

How the Riksdag works



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The people elect their representatives

For just over 100 years, Sweden has been a democracy where the people have the ultimate power. The Instrument of Government – one of the laws that make up the Constitution of Sweden – opens as follows:

“All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people.”

Decisions concerning laws, taxes, education and other matters that affect many people must, in other words, be based on the will of the people.

In practice, democracy is realised through a representative and parliamentary form of government.

It is representative as the people elect their political representatives through elections. Every four years, the voters have the chance to elect their representatives to the Swedish Parliament (the Riksdag), the regions and the municipalities. The politicians that are elected go on to take decisions on laws, taxes and other political issues. In addition, elections to the European Parliament are held every five years.

The fact that Sweden has a *parliamentary form of government* means that the Swedish Government's policies must be accepted by the parliament. The Prime Minister and Government

can, in other words, only implement proposals that have the approval of the Riksdag, which has been elected by the people. That is why the following is also stated in the Instrument of Government:

“The Riksdag is the foremost representative of the people.”

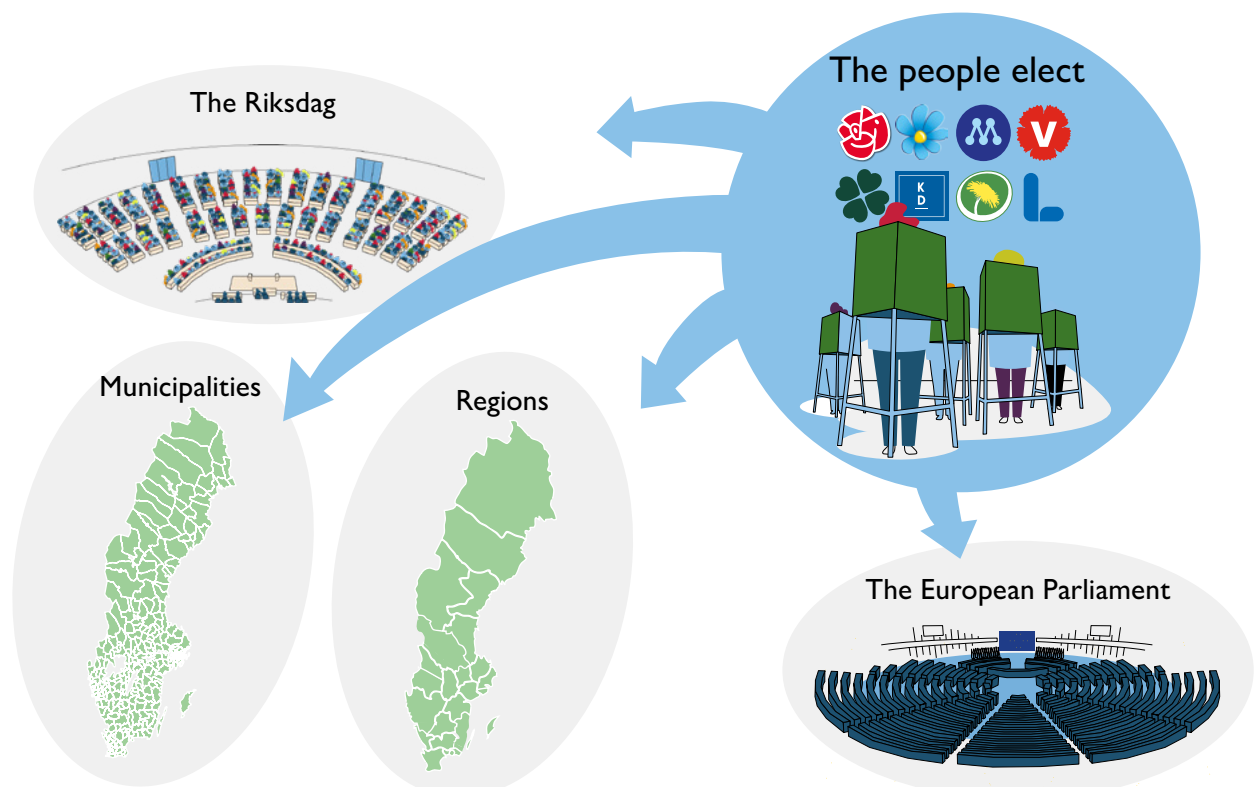
Direct democracy at referendums

Sweden's system of government is based primarily on indirect, representative democracy.

Direct democracy sometimes occurs in the form of referendums. These give the voters an opportunity to vote on a specific political question. The decision to hold a national referendum is made by the Riksdag. Local referendums can also be held in municipalities and regions.

Referendums on political issues are consultative. This means that the results of the vote do not compel the Riksdag to take a specific decision. The idea is that the vote should guide the Riksdag's forthcoming position.

The latest national referendum was held in 2003. It was then that the Swedes voted no to introducing the euro as Sweden's currency. The parties in the Riksdag observed the will of the people and retained the Swedish krona.





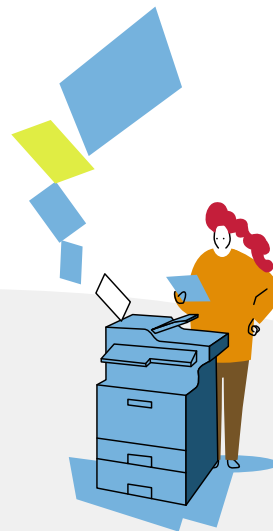
The fundamental laws and the Riksdag Act

Democratic systems can be organised in many different ways. Sweden has four fundamental laws that describe how the country is to be governed. Fundamental laws are more difficult to change than other laws. To make an amendment to a fundamental law, the Riksdag must adopt two decisions of identical wording with a general election between.

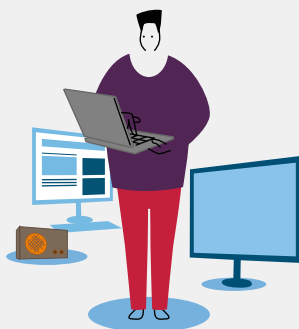
In addition to the provisions of the Instrument of Government, the work of the Riksdag is regulated by the Riksdag Act. Other laws such as the Elections Act, Local Government Act and Administrative Procedure Act also serve to clarify the provisions of the fundamental laws.



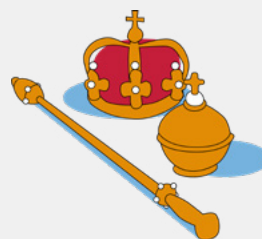
The **Instrument of Government** establishes the principles for democracy in Sweden, the people's rights and freedoms and the division of responsibilities between the Riksdag and the Government.



The **Freedom of the Press Act** gives citizens the right to publish books, journals and other printed matter. Public authorities cannot prohibit or censor material prior to publication. The Freedom of the Press Act also regulates the right to access information from public authorities and courts in accordance with the principle of public access to official documents.



The **Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression** protects the right to broadcast radio and television and to publish texts, images and videos on the Internet.



The **Act of Succession** regulates the succession to the throne in Sweden, that is, who can become king or queen, and thus head of state. Sweden's head of state only has representative duties and has no political power.



At the request of the Speaker, King Carl XVI Gustaf, who is Sweden's head of state, declares the Riksdag session open. The opening ceremony in September marks the start of the parliamentary working year.

PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

The Riksdag's five tasks

The Riksdag is the highest democratically elected assembly in Sweden, and consists of 349 members who are elected every four years in general elections. The election results determine how the 349 seats in the Riksdag are distributed among the parties. The primary tasks of the Riksdag are to:



- make laws



- work with EU matters



- determine the central government budget



- shape Sweden's foreign policy together with the Government.



- examine the work of the Government

Parliamentary elections every four years

Elections to the Riksdag are held every four years on the second Sunday in September.

This is a chance for voters to go to the polling stations to elect the individuals who are to represent them in parliament. Anyone who is unable to get to a polling station on election day can vote in advance. Elections to the regional and municipal councils are held on the same day as the parliamentary elections.

The voters vote for one of the political parties that is standing for election. The parties select their candidates, that is, the individuals who are standing for election. The names of the candidates are listed on the parties' ballot papers. Seats as members of parliament are allocated to the candidates in the order in which they are listed on the ballot papers. If a voter prefers to vote for another candidate, personal preference voting is possible by marking a name on the ballot paper with a cross, or adding a name.

All Swedish citizens who have reached the age of 18 by election day and who are or have been registered as resident in Sweden are eligible to vote in parliamentary elections.

Everyone with the right to vote is also eligible for election, which means that they can stand as a candidate for a party in an election.

Almost 7.8 million Swedes were entitled to vote in the 2022 parliamentary elections.

Voter turnout was 84.2 per cent, which is high by international standards.

“Swedish democracy is founded on the free formation of opinion and on universal and equal suffrage. [...] The Riksdag is appointed by means of free, secret and direct elections.”

From the Instrument of Government.

Free formation of opinion: all voters are free to think, hold and express opinions as they wish.

Universal suffrage: the right to vote applies to everyone, regardless of income, gender or ethnicity.

Equal suffrage: everyone's vote is of equal value. Your vote carries the same weight as the Prime Minister's.

Free elections: voters must be able to make free and independent choices. No one may be forced or tricked into voting in a particular way.

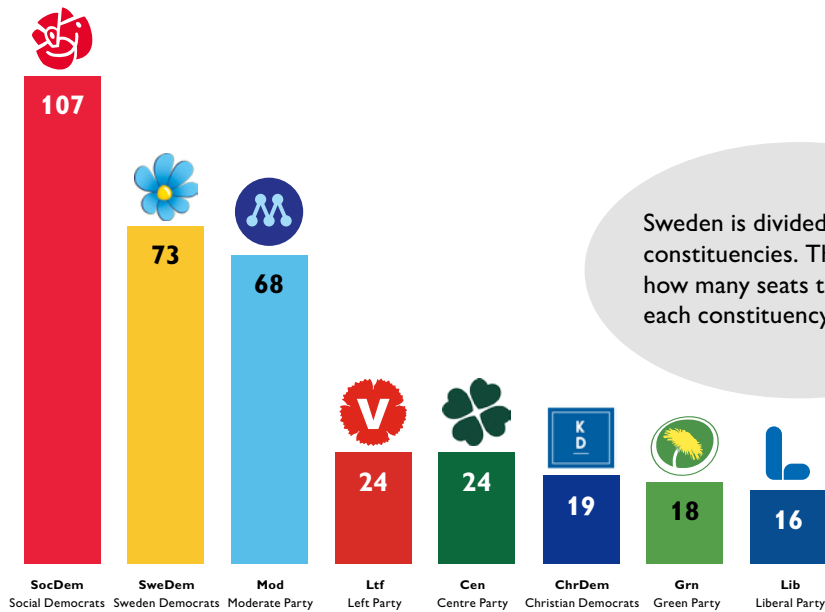
Secret elections: voters are not obliged to reveal their political opinions or how they have voted to anyone.

Direct elections: the members of the Riksdag are elected directly by the voters, without any intermediaries.

On election day, everyone with the right to vote can vote at a polling station. It is also possible to vote in advance. The ballot papers are first placed in an envelope which is then put into the ballot box.

PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND/ ANDERS LÖWDIN





The distribution of seats in the Riksdag after the 2022 parliamentary elections.

From vote to seat in the Riksdag

After the election, the votes are counted and the results are converted into 349 seats in the Riksdag. The distribution is proportional; a party that receives 20 per cent of the votes in the elections receives approximately 20 per cent of the seats in the Riksdag.

Parties must receive at least 4 per cent of the votes in order to be given seats in the Riksdag. The four per cent threshold exists to avoid a parliament consisting of many small parties. A large number of small parties with different opinions would make it more difficult for a government to be formed. Since the 2010 elections, there have been eight parties in the Riksdag.

The seats in the Riksdag are distributed geographically, based on Sweden's 29 constituencies.

This means that the members who are elected to the Riksdag come from all parts of the country.

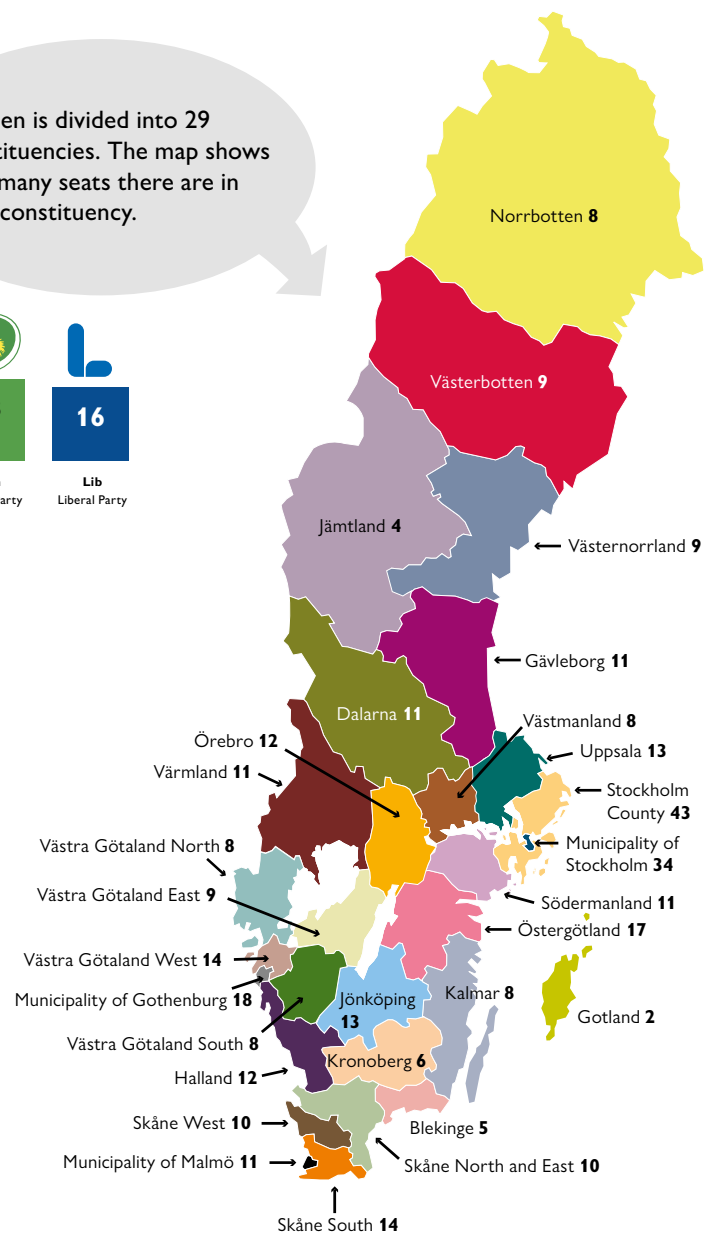


PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND



The relationship between the Riksdag and the Government

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy. The Government governs the country by presenting proposals for new laws, proposing amendments to existing legislation and implementing the Riksdag's decisions, but it must also have the support of the Riksdag to be able to implement its policies. If the Government loses the support of the Riksdag, it may be forced to resign.

