in 1997 transformed the separate ministries into one organization formally headed by the Prime Minister and there hasalso been more recent attempts made to stimulate further coordination (Persson 2015).

Another organizational feature that calls for coordination is the administrative dualism of the Swedish state executive. The executive is organized in small-sized government offices on the one hand, and 345 (January 1st 2017) semi-autonomous state agencies on the other (www.statskontoret.se, accessed 2017-03-31). The type of semi-autonomous organization that is today referred to as agencies have actually been around in Sweden for several hundreds of years. Further agencification during the NPM era added extensive delegation of managerial decisions to the agency level to already highly autonomous agencies. In addition, Hall (2015) describes a 'culture of autonomy' that supports the dual structure of the executive. Agency autonomy in relation to the government is high when it comes to certain types of decisions, i.e. when agencies decide in individual matters. In such cases, autonomy is protected in the constitution and concerns interference from the government as a collective, individual ministers as well as from other public authorities (Instrument of Government, Chapter 12). Laws are rarely detailed which creates a room for, and a need for, interpretation. Swedish state agency autonomy is also in general high when it comes to managerial issues but the exact room for e.g. autonomy in decisions concerning an agency budget can however vary a lot across agencies, as can most types of agency autonomy (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg, 2016b). Survey data indicates that while top-level civil servants perceive their managerial autonomy to be high, they perceive their autonomy in decisions concerning policy choice and design to be lower. Somewhat surprisingly in a dual executive, the top-level civil servants perceive their autonomy in decisions regarding policy implementation to be lower than their managerial autonomy (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg, 2016a).

A one-size fits all version of performance management has been implemented in the state sector. This model has been criticized for being unrealistic and too demanding in terms of the ex-ante control governments exercise on agencies. A reform aimed at decreasing the demand for performance information was launched in 2009. The reform also aimed at allowing agencies more autonomy in what and how to report, and at being more realistic when asking for information on the casual effects of agency activities. An important goal was to adjust steering to agency specific features, i.e. to abandon the one size fits all implementation of performance management. An evaluation of this reform shows that, on an aggregated level, Swedish governments today ask for less information than they used to, but that the reform outcome in other variables and in different policy sectors varies (Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg 2016b).

The relationship between the political side of the executive on the one hand and the state agencies on the other varies. Some agencies are 'court like' boards or have managerial boards at the top, models chosen to create some distance to the government. Hall (2015) however points our attention to recent developments that can undermine agency autonomy towards the government: the propensity for contemporary Swedish governments to appoint sole Director Generals rather than boards as agency management raises questions about e.g. the policy autonomy of state agencies, as the Director Generals can serve as an extension of government (Hall 2015). Survey data has shown that Swedish top-level civil servants to a high degree find that politicians respect technical advice and to a low degree interfere with routine activities. Political influence over state sector organizations are according to the respondents exercised via appointments, here Sweden scores higher than e.g. Denmark and Finland (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2016a).

Agencification and performance management has been found to increase the fragmentation of the Swedish executive and this in ways that make coordination in relative terms hard (Niklasson 2012). In Sweden, as in other Nordic countries, vertical coordination (i.e. between agencies and ministries) is less common than horizontal coordination. Also, coordinating within the state sector is more common than coordinating with actors outside the state sector (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2016a). As mentioned briefly above, state agency coordination/cooperation is a legal requirement stipulated both in the Administrative Procedure Act (1986:223) and the government Agency Ordinance (2007:515). State agencies can also be instructed or commissioned to coordinate with other actors. A high degree of all state agencies is involved in both compulsory and voluntary coordination with others. The main reasons to engage in voluntary coordination are described to be related to increased efficiency, both for individual agencies and for the state sector as a whole (rank 1-3). In fourth place comes the aim to enhance citizens' or private companies' access to the public authorities. A large share (80 %) of the state agencies chooses to cooperate with actors within their policy area, and a clear majority with organized networks of actors who share specific types of users. Agencies involved in voluntary coordination also stated that such cooperation increased efficiency (90 %). Asked about factors that hinder further developed coordination, 40 % of the state agencies mentioned different types of costs. Interestingly, as much as 30 % perceived governmental steering to create obstacles for coordination (Johansson 2017).

Is the centre of government in Sweden strong or weak? In terms of resources, the centre of government is indeed small and much less resourceful than the state agencies. Furthermore, the formal requirements for collective decision-making make individual ministers weak and dependent upon the Cabinet as a whole. At the same time, Swedish ministries are sometimes described as horizontally un-coordinated, a fact that could both enhance and increase their strength towards other parts of the government offices. If the capacity to coordinate a fragmented executive horizontally and vertically is a source of strength, the centre of government can appear to be rather weak. If we instead make an inventory of the numerous ways to micro-manage the executive organization as a whole, Jacobsson & Sundström (2015) argue that Swedish governments use a variety of tools to accomplish delegation, competition and communication across organizational borders. From this perspective, sharp organizational borders can be perceived as something positive, e.g. as way to foster fruitful rather than destructive competition between agencies (Jacobsson & Sundström 2015).

