

500 years of parliament in Sweden

FROM ROYAL POWER TO PEOPLE'S POWER

Sweden is a democracy and our parliament – the Riksdag – consists of the people's elected representatives. Over the centuries, the power and tasks of parliament have varied.

Today, the Riksdag has five tasks: adopting laws, determining the central government budget, examining the Government, shaping foreign policy together with the Government and examining EU-related work.

This exhibition showcases the development of the role and work procedures of parliament in Sweden over the last 500 years – from the parliamentary session in 1523 to our modern-day parliament.

Visit www.riksdagen.se to read more about 500 years of parliament in Sweden.

In 1523, Sweden left the union with Norway and Denmark and has been an independent state since then. At the parliamentary session in Strängnäs on 6 June, Gustav Vasa was elected King, and parliamentary meetings began to be held at regular intervals.

In the 500 years that have passed since then, parliament in Sweden has undergone major changes. There have been ongoing power struggles between the King and the Riksdag. For many years, the members of the Riksdag were not elected by means of general elections. Today, the Riksdag serves as the democratic basis of our system of government by the people.

Image: Gustav Vasa was elected King at Roggeborgen, Strängnäs.



Sweden is a democracy, which means government by the people or people's power. Every four years, all citizens in Sweden elect the members of the Riksdag.

This has not always been the case. In the 16th century, Gustav Vasa held the first meetings of the Riksdag of the Estates, with representatives of the Nobility, Clergy, Burghers and Peasantry. However, just a minority of the population enjoyed the right to vote. Most women did not have this right.

In 1809, Sweden adopted a new Instrument of Government, which divided the political power between the King and the Riksdag. The Riksdag of the Estates was abolished in 1866, when Sweden introduced a bicameral (two-chamber) Riksdag.

In 1921, Sweden held its first elections with universal and equal suffrage. Both men and women had one vote each and were eligible for election to the Riksdag. However, many groups in society still lacked the right to vote.

In 1971, the two-chamber system was abandoned in favour of today's unicameral system.

Image: The East and West Wings of the Riksdag on either side of Riksgatan.



Art. 1 All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people.

From The Instrument of Government, Chapter 1

Art. 4 The Riksdag is the foremost representative of the people.

From The Instrument of Government, Chapter 1

Common ground rules or laws have been needed throughout history. During the Middle Ages, political and legal matters were determined in the things (courts). Only landowners and free men were permitted to participate in the decisions.

For a long time, the provinces had their own laws, but in the mid-14th century, Sweden adopted its first national law: the National Law of King Magnus Eriksson.

Gustav Vasa's ascension to the throne in 1523 was followed by tug-of-war that continued for centuries between the King and the Riksdag over the right to enact laws. With the advent of democracy, the Riksdag took over the legislative power.

Today, the Government presents proposals for new laws to the Riksdag. These proposals are known as government bills. The Riksdag then takes decisions on the proposals.

Image: A strike of the gavel confirms the adoption of a new law in the Chamber of the Riksdag.



Public power is exercised under the law.
From The Instrument of Government, Chap. 1 Art. 1

Central government revenue and expenditure are known as the central government budget.

During the 17th century, the power to approve taxes was transferred increasingly to the Riksdag. Previously, it was the King who negotiated taxes at the meetings of the things.

Until the end of the 19th century, taxes were paid to the King's bailiffs. In addition to money, taxes were often paid in products such as charcoal, eggs, butter, cheese, salted herring and barrels of rye.

Taxes in those days often went to warfare. Today's taxes go, for example, to child allowances, the police, roads, and sickness and unemployment support.

Today, it is the Government that proposes how the money is to be used, but the Riksdag takes the actual decision. The Riksdag also decides on certain taxes.

Image: The bailiffs of the day collected taxes at the request of the King. Today, central government finances are presented in the Budget Bill.

PROP. 2019/20:1

Tabell 7.17 Volymier inom olika transfereringssystem 2020–2022
Förändringar mot 2019 års ekonomiska vårproposition

Utgiftsområde	2020	2021	2022
8 Asylsökande, genomsnittligt antal inskrivna per dygn	-14 000	-25 700	-35 800
9 Antal personer med assistansersättning	-216	-307	-414
10 Antal sjukpenningdagar (netto), miljoner	-2,6	-3,2	-3,5
13 Genomsnittligt antal nyanlända som kommunerna får schablonersättning för	2 982	11 947	16 782

Anm.: Volymuppgifter om antal personer avser årsgenomsnitt och är avrundade. Endast ett urval volymer med större förändringar mot beslutad budget för 2019 redovisas i tabellen. Se tabell 7.11 för könsuppdelade utfall.
Källa: Egna beräkningar.

