

# Statement of Government Policy

18 October 2022





*Statement of Government Policy delivered by Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson*

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Swedish Riksdag,

The Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Party have agreed to take responsibility for Sweden along with the Sweden Democrats. The Government will consist of the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Party. The Sweden Democrats will cooperate with the Government in the Riksdag, and will have political staff at the Government Offices.

In the election, the electorate gave the parties involved in this cooperation a mandate to set Sweden on a new course. This cooperation lays the foundations for long-term policy, with the aim of finding serious solutions to Sweden's major societal problems. Change was necessary, and change is now possible.

Our four parties know that society is bigger than government. That society as a whole can do more than government alone can. But we also share the conviction that whatever government is responsible for, it must accomplish to the fullest.

For this reason, the key tasks of government must now be the focus of the Government and the Riksdag. Several of the cornerstones of the Swedish welfare state – internal security, external security, energy supply and social cohesion – must now be repaired and reinforced. If they fail entirely, the damage will be monumental. And if that happens, Sweden will no longer be Sweden. The ability to prioritise the most important tasks of government in difficult times will be crucial to our success.

Let me therefore speak plainly here today: the Government now taking office is taking responsibility for a country in the midst of several parallel crises.

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We are facing four very demanding tasks.

Firstly: shortly after the elections, Sweden broke its own bloody record in fatal shootings. The fight against serious crime must be won, and security must be restored throughout our country. In this respect, government will now take back control. This alone is a task of such magnitude that many believe that it is not even possible. We in this Chamber have a joint responsibility to prove that we can do it.

Secondly, Sweden must – once again – have the strength to endure a new recession, at a time when many people and businesses are facing dramatic cost increases due to high inflation and extreme energy and fuel prices. This comes at a time when Sweden's largest economic and social problems are due to high levels of immigration, in combination with failed integration and hundreds of thousands of people living in social exclusion and benefit dependence.

Thirdly, Sweden must emerge from the energy crisis to achieve our climate goals and restore reasonable electricity prices for the Swedish people.

And fourthly, we must lead Sweden into NATO, become a strong member of the Alliance, and equip our defence for a security environment that has not been this uncertain since the Second World War.

As such, my message today is an austere one: this is a very difficult situation. And it could very easily worsen considerably. But my message is also one of hope: we in Sweden have solved difficult problems before, and we can do it again. Generations of Swedes have faced tough times and stood the test.

Mr Speaker,

We have shown a number of times in this Chamber that we can cooperate when it is necessary. Many of you here have seen this firsthand. Even more of you know people who have. In the crisis of the 1990s, for example. During the COVID-19 pandemic. When Russia launched its war of aggression. And not least when we took the historic decision to apply for membership of NATO. I hope that we as parties – and as citizens – are willing to support one another again.

Not because we share the same beliefs about everything, because we don't. Let us honour Swedish democracy by debating openly and doing what our friends in Ukraine currently cannot.

But at the same time let us see the opportunities to cooperate. I will now form a government for the whole of Sweden and for everyone who lives here. A government based on strong values, which therefore has no difficulty respecting the values of others. A government that wants to see what unites us, not just what divides us. That wants to bring people together, not drive them apart. As Prime Minister, I want to lead Sweden from a divided country to a united country. We in this Chamber have a particular responsibility to pursue a mature discourse. Let us assume that responsibility.

Today, I feel confident ahead of the tasks we are facing. That you are facing, and that Sweden's Government and I are facing. This is not because I underestimate Sweden's problems, not in the least. Nor is it because I overestimate our, or my own, abilities – because it will be difficult. It will take time. But it will be possible. Nothing in Sweden is so badly broken that it cannot be fixed using everything great at our disposal.

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Mr Speaker,

Unemployment in Sweden is among the highest in the EU, and our growth is the lowest of any EU Member State. The Swedish growth engine has stalled. Next year, unemployment is forecast to rise from its current level of more than seven per cent.