An election often involves changes in the composition of the Riksdag; some parties gain more seats, while others get fewer. If the Government that has led Sweden before the election loses its support in the Riksdag, the Prime Minister can choose to resign voluntarily. If the Prime Minister chooses to remain in office, a vote on the Prime Minister is held. If more than half of the members of the Riksdag vote no to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister must resign. Since the 2014 elections, a vote on the Prime Minister is obligatory following an election.

The Riksdag can force a government to resign through a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister. If more than half of the members of the Riksdag, that is, at least 175 members, vote in favour of a vote of no confidence, the Government must resign or call an extraordinary election, that is, an election that is held between general elections.

A government can also resign for other reasons. One reason may be that the Government considers a particular matter to be so important that it resigns if it loses a vote on the matter in the Chamber. This is known as declaring the matter a "cabinet issue".

If a government resigns, it remains in office as a

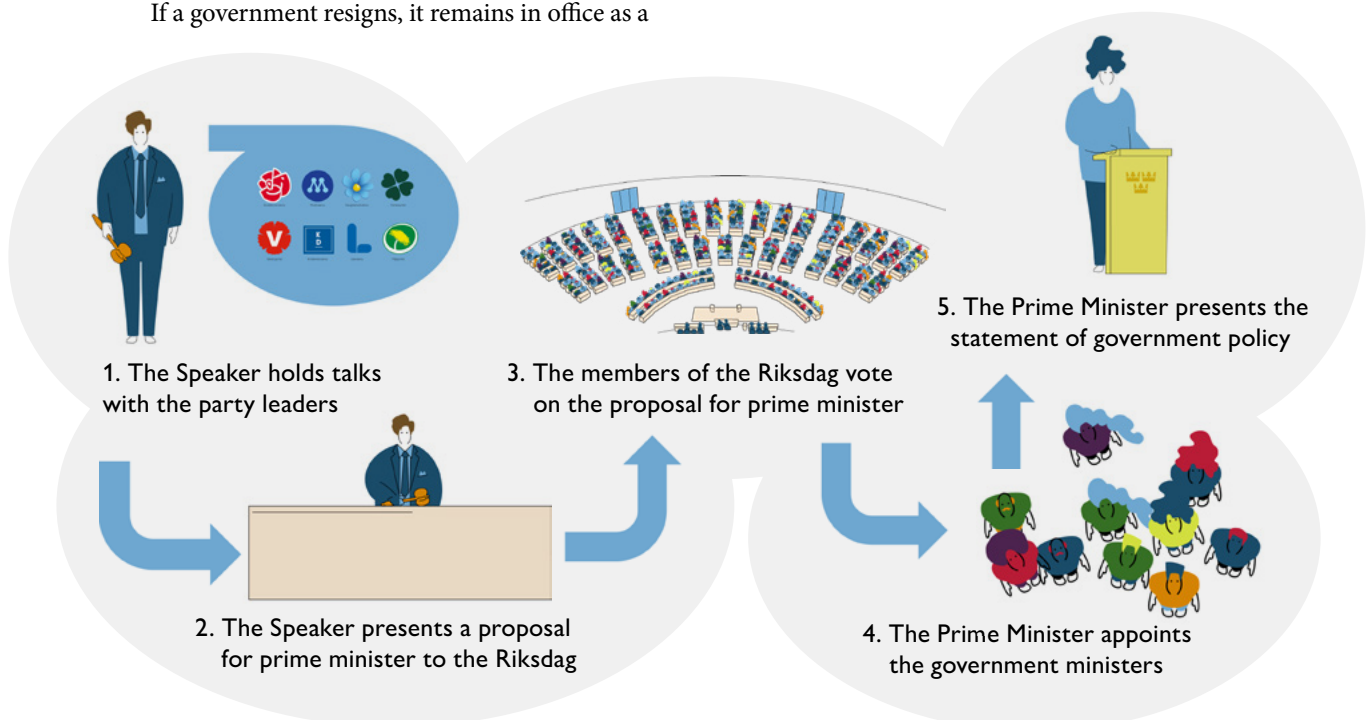
caretaker government until a new prime minister has been elected. A caretaker government attends to routine matters, but does not usually take any new political initiatives, such as presenting legislative proposals to the Riksdag.

Forming a new government

Once a new government is to be formed, it is the task of the Speaker of the Riksdag to prepare a proposal for a new prime minister. The Speaker holds talks with representatives of all the parties in the Riksdag in order to examine which candidate for prime minister has the greatest possibility to form a government with sufficient support in the Riksdag. The Riksdag then votes on the proposal.

If the Riksdag approves the Speaker's proposal, the new prime minister is appointed, who in turn appoints the other government ministers. If more than half of the members of the Riksdag vote against the proposal, it is rejected. The Speaker must then continue talks with the parties in the Riksdag in order to be able to present a proposal for a new prime minister. If the Speaker fails to present a proposal four times, the Riksdag must hold an extraordinary election within three months.

When the Government has been appointed, the Prime Minister presents a statement of government policy which describes the Government's policies for the coming year.












On either side of the water in central Stockholm. To the left the government building Rosenbad, and to the right the Riksdag buildings. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

The tasks of the Riksdag and the Government

Together, the Riksdag and the Government shape Sweden's political development. The Government is responsible for formulating Sweden's policies by drafting and presenting proposals – government bills – to the Riksdag. The Riksdag considers and

decides on the proposals and subsequently gives the Government the task of implementing its decisions.

The Government represents Sweden in the EU and other international contexts. The members of the Riksdag help to shape EU and foreign policy, for example, through meetings, discussions and debates with government representatives.

Task	The Government 	The Riksdag 
Legislation 	The Government submits government bills – proposals for new legislation – and later implements the Riksdag's decisions.	The Riksdag takes decisions on the legislative proposals and gives the Government the task of implementing the decisions. Members of the Riksdag can also submit proposals – motions – for new legislation.
Central government budget 	The Government draws up a proposal for the central government budget which describes central government revenue and expenditure. The Government is responsible for ensuring that central government funds are used in the way decided by the Riksdag.	The Riksdag takes decisions on the central government budget and follows up how tax revenues are used by the Government and public agencies.
Parliamentary control 	The Government answers questions from members of the Riksdag about the work of the Government. The Government also keeps the Riksdag informed of how the country is governed.	The Riksdag examines the work of the Government and public agencies, for example, by means of hearings, debates and special examination.
EU cooperation 	The Government participates in the European Council and in meetings of the Council of the European Union. The Government keeps the Riksdag informed of work in the EU and consults the Riksdag on its EU policies.	The Riksdag examines all draft legislation in the EU. The Riksdag discusses and holds consultations with the Government on EU matters. The members of the Riksdag cooperate with politicians from other parliaments in Europe.
Foreign policy 	The Government is responsible for negotiations and enters into agreements with other countries and international organisations.	The Riksdag examines the Government's foreign policy work and receives information about all major foreign policy decisions. The Riksdag takes decisions on matters relating to international agreements, peacekeeping measures with armed forces and Sweden's development assistance.