Tekniska justeringar

Vissa av de förslag som regeringen lämnar i denna proposition motiveras tekniska justeringar av utgiftstakets nivå (se tabell 7.14). Dessa budgetförändringar uppgår sammanlagt till 4,2 miljarder kronor per år fr.o.m. 2020. Den enskilt största tekniska justeringen beror på att statsbidragen till kommunerna föreslås höjas för att neutralisera att skatteintäkterna till kommunerna blir lägre till följd av den föreslagna justeringen för personer över 65 år. I praktiken avrundas de årsvisa tekniska justeringarna till hela miljarder kronor och uppgår till 4,2 miljarder kronor per år årligen 2020–2022 (se tabell 7.14).

Övriga utgiftsförändringar

Utgiftsprognoserna kan revideras till följd av justeringar som motiveras av ny information. Detta gäller inte avser makroekonomiska förutsättningar, t.ex. nya prognosmetoder, korrigeringar av tidigare gjorda fel och regeländringar som kräver regeringens direkta kontroll, t.ex. ändringar i rättsakter.

Jämfört med 2019 års ekonomiska vårproposition revideras övriga utgifter för 2020–2022 främst på grund av ändringar i antaganden om EU-avgiften. Dels kräver Europeiska kommissionen göra en återbetalning till Sverige efter en översyn av inkomster från 1995 fram till i dag, dels kräver kommissionens förslag till budget för 2020 beaktad i prognosen.

7.5 Uppföljning av utgifterna i statens budget och takbegränsade utgifter 2019

Utgiftsramarna för 2019 följer dels av budgeten för 2019, dels av de ramar som bestäms av riksdagen efter förslag i propositionen Vårändringsbudget för 2019. Därutöver föreslås i propositionen Höständringsbudget för 2019. I tabell 7.18 redovisas den totala budgeten för 2019, samt beräkningarna för de nämnda propositionerna.

Statens utgifter under 2019 beräknas till att understiga de utgiftsramar som fastställts. I den nu aktuella prognosen för utgifterna under samtliga utgiftsområden under 2019 beräknas utgifterna sammanlagt 1 018 miljarder kronor. Slutligen beräknas den slutade budgeten för 2019 till 1 030 miljarder kronor. Inklusivt med utgifter för 2019 uppgår utgifterna totalt uppgå till 1 019 miljarder kronor. Med hänsyn tagen till ovan angivna budgetar har totalt 1 036 miljarder kronor anvisats.



The Riksdag determines taxes and charges to central government, and approves the central government budget.

From The Instrument of Government, Chap. 9 Art. 1

PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL

Through the ages, the Riksdag has tried to examine the work of the kings and the governments of the day. In the 17th century, Sweden developed more uniform public administration structures. However, incompetence and corruption were common. Major reforms were implemented in the latter part of the 19th century, with the purpose of achieving a more professional public administration.

The principle that the Government could not remain in office without the support of the Riksdag was introduced in the early 20th century.

Today, the Government has considerable power, which is why various procedures are in place with which to examine it. If the Riksdag is dissatisfied with the Government, the Riksdag can force the Government to resign.

The Committee on the Constitution examines the Government's compliance with existing rules. The National Audit Office, an authority under the Riksdag, examines how central government funds are used.

Image: The Riksdag Act lays down the Riksdag's work procedures. The first Riksdag Act was adopted in 1723, and the most recent one in 2014.



The Riksdag examines the government and administration of the country.
From The Instrument of Government, Chap. 1 Art. 4

The Government governs the country. It is accountable to the Riksdag.
From The Instrument of Government, Chap. 1 Art. 6

