

APPENDIX: SWEDEN

DEMOGRAPHICS AND ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy with 21 counties, 290 municipalities, and 6,000 “electoral districts.”¹ The population of Sweden is 9.3 million.² In the last parliamentary election, the voting age population was more than 7 million, and 6.8 million of these individuals, or about 95%, were registered to vote.³ 82% of registered voters turned out to vote in that election.⁴

An independent agency called the Swedish Election Authority is responsible for administering elections in Sweden.⁵ A five-member, government-appointed Electoral Board oversees the Election Authority, which has about 13 full-time staff members and nine consultants at any given time.⁶ There are also 21 county election authorities and 290 municipal election authorities.⁷ The central Election Authority is responsible for compiling the list of voters, preparing and sending voter cards to eligible voters, preparing ballots and other election materials, and providing technical support for election administration.⁸

Local election authorities are not responsible for overseeing voter registration, nor for maintaining or updating the voter rolls; their primary responsibility is to manage polling sites.⁹

VOTER REGISTRATION¹⁰

Sweden’s voter registration model is based on a continuously updated civil registry that is administered by the National Tax Agency.¹¹ The civil registry is a compendium of information about residents of Sweden. It reflects each person’s name, address, national identity number, place of birth, and citizenship status.¹² It also includes the names of an individual’s spouse, children, parents and adoption information, along with immigration and death information, if applicable.¹³

Thirty days before every election, the Tax Agency extracts a list of all qualified voters from the national civil register and provides this list to the Election Authority.¹⁴ The Election Authority pays the Tax Agency the equivalent of about one half of one U.S. cent per name for this information.¹⁵ The total annual cost of election administration in Sweden is an estimated \$28 million U.S. dollars.¹⁶ The Election Authority then divides the register geographically, to produce voter lists for each polling station.¹⁷

Registered residents who have been living abroad for more than ten years are not automatically included on the voter roll, but they may separately request to be included by notifying the Tax Agency no later than 30 days before the election.¹⁸

Adding New Voters

Newly eligible voters are automatically added to the rolls in Sweden.¹⁹ The population register includes the record of anyone who is born in or who moves to Sweden, and the Tax Agency transmits these individuals' information to the Election Authority when they become eligible to vote.²⁰ Swedish citizens who are at least 18 years old and are included in the national population register have the right to vote in all Swedish elections.²¹ Swedish citizens who are no longer registered residents in Sweden may also vote, but their ballots must be received by the day prior to the election.²²

Non-citizens from European Union countries, Iceland, and Norway are included on the voter rolls for county or municipal elections when they register with the Tax Agency.²³ They are automatically included on the voter rolls for county or municipal elections, as long as they have lived in the locality in question for three years continuously.²⁴ Since the Tax Agency records the date when an individual moves to Sweden in the population register, it is easy to identify which non-citizens should be culled from the population register and placed on the voter rolls.²⁵

Updating Existing Voter Entries

Because the Election Authority derives its voter rolls directly from the population register, all updates to the voter rolls are based on updates reported to or discerned by the Tax Agency, and logged in the register.

While the Tax Agency collects most of its updated information from other government sources,²⁶ like the local tax offices, citizenship authorities, and departments of motor vehicles, individuals are responsible for reporting any changes of name or address.²⁷ If a change occurs on the eve of an election, individuals may request an immediate revision to their voter registration information in writing up to 12 days before an election.²⁸

Swedish residents must notify the government of a change of address within one week of moving.²⁹ If individuals move from another country to Sweden and intend to stay for more than a year, they are also required to register with the Tax Agency.³⁰ Swedish residents who move out of the country will stay on the voter rolls for ten years, and citizens living abroad can stay on the rolls for a longer period of time if they communicate their intent to the Tax Agency.³¹

Residents must also report name changes to the Tax Agency. After a child is born, the Tax Agency sends parents a "Reporting a Given Name" form, which the parents must return within three months of the birth.³² The reported name will remain on the population register unless or until an individual reports a name change. When residents change their names due to marriage,

the marrying parties must report the new surname to the Tax Agency no later than the date of the wedding ceremony.³³ Individuals who wish to change their first names must also do so through the Tax Agency.³⁴

When a Swedish resident dies, the doctor who declares the person dead must submit a death certificate to the Tax Agency, which updates the population register accordingly.³⁵ Since the Tax Agency removes these individuals from the population register, they are automatically removed from future iterations of the voter rolls as well.³⁶

Swedish citizens who move abroad are kept on the voter rolls for ten years after the date of their departure.³⁷ After ten years, citizens must either notify the Tax Agency of their desire to remain on the voter rolls, or report a change of address abroad; otherwise, expatriate citizens will be removed from the voter rolls.³⁸

Like residents who move within the country, the law requires Swedish residents who move out of the country to report their move to the Tax Agency within one week of departure.³⁹ Non-citizens lose their right to vote in Swedish county or municipal elections upon departure.⁴⁰

FILLING GAPS AND CORRECTING INACCURACIES IN THE ROLLS

Annual Statement

Every citizen receives an annual statement containing her information on the Tax Agency's population register, which is translated to the voter rolls.⁴¹ Voters may also inspect their information in the population register by visiting a local tax office.⁴² They may request any changes or additions in writing up to 12 days before an election, and the county administrative board will review the request.⁴³

