Public Administration in the Service of Democracy
—an Action Programme
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To everyone who works in public administration

Swedish public administration has a major bearing on citizens’ everyday lives, democracy, welfare, economic growth and the nation’s international standing.

We know that our central-government administration today rests on the efforts of civil servants who, with great expertise and skill, carry out excellent work and implement the elected politicians’ decisions in an impartial, objective and loyal manner.

Citizens and businesses rightly demand a great deal from public administration. In a society that is constantly changing, the content of government agencies’ work and the way in which they perform it must be constantly re-examined.

Agencies capable of working in the right way, at the right time and with good resource management earn high public confidence and enhance popular trust in politics and democratic institutions.

At a time when public administration, like society at large, is characterised by diversity and variation it is paramount for us to recall what unites us—our joint function to serve democracy. In our view, it is therefore vital to keep our central-government administration together as a coherent whole, through a shared administrative culture and ethic.

An account of the foundation of a joint administrative culture was given in the Government Bill on Central Government Administration in Public Service. The objectives for the 21st century are public administration that, while meeting stringent requirements concerning the rule of law, efficiency and democracy, is accessible and responsive in its dealings with citizens. It enjoys their full confidence, and affords favourable conditions for employment and growth. It is successful and respected abroad.
In this administration, central-government agencies perform their tasks at a high service level and with openness. Their employees are skilled and well motivated, their managers are competent and their capacity for change is great.

In the Bill, the Government announced an action programme to meet the objectives of administrative policy. The programme coherently presents the measures that are planned.

The action programme is aimed at executive management groups and all employees. The Government Offices have a vital function in actively pursuing and monitoring implementation on the Government’s behalf. Recurrent polling of citizens’ and companies’ opinions of public administration is included in this monitoring.

With the action programme as a point of departure, the work of making this country’s good central-government administration even better is now continuing.

Göran Persson     Britta Lejon
The purpose of central-government administrative policy is to create forms of organisation, governance and management that pave the way for the three basic values of democracy, the rule of law and efficiency to be realised throughout public administration. Within the objectives and framework laid down by Parliament and the Government, the central-government agencies determine how activities are to be conducted.

The general preconditions for governing the agencies, i.e. the agencies’ accountability, role and obligations vis-à-vis the public and citizens, are subject to laws and ordinances. Two aims of the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (1986:223) and the Ordinance (1980:900) on central-government agencies’ service obligation are to safeguard citizens’ legal rights in their dealings with administrative agencies and to improve the agencies’ services to the public. The Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance (1995:1322) regulates such matters as agency heads’ responsibilities and duties: heads are in charge of their agencies’ activities, and must ensure that these are conducted in accordance with statutes and with efficiency.

In its bill Central Government Administration in Public Service (Bill 1997/98:136), the Government issued guidelines and requirements for the central-government administration of the future. The Bill was passed by a unanimous Parliament. Based on the guidelines it contained, the Government has embarked on an administrative-policy action programme of several years’ duration. The programme presents, first, the basic values and conditions that should, according to the Bill, be the guiding ones and, secondly, the Government’s measures to bring about long-term development of public administration.
The agencies’ responsibilities in terms of ecologically sustainable development and also issues concerning integration, people with disabilities and youth are laid down in laws and ordinances. Under the **Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance** agency heads must, for example, take into account the requirements to which activities are subject with respect to ecologically sustainable development, gender equality and integration policy. In certain areas, including policy regarding people with disabilities and youth, there are also special national action plans or government decisions imposing requirements on the external and internal activities of public administration. In addition, there is the **Ordinance (1986:856) on Central-Government Agencies’ Responsibility for Implementing Integration Policy**. All in all, the agencies’ responsibility involves integrating all the above-mentioned perspectives into their regular activities.

As for gender equality, the Government’s aim is for equality between the sexes to permeate every aspect of its policy. This applies to the other perspectives as well. They will be taken into consideration in the relevant measures taken by the Government to develop public administration, and are therefore not specifically covered in this programme.
All work in central-government administration should be carried out on the basis of the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and efficiency. The requirements imposed by democracy mean that public administration must fulfil its functions in accordance with the decisions taken by Parliament and the Government. For the rule of law, public administration must take materially correct decisions based on current legislation, and private individuals must be able to have their cases examined in courts of law. The requirement of efficiency means that public administration must bring about the intended results and attain the objectives laid down by Government and Parliament, and do so cost-effectively.