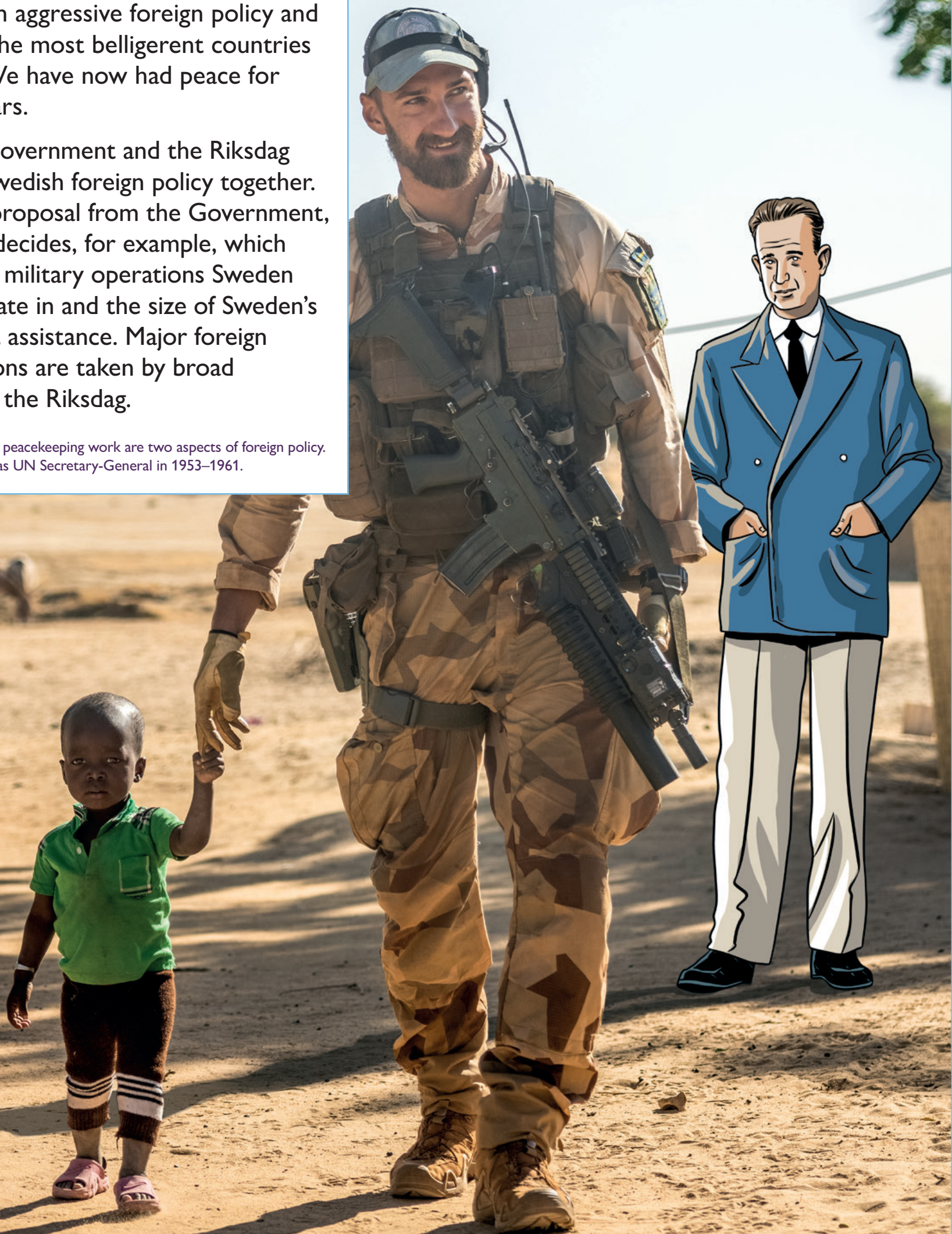
FOREIGN POLICY

For many years, foreign policy was an area in which the Riksdag had little influence. Instead, it was the King and the Swedish Foreign Service that were responsible for relations with the rest of the world.

During the 17th century, Sweden conducted an aggressive foreign policy and was one of the most belligerent countries in Europe. We have now had peace for over 200 years.

Today, the Government and the Riksdag determine Swedish foreign policy together. Following a proposal from the Government, the Riksdag decides, for example, which international military operations Sweden shall participate in and the size of Sweden's development assistance. Major foreign policy decisions are taken by broad consensus in the Riksdag.

Image: Diplomacy and peacekeeping work are two aspects of foreign policy. Dag Hammarskjöld was UN Secretary-General in 1953–1961.



The Riksdag's approval is required before the Government concludes an international agreement which is binding upon the country.

From The Instrument of Government, Chap. 10 Art. 3



THE EU



Following World War II, six countries initiated a collaboration with the purpose of securing peace in Europe and preventing an arms race. This cooperation has developed into the European Union (EU).

Over the years, the number of member states and areas for cooperation have grown. Today, the EU has 27 member states. Together, they have created a common market for goods and services. EU citizens are free to move between the countries to work or study.

Sweden became a member of the EU in 1995. As a result of this membership, the Riksdag has handed over part of its legislative power to the EU. There, joint decisions are taken about certain laws and rules that the member states are obliged to follow.

The Government represents Sweden in the EU and consults the Riksdag on which policies Sweden should pursue in the EU.

Image: The EU flag symbolises the unity of Europe, and flies in front of the Riksdag buildings.



Sweden is a member of the European Union.

From The Instrument of Government, Chap. 1 Art. 10