Voter Cards

At least 18 days before each election, the Swedish Electoral Authority sends a voting card to every individual on the voter rolls.⁴⁴ The card contains the voter's name and number on the electoral roll, the list of elections in which the voter may participate, and the voter's polling station and its hours.⁴⁵ Although voter cards do not contain the photograph or signature of the voter, they are an acceptable form of voter identification at the polls.⁴⁶ A voter is not required to show photo identification at the polls. Rather, a voter who is not known to voting clerks must produce any identity document that verifies her identity.⁴⁷

Residents who do not receive a voting card by the 18th day before an election should know to confirm their information with the Tax Agency or the Election Authority. If a qualified voter believes that she has been omitted incorrectly from the voter rolls, she may submit a written request to be added, up to 12 days before an election.⁴⁸ If the county administrative board determines that the petitioner is in fact a qualified voter, they will order the electoral roll corrected, after which the municipal election committee will receive updated information.⁴⁹

PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

Voter information in Sweden is protected by the same standards concerning privacy and security that govern the population register. Under Swedish law, anyone is entitled to obtain information contained in the population register unless the Tax Agency has reason to believe that someone would be harmed by the disclosure.⁵⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ Development Associates, *Considerations for a New Voter Registration System for Ukraine*, at 113 (Aug. 2006), *available at* <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/europe/SE/sweden-voter-registration-case-study.pdf>; Maria Gratschew, Case Study 4: Sweden, in *GETTING TO THE CORE: A GLOBAL SURVEY ON THE COST AND REGISTRATION OF ELECTIONS*, at 95 (Center for Transitional & Post-Conflict Governance, IFES & Bureau of Development Policy, UNDP, June 2005), *available at* <http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/Elections-Pub-Core.pdf>.

² Figure from 2008. Statistics Sweden, Population by region, marital status, age and sex. Year 1968-2008 (Feb. 17, 2009), <http://www.ssd.scb.se/databaser/makro/produkt.asp?produktid=BE0101&lang=2>.

³ This percentage was calculated using statistics from the following sources: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Voter Turnout: Country View—Sweden, http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?CountryCode=SE (last updated May 19, 2009); and Statistics Sweden, *supra* note 2.

⁴ Valmyndigheten, Riksdag Election Result 2006, http://www.val.se/in_english/previous_elections/2006/index.html.

⁵ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 113.

⁶ Gratschew, *supra* note 1, at 95.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 113.

⁹ Gratschew, *supra* note 1, at 97-98.

¹⁰ Finland and Norway have similar population registries from which they draw their voter rolls. As in Sweden, these registries are continuously updated with information collected by various sources, including other government agencies, which translates into voter rolls that consistently include virtually all individuals who are eligible to vote. Ministry of Justice Finland, Right to Vote and Compilation of the Voting Register, <http://www.vaalit.fi/30916.htm> (Finland); Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, The Main Features of the Norwegian Electoral System, <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/krd/kampanjer/the-municipal-and-county-election/The-Norwegian-electoral-system/The-main-features-of-the-Norwegian-elect-2.html?id=457014&epslanguage=EN-GB#5> (Norway).

¹¹ Gratschew, *supra* note 1, at 97; Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 114.

¹² Swedish Tax Agency, *Population Registration in Sweden*, Publ'n No. SKV 717B, at 3 (4th ed. 2007), *available at* <http://www.skatteverket.se/download/18.5cbdbba811c9a768f0c80002830/717b04.pdf> [hereinafter Population Registration].

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Gratschew, *supra* note 1, at 97; Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 114.

¹⁵ Derived from Gratschew, *supra* note 1, at 97.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 104.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 97-98.

¹⁸ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 115.

¹⁹ Population Registration, *supra* note 12, at 6.

²⁰ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 114.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.* at 115.

²³ *Id.* at 114.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *See* Population Registration, *supra* note 12, at 3.

²⁶ *Id.* at 2-4; Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 116

²⁷ Population Registration, *supra* note 12, at 4, 8

- ²⁸ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 116.
- ²⁹ Population Registration, *supra* note 12, at 4.
- ³⁰ *Id.* at 5.
- ³¹ *Id.* at 6.
- ³² *Id.* at 8.
- ³³ *Id.*
- ³⁴ *Id.*
- ³⁵ *Id.* at 10. When a Swedish citizen dies abroad, the Embassy or Consulate is responsible for reporting this information to the Tax Agency. *Id.*
- ³⁶ *Id.*
- ³⁷ Population Registration, *supra* note 12, at 6.
- ³⁸ *Id.*
- ³⁹ *Id.*
- ⁴⁰ *Id.*; Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 114.
- ⁴¹ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 117.
- ⁴² *Id.* at 116.
- ⁴³ *Id.*
- ⁴⁴ *Id.*
- ⁴⁵ *Id.*
- ⁴⁶ *Id.*
- ⁴⁷ 8 ch. 6 § Elections Act (2005:837) (Swed.).
- ⁴⁸ Development Associates, *supra* note 1, at 116.
- ⁴⁹ *Id.*
- ⁵⁰ *Id.* at 117; Population Registration, *supra* note 12, at 3.