The assignment as a member of the Riksdag

The members of the Riksdag are the foremost representatives of the people. Through elections, they are given an assignment as the representatives of the people that they carry out throughout the year, both within and outside the Riksdag.

The party groups shape policies

Members from the same party hold regular meetings in their party groups in the Riksdag. At these meetings, they discuss how the party should formulate its policies and how they should vote in the Chamber. The party groups all have secretariats in the Riksdag, with staff that they employ themselves.

The committees prepare and follow up

The Riksdag makes thousands of decisions every year. The hub of the work of the Riksdag is the 15 parliamentary committees. It is there that the members prepare the Riksdag's decisions.

When a committee has presented a proposal for a decision, all 349 members of the Riksdag must adopt a position on the proposal.

The committees have different areas of responsibility, such as defence, culture and education.

Each committee must consist of an odd number of members, and must have at least 15 members.

The Riksdag's 15 parliamentary committees and examples of their areas of responsibility



Committee on Civil Affairs: consumer policy, housing policy, parents' obligations



Committee on the Constitution: examination of the government, constitutional matters, radio, television, press subsidies



Committee on Culture: culture, sport, youth policy, radio and television (public service)



Committee on Defence: defence, contingency measures, cyber security



Committee on Education: preschool, compulsory and upper-secondary education, adult education, higher education and research, student finance



Committee on Environment and Agriculture: environment and climate policy, agriculture and forestry



Committee on Finance: overall responsibility for the central government budget, evaluation of the Swedish central bank's monetary policy, matters relating to legislation on the financial market and public procurement



Committee on Foreign Affairs: foreign and security policy, international development cooperation



Committee on Health and Welfare: health and medical care, pharmaceutical products, care services for children, young people, the elderly and people with disabilities



Committee on Industry and Trade: industrial policy, trade, energy policy



Committee on Justice: the courts, the police, prison and probation services



Committee on the Labour Market: labour market, work environment, labour law



Committee on Social Insurance: migration issues, asylum policy, financial security in the event of illness, disability, old age and for families with children



Committee on Taxation: taxes, tax agreements with other countries, population registration



Committee on Transport and Communications: transport and communications such as road traffic, roads, public transport, railways, air travel, shipping, postal services and digitalisation

At present, each committee has 17 regular members and at least as many deputy members, that is substitutes. The parliamentary committees are each like a miniature Riksdag, where the number of seats is based on the parties' representation in the Riksdag.

Both the Government and the members of the Riksdag can submit proposals to the Riksdag. All proposals must be considered by a parliamentary committee. Government bills and motions from the members are forwarded to the parliamentary committee responsible for the matter that the proposal concerns. In a parliamentary committee, the members acquaint themselves with and discuss the

proposals. The committee then drafts a committee report containing proposals for a decision. They are based on the opinion of a majority of members of the committee. Members from parties that do not agree with the majority can attach their objections in the form of reservations. The report is then sent to the Chamber for a debate and decision.

The parliamentary committees also follow up the decisions that the Riksdag has taken. The committee that has prepared a decision later evaluates the outcome of the decision.

Meeting of the Committee on Defence. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND





Four debates between party leaders are held in the Riksdag every year. Here Magdalena Andersson (The Social Democratic Party) is debating with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson (The Moderate Party).

PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

Debates and decisions in the Chamber

The largest meeting room in the Riksdag is called the Chamber. This is where the members of the Riksdag meet to debate and make decisions.

The meetings of the Chamber are open for the public and the media. They can also be viewed via webcasts on the Riksdag website. The debates are an opportunity for the parties to present their opinions. Many debates concern proposals that the committees have presented for a decision by the Riksdag. Other examples of debates are debates between party leaders, budget debates and questions from members of the Riksdag to government ministers. When the Riksdag makes decisions, it is done by acclamation or by a vote. Acclamation can be used when all the parties agree. The members then approve the proposal orally by saying yes. In many cases, a member from one of the parties requests a vote. A vote is then held using the voting buttons and members of the Riksdag can vote either yes, no or abstain.

Attendance and pairing in the Chamber

The parties in the Riksdag have reached an agreement on pairing in order to ensure that votes in the Chamber are not affected when members are absent. Pairing means that one or more members voluntarily abstain from a particular vote in the Chamber in or-



Decisions are made in the Chamber. When a vote is held, the members of the Riksdag press the voting buttons on their desks. PHOTO: ANDERS LÖWDIN

der to compensate for the absence of members who are, for example, ill or otherwise engaged with an assignment for their party or the Riksdag.

Other assignments in the Riksdag

After an election, the Riksdag appoints members to, for example, the Committee on EU Affairs and the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs. Here too, the seats are distributed in proportion to the parties'

The voting displays show how each member has voted. A green lamp means that the member has voted "Yes", a red lamp "No" and a yellow lamp means that the member has abstained from voting.

PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND





The Speakers of the Riksdag since the 2022 parliamentary elections. The Speaker Andreas Norlén in the middle. Standing from the left: Third Deputy Speaker Kerstin Lundgren (The Centre Party), First Deputy Speaker Kenneth G Forslund (The Social Democratic Party) and Second Deputy Speaker Julia Kronlid (The Sweden Democrats). PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

representation in the Riksdag. In the Committee on EU Affairs, the Government consults the members of the Riksdag on Sweden's position on EU matters. In the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs, the Government discusses and seeks the Riksdag's support for its foreign policy.

Work outside the Riksdag

The duties carried out in the members' constituencies are an important aspect of their work. Here, members of the Riksdag have the opportunity to meet residents from their constituencies. They visit workplaces, associations and schools and pick up opinions, ideas and impressions that they can take with them to the Riksdag.

Members of the Riksdag also write opinion pieces, give interviews and are active on social media. Many members are also involved in international assignments.

The tasks of the Speaker

The work of the Riksdag is led and planned by the Speaker. The Speaker chairs the meetings of the Chamber and also has an important role when a new government is formed. He or she does not participate in any party political work, such as debates, committee meetings or votes.

The Riksdag has three Deputy Speakers. They can lead debates and votes in the Chamber in place of the Speaker. The three Deputy Speakers also work as regular members of the Riksdag, but as Deputy Speakers, they may not participate in a debate that they are leading.

The Speaker and three Deputy Speakers are elected by the Riksdag after an election.

The Speaker is the foremost representative of the Riksdag. The office of Speaker is the highest position to which a person can be elected in Sweden. The Speaker ranks after the head of state – the King – but before the Prime Minister.

The legislative process – from proposal to law



The legislative process usually starts when the Government submits a proposal to the Riksdag in the form of a government bill. Members of the Riksdag can also submit proposals for legislation. These are known as motions, and are often counter-proposals to government bills.

The proposals can deal with a wide range of issues, such as the school grading system, rules for specially converted vehicles and penalties for various crimes.