2.2.3 Key management, budgeting and monitoring mechanisms

Swedish governments apply long term and short term steering to control and monitor the state agencies. Basic procedures to uphold public values such as the rule of law, due process, meritocracy, transparency and efficiency are found in the constitution as well as in administrative law. In addition, the general Agency Ordinance regulates the

organizational form of state agencies, e.g. management models and basic processes and requirements. Long term mandates and tasks of agencies are defined in laws and regulations for different policy areas and tasks, as well as in agency specific ordinances that define the main tasks and organizational features of each agency.

To abolish agencies and/or create new ones is a strategic possibility in the hands of Swedish governments who, in addition, also are mandated to appoint agency top management. Recent research has established a relationship between partisan shifts in government on the one hand, and agency survival and agency management turnover respectively, on the other (Holmgren 2016). Given the high degree of managerial autonomy and agencification found in the Swedish executive, the appointment tool is a strategic option and Director Generals are sometimes described as extensions of the governments (Hall 2015). Swedish governments also have a strategic choice to make in terms of what type of management model to apply in an agency. A sole Director General is supposedly creating a closer relationship to the government than a management board, which can act more autonomously. Over time, Swedish governments apparently to an increasing degree appoint sole Director Generals (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2016b).

Short term (yearly or more frequent) steering is executed as the state budget is broken down into appropriations, often drafted for individual agencies, in December1 each year. These appropriation documents used to start with quite extensive goal catalogues, but recently the stated ambition is to move political goal descriptions to long term steering documents, i.e. to the individual agency instruction. A typical appropriation document contains performance information demands (what to report and sometimes how) and extra commissions given to the agency. Importantly, this is also where the agency budget is defined in terms of volume and where the government can choose to give more or less precise instructions on how much money fis to be spent on a specific task. These documents hence are of importance for the managerial autonomy of agencies (Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg 2016b). For most state agencies, it is mandatory to report performances in an annual report to government. In addition to these transparent and publicly accessible ways for control and communication between ministries and agencies, ministers (or the State Secretary) and agency top management have yearly meetings, the so-called agency dialogue (myndighetsdialogen). These meetings are commonly described as an opportunity for the government to give feedback to agency management and as a steering tool.

2.2.4 Key mechanisms of audit and enforcing accountability

In 2003 a new organization for the National Audit Office was set up. To secure the independence of this audit institution this function was moved from the executive branch, where it had been placed as a regular government agency under the Government, to be an authority under the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament). The National Audit Office carries out both financial and performance audits, and the office has the right to audit the whole chain of the executive power. However, it has no powers to apply sanctions by itself. Instead, the published reports – which are all accessible to the public – are delivered to the Riksdag, and thereby give the Riksdag, the Government and/or the public the possibility to respond to the findings.

At the local and regional government level, the audit institution is modelled in a completely different way. The auditors are elected politicians and perform not only traditional financial audit, but also political and managerial audit. All members of the municipal and county councils are elected in general elections every four years. Each

[1] Appropriation documents can be revised whenever the government so wishes.

council then appoints the auditors, a minimum of five persons with a term of office of four years. The system with popularly elected auditors has been the cause of debate for a long time. The proponents, often headed by the Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), argue that long tradition of local self-governance enables the municipalities and the county/regional councils to organize the audit differently from central government.

The Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen is an authority under the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament), and its task is to guarantee that the treatment of all individuals by public agencies is in accordance with Swedish law. Complaints concern central government agencies (including courts of law), municipal agencies, officials employed at central government and municipal agencies, and other institutions which are entrusted to exercise public authority. The Parliamentary Ombudsmen have the authority to issue statements if the measures taken by a public authority or a public official are in conflict with an existing law or other statute, or are incorrect or inappropriate in some other way. The ombudsmen also have the right to issue advisory opinions intended to promote uniform and appropriate application of the law. In the role of extra-ordinary prosecutors, the ombudsmen may initiate legal proceedings against an official who, disregarding the obligations of his office or his mandate, has committed a criminal offence other than an offence against the Freedom of the Press Act and the right to freedom of expression. Moreover, the ombudsmen may report a civil servant for dereliction of duty.

2.2.5 State level administrative reform capacity

Public management is a governmental portfolio carried by a Minister with also other responsibilities, and hence it can be located within almost any ministry. Today the unit dedicated to public management issues is located within the Ministry of Finance, which is also the home base for the Minister in charge. The Ministry of Finance also issues yearly instructions for the drafting of the appropriation documents where ministries instruct their state agencies. Within the Government offices, project like efforts to develop agency steering are sometimes introduced. A great deal of the systematic analytical input Swedish governments receive regarding agency performance, public management ideas and models etc. comes from two of its agencies - The Swedish Agency for Public Management and The Swedish National Financial Management Authority - and from audit institutions (see below). In addition, public management issues are regularly delegated to investigatory commissions. Reforms are often announced in a rather low-key manner, commonly in the budget bill. Historically, public management is a low conflict area featuring a high degree of consensus among the political parties and within the bureaucratic elite working with these issues. Contemporary political debate is however more polarized when it comes to the effects of some of the NPM reforms, i.e. the effects of privatization and marketization (Sundström 2006; Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg 2016a).