It is also fundamental for central-government administration to develop and adapt its internal and external activities to the changes that are taking place in society, such as globalisation and changes in demographic composition.

Sweden has public administration of consistently high quality. Central-government agencies are characterised by efficiency and openness. But citizens’ trust in public institutions decreased during the 1990s. Nonetheless, according to the studies carried out by the SOM (Society, Opinion and Media) Institute at Göteborg (Gothenburg) University, trust in public-sector organisations is high compared with corresponding assessment of businesses and also political and other organisations. This picture is confirmed by the studies being jointly conducted by Statistics Sweden (SCB) and the Stockholm School of Economics, Karlstad University and the Swedish Institute for Quality (SIQ) in Gothenburg. The objective of not only high, but also rising, public confidence in central-government administration is an important one.
Citizens in focus

Certain common values must apply to the whole of public administration. Its functioning, governance, leadership, organisation and way of working are crucially significant to the functional adequacy of democratic society, but also to welfare and economic growth. Public administration must provide services in such a way as to yield the greatest possible benefit to citizens, companies, municipalities, organisations, etc within given financial limits.

Central-government agencies must meet stringent requirements in terms of being accessible and obliging. They must be able to declare the services they offer and the means by which they do so, and must give citizens the opportunity for dialogue and for expressing their views on the agency activities that affect them. In private transactions, people should need to be in contact with only one agency as far as possible. All citizens with special needs must have equivalent access to the services on offer, and to information about the public sector.

Open public administration

Public access is one of the basic principles of Swedish society. Swedish public administration is characterised by transparency vis-à-vis citizens, companies, municipalities, organisations and media. Central-government agencies’ work and contacts with citizens, businesses and the media must be characterised by great accessibility and language that is as simple and intelligible as possible. Nonetheless, it is essential to point out that the citizens’ demands, as well as the preconditions for developing and meeting transparency requirements, change over time. Public administration must therefore derive benefit from the available opportunities of, for example, using new technology in its efforts to facilitate openness and access to information.

Information technology in society has expanded at an exponential rate in the past few years. Through the Internet, the accessibility of public-sector information, too, can increase.

In central-government administration, with far-reaching decentralised responsibility, it is paramount for the capacity to safeguard transparency in activities to include all staff. Sound knowledge, among managers and employees, of the laws and ordinances that regulate public access and secrecy are the basis of open public administration. Central-government agencies must also take into account all
employees’ skills-development needs, to clarify the existing provisions concerning public access and high-quality public services.

In order for basic values concerning transparency to be reflected in an agency’s entire range of activities and response to the citizens, its organisation and forms of work must be evaluated, adapted and improved in response to shifting community demands and other conditions. The scope for public administration to live up to stringent transparency requirements stands and falls with managers’ and employees’ confidence in joining in the internal debate and proposing changes.

**Capacity for change and quality**

Sweden should be at the leading edge of quality in public administration, in an international comparison. To retain high public confidence in central-government activities, bring about favourable conditions for companies’ growth and function in an exemplary way in international co-operation, continued efforts are required to raise the level of ambition in work to develop the quality of public administration.

Citizens and businesses are making ever-higher demands on central-government administration. With social development, the needs for agencies’ services are changing at an increasingly rapid pace and central-government administration must therefore undergo constant re-examination. IT development is boosting expectations of public services provided by the state.

The citizens are entitled to demand that administrative agencies do their utmost to fulfil the objectives laid down by the Government, and that their services be provided with high quality and at low cost. Agencies capable of doing the right things at the right time, in the right way and with good resource conservation will earn high public confidence and enhance people’s trust in politics and democratic institutions.

The *Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance* prescribes that agencies’ activities be conducted in accordance with the law and efficiently, and that they be continuously followed up and examined.