Before the Government can submit a bill to the Riksdag, it needs to draw up a proposal. This often starts with the Government appointing an inquiry. The inquiry's proposals are circulated for consultation to public agencies, municipalities, experts and organisations who submit comments in response. Anyone, including private individuals, may submit comments. Once the Government has received all

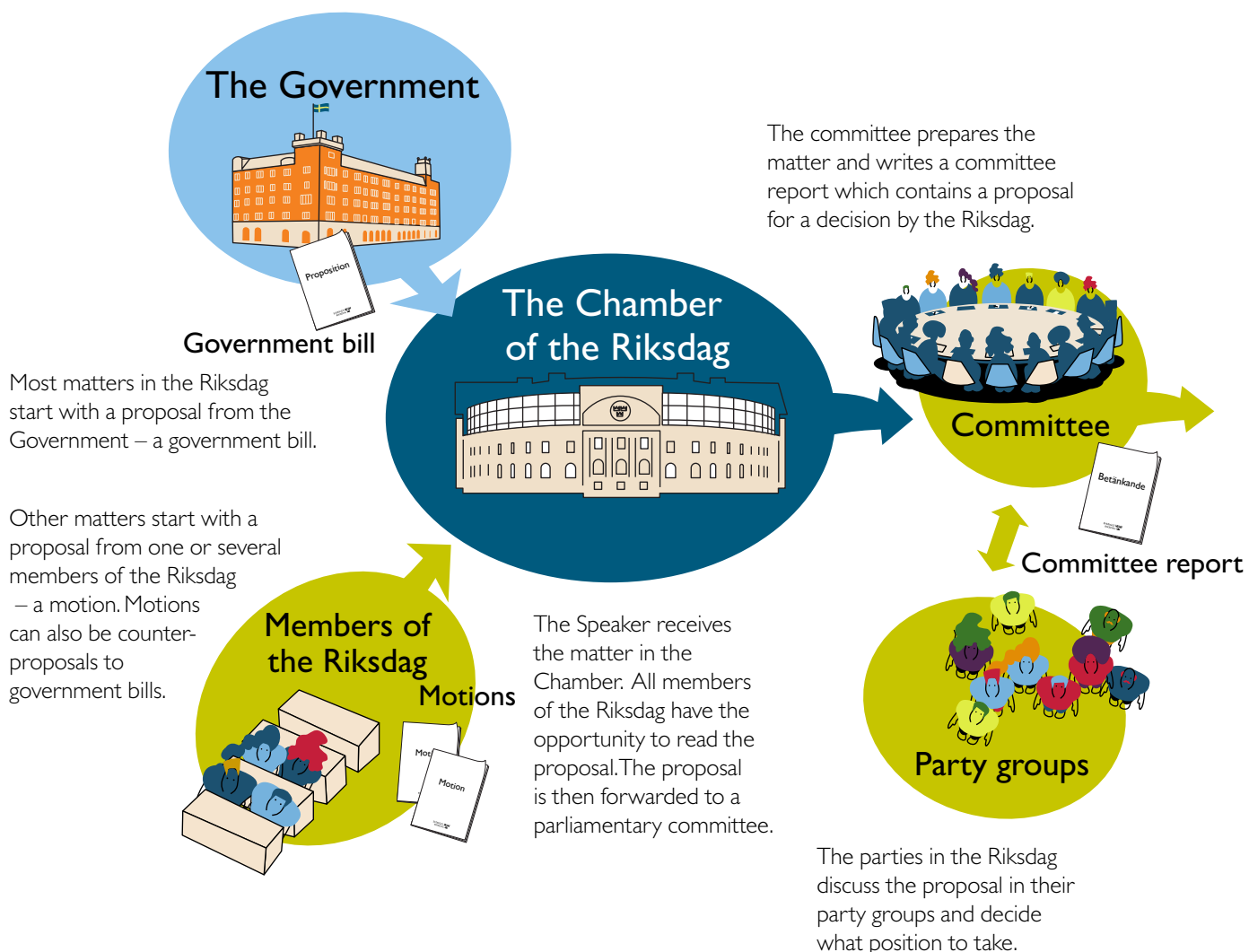
the consultation responses, the proposal is revised.

After this, it is usually sent to the Council on Legislation, an authority consisting of judges from the Supreme Court and Supreme Administrative Court. The Council on Legislation examines whether the proposal complies with the fundamental laws and other legal provisions.

The Government then revises the proposal and submits the resulting government bill to the Riksdag.

When the government bill reaches the Riksdag, it is forwarded to one of the parliamentary committees. The parties in the Riksdag discuss the proposal in their party groups and decide what position to take.

When the committee has taken a decision, it drafts a committee report with a proposal for a decision. The Committee report is forwarded to the Riksdag for a debate and decision in the Chamber.



The Government implements

The Government is responsible for ensuring that the Riksdag's decisions are implemented. This is often done by means of an ordinance, in which the Government clarifies the implications of the new law.

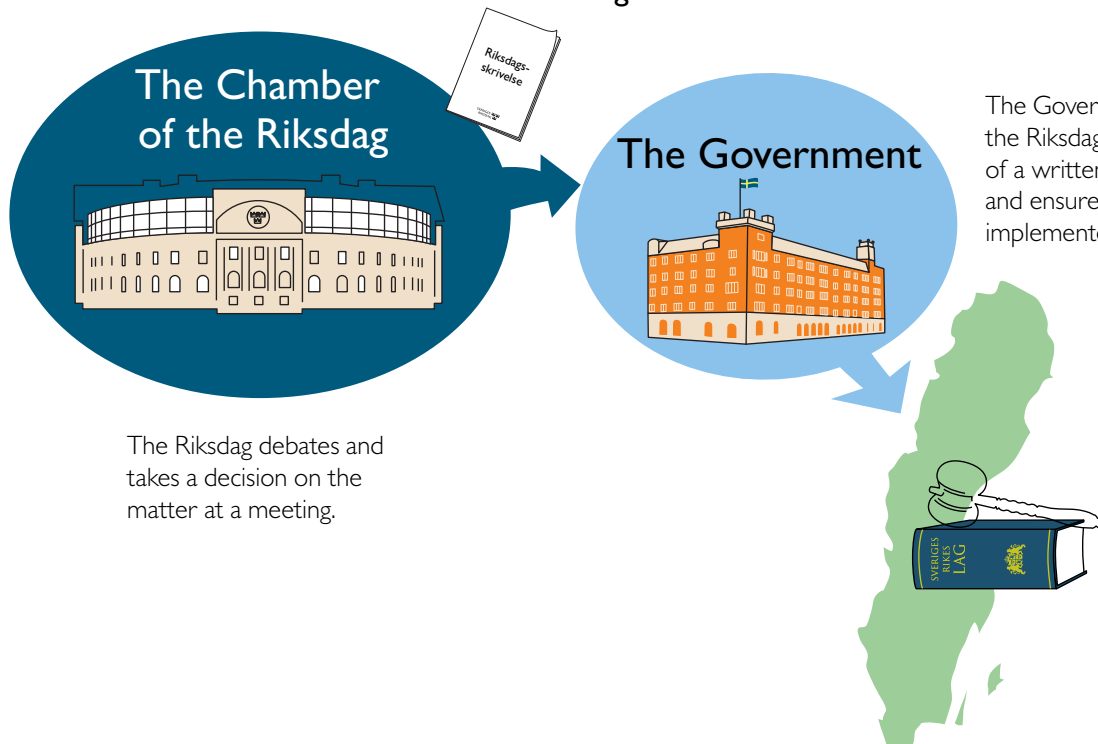
The public agencies under the government are responsible for implementing the Riksdag's and Government's decisions. Following this, agencies, municipalities, regions, companies, associations and private individuals all have access to information about the new laws.