The capacity and competence to develop public management are to a high degree located outside the Government offices, which is to be expected due to the administrative dualism. Ways to meet a need for specialized in-house public management competence has been discussed but these ideas have not been implemented in a comprehensive or systematic manner. From our perspective, the most recent public management reform (in 2009) that states that governmental steering of state agencies should be task specific and adjusted to agency characteristics must be considered as a challenge for the Swedish ministries. To adjust the one size fits all-steering model is easier said than done.

3 KEY FEATURES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

3.1 Status and categories of public employees

As noted above, and in contrast to most other countries, the central government administration in Sweden is organized into two levels: the Government Offices and central government agencies. The Swedish Government Offices (ministries) employ only a relatively small number of staff, and government agencies enjoy a relatively autonomous status – i.e. what is called administrative dualism (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2015). This means that the Government Offices work mainly with supporting the Government in its operations, including starting investigations, performing follow ups and formulating operational goals for the central government administration. Hence, the bulk of the state administration is working in government agencies, which may have central, regional and local offices. Government agencies are joint entities responsible for most operational activities of the Swedish public administration. Each of them is managed by a Director General, appointed by the Government, and for most of the agencies the government has also appointed an advisory council (insynsråd) or a lay board (styrelse) (Statskontoret 2014a). Apart from these leading positions, each agency recruits, manages and dismisses its own staff.

In most agencies, the formal career systems were abolished already in the 1990s. Ever since, the Swedish system is best depicted as a positioned based system characterised by position-related recruitment, open access route to public service and a greater permeability between the public and private employment sector (Kuhlmann & Wollman 2014). Consequently, there is no central recruitment procedure into a civil service career as such, and in general there are no special higher education institutions to access a civil service career. However, there are a few career-based civil servants left in the Swedish system, and these are confined to the diplomatic corps, the judiciary, the police force and the armed forces, which constitutes about 1–2 percent of the total number of employees in the public sector. In these cases, the respective agency is still responsible for appointments and training.

As Pollitt and Bouckaert point out, training in law has in the past been normal for higher public officials, but this juristic dominance has been considerably diluted over the past fifty years. Civil servants now come from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds, and the culture of upper civil service could be said to have as much to do with satisfying the demands for 'coordination', 'partnership', 'responsiveness', and 'leadership' as with a strict application of law (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011, 63).

In terms of the structure of public employment the best description is that the same employment rules are applied to public sector employees as those applied to the private sector. Although state employees carry some special conditions, there is no formal legal status for them (see below). Hence, Sweden does not employ civil servants under a public law status, which is a clear exception in the EU member state setting (Demmke & Moilanen, 2010, 52).

3.2 Civil service regulation at central government level

In general, employment rules in Sweden are similar for the public and private sectors. This means that in principle the same overall labour law applies to the public sector as to other sectors in the labour market, e.g. the Employment Protection Act (1982:80) and the Working Hours Act (1982:673). It should, however, be emphasized that in a comparative perspective few laws are issued within the area of labour legislation in the Swedish setting. The Swedish labour market model relies heavily on collective agreements, and since 1965 all central government employees have had the right to negotiate and to take industrial action in the same way as other groups on the Swedish labour market. Swedish public employment conditions are, thus, based on sectoral

agreements which complement legislation in other aspects than specified by law. There is one set of agreements for the regional and municipal sector and another set of agreements for the sector of central government administration. The authority to conclude collective agreements on behalf of the state has been delegated to the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (SAGE), which in turn may delegate this authority to other government agencies. Procedures for negotiations, disputes and industrial action are regulated by collective agreement. However, it should be noted that the Public Employment Act does include certain limitations to the public employees' right to industrial action. E.g. it is not allowed to carry out industrial action aimed at influencing domestic political circumstances, nor is it allowed to carry out industrial actions that are "damaging to society". The question of whether a labour dispute is damaging to society is dealt with according to the collective agreement. In addition, the parliament may pass legislation ordering the cessation of a labour dispute considered dangerous to society, irrespective of labour market sector. In practice, the parliament very rarely exercises this right (Arbetsgivarverket 2009).

In sum, Swedish laws do not regulate many areas of public employment, with the exception of public employee responsibilities (the Public Employment Act (1994:260)). For employment in central government the Instrument of Government lays down recruitment based on meritocratic principles (Regeringsformen Chapter 12 Act 5). However, for the bulk of the public employees – hired at the local and regional government levels – the meritocratic principles laid down in the Instrument of Government are not applicable, but can instead be found in ordinary law (the Public Employment Act (1994:260)).

As follows from having a position-based system, there is no life-long employment guarantee in central government posts. If redundancies become necessary, permanent employees may also be laid off. In 2015 80 percent of central government employees were employed on unlimited contracts, and 20 percent on temporary contracts (Statskontoret 2016a). However, certain very small groups do enjoy greater employment security, for example higher judges, who may only be removed from their posts if they commit a crime or otherwise have shown to be obviously unsuitable (Act respecting the employment of public servants in positions of authority (1994:261)).

3.3 Key characteristics of the central government HR System

The Ministry of Finance carries responsibility for overall policy for the central government administration including HR. However, executive HR responsibility is highly decentralized in Sweden, i.e. delegated to each of the 345 central government agencies. Each agency recruits, manages and dismisses its own staff, except the heads of agencies who are appointed by the Government. The government agencies are obliged to cooperate within the frameworks of the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (SAGE) to form their collective employer policies (EUPAN 2013; Arbetsgivarverket 2009). The overall unionization rate for public sector employees in Sweden is today about 80 % (Kjellberg 2017).