The fact is that Sweden has historically high levels of unemployment as we potentially face a recession. Inflation in Sweden is verging on ten per cent. In September, interest rates were raised by one percentage point – the largest increase since inflation targets were introduced in 1993. Segments of the business sector are now struggling desperately to survive skyrocketing electricity costs.

The Government will take responsibility. Maintaining order in central government finances is a key task. Fiscal policy must not fuel inflation, and the budget must not be too expansive. Sweden must not end up once again in a wage-price spiral. The budgetary framework is in place, and the central government budget will be taken as a whole.

One of the Government's first tasks will be to help households to get through the coming winter. For this reason, in the short term a high-cost

protection scheme for electricity costs will be introduced for households and businesses, returning part of the high electricity bill costs to consumers. The Government will also act to reduce fuel prices. The amortisation requirement will be re-examined with the relevant government agencies.

To cope with the recession in the longer term, the work-first principle must be safeguarded and Sweden's growth potential must be strengthened. At the same time, our common welfare system must be reliable. The current unemployment insurance benefit levels will continue to apply.

Swedish businesses – not least the many small businesses – need relief from bureaucracy and administration. The Government will take a holistic approach to improve the conditions for business in the long term. The 3:12 rules will be reviewed. A new productivity commission will be appointed to undertake an overall analysis of the competitiveness of the Swedish economy, just as a similar commission did several decades ago.

The Swedish business sector is a hothouse of prosperity and innovation, but now also an important environmental movement – a world leader in sustainability and green transition. The Government will be a proactive partner in these efforts. And all the enterprising people who create jobs, prosperity and impetus deserve our respect. A free economy and free entrepreneurship are the foundation of our prosperity.

Few tasks are as important as overcoming exclusion. Those who are excluded from society, and have lived on benefits year after year, need to transition from benefit dependence to supporting themselves. A major benefit reform will therefore be implemented. This will take place during the electoral period: in part through lower taxes primarily on low and middle income earners, and in part through a benefit ceiling that makes it more worthwhile to work than to live on benefits.

Nothing creates prosperity in a country like work. Nothing counteracts poverty at the individual level like having a job. And nothing enables social mobility like getting your very first job.

Anyone who has worked their whole life has a right to an adequate pension that ensures dignity in old age and a good quality of life. The Government's approach is to produce reforms to reinforce all pensioners' finances, including through reduced tax on pensions. The Government will invite all parties to cross-party discussions on pensions.

The incentives for older people who want to remain in working life will be improved. The experience and expertise of older people are often overlooked in Sweden. Age discrimination may be unintentional, but is still perceptible. It underestimates the capacity of many older people to contribute. The Government will appoint a minister with clear responsibility for all issues related to older people.

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Mr Speaker,

No other country in Europe has had the same trend of violence as Sweden. So far this year there have been 53 fatal shootings – many of them nothing less than executions. Innocent bystanders are also hit and killed by gangland bullets.

Such crime is a threat to the system. It damages the confidence and trust on which Swedish society is built, and is a greater threat to the social contract than any previously experienced by any Swedish politician working today. I take this very seriously.

This Government will now launch the largest offensive against organised crime in Swedish history. Tougher penalties for individual offences are necessary, but not sufficient. The Government will undertake a complete review of the criminal legislation. The focus will shift from the perpetrator to the victim and to protecting society. Penalties must consistently reflect the seriousness of the offence. A new sanction of detention sentences for repeat offenders will be introduced.

A coordinated serious organised crime council will be established at the Ministry of Justice. This council will bring together all relevant government agencies to combat gang crime and lead efforts to rapidly investigate a Danish-style approach to combating Swedish crimes.

The Government intends to double the sentences for offences committed in gang environments and make participation in criminal networks a punishable offence. More criminals who are not Swedish citizens will be expelled from the country, and less account will be taken of ties to Sweden. Anonymous witnesses, exclusion orders, secret coercive measures and temporary stop and search zones will be introduced, and reduced sentences for adult offenders will be abolished. The current form of reduced sentences in case

of multiple offences will be abolished, and the conditional release rules will be stricter.