Individual government ministers are not permitted to determine how public agencies or courts decide or rule in specific cases. Attempting to influence decisions in this way is known as "ministerial rule" and is prohibited under the Instrument of Government.

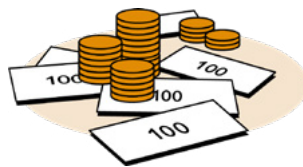


PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

Written communication from the Riksdag



Work with the central government budget



The Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

Work on the budget begins in April when the Government presents the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill to the Riksdag. It contains an assessment of the economic situation and proposed guidelines for economic policy. It also contains a proposal on a ceiling for central government expenditure in three years' time. This means that the upper limit for central government expenditure is established three years in advance. The Riksdag takes its decision on the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill in June.

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

From the Instrument of Government

The Budget Bill in the autumn

The Government presents the Budget Bill to the Riksdag in September each year. It contains the Government's proposals for the central government budget for the following year.

The parliamentary committees' task of preparing the decisions starts when the Riksdag has received the Budget Bill and when the opposition parties have submitted their counter-proposals in the form of budget motions, often referred to as shadow budgets.

Central government revenue and expenditure

Central government funds need to cover a great many areas of activity. The budget often involves tough political choices. It is about which areas to prioritise and whether to raise or lower taxes.

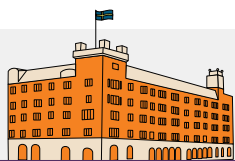
Approximately 90 per cent of central government revenue comes from taxes, such as tax on wages, tax on goods and services, that is, VAT (value-added tax) and tariffs on goods that are imported to Sweden.

The expenditure is divided into 500 appropriations in 27 different expenditure areas. Approximately 20 per cent of expenditure in the budget goes to the social insurance system, which is intended to provide economic security, for example, in the event of sickness. Just over 10 per cent is



FOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

April



The Government presents the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill.

June

The Riksdag takes a decision on the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill.

September



The Government presents the Budget Bill. During an election year, the Budget Bill can be presented later, but no later than 15 November.



Minister for Finance Elisabeth Svantesson (The Moderate Party) on her way to the Chamber to present the Government's 2024 Budget Bill to the Riksdag. Here together with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson (The Moderate Party). PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

earmarked for government grants to the local authorities. Other expenditure areas include justice, defence and contingency measures, and climate, environment and nature.

The Riksdag decides on the budget in two stages: first as a whole and second in greater detail. In November, the Riksdag takes decisions on revenue and on the limits for total expenditure, as well as how much money will go to the various expenditure areas. In December, it decides on the details of the budget, that is, what the money in the 27 expenditure areas will be used for.

Amending budgets and additional amending budgets

Sometimes things do not turn out as the Government and the Riksdag had intended. A public

agency may need more money than planned.

The Government can then propose an amendment to the central government budget, despite the fact that the budget has already started to apply. This is known as an amending budget. The Government presents such proposals in April and September in connection with the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill and the Budget Bill.

On other occasions if special grounds exist, the Government can also present further proposals for amendments to an already decided budget in an additional amending budget.

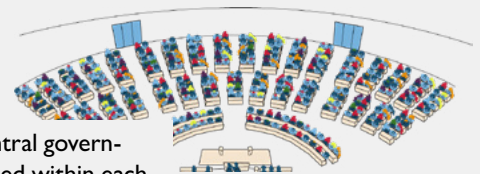
Since 2020, the Riksdag has approved several additional amending budgets. These have, for example, concerned measures during the COVID-19 pandemic and support to Ukraine.

November

The Riksdag determines the expenditure limits for the budget. It establishes how much money each of the 27 expenditure areas will receive.

December

The Riksdag decides how central government funding will be distributed within each of the 27 expenditure areas. When all of the budget decisions have been taken, the Riksdag compiles the budget for the following year and submits it to the Government.





Parliamentary control

“The Riksdag examines the government and administration of the country.”

From the Instrument of Government

Swedish democracy is based on openness. Elected politicians, public agencies and others in positions of power must therefore be prepared for the fact that their actions will be examined.

The Riksdag contributes to the process of democratic examination by scrutinising how the Government and public agencies perform their duties.

Members' questions to the Government

The right to put questions to the Government is one of the parliamentary control instruments. By addressing questions to the Government, members of the Riksdag can find out what the Government intends to do about a specific matter.

Members can address both oral and written questions to the Government. One type of question that is often used as the basis for debates in the Chamber is interpellations. An interpellation is a written question from a member of the Riksdag to a government minister. The minister answers in writing and also attends a meeting in the Chamber to answer the question orally. This then leads to a debate between the minister and the member who put the question. All members of the Riksdag may participate in the debate.

Examination in the Committee on the Constitution

The Riksdag's Committee on the Constitution examines the Government and its ministers. Members of the Riksdag can report a minister to the Committee on the Constitution. The reports should not concern government policies, but how a minister has performed his or her duties.

The examination gives the Committee on the Constitution the opportunity to study documents from the Government and to hold hearings with ministers, officials and others who have been involved in the matter. Hearings in the Committee on the Constitution are usually open to the public and are broadcast on the Riksdag website.

When the examination is completed, the Committee on the Constitution compiles its conclusions in a report which is then debated in the Chamber.

Declaration of no confidence

The members of the Riksdag can direct a declaration of no confidence in a minister who no longer has their confidence. The Riksdag then holds a vote to determine whether the minister can remain in office. If more than half of the members of the Riksdag support a declaration of no confidence, the minister must resign. If the Riksdag decides that the Prime Minister no longer has its confidence, the whole Government must resign.

The Parliamentary Ombudsmen and the National Audit Office examine the public agencies

The Riksdag also examines the public administration through two authorities:

The Parliamentary Ombudsmen ensure that public agencies, courts and officials act in compliance with existing laws and regulations. The Parliamentary Ombudsmen investigate complaints from the public, conduct inspections of public agencies and examine matters at their own initiative.

The primary task of the **National Audit Office** is to examine how central government funds are used and to ensure that public agencies carry out their

work efficiently. The National Audit Office decides independently what to examine, how to conduct the examination and what conclusions to draw.

The Parliamentary Ombudsmen and the Auditor General are appointed by the Riksdag.

Examination through the principle of public access to official documents

The public and the media can also examine public agencies by means of the principle of public access to official documents.



The Committee on the Constitution holds a hearing with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson (The Moderate Party) in April 2024. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND



The Riksdag and the EU

Sweden has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1995. The EU's 27 member states cooperate on economic and political matters. The Riksdag and the other national parliaments have transferred part of their rights to decide on legislation to the EU level. This means that the member states take joint decisions on legislation that applies throughout the Union.

The EU's legislative process starts when the European Commission presents proposals for new EU legislation.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, often referred to as the Council, consider and take decisions on the proposals. The European Parliament consists of members of parliament who are chosen by means of elections held in each of the member states. The Council of the European Union consists of ministers from the governments of the EU member states. For new EU legislation to be adopted, the European Parliament and the Council need to agree. This is the ordinary legislative procedure in the EU.

It is the Government that represents Sweden in the EU and that negotiates and takes decisions on EU legislation in the Council. The Riksdag still has the opportunity to influence EU matters as the Government is answerable to the Riksdag and must gain the Riksdag's support for its EU policies. Government ministers come to the Riksdag to provide information and answer questions from members of the Riksdag about EU policies.