There is no central pay system, so each of the agencies managing public employment is responsible for managing its own budget, which includes assigning a part to staff salaries. All in all, the social partners form regulations by binding agreements on pay, working conditions, work environment, job security benefits, supplementary pensions etc. Collective agreements are initially negotiated at central level, then within each agency and finally individually. At the local level, individual salaries based on the pay-for-performance principle were introduced in the 1980s in the public sector in Sweden, which gives scope for negotiation at the individual level (Government written communication 1984/85:202; Ahlbäck Öberg 2012). The overall aim is to ensure that

remuneration is competitive to the labour market as a whole when performing the same kind of activities. In general, it should be noted that the wages in the private sector are higher than in the public sector. However, the public sector can many times offer employment conditions that are attractive, e.g. flexible working hours, health benefits, and longer vacations. The delegated employer policy of the Government and Parliament has for many years been that Swedish central government should not be wage leading in relation to the private sector, but the pay should be competitive enough to secure the hiring of competent staff (Riksdag 2005/06:FiU18; Arbetsgivarverket 2009).

The Government decides only on Senior Civil Servant salaries (e.g. Heads of Agencies). The general pay framework agreement is determined at a central level by national social partners whilst more detailed negotiations take place in each agency at local level. The salaries of the Heads of Central Government Agencies are decided on with regard to their qualifications and experience. Salaries are also based on the size of the workforce, budget, complexity, results obtained, annual appraisals, etc. (EUPAN 2010).

During the last decade, the main government policy-making effort in terms of central government HR is a program aimed at promoting a common public ethos and the basic values inherent in the legitimate execution of public power. Public ethos issues surfaced on the agenda already in 1997 (SOU 1997:57). In 2009 the right-wing coalition created an agency, the Council for the Development of Human Resources in Public Administration (Kompetensrådet för utveckling i staten), commissioned to promote a public ethos and support other state agencies within this area. The goals were to strengthen public trust in state level administration; enhance efficiency, and to promote the state sector as an attractive area to potential employees (Government Bill 2009/10:175, p. 37). The agency was abolished in 2012. Evaluating the public ethos reform, the Swedish Agency for Public Management (SAPM) found it difficult to isolate the effects of the project from effects of already existing formal rules (such as the Swedish Constitution) and other contemporary influences. SAPM concluded that efficiency was hampered by the fact that the promoting role was given to a new, unknown state agency, as well as by the agency being abolished when the public ethos project finished (Statskontoret 2014b). In more general terms, SAPM points our attention to weaknesses in the basic organizational dimensions of the reform. Since 2013 a 'working group' based within the Ministry of Finance has been promoting public ethos issues within the public sector. This Council of Basic Values has had a project like form and delivered a final report at the end of 2016 (Värdegrundsdelegationen 2016). From 2017 the responsibility for public ethos-issues has been transferred to SAPM (Government Budget Bill 2016/17:1, expenditure area 2, p. 90). Moreover, in June 2012 the new National Service Centre was established with the mission to provide standardised administrative support to government agencies. Its fields of work include staff administration, ICT- support etc. According to a recent report by the SAPM the promised reduction of administration for the associated government agencies is uncertain and needs to be further analysed (Statskontoret 2016b).

HR system (Career vs. position based)	**Employment status** (civil servant as standard; dual; employee as standard)	**Differences between civil servants and public employees** (high, medium, low)	**Turnover** (high, medium, low)
Position based	Employee as standard	Low	central government: 20 %

Coherence among different government levels (high, medium, low)	compensation level vs. private sector (much higher, higher, same, lower, much lower)	Formal politicization through appointments (high, medium, low)	Functional politicization (high, medium, low)
medium	lower	low	low

4 POLITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

4.1 Policy-making, coordination and implementation

Sweden is a decentralized unitary state ("intermediate" using Pollitt & Bouckart's terminology, 2011, 55), which involves a) a highly decentralized administrative structure with politically and functionally strong local governments and a high degree of autonomy of action of local authorities, and b) the administrative dualism in the central government structure described above (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2015; Wohlmann & Kuhlman 2014).

The Swedish civil service is non-partisan and the career patterns of ministers and senior civil servants are largely separate. Hence, there are few overtly party-political appointments made to the upper reaches of the public service, and hence also few individuals that leave due to cabinet turnovers. The top three officials in ministries are the State Secretary, the Director General for administrative affairs and Director General for legal affairs, and of these only the State Secretary is a political appointment. It should be added, however, that the category of 'political advisers'– individuals who are neither politicians nor career civil servants, but who are sympathetic to the party in power – has grown in numbers and influence since the mid-1990s (Garsten et al. 2015), even though their share of total numbers employed in the Government Office is still very low. As mentioned earlier, the Government also appoints the top executive staff at the agencies i.e. Director-Generals, County Governors, Heads of Agencies directly under the Government, Vice-Chancellors of universities and other university colleges, Deputy Director-Generals, Deputy County Governors and County Directors (approximately 280 people).