The Swedish Prison and Probation Service will be substantially expanded, and the possibility of renting prison places abroad will be investigated. The tasks of the Swedish Police Authority will be streamlined, and the Authority will have more employees with higher wages during the electoral period. Police numbers will grow towards a target of officers per capita at least equivalent to the EU average.

All of this will take time. And we should all understand how serious this is – there will be a great deal of conflict when the power of the criminal gangs is threatened. I want to stress the risk that things may get worse before they get better.

The serious criminals who control districts and illegal markets will not surrender them willingly. The gangs that have infiltrated legal activities and that corrupt public authorities and businesses will not cede ground voluntarily. But there is no other way forward. Government must both take up this fight and win it. Security has become the great issue of freedom of our time.

Many things must now be done simultaneously and with a view to the long term. Swedish Customs will be given new tools to fight cross-border crime. Theft rings – who are essentially allowed to steal diesel, car parts, agricultural machinery and boat engines – threaten many people's faith in the rule of law. The humiliating muggings to which many young people are subjected and the ruthless crime targeting many older people will be taken considerably more seriously.

The task of giving all children an honest chance of succeeding is just as important as the task of locking up adults who have exhausted all trust. Preventive measures must therefore be as systematic as law enforcement measures. True evidence-based prevention forestalls social problems and crime.

Priority will be given to crime prevention efforts during this electoral period. The most important environments for crime prevention are functioning families and a strong civil society. Parental responsibility will be reinforced, there will be more parental support programmes, and the Social Services Act will be reformed to give social services a mandate to order more compulsory

measures. More forms of non-institutional support will be established, including family centres, which will be expanded. Ongoing efforts to strengthen the rights of socially vulnerable children will be completed. The experiences and opinions of children and young people will be incorporated into this work.

Schools will be obliged to always report offences committed on or adjacent to school property. Government will take greater responsibility for serious young offenders, and responsibility will shift from municipal social services to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. Special young offenders' prisons will be established under the aegis of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service.

Lethal violence against women has been neglected for decades. Last year, five women were murdered in the space of just three weeks. Stopping men's violence against women is about fighting serious crime, but also about freedom and gender equality. In the Government's view – and my own personal view – no girls or women should have to adapt their lives to violent and controlling men. Anyone suspected of gross violation of a woman's integrity must be subject to mandatory remand, and penalties will be substantially tougher.

Mr Speaker,

Immigration to Sweden has been unsustainable. The result has been dangerous social exclusion among many people born in other countries, but also among children and young people born here in Sweden. The integration problems now affect all of society in the form of housing segregation and overcrowding, unemployment and benefit dependence, health problems and poor school outcomes, crime and vulnerability to crime, honour-based oppression, insecurity and violations of young people's rights.

There has never been a well thought-out approach to how many people can come, and on what terms. The same can be said of what rules are necessary to integrate people into the community when they come from countries with completely different laws, rules and cultures.

This Government's message is that this cannot continue. A paradigm shift is now taking place in Swedish migration policy.

The right of asylum will be upheld through the binding international rules that Sweden has undertaken to follow. The starting point will be that protection will be offered temporarily to those fleeing conflict or crisis in Sweden's neighbourhood. Sweden's asylum reception legislation will be adapted to ensure that it is not more generous than is required of any Member State under EU law. The following reforms will be implemented.

The Government will introduce enhanced possibilities to undertake internal controls of aliens, stricter conditions for family reunification, and incentives for voluntary returns for those who so choose.

Work to introduce transit centres will be launched. Stricter requirements will be introduced for those seeking Swedish citizenship, and it will be possible to withdraw residence permits in more cases. An inquiry will analyse the conditions for reintroducing the possibility to expel non-citizens who demonstrate serious shortcomings in their moral character, for example collaborating with a criminal, violent extremist or other extremist organisation or other environments that threaten fundamental Swedish values.