The committees' work with EU matters

The 15 parliamentary committees work with EU matters within their areas of responsibility. The committees examine new proposals from the EU and determine which EU matters the Government must consult them on. The parties in the Riksdag can then put forward their points of view to the Government, and the Government can check whether it has the support of the Riksdag on various matters.

The committees also examine new proposals for EU legislation in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. According to this principle, the EU should take decisions as closely to the citizens as possible and should only take action if this would be more effectively achieved than by the individual member states alone. Subsidiarity checks are carried out in areas in which the EU and the member states have shared competence to adopt legislation, and they can also result in the European Commission having to revise its legislative proposal.

In addition, the committees examine strategic documents from the Commission. These may concern initiatives for new policies and future actions. After a debate and decision in the Chamber, the Commission is informed of the Riksdag's opinions. In this way, the Riksdag can influence EU matters from an early stage.

Public consultation in the Committee on European Union Affairs in October 2024. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND





The Swedish flag and the EU flag at Riksplatan in front of the Riksdag. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

EU matters in the Chamber

EU matters are taken up for debate and decision in the Chamber of the Riksdag.

When Swedish legislation needs to be adapted to new EU legislation, it is the Riksdag that decides this, in the same way as with other legislation. EU member states may need to adapt their legislation when the Council and the European Parliament have decided on new EU legislation. They may, for example, need to take measures to achieve the objectives of the EU legislation or amend their national legislation to ensure that there is no conflict of regulations.

The oral and written questions that the members of the Riksdag can put to government ministers can concern EU matters. These questions and interpellations are answered and debated in the Chamber.

After the European Council's summits, the Prime Minister, sometimes together with another minister, visits the Chamber to report back on what has happened at the meeting with the other EU member states' heads of state and government. After this information, a debate is held at which members of the Riksdag have the opportunity to express their opinions or ask questions.

Once a year, the Government presents its work in the EU to the Riksdag in a written communication. It describes what has happened in the EU during the year and what the Government has achieved. This

communication is also debated in the Chamber.

Once a year, a debate between party leaders on EU policy is held at the Riksdag.

The Government seeks support for its EU policies in the Committee on EU Affairs

Ahead of the meetings of the Council of the European Union, the Government needs to seek the Riksdag's support for its EU policies. This takes place through consultation with the Riksdag's Committee on EU Affairs. Just like the 15 parliamentary committees, the Committee on EU Affairs consists of members of all the parties in the Riksdag. Depending on what issues are to be discussed at the next Council meeting, different ministers attend the meetings of the Committee on EU Affairs. The Prime Minister consults the Committee on EU Affairs ahead of the meetings of heads of state and government in the European Council – EU summits.

The ministers discuss the Government's position with the Committee on EU Affairs. The Committee on EU Affairs then gives the Government a mandate to put forward a particular position on matters to be decided in the Council. The Government is expected to follow the mandate it has been given by a majority of members of the Committee on EU Affairs.



The Riksdag and foreign policy

In today's globalised world, there are many political matters that affect people across national borders. The climate, migration and world trade are examples of political areas that require international cooperation.

Work with foreign policy is one of the Riksdag's primary tasks. The Government represents Sweden in international contexts and takes most foreign policy decisions. However, the Government must keep the Riksdag informed of developments. The Riksdag helps to shape Sweden's foreign policy together with the Government through debates in the Chamber, work in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, consultations in the Committee on EU Affairs and discussions in the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs.

The role of the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs

It is in the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs that the Government seeks support for its foreign policy. The Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs consists of the Speaker, nine ordinary members of the Riksdag and nine deputy members. The Council is chaired by the King, who is Sweden's head of state.

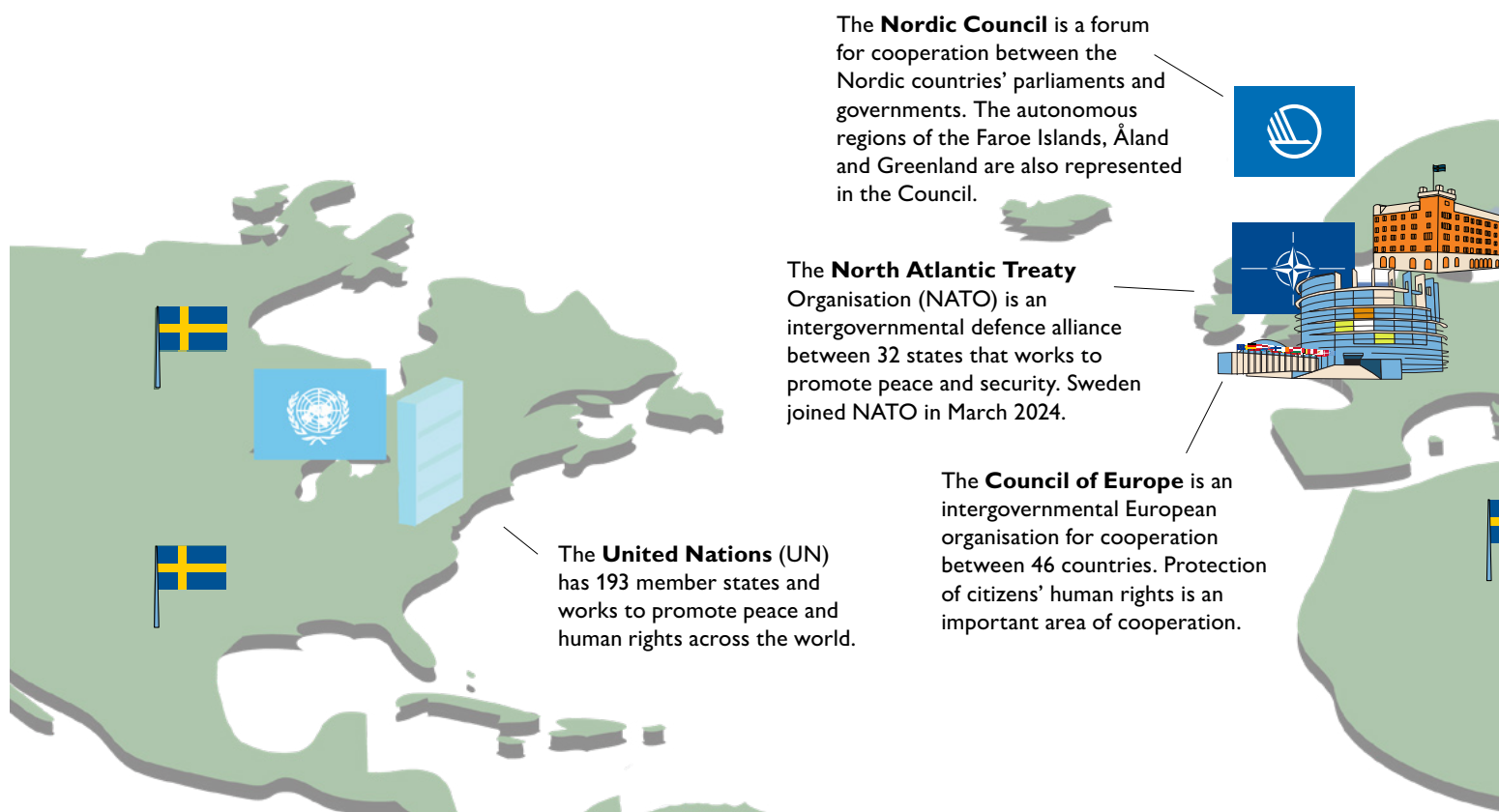
The Government is obliged to inform the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs of foreign po-

licy matters that may have an impact on Sweden. In all major foreign policy matters, the Government must, if possible, hold deliberations with the Council before a decision is taken.