Systematic quality work should form an important part of agencies’ efforts to develop their own activities. This means that quality work should be conducted in a methodical way (systematically), based on a strategy that extends over a long period (with a long-term approach) and with serving the citizens as the top priority (in a citizen-focused way). Development work should comprise the whole of an
Further development of performance management

Performance management—management by results—involves specifying objectives, following up results, and assessing performance in such a way that it can form the basis for measures. The Government and Parliament define objectives, but the agencies are given freedom to choose their means of attaining them. Results are followed up in relation to the objectives, and the Government and Parliament then have the function of taking the “right” measures. Performance management is the instrument of control that governments have found most interesting over the past ten years. Work on improving performance management is continuing, in terms of adaptation of activities, i.e. adapting the objectives and requirements of performance accounting better than hitherto to the agencies’ various circumstances.
The state as a model IT user

On 28 March 2000 the Government presented its Bill An Information Society for All (Bill 1999/2000:86) to Parliament. The Bill also deals with the use of IT in the public sector.

The foremost tool for developing service in public administration is information technology. Services catering for individuals and companies must also be offered on the Internet. Central-government agencies must collaborate with one another, as well as with municipalities, county councils and private enterprise, to create rational service arrangements for all parties. Individuals and businesses should—as far as possible—find it easy to retrieve and submit the information that is relevant in each individual situation, regardless of how responsibility for the information is divided between agencies or between the state, municipalities and county councils.

IT is also a superb instrument for facilitating public information access and control, and for issuing information to and obtaining the views of citizens and companies on a larger scale.

A shared, open and reliable IT infrastructure based on the Internet must form the basis for electronic contacts with individuals and businesses. In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises’ (SMEs) dealings with agencies should be facilitated electronically.

Extensive efforts are under way to develop the various parts of this IT infrastructure. A system for delivering and receiving information (the “SHS” system) has been developed in collaboration between central-government agencies. The use of digital signatures is being accelerated as a result of agency co-operation. An electronic channel that is as comprehensive as possible, Sweden Direct, based partially on life and business situations, has been developed. This, combined with more specialised electronic means of access, “portals”, is intended to facilitate dealings with citizens and companies. It is a matter of central-government agencies making use of the infrastructure work that is in progress.

Central-government agencies should have Internet websites of high quality with home pages linked to Sweden Direct. Each agency’s home page should rapidly lead to basic facts about the agency and other specialist information of interest to citizens. It should also enable them to submit particulars to the agency and, for example, initiate transactions electronically.
Regulations with quality

Responsibility for issuing regulations in society is located at all three levels of central-government administration: Parliament, the Government and the agencies. The agencies’ responsibility is to draw up regulations on the application of laws and ordinances. The basic requirements concerning this work on regulations are contained in the Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance.

Under this Ordinance, before the agencies decide on regulations or general recommendations, they should investigate the likely impact of the same and give those concerned and also the National Financial Management Authority an opportunity to express their views. As part of its endeavour to improve conditions for SMES, the Government has resolved on an ordinance concerning special impact analyses of the effects of regulations on conditions for SMES. Under this ordinance the agencies must report to the Government annually, by 1 February, on their work of carrying out these impact analyses.

Society’s regulations should bring about the effects intended at reasonable cost, and be accessible and easily intelligible to all those concerned. This means that quality requirements in the work of drawing up regulations are stringent, where Parliament and the Government as well as the agencies are concerned. The agencies’ issue of regulations should be based on competent, high-quality preliminary work that should include investigating impact, assessing alternative measures and obtaining knowledge from the parties concerned.

Central-government administration should simplify and improve the regulatory systems, continuously and systematically, in terms of content as well as in editorial and linguistic respects.
The state as a model employer

The Government has delegated large portions of its employer policy to the agencies. Section 8 of the Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance (1987:1100) makes it clear that the head of each agency is responsible for that agency’s employer policy. The term “employer policy” covers matters relating to the agencies’ supply of staff and managers, skills development and mobility, and also conditions of pay and employment. The agency heads are in charge of individually and jointly shaping employer and staff policy. The purpose of delegating this policy is to enable the agencies to use employer policy as a means of attaining the objectives of their work in a manner that is highly efficient and inspires confidence among the citizens. The Government’s task is to impose requirements and monitor the agencies’ employer policy. Under a flexible system for following up employer policy that was introduced in 1997, the Government annually requests particulars of the agencies’ long-term supply of skills. During the past year, this monitoring has focused on such aspects as age structure, gender composition and ethnic diversity. As part of its continuous monitoring the Government intends to follow up, in 2001, the agencies’ efforts concerning the work environment as well.