Reforms will be implemented to reduce the risk of people choosing to come to Sweden on purely financial grounds. An inquiry will be tasked with proposing a model for gradual qualification for Swedish welfare benefits through work or citizenship, for example. The right to financial assistance will be removed for those remaining in the country illegally. Greater activity requirements will be imposed for income support and introduction benefits.

The asylum process will be reviewed, in order to increase quality, uniformity and legal certainty. The review will include criteria for public counsels and assessments of cases concerning converts and LGBTIQ persons.

The Government will make the conditions for labour immigration stricter, including through higher income requirements and prohibiting 'changes of track' to counteract fraud. At the same time, the rules for highly qualified labour immigration and foreign researchers and research students will be improved, to reinforce Sweden's competitiveness as a research nation.

An inquiry will produce proposals on a national ban on begging. A census will be conducted and coordination numbers that are not confirmed will be revoked. Increased use will be made of biometric data in aliens cases, and measures to increase the proportion of enforced expulsions will be

prioritised. Enhanced possibilities to undertake internal controls of aliens will be introduced.

Mr Speaker,

This is a government for everyone who makes an effort and wants to do the right thing – regardless of whether they have immigrated to Sweden or were born here. Over the years, people have come here bringing expertise, entrepreneurship and tax revenues. When integration into Swedish society works, a richer, more tolerant and successful society ensues. But we must never be tolerant of intolerance.

Everyone who comes to Sweden must of course also become part of Swedish society. An inquiry will be appointed to amend the rules on civic orientation for newly arrived immigrants and introductions to Swedish society for asylum seekers. A requirement to learn Swedish and earn a living will be introduced as a condition of being granted Swedish citizenship.

Society's interfaces with children and their families will increase. Child health clinic programmes will be expanded in vulnerable areas to include obligatory language screening. Language preschools will be introduced.

The Government will step up the efforts to combat honour-based oppression. Virginity testing, hymen reconstruction surgery and virginity certification will be criminalised. Interventions will be reinforced for children who disappear suddenly, and it will be possible to impose financial penalties on custodial parents who do not cooperate in returning children. Marriage between cousins will not be permitted. More people who are convicted of honour-based offences will be expelled from the country.

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Mr Speaker,

Four decades ago, Sweden undertook a unique expansion of nuclear energy, leading to electrification that was unprecedented in the world at that time. Until quite recently, Sweden was electrically self-sufficient 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. A total of six fully functioning nuclear power stations have since been closed down for political reasons. This Government's assessment is that this was bad for the business sector, bad for the climate, bad for household finances – and also bad security policy.

Those decisions now make southern and central Sweden, in particular, vulnerable to electricity prices on the continent. The Swedish energy system must be rebuilt, while at the same time, the acute electricity crisis must be mitigated for Swedish households and businesses. The risks are now very great, and nobody can make any definitive promises.

The aim of our energy policy is for Sweden to shift from an impending electricity deficit to an abundance of fossil-free electricity. Sweden's international competitiveness is built on good access to affordable energy. The climate transition and security policy are now two major additional international factors. Neither Sweden nor Europe can be allowed to be dependent on Russian energy production.

In the short term, the risk of acute financial problems – with households and businesses forced to bear the entire cost of energy policy failures – must be eliminated. The Government will therefore introduce a high-cost protection scheme. At the same time, broad measures will be taken to reduce energy consumption with a view to reducing the risk of unplanned power outages. The Government intends to reinforce and expand energy efficiency support for private individuals.

Secondly, the Government will immediately give the Swedish National Grid a clearer mandate to procure plannable electricity production where it is most needed to increase electricity production, and investigate the possibility of resuming plannable electricity production in southern Sweden. The price impact must be mitigated. All new electricity production that strengthens the power system, or contributes to the rapid expansion of the power system, is needed. This includes wind and solar power. Reviews of environmental permits for hydroelectric power plants will be paused. Flowing waterways and fish migration routes will be recreated while preserving electricity production.

Thirdly, the Government will underscore the significance of energy policy to climate policy. The energy policy target will be changed from 100 per cent 'renewable' to 100 per cent 'fossil-free'.