As Matheson et al. accounts for Sweden has a highly informal system with few rules or institutions in charge of guaranteeing merit and the proper delineation of responsibilities between ministers and the senior public service. The principle of political non-partisanship of the public service is not spelled out in the Constitution, law or regulation. However, in the Instrument of Government the principle of government by law is laid down (Chapter 1 Art. 1), and the same law requires that all appointments are made on objective grounds such as merit and skills (Chapter 12 Art. 5). Hence, even though there is not any explicit legislation on the neutrality of senior positions in the Swedish setting the idea is widely recognized in an informal and consensual manner (Matheson et al. 2007). This does not mean, however, that the Swedish political debate is free from allegations of top executive appointments made by government being partisan (rather than meritocratic). On the contrary, this kind of debate flares up on a regular basis irrespective of the colour of the sitting government, and some commentators hold that from the 1970s onwards the politicization of top executive positions has increased (Molander et al. 2002).

Sweden's policy process is often portrayed as both rational and consensual by outside observers (Petersson 2015). The notion of a rational and a consensual process is evoked by two important features of Swedish policy-making. The first is the corporatist policy-making style, which, at least up to the 1990s, guaranteed policy influence from interest organizations generally, and labour market organizations particularly. The second feature is the commissions of inquiry and referral systems. There is, and has been, a

strong emphasis on the preparation of policy proposals. A Swedish trade-mark, especially historically, is that almost all complicated policy proposals are first investigated by a commission of inquiry and then sent to government agencies and private and public organizations for referral (*remiss*), before the government bill is sent to Parliament. Hence, the referral bodies may be central government agencies, special interest groups, local government authorities, higher education institutions or other bodies whose activities may be affected by the proposals. This way the policy process has been geared towards problem solving and towards building broad support among specialists as well as parties and organizations (Dahlström 2015). Hence, the process is oriented towards collecting both expertise and stakeholder input.

Distribution of powers	Coordination quality (high, medium, low)	Fragmentation (high, medium, low)
decentralized	medium	high

Political economy (liberal – coordinated)	Interest intermediation (corporatist – pluralistic)	Citizen participation (strong – weak)	Policy style
coordinated	traditionally corporatist, today with pluralistic elements	strong	consensual

Sources of policy advice (mandarins, cabinets, external experts)	Administrative autonomy (high – medium – low)	Patronage & politicization (formal, functional (merit – patronage) (high – medium – low)	Public Service Bargains (Agency – Trustee)	Stability (high – low – no turnover after elections)
A broad mixture: experts, business people, trade unions and civil society.	high	merit formal: low functional: low	trustee (however, recent debate claims that this bargain is renegotiated – i.e. increasing elements of control)	high stability (almost no turnover)

4.2 Administrative tradition and culture

Swedish local self-government and the executive divide in central government are two main parts of the administrative tradition already discussed above. A third feature of great importance is the strong tradition of transparency that dates back to the 18th century. This strong tradition of transparency is laid down in the Freedom of the Press Act (from 1766) and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (from 1991). In these fundamental laws principles of public access to public documents and to some extent decision-making processes, as well as the protection of whistle-blowers in the public sector is regulated. The principle of public access means that the public and the mass media, newspapers, radio, and television are to be guaranteed an unimpeded view of activities pursued by the government and local authorities. That both tradition and constitution provides the system with transparency is reasonably of great importance for the possibilities to decentralize and delegate (e.g. from the core executive to state agencies), as well as for the high levels of trust in government and the low levels of corruption that characterizes the Swedish public system.

Rule of law and due process is to a high degree established in Sweden and a part of the administrative tradition and culture. Sweden scores very high in international evaluative rankings on rule-of-law indicators as well as on factors measuring the performance of the judiciary system (see, e.g., the World Justice Project 2014). 'Court like' tasks and procedures have not only been the task of courts, but also of state agencies and until 2011 courts and state agencies were described in a joint chapter in the Instrument of Government (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2015).

In addition to transparency and Weberian ideals that characterize the Swedish administrative culture, a strong focus on efficiency, productivity and what is sometimes described as a performance culture should be mentioned here. Careful spending of tax revenue and high quality output are considered to be strong norms within the public sector. This focus is explicitly stated in the Agency Ordinance. When indices for the development of state agencies' salaries and other types of prices are calculated (*pris- och löneomräkning*), reductions will be made in order to create a 'productivity pressure' (*produktivitetstryck*) in the public sector. These reductions are calculated based upon developments in the private sector (Statskontoret 2013).

In terms of welfare regimes, the Swedish welfare state is classified as a Social Democratic welfare state. Such a regime includes support for a "universalist" welfare state aimed specifically at enhancing individual autonomy and promoting social mobility. In addition it also contains a corporatist system involving a tripartite arrangement where representatives of labour and employers negotiate wages and labour market policy mediated by the government.