The starting point for this delegation is that it should be possible to adapt employer policy to the needs of agencies’ activities. This includes ensuring that employees are amply familiar with the objectives of these activities, that working conditions are good and that employees’ skills and experience are developed and utilised.

Employer policy adapted to activities is a precondition for the individual agency succeeding in its efforts to develop efficiency, quality and service. The delegated employer responsibility enables agencies to shape their organisation, work processes and supply of skills with reference to their activities. The agencies’ responsibility as employers is thus a strategic management instrument in their quality work that enables them to organise their development efforts in such a way that employees at all levels can take part in developing the internal work processes. When staff and management collaborate in this work, such issues as the employees’ working conditions and work environment can be integrated into the development process. A good work environment is also a quality issue.

One important staff-policy instrument in central-government employer policy is pay formation. Through the reform of the employer function, pay formation can be adjusted to agencies’ activities. This means that central-government employers have been given yet another instrument to improve agencies’ efficiency.
Skills and ethics

The work of central-government administration is carried out by highly skilled public servants. The ability to realise elected politicians’ decisions in a knowledgeable, impartial way, subject to the rule of law, is a vital foundation of their work. Public administration needs employees with ample knowledge of the field, good communication skills, integrity, sound judgement and an ethical approach that inspires respect.

Public confidence in central-government administration and the agencies’ work is a vital democratic issue. Generating high confidence among citizens, companies and the media presupposes long-term, continuous work. Understanding of the skill and objectivity requirements of the role of public servant must be constantly kept to the fore.

The agencies have responsibility for ensuring that their employees have the knowledge required for their tasks, including awareness of the legislation that governs the work of public administration. The Government requires of the agencies that each of them should have clear objectives for its supply of skills, and that the employees should have skills appropriate to the activities concerned. The Government considers that there is reason for the agencies to work on the long-term, strategic orientation of their skills supply.

Opportunities afforded by generation change

Attractive working conditions in central government makes it easier for agencies to achieve an adequate long-term supply of skills. During the period up to 2015, a growing share of employees will retire. Today, we already know that many agencies have a skewed age composition, with an increasing proportion of employees aged 55 and over. The agencies’ capacity to cope with this trend and supply the organisation with skills in the short and long term is one of the major challenges to central-government administration in the first few decades of the 21st century. Public administration capable of competing for labour is attainable only if the agencies continue to strive to be stimulating and creative workplaces, with a good work environment and well thought-out staff and pay policy. Responsibility for dealing with these issues rests on each agency concerned. The solutions adopted must be adapted to the nature of each agency’s activities.
The supply of managers

The Government’s power of appointment is one of its instruments for controlling public administration. The Government’s managerial appointments will continue to relate to agency heads in the future, as hitherto. Without a policy for securing an adequate supply of managers that is well thought-out and implemented, there can be no functioning government control. The managers’ skills and leadership largely determine the Government’s success in implementing its policy.

The main features of the Government’s policy to ensure quality in its supply of managers were established in the mid-1990s. The policy, which is described in the Administrative Policy Bill, regulates the Government’s recruitment and development of agency heads. In the policy, it is pointed out that recruitment of agency heads must be professional and that the recruitment base must be broadened to bring about an appropriate balance between skills and experience possessed by the agency heads as a whole. The Government will particularly strive for an increase in the number of female agency heads, people with experience from other sectors of society and people with a foreign background. Thorough induction and continuous development are to be offered to every agency head. Annual goal and performance dialogues are an important precondition both of control and of planning of development inputs for agency heads. Mobility among the agency heads should also be striven for. Pay and other conditions of employment are important decisions that are to be subject to the interests of activities.