The conditions for maintaining, developing and expanding Swedish nuclear power will be radically improved, so as to meet the massive need for clean Swedish electricity for both households and the green transition.

At a later date, the Government will propose credit guarantees for new construction of Swedish nuclear power plants, alongside legislative amendments to enable new nuclear power production via shorter permit processes and administrative fast tracks, for example. The prohibition of new reactors in new locations and of more than ten simultaneously active reactors will be removed from the Swedish Environmental Code. Vattenfall will receive owner directives to commence planning and procurement of new Swedish nuclear power facilities.

The development of rural areas is crucial to the success of Sweden as a whole. In this area, the Government has a concerted focus: the whole of Sweden must be given conditions for living. The possibility to travel to work and with your family are fundamental. The reduction obligation will be reduced to the minimum EU level on 1 January 2024 and apply for this electoral period.

Swedish forestry is crucial to Sweden's climate action. Our growing forests are crucial to biodiversity. The Government will wholeheartedly stand up for sustainable Swedish forestry, providing for future generations. Protection of ownership rights will be strengthened in certain areas. The competitiveness of Swedish food production will be strengthened.

There are major needs in Swedish infrastructure, and maintenance has been neglected. Investments in the railways must primarily facilitate commuting and goods transports, which strengthen jobs and growth.

Environmental problems are one of the great cross-border issues of our time. Sweden's climate and environment policy will be ambitious. A programme for international climate investments in accordance with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement will be developed. These investments will contribute to achieving the Swedish climate objective of net-zero emissions by 2045. Major investments will be made in charging infrastructure and carbon capture technology.

Special initiatives will also be undertaken to counter eutrophication in the Baltic Sea and to push back the boundaries for large-scale trawling.

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Mr Speaker,

We are facing the greatest foreign, security and defence policy challenges of modern times.

Russia is challenging the free world with its authoritarian domestic policy and aggressive foreign policy. With its unjust and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has violated the peace in Europe – an attack on both the international legal order and the possibilities for effective intergovernmental collaboration.

In response to Russia's war, the EU and NATO have demonstrated unity, solidarity and determination in difficult circumstances. It is a show of strength from the western democracies.

In these dangerous times, foreign and security policy must be reoriented to meet the threats facing Sweden and Europe. Russia's war of aggression and the defence of Ukraine's freedom and sovereignty will be the defining focus areas of our foreign policy in the coming years.

In light of this, the Government will pursue a primarily Swedish and European foreign policy. Protecting Swedish interests and standing up for democratic values are at the core of this policy. Just as it goes without saying that Sweden will always pursue dialogue to contribute to resolving differences, we will never hesitate to look after our vital interests.

Sweden's foreign policy is best pursued together with other countries that share our fundamental values. This takes place in the EU and, not least, together with our Nordic and Baltic neighbours. Closer and stronger Nordic collaboration is essential, both for our region's collective influence in the EU and for our own contribution to security in the framework of our future NATO membership.

The rules-based international system, respect for the UN Charter and protection of human rights remain fundamental to our foreign policy. We take this for granted, while at the same time millions of Iranians are fighting for their freedom. Sweden will never accept that aggressive states violate democratic countries' freedom and self-determination. Might does not make right.

China's latest rhetoric towards Taiwan is worrying. Threats of military force are unacceptable. This applies to all countries, and most particularly to permanent members of the UN Security Council. Sweden's relations with China should be anchored in a common European strategy with a clear transatlantic link.

We face three central foreign, defence and security policy challenges in the coming electoral period.

Firstly, to complete the NATO accession process together with Finland, then to strengthen Sweden's defence and live up to our obligations as a member, and finally to systematically integrate ourselves into NATO's various structures. This paradigm shift in Swedish defence and security policy will guide the Government's work.

The Government will therefore follow through resolutely on the three-party agreement between Sweden, Türkiye and Finland both prior to NATO accession and as a member. Participation in terrorist organisations will be prohibited. Collaboration with the Swedish Social Democratic Party as regards NATO will continue. The broad consensus on NATO membership is a strength for Sweden.