Administrative culture Rechtsstaat, Public Interest	Welfare state (liberal, conservative, social-democratic)	Public Sector openness (open, medium, closed)
Legalistic base	Social Democratic	Open

Key PA Values	Managerial vs Procedural (Managerial. Mixed, Procedural)	Red Tape (regulatory density) (very high to very low)	Discretion/autonomy (high, low, medium)
Democracy, efficiency and the rule of law. Transparency.	Mixed	Medium	High

Table 7. Hofstede's national culture dimensions

Hofstede national culture dimensions		
Dimension	Value	*Average EU28*
Power Distance	31	*52*
Individualism/Collectivism	71	*57*
Masculinity/Feminity	5	*44*
Uncertainty Avoidance	29	*70*
Long-term Orientation	53	*57*
Indulgence/Self-restraint	78	*44*

***Sources**: Geert Hofstede's national culture dimensions, https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html*

The table shows that Sweden scores considerably lower than the average member states of the EU on the dimension Power Distance. This indicates a culture striving to equalise the distribution of power and where justifications for inequalities of power is demanded. In all respects, Sweden is an egalitarian society and this is demonstrated economically, through low incidences of poverty, and socially, in that all citizens are given access to resources and treated equally. Hierarchies are not liked, and e.g. managers are expected to consult the employees. The table also shows that the Swedish culture is highly individualistic compared to the rest of the EU. Comparative data from the World Values Survey suggests that Sweden has some of the most individualistic, secular and non-traditionalist values of any country, and this despite its traditional image as a collectivist social democracy (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). With the obvious risk of pushing such analogies too far, one could perhaps say that the relationship between individuals and public authorities is shaped by the individualistic and non-hierarchical culture in so much as public authorities are expected to be service-oriented and accessible. One basic part of the universal welfare state is to provide possibilities for life choices and minimize dependency on private relationships. Moreover, Sweden scores low on Hofstede's masculinity/femininity-dimension, which is also far from the EU average. This heavy lean towards the femininity-side represents a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. It is by any measure fair to describe the Swedish society at large as clearly consensus-oriented. A Swedish ethnologist explicitly includes "conflict avoidance" among the traits of the "Swedish mentality" (Daun 1998). In addition, having a markedly low score on the Uncertainty Avoidance-dimension indicates a pragmatic culture in which practice counts more than principles. Again reflecting on the boarder of speculating, we would like to suggest that pragmatism is an important part of Swedish public sector operations, but importantly within a stable frame of rule of law. In terms of long-term orientation, this is the only dimension in the table where the Swedish score is close to the EU average, indicating the middle way between preferring change and a preference for continuity, i.e. no preference in particular. A high score of 78 in the last dimension indicates that Swedish culture is one of indulgence. According to Hofstede, people in societies classified by a high score in indulgence generally exhibit a willingness to realise their impulses and desires with regard to enjoying life and having fun. In our view, the ways in which Swedish culture in general is described in Hofstede's dimensions makes sense also when we analyse the public sector. Equality, accessibility and pragmatism are indeed features of the Swedish public sector system. While we have no reason to believe that Swedish bureaucrats are not as self-indulgent e.g. fun loving, as the average inhabitant, we would hesitate to describe their mode of operation as impulsive.

5 GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE

5.1 Transparency and accountability

Indicator	Value 2014	*EU28 rank*	Value 2016	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Access to government information (1-10)	10.00	*1*	9.00	*3*	-1.00	*-2*
	Value 2013	*EU28 rank*	Value 2015	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Transparency of government (0-100)	59.14	*10*	63.86	*13*	+4.72	*-3*
	Value 2010	*EU28 rank*	Value 2015	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Voice and acccountability (-2.5,+2.5)	1.58	*1*	1.60	*1*	+0.02	*0*
Control of corruption (-2.5,+2.5)	2.32	*2*	2.25	*2*	-0.07	*0*
TI perception of corruption (0-100)	92.00	*1*	89.00	*3*	-3.00	*-2*
	Value 2010	*EU28 rank*	Value 2014	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Gallup perception of corruption (%)	15.00	*2*	14.00	*1*	-1.00	*+1*

***Sources**: Bertelsmann Stiftung, European Commission, World Bank, Transparency International, Gallup World Poll.*

As described above, the Swedish system has many features that support a very high degree of transparency. Thus, we expect to find the type of scores reported here and would like to point out the covariation between transparency and corruption illustrated in the table. One could perhaps argue that minority government is less transparent than majority government since the former builds upon negotiations and informal party agreements. Two types of developments of potential importance for the results presented here should be mentioned. First, Swedish EU membership has in some ways challenged the strong transparency norm. Second, another challenge to transparency through the principle of open access and accountability is the introduction of non-public providers of welfare services, an issue that is the object for coming legislation to solve.

The low degree of corruption is well known in the Scandinavian countries, and is mirrored for Sweden in the table above. This does not mean that Sweden is totally immune against corrupt behaviour. However, the prevalence (identified as cases brought to court) is in a comparative perspective very low, and on the occasions that such affairs surface they are the target of general resentment from the public.