The Government considers that the supply of managerial resources is vitally important to public administration and should be given greater attention at every administrative level. The agency heads are expected to apply the Government’s policy in their internal efforts to recruit managers.
Attaining the objectives of public administration requires continuous reform work at all levels. Long-term development requires changes to be examined by individual agencies, sometimes in collaboration. In some cases, reassessments are needed through the agency of a Government-appointed commission of inquiry. The results of development inputs need to be monitored and evaluated to give Parliament and the Government additional documentation for their decisions on the orientation of future measures.

This section of the action programme presents a number of measures that are under way or that the Government plans to implement in important areas. These measures are aimed at creating forms of organisation, governance and management that pave the way for the three basic values of democracy, the rule of law and efficiency to be implemented throughout public administration.

The aim is for Swedish public administration to set an outstanding example internationally with respect to its transparency in society towards citizens, companies and media. The principle of public access is one of the cornerstones of Swedish democracy and an important part of administrative policy.

The Government has appointed a parliamentary committee, the “Committee on Public Access and Secrecy” (dir. 1998:32), to carry out an overview of regulations concerning access to public records for the purpose of extending scope for the principles of public access to be applied in the IT society. The committee must also carry out a general overview of the Secrecy Act. This includes investigating the extent to which the law can be improved by, for example, annulment of unnecessary regulations and by the law being made more easily
intelligible. Another issue the committee is to investigate is the factors that have been crucial in determining how far transparency prevails in municipal and state-owned enterprises, and views on the appropriateness of the principle of public access with regard to such enterprises.

Openness and accountability

MEASURES

• Public-access campaign

The Government will conduct a campaign to boost knowledge and awareness, in society and among employees in public administration, of the principle of public access and its role in transparency and democracy. This work will proceed during the years 2000 and 2001, and be headed by a chairman and a public-access council with representatives of central government, the municipalities, the county councils, etc.

• Evaluation of the agencies’ work on linguistic clarity

The agency heads are responsible for facilitating the dealings of the public and others with the agencies by such means as “clear, comprehensible language in the agencies’ written material and decisions” (Section 7 of the Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance). Through the Plain Swedish Group, the Government is engaged in active efforts to promote preservation of linguistic purity among the agencies. These efforts have been under way since 1994. The Government now plans to secure an evaluation of the effectiveness of the agencies’ work on clarity of expression and their success in the task of writing in an easily intelligible manner.

Better service for citizens and companies

In the work of developing public services to citizens and companies, the notion of the “24/7 agency” (a government agency that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week) has come to the fore. This refers to agencies that are, on a continuous basis, electronically accessible for information retrieval and handling of transactions. One objective is for the public and businesses to be able to provide and obtain information, ask questions, and carry out other transactions when it suits them, regardless of office hours and geographical location.

Another important objective is to get citizens and companies to play more of a part in the work on public administration to shape and offer its services. Public-service commitments, in terms of service range and activities, should be clearly stated to the consumers of public services, and public administration should also
continuously inform itself about these consumers’ opinions and demands. Needs and demands should be taken into consideration in efforts to develop activities further.

One urgent task is to ensure that public-sector information is made available to the public and businesses in a simple and cost-effective way, regardless of who is responsible for providing the information, and that the information is worded in clear and comprehensible terms.

Better service for citizens and companies

MEASURES

• 24/7 AGENCIES
As part of the development of electronic administration (e-government), criteria for 24-hour, seven-days-a-week agencies are being drawn up. The purpose is to encourage the agencies to develop electronic services in a manner that suits the needs of citizens, companies and other consumers. The aim is for the criteria to be used in the agencies’ own quality efforts, as well as the Government’s quality assessment and control of the agencies.

• SERVICE DECLARATIONS
A pilot project involving service declarations is being initiated at agencies with a broad interface with the public and businesses. The purpose is for the agencies to report openly on their commitments regarding services, and also to create a dialogue with their consumers on how these services can be developed.

• ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC-SECTOR INFORMATION
The activities conducted at present in project form, under the appellation of “Sweden Direct”, are to be given permanent form. This will satisfy needs for co-ordination with other, closely related IT-based public-sector information.