As a NATO member, Sweden will contribute to the security of the entire Alliance. We will contribute our unique capabilities on land, on and below the sea, and in the air. The build-up of Sweden's total defence must be intensified. All branches of the armed services will be strengthened and continuously adapted to the rapid technical developments in all areas. The defence industry has long been an asset to Sweden, and through NATO membership it will become an asset for others.

Sweden will meet its commitment to spend two per cent of GDP on defence as soon as possible, but no later than 2026. The basis for calculating the two per cent target should be updated to match NATO's as soon as possible. We will seek broad political support – for example within the Defence Commission – on how to meet this target. The civilian components of total defence must also be strengthened. Resilience to hybrid threats will be enhanced, and cyber security must be improved. For this reason, responsibility for civilian defence and crisis preparedness will be moved from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Defence, where a special minister for civil defence will be appointed.

To coordinate Sweden's security policy activity, a national security council will be established, led by the prime minister and based on international models. A new national security strategy will be developed. This, in turn, will be the basis of the defence programme that the Government plans to present to the Riksdag. The Government will soon appoint the first national security policy adviser, whose tasks will include leading the security council's operational work.

Secondly, we will shoulder the Presidency of the Council of the EU starting on 1 January 2023. The EU is Sweden's most important foreign policy platform and is also essential to Sweden's economy. Sweden will be an active, engaged and proactive member of the EU – before, during and after the Presidency.

The parties represented in the Riksdag have, through broad consensus, identified a number of specific priority areas for our Presidency. These include creating security for EU citizens and jointly supporting Ukraine. Equally important are energy supply, climate transition and strengthening the EU's competitiveness – not least through greater focus on digital transformation and technology policy, in collaboration with the United States. With our open and export-dependent economy, it is in Sweden's interest to strengthen the European single market, the digital single market and the EU's position as a trade bloc.

Thirdly, we must provide as much support as possible to war-torn Ukraine – politically, economically and in terms of security. A long-term and cohesive programme for civilian reconstruction and military support will be developed. This includes transfer of more qualified weapons systems.

Sweden's aid policy remains generous. The development assistance framework will be established for three years, but will no longer be linked to GNI. It is results that will be calculated, not a disbursement target. The core support will be redirected from multilateral organisations to civil society. In addition to increased support to Ukraine, thematic priorities will be established with a focus on humanitarian aid, poverty reduction and health initiatives for the most vulnerable; democracy aid to human rights defenders and champions of democracy; expanded and streamlined climate aid, and women's and girls' rights and opportunities.

Development assistance policy will also be focused as a tool to counteract irregular migration, increase repatriation and effectively contribute to

voluntary returns. Development assistance will also encompass effective measures to reduce the root causes of migration.

In the long term, trade and economic development pave the way from poverty to prosperity. In this Government, a single minister will therefore be responsible for development assistance and foreign trade. The incoming minister for development assistance and foreign trade will be given special responsibility for Sweden's support to the reconstruction of Ukraine.

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Mr Speaker,

High-quality education and research are essential to Sweden's prosperity. After several years of declining outcomes, the major reforms implemented under the Alliance Government have borne long-term results.

At the same time, Swedish schools have serious problems. Many children start school with deficient linguistic skills and lacking help with their homework at home. Integration places completely new demands on school policy – but children must never be used as tool for integration.

Government responsibility will be enhanced to increase equality. Steps will be taken to introduce a nationally binding school voucher standard, and national investments in textbooks will be made. School policy documents will be reformed with a focus on learning and knowledge. To help pupils in need of support, additional specialist teachers will be hired, and more pupils will be taught in special study groups. At the same time, investments will be made to introduce more classes for gifted pupils.

Schools will have the authority to prescribe extra study time for pupils who need additional support outside of their regular school time. Catch-up school will be offered for younger pupils, which will require both regulatory amendments and government funding. An inquiry will be appointed to review mother tongue instruction.