5.2 Civil service system and HRM

Indicator	Value 2012	*EU28 rank*	Value 2015	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Impartiality (1-7)	1.83	*1*	1.45	*1*	-0.38	*0*
	Value 2012	*EU26 rank*	Value 2015	*EU26 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Professionalism (1-7)	5.65	*3*	5.48	*3*	-0.17	*0*
Closedness (1-7)	4.60	*20*	3.56	*25*	-1.04	*-5*

***Sources**: Quality of Government Institute Gothenburg.*

The public-sector employees represent a third of the workforce in Sweden, i.e. the public sector is definitely a major employer. Most of these public servants are employed at the local and regional government level, and about 6 % is hired at the central government level. Historically the public sector has been considered an attractive and safe employer, but the effects of decades of NPM-reforms – reducing the professional autonomy of different corps – has created problems of recruiting e.g. health care professionals, school teachers and even judges. The over-control and administrative burden created by managerialist ideas have reduced professional autonomy, and it has also created a sense of not being trusted. Hence, for the government agencies and/or units that employ these professions the challenge that lies ahead is how to attract candidates (Ahlbäck Öberg et al. 2016; SOU 2017:85; Skolinspektionen 2015; Socialstyrelsen 2017).

The Instrument of Government stipulates that administrative authorities, and others performing tasks within the public administration, shall recognize the equality of all before the law and shall observe objectivity and impartiality (Chapter 1, Art. 9). The relatively low score for the Impartiality indicator suggests that this is also taking place, i.e. the Swedish public administration is perceived as professional in these fundamental respects. The impression of professionalism is also fortified by the Professionalism indicator which signals that the level of politicization is low. This is a conclusion that corresponds well with the overarching principle of meritocracy discussed in chapter 3. The level of politicization of the public administration is low in a system that is characterized – not only by meritocracy – but also by administrative dualism and institutional autonomy (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg 2016b; Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg 2016b). The score of the Closedness indicator reveals that the Swedish civil service is a positioned based system characterised by position-related recruitment, open

access route to public service and a greater permeability between the public and private employment sector (Kuhlmann & Wohlman 2014).

5.3 Service delivery and digitalization

Indicator	Value 2013	*EU28 rank*	Value 2015	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
E-government users (%)	46.10	*3*	44.83	*6*	-1.27	*-3*
Pre-filled forms (%)	77.00	*4*	74.71	*7*	-2.29	*-3*
Online service completion (%)	82.86	*9*	88.86	*10*	+6.00	*-1*
	Value 2010	*EU28 rank*	Value 2016	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Online services (0-1)	0.53	*8*	0.88	*8*	+0.35	*0*
	Value 2013	*EU27 rank*				
Barriers to public sector innovation (%)	11.30	*25*				
			Value 2015	*EU28 rank*		
Services to businesses (%)			55.50	*8*		
	Value 2011	*EU28 rank*	Value 2016	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Ease of Doing business (0-100)	82.75	*3*	82.13	*3*	-0.62	*0*

***Sources**: European Commission Digital Economy and Society Index UN e-government Index, EU Scoreboard Public innovation, Eurobarometer num.417, World Bank Ease of Doing Business.*

According to the United Nations Sweden is one of the international leaders with regards to eGovernment (United Nations 2012). Hence, for a long period of time Swedish governments have had strong policy aspirations in this area. In 1999 the Swedish government stated that its ambition was to become an internationally leading information society accessible to all, 24 hours every day and with the expressed aim to improve efficiency (Government Bill 1999/2000:86). Later on, the Swedish government published an "Action Plan for eGovernment" whose central goals were to rationalize policy governance, make the Swedish public administration the world's simplest administration, and take public services delivery to a higher level than that of mere provider–customer interaction. This would happen by rendering the recipient of a public service an actor of its delivery (Government Offices of Sweden 2008). This streamlining effort was continued with the establishment of an institution, which became the centre protagonist of the system: the eGovernment Delegation, an expert group commissioned by the Government to develop eGovernment, inter-agency coordination and IT standardization (Government Bill 2009/10:175). However, irrespective of the eGovernment Delegation, forces to develop eGovernment have been into play for a long time. The Government brings this topic up in practically every Government Budget Bill. Examples of eGovernment achievements so far are: Electronic Invoices – All Government agencies have been handling invoices electronically since July 2008; A popular electronic authentication infrastructure – referred to as e-Legitimation – enables the citizens' and businesses' access to secured public eServices; A set of well-established public electronic procurement portals; The possibility of returning income tax returns by text message, phone, using e-service or a specific app. Hence, Sweden scores relatively high in the table above, a fact that rhymes well with the political ambitions within this field.

During the term of office of 2006–2010 the then right-wing government ventured to further simplify the rules for businesses in order to reduce their administrative burden. An overall objective was to create more jobs, employment and welfare by designing

rules, processes and procedures that were better suited to the conditions and realities of businesses. The idea being that the thresholds would be lowered for the starting up of businesses, and it was also expected to make the Swedish setting more investment friendly. The Government's undertaking proceeded from a simplification of rules program where a number of tools were developed, which were presented in a written communication to Parliament in 2010 (Written communication 2009/10:226).