• INTERNET-BASED INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR BUSINESS OWNERS
To improve the dialogue with future and existing business owners, Internet use is to be developed further through special portal functions that make relevant, situation-oriented official information available to business owners. The purpose of a joint portal on the Internet is to facilitate companies’ agency contacts and provide easily accessible and, in terms of content, correct information on relevant subjects. The Government is to be the provider of the portal.
• SME survey
The Government has initiated what is to be an annual survey of attitudes among a number of agencies’ corporate customers concerning agencies’ information and accessibility. The result of the survey is to serve as support in the agencies’ quality work and the Government’s control of the agencies.

• Collaboration between government and municipal agencies
To improve their services to citizens, partly on the basis of a number of different life situations, government and municipal agencies need to step up their co-operation. Development work will be initiated, with the focus on defining areas in which the boundaries of responsibility are unclear and on creating integrated service solutions, i.e. solutions that both government and municipal services have in common.

• Secure electronic transmission of documents and messages
Joint security solutions will be developed to guarantee high security in electronic communication between agencies, companies and citizens. The National Tax Board, the National Social Insurance Board, the Patent and Registration Office and the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development will, not later than on 1 October 2000, propose means of organising responsibility in public administration for secure administration of digital signatures. The National Tax Board will also, as soon as possible, test and apply solutions that can afford useful experience for the agencies’ continued work of developing their electronic services.

• Use of digital signatures
Overviews, at each ministry separately, of laws and ordinances are to be carried out for the purpose of, where appropriate, facilitating the introduction of interactive and integrated electronic services (e-services). Above all, this is a matter of the use of digital signatures.

• Basic public-sector information
A strategy is being drawn up to enhance efficiency and facilitate access to the basic electronic information about society that is issued by the public sector. Parliament and the Government have, in various decisions, taken decisions on the role of the state in the information sector, and pinpointed such priority areas as law, business, property and population. The Government is now continuing the work of creating clear regulations for society’s information supply by, for example, taking into consideration the divergent conditions applying to central and local government.
Quality and skills development and learning from others

With the introduction of performance management, there has been a delegation to senior agency managers of responsibility for deciding how the objectives and performance requirements of the Government and Parliament are to be attained. Nevertheless, the Government is—with its ultimate responsibility for central government administration—responsible for creating conditions that promote efficiency and quality in central-government activities. The Government will therefore implement measures aimed at, for example, stimulating public administration to work more systematically on developing the overall quality of its work. This relates to systematic quality work based on the criteria that are currently deemed to characterise successful organisations, such as customer orientation, committed leadership, staff participation, skills development, a long-term approach, constant improvements, reciprocal learning and collaboration.

In 1999, the Government set up the National Council for Quality and Development. This agency’s function is, in the interest of the public, to support and stimulate work on quality development and the supply of skills in central-government administration. It is intended to encourage and facilitate the agencies’ work on systematically developing overall quality in their activities. Another aim of the Council is to support central-government administration in its efforts to acquire, develop and retain the right skills. The Council’s directives include providing courses in administration. Over the next few years, its tasks on behalf of the Government will include developing joint introductory and basic courses in administration for central-government employees. Another function of the Council will be to develop forms for the interchange of experience between public servants and research spokesmen in the area of the Council’s activities. Practitioners and researchers have different perspectives on public administration. To make it easier for ideas and knowledge to be spread and tried out, many opportunities for administration and research to meet and conduct dialogues are needed. The Government also wishes to support efforts in public administration to utilise comparisons and learning from others in its internal development work.

MEASURES

- QUALITY AWARD FOR CENTRAL-GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
  The Government wishes, as part of its endeavour to encourage quality work in public administration, to explore the feasibility of setting up a special quality award for central-government administration. The Government has therefore
commissioned the National Council for Quality and Development to investigate demand for a quality award for central-government administration. The Council is also to examine what form this might take in order to stimulate the central-government agencies to engage in systematic quality work that emphasises the citizen perspective, committed leadership and everyone’s active participation in development efforts. The award should also take into account how agencies assume their responsibility as employers. The content of the organisation’s staff policy and work-environment efforts is crucial in a coherent quality programme.

• EU “Innovative public services/performance indicators” project
An EU project is being conducted in a control group under the EU director-generals’ network for administrative policy, with representatives of each member state. The purpose of the project is to promote benchmarking and the sharing of experience relating to best practice between EU administrations.