The responsibility of head teachers to ensure security and conducive study environments will be incorporated into the Education Act. School management teams will have a mandate to determine rules of conduct. Teachers' authority will be strengthened, and administrative burdens reduced. A broad review will be conducted with the aim of freeing up

additional working hours for planning and teaching. The Education Act's excessive requirements to document pupils will be limited, and the career path reform will be developed.

Sweden's unique independent school system will be improved through concrete reforms. National quality requirements will be adopted, and the introduction of digital national tests that are corrected centrally will be accelerated. It will be obligatory to choose a school, and queue times will be shortened dramatically compared with today.

A sanctions scale will be introduced, with harsher penalties, administrative fines and the possibility to replace management teams or impose compulsory management. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate will strengthen its review of schools with a confessional focus, and forceful measures will be taken against extremism and radical Islamism. Profits must not be disbursed during the initial years following a school's establishment or takeover by a new owner. The aim is to guarantee long-term ownership and ensure that those who start up or take over an independent school have adequate financial resources. A transparency principle will be introduced for independent schools, corresponding to the current principle of public access.

The need for qualified labour is currently acute in many sectors. To secure the skills supply, the offering of training courses, particularly in adult education, will be adapted to a greater extent to the demands of the labour market and needs of professionals. Vocational training will be improved with a focus on quality.

Higher education institutions contribute significantly to the development of society and competitiveness of the business sector. The holistic concept of education is important and should not be seen as antithetical to professional skill and employability. Higher education institutions will be governed with greater emphasis on principles of quality of education and scientific excellence rather than purely volume-based targets. Science and research must remain independent of political control.

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Mr Speaker,

Sweden has very high-quality health and medical care – when it is available. Even before the pandemic, health care queues had already doubled since

2014. Queues for child and adolescent psychiatric services tripled during the same period.

Less than half of all women with breast cancer receive care in time – and the same holds true of more than two thirds of men with prostate cancer. This is an enormous failure.

The Government intends to increase national responsibility for health care. National health care leadership is needed. An inquiry will be appointed to investigate the pros and cons of introducing partial or complete central government responsibility in the longer term. A common national digital infrastructure will be introduced.

A national health care referral centre under state management will be established, through which available capacity will be determined and patients will have the opportunity to seek care throughout the country. A national long-term strategy to create more care places will be adopted.

A comprehensive expansion of primary care will be initiated, with the aim of providing more general practitioners and district nurses within primary care. The right to continuity of care will be followed up.

A special investment will be made in equitable local health care that ensures patient safety, focused on rural and sparsely populated areas. A special investment will be made in cancer care and children's cancer care, including aftercare and rehabilitation.

An inquiry will be appointed to strengthen high-cost protection in dental care so as to better match the protection offered for other forms of health care. Older people who have the greatest dental care needs will be prioritised.

People with disabilities must be able to participate fully in society without being subjected to discrimination. Integrating the disability rights perspective into more political and societal areas remains a focus. Measures for overall central government responsibility for personal assistance within the framework of the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments will be considered.

A greater emphasis will be placed on more equitable health care, women's diseases and research on women's diseases and health. Young women should

not have to accept that it is normal to live with pain. A special emphasis will be made on addressing migraines, endometriosis and menopausal care. Legislation will be amended to also enable abortions at home. A national maternity care plan will be developed to increase availability and reduce regional differences. As many women as possible will have access to a team of midwives before, during and after birth.

Few issues are as vital as reaching children and young people suffering from mental health problems. The statistics are bad enough. But for those who have someone close to them with mental health problems, it is anything but statistics – it is deeply and personally tragic. Many of us have experienced it in someone close to us.

Statutory health care guarantees will be introduced to ensure that children in need of help and support will receive it within 30 days. School health and welfare services will be strengthened, every school will have school health care and school health guarantees will be introduced. The new national strategy for mental health and suicide prevention will be presented by 1 September 2023. A national research programme will be established.