5.4 Organization and management of government

Indicator	Value 2014	*EU28 rank*	Value 2016	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Strategic planning capacity (1-10)	8.00	*4*	8.00	*4*	0.00	*0*
Interministerial coordination (1-10)	6.50	*16*	6.67	*16*	+0.17	*0*
SGI Implementation capacity (1-10)	8.43	*1*	8.14	*2*	-0.29	*-1*
	Value 2012	*EU26 rank*	Value 2015	*EU27 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
QOG Implementation capacity (1-7)	5.60	*7*	5.42	*8*	-0.18	*-1*

***Sources**: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Quality of Government Institute Gothenburg.*

A high score on strategic planning capacity is not surprising. What could be of interest to note is that strategic planning bodies in many policy areas are located outside the government offices, e.g. state agencies with the task to provide analyses and other types of input to decision processes. Inter-ministerial coordination in policy work, e.g. preparation of bills, is undertaken as soon as an issue involves more than one ministry. The indicators reported here should probably be interpreted keeping this fact in mind: since the demands on coordination are high and involves a large share of all issues, it is hard to accomplish perfect coordination. This said, we have also above noted fragmentation caused by both ministerial cultures and the high degree of specialization of the state sector as whole.

Public employees' capacity to implement policies is quite realistically described as being high by the QOG indicator. In regards of the SGI Implementation capacity-indicator, which captures in short central government's capacity to enable implementation and monitor performances, it should be noted that the high score is accomplished in a highly decentralized and fragmented state apparatus.

All in all, we would like to stress that Sweden is a small and relatively homogenous country with a well-oiled public administration. At a general level, the implementation of government programs and policies are carried out in a surprisingly efficient way given the fact that there are at least two "breaches" in the parliamentary chain: a) the administrative dualism of central government, and b) the (formally) far-reaching self-governance of local government (the level where the bulk of the welfare policies are actually carried out). This indicates that there is, in general, an ambition among civil servants and public sector professionals, to respond to what is perceived as the political will in a sensitive and ambitious way.

5.5 Policy-making, coordination and regulation

Indicator	Value 2014	*EU28 rank*	Value 2016	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Societal consultation (1-10)	8.00	*4*	8.00	*4*	0.00	*0*
Use of evidence based instruments (1-10)	7.00	*9*	7.00	*9*	0.00	*0*
	Value 2010	*EU28 rank*	Value 2015	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Regulatory quality (-2.5,+2.5)	1.67	*6*	1.81	*3*	+0.14	*+3*
Rule of law (-2.5,+2.5)	1.96	*2*	2.04	*2*	+0.08	*0*

***Sources**: Bertelsmann Stiftung, World Bank.*

The infrastructure for societal consultation in the policy process is strong and provides ample and organized opportunities for experts and stakeholders to participate.

Corporatism, understood as exclusively inviting a few strong interest groups to make policy and manage the state apparatus, is formally abolished, and more informal network structures have developed. While the system of referral is formally open to all, other types of participation, i.e. lobbying, is of course dependent upon resources which could create the same type of exclusiveness as the corporatist model did. Furthermore, private provision and market-like arrangements represent new channels for participation that are organized but neither transparent nor accessible for all. The use of evidence-based instruments is here operationalized as Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA), i.e. to what extent policymaking includes analyses of regulatory impact. The Swedish score (7) is compatible with our understanding of how policymaking procedures at least to some extent fulfil requirements on consequence analyses.

Reports on regulatory quality and rule of law are as expected positive. On this note it is interesting that historically good records do seem to be continuous also in the new legal landscape that EU membership constitutes. The Swedish public sector appears to have absorbed the great mix of legal traditions, and the ways EU law changes over time. These things noted, the currently much debated issue of the effectiveness of the Swedish police should be noted. The ratio of reported/solved crimes is cause for criticism and has been so for a prolonged period of time.

5.6 Overall government performance

Indicator	Value 2010	*EU28 rank*	Value 2016	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Trust in government (%)	57.00	*2*	45.00	*4*	-12.00	*-2*
	Value 2011	*EU27 rank*				
Improvement of PA over last 5 years (%)	10.00	*9*				
	Value 2010	*EU28 rank*	Value 2015	*EU28 rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Public sector performance (1-7)	6.02	*2*	5.37	*6*	-0.65	*-4*
Government effectiveness (-2.5,+2.5)	2.01	*3*	1.81	*4*	-0.20	*-1*

***Sources**: Eurobarometer 85, Eurobarometer 370, World Bank, World Economic Forum.*

It is very hard to assess the whole government sector and to use this type of extreme aggregates to do so. The positive trend reported for how public administration has improved (until 2011) is to some extent matched by more recent survey data (COCOPS). The reported (negative) changes in the indicators for public sector performances and government effectiveness respectively are still declines at a very high level. Hence, what we observe is a Swedish public sector that performs well according to measures presented in this report.

In general, the citizens' trust in government is high in Sweden. This is revealed in the reports by the SOM-institute that on an annual basis surveys the citizens' confidence in institutions as the police, courts, healthcare, universities, elementary schools, etc. (SOM Institute 2016). The trust in these institutions is markedly higher than the confidence in big business, banks etc. – and definitely higher than for politicians at different levels. The effects of managerialisation on different categories of professionals within the public sector (i.e. over-control, administrative burdens with less time for the core activity, reduced scope for professional autonomy etc. (Statskontoret 2016b) are now discussed as something that makes public sector employment less attractive. This in turn could impede the quality and the efficiency of the public sector in the future. This is to some extent recognized as a key issue by the incumbent government who has launched a so called trust-based public management reform (tillitsreform) with explicit reference to a critical debate on negative effects of New Public Management instruments on professional work (www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/tillitsreformen, accessed 2017-03-29).

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