Foreign policy debates and decisions in the Riksdag

Certain foreign policy matters are decided by the Riksdag alone, for example, when Sweden is to participate with an armed force in international peace-keeping operations and how much money Sweden should spend on development cooperation with other countries. The Riksdag also approves international agreements that require amendments to legislation, budgetary decisions or are of major importance.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs prepares foreign policy decisions before the matters are debated in the Riksdag and adopts a position in the Chamber. Sweden's cooperation and relations with other countries are the overall areas of responsibility of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Matters relating to the United Nations (UN), NATO and human rights are also the responsibility of the Committee. Foreign policy matters are also considered in other committees, such as the Committee on Defence and the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.



The **Nordic Council** is a forum for cooperation between the Nordic countries' parliaments and governments. The autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands, Åland and Greenland are also represented in the Council.

The **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)** is an intergovernmental defence alliance between 32 states that works to promote peace and security. Sweden joined NATO in March 2024.

The **Council of Europe** is an intergovernmental European organisation for cooperation between 46 countries. Protection of citizens' human rights is an important area of cooperation.

The **United Nations (UN)** has 193 member states and works to promote peace and human rights across the world.



The Speaker of the Riksdag Andreas Norlén receives the President of the National Assembly of Serbia Ana Brnabić during an official visit to Sweden in March 2025. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND



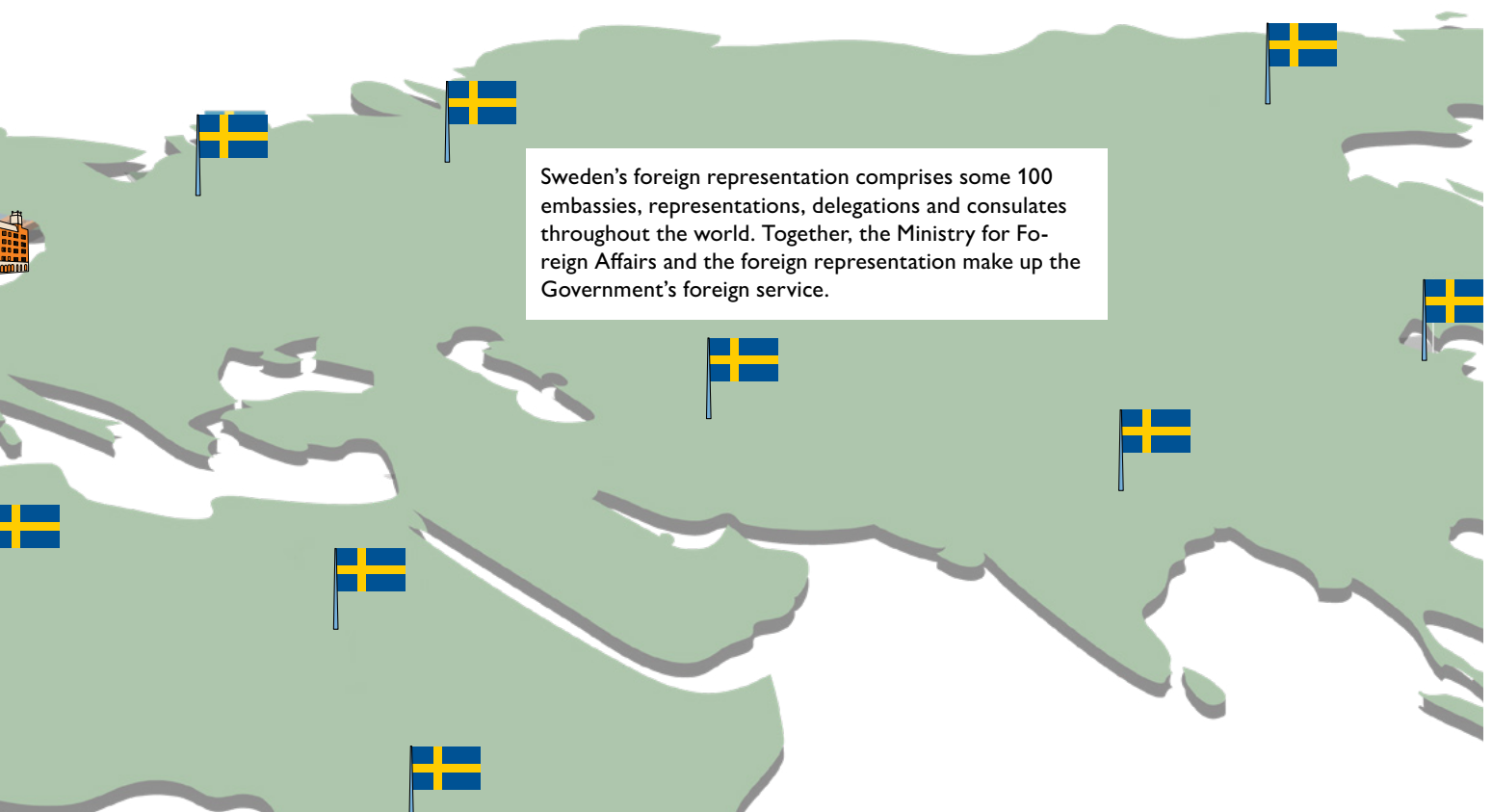
The French President Emmanuel Macron visits the Riksdag during a state visit in January 2024. Here, President Macron and Speaker Andreas Norlén are on their way to meet the Prime Minister on Riksbron. PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND

Cooperation across borders

Contacts and cooperation across borders is an important aspect of foreign policy. The Riksdag therefore receives many foreign guests and delegations. The Speaker and members of the Riksdag also make visits outside the Riksdag. During visits abroad, they meet Speakers and members of other parliaments, heads of state, ministers and repre-

sentatives of international organisations such as the UN and NATO.

The Riksdag also appoints members to participate in the parliamentary assemblies of international organisations, such as the Council of Europe and the Nordic Council.



Sweden's foreign representation comprises some 100 embassies, representations, delegations and consulates throughout the world. Together, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the foreign representation make up the Government's foreign service.

The Riksdag represents the people

Sweden's political system is based on the autonomy of the people; the voters elect their political representatives in the Riksdag, regions, municipalities and European Parliament. The elected politicians make decisions on laws, taxes and other matters that affect the Swedish society and its people.

The power of the Riksdag and Government starts and ends with the people. This idea is established in the opening paragraph of the Instrument of Government: "All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people." The foremost expression of the autonomy of the people is universal suffrage, which means that the voters elect their political representatives in general elections.

All citizens have the right to express their opinions and to access decisions taken by our elected representatives. On the Riksdag website,

www.riksdagen.se, you can find motions, government bills, the Riksdag's decisions and much more about the Riksdag and its work. You can also follow debates, votes and seminars via our webcast service.

"Public power is exercised under the law."

From the Instrument of Government.

PHOTO: MELKER DAHLSTRAND



The Riksdag

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