A national coordinator with overall responsibility for suicide prevention efforts will be appointed. Follow-up of patients with suicidal behaviour will be an integral part of the care process. Every time a person takes their life, an ‘investigation commission’ will be appointed so that social services, schools, police and health and medical care services can conduct an inquiry and learn lessons for the future.

Mental health is a matter of laws and regulations, but also of compassion. More people must care and show that they care. More people need to talk about mental health problems and take care of each other. Politicians can do much more, but they can’t do everything.

The importance of the Swedish sports movement to public health and cohesion cannot be understated. The Government intends to present a number of initiatives during the electoral period.

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Mr Speaker,

Free media, independent research and a dynamic cultural life are indispensable components of an open society. Culture and its practitioners are an indispensable part of civil society and keep the democratic discussion alive.

The Government's cultural policy is informed by a number of important objectives. The principle of keeping an arm's length, which frees the culture sector from politicisation and undue control. Both quality and accessibility will be encouraged. The conditions for cultural creators will be improved through more long scholarships and more favourable conditions for self-employment.

Sweden will stand up for ambassadors of free speech: the Government will continue the efforts to secure the release of journalist Dawit Isaak and author and poet Gui Minhai, both unilaterally and in collaboration with other democracies. Lessons learned from the review will be published shortly.

Culture and our shared history are the basis of our collective identity. They create cohesion and enhance our mutual understanding. Standalone expert committees will draft proposals for the Swedish cultural canon. An investigation will be carried out to ensure that organisations that receive funds from the Swedish Inheritance Fund follow democratic values.

A strong democracy requires a diversity of strong, free and independent media. Public service media's long-term funding will be maintained and safeguarded as part of the democratic infrastructure. This is the strategic direction for the licence period 2026–2033.

The ongoing Working Committee on Constitutional Reform, whose purpose is to strengthen the independence of the courts, will complete its work based on its terms of reference. A new working committee on constitutional reform will be appointed to review how the right to abortion can be strengthened by protecting it under the Instrument of Government. A statutory responsibility of public officials will be introduced. Efforts to combat antisemitism will be prioritised, and an inquiry will review prohibiting foreign financing of faith communities to counteract radical Islamism and separatism, among other things.

In Sweden, everyone has a right to be who they are and love whomever they choose. The Government stands up for the rights of LGBTIQ people, regardless of who tries to restrict or violate them. A proposal to prohibit conversion therapy under threat or coercion will be investigated.

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Mr Speaker,

The Government is assuming responsibility for a fantastic country. We are now all, and in various ways, responsible for Sweden's future. But we can also learn from Sweden's history.

Sweden tackled the oil crisis of the 1970s with an entirely new energy policy, broke the link between growth and increasing emissions, and become one of the world's first almost completely fossil-free industrial countries. Following the outbidding policy of the 1980s, we faced facts and in the 1990s staked a course based on an austere budgetary framework, low national debt and well-managed public finances. At a time when almost half a million people retired early and Sweden had twice as many people on sick leave as other countries, we revived the work-first principle in the 2000s. I am convinced that it is time to do it again. We are facing a historically important task.

Therefore, I want to ask the Swedish people to prepare themselves for difficult times. But I can also promise that the new Government will do everything in its power to provide good leadership along the way. Public servants are here to serve the people – never the other way round.

Our four parties went to the polls to speak honestly about the severity of the situation and sought a mandate to tackle Sweden's major problems. We remain humble in the face of this immense task. But we are also resolute in taking it on.

Sweden will be a country where the law and gender equality apply to all. A country where every child gets to see their parents go to work, and where it always pays to work and do your best. A country where climate-smart wind, water and nuclear energy provide clean, reliable and cheap electricity. A country where green innovations, world-leading education and research, and new jobs – not riots and shootings – are what put Sweden in the international headlines.

The Sweden that we love is distinguished by the dynamic between freedom and responsibility. The freedom to decide over our own lives. To choose our own path. And to take responsibility for each other, because we are by no means stronger alone.

Freedom and responsibility are Sweden's lodestars, and my Government will navigate by them.