Regulatory quality

The role of SMEs in generating growth and boosting employment is receiving increasing attention. The impact of regulations on these companies has, for example, been given particular consideration. Guidelines have been issued for the Government Offices regarding special analyses of the impact of regulations on SMEs’ work situation, competitiveness or other conditions.

The work of co-ordinating, supporting and following up efforts to simplify regulations is being carried out in a permanently established group devoted to regulatory simplification in the Government Offices.

Regulatory quality

MEASURES

• Impact analyses
Special courses are being provided to enhance the agencies’ skills in carrying out special analyses of the impact of regulations on conditions for SMEs.

• Simplification of companies’ submission of information
Companies’ information submission must be facilitated and limited through improved adaptation to their own accounting routines, increased utilisation of electronic data retrieval and enhanced co-ordination of the agencies’ data collection.
Focusing central-government activities

The process of focusing central-government activities should continue. This process involves an endeavour to demarcate the state’s functions. Another purpose is to attain greater clarity in the division of responsibility between agencies, on the one hand, and between the state and other principals on the other. The Government is concentrating mainly on safeguarding core activities in its continued efforts to focus central-government activities. Further rationalisation efforts will be a matter of the necessity to review the public-sector commitment with great care. The functions that are extraneous to the core activities should be phased out or transferred to other principals.

The focusing process will be completed through continued active, structural adaptation of activities. Through this process, the three principal administrative-policy values of democracy, the rule of law and efficiency are promoted. Structural changes are an integral part of the development of central-government administration. The purpose is to enhance efficiency and make activities more appropriate in relation to the objectives defined by Parliament and the Government. There are still major efficiency problems due to the agencies not being appropriately organised, having overlapping functions, etc.

Restructuring calls for analytical capacity and organisational know-how. The Government therefore places heavy emphasis on capacity to evaluate structural changes. The Government Offices’ ability to control and lead central-government administration with quality and expertise must be developed. Documentation to support decisions concerning structural changes must be characterised by high quality. The Government will also lay heavy emphasis on the need to follow up and analyse the impact of structural changes on activities to a greater extent than at present. When a decision is taken to effect a structural change, it should also be decided how and when this follow-up is to be carried out.

Focusing central-government activities

MEASURES

- **Guide to organisational and structural changes**
  A new guide to organisational and structural changes in central-government administration is being drawn up. This guide, which is in the nature of a list of guidelines, is aimed primarily at managers and administrators in the Government Offices. The aims include enhancing organisational know-how in the Government Offices and improving documentation to support decisions on organisational and structural changes.
Agency governance adapted to activities

In view of the major differences between agencies with respect, for example, to their activities and size, governance must be adapted to individual agencies. In governing an agency, several different instruments can be used: performance management and financial control in the official appropriation document, the appointment of the agency head, the directives (including choice of management form), miscellaneous laws and ordinances to which activities are subject, the performance dialogue, work on the budget and finance bill, and informal dialogue with the agency. A comprehensive view of the agency’s sphere of activities and the control instruments available is required for co-ordinated governance adapted to the work to be attainable.

The Government Offices’ way of working is crucial if administrative policy is to be effective and their governance of public administration is to function well. It is important for the forms of work to develop. It must be ensured that the administrators who are in direct contact with the agency are given ample scope to function effectively in their role, and receive the requisite support.

The Government Offices must be highly knowledgeable as to how the various means of control function separately, and how they work together and may be used to best effect. Existing instruments need developing and new instruments may need creating. The Government and Government Offices should shape their governance, more than hitherto, according to their dialogue with the agencies.

The Government chooses the form of management that, given the nature of the work, is most suitable. One precondition for an individual board to act efficiently is for its members to be fully aware of the board’s role and responsibilities. Knowledge of the laws and ordinances that constitute the framework of the Government’s control of administration, and also knowledge of the division of responsibility between the ministry, board and agency head concerned, are essential if the board members are to be able to perform their role properly.

For a number of years, the Government has offered training courses for boards with full responsibility. The Government will develop this input further by offering corresponding training to all forms of central-government boards and councils. The parameters of the input are tailor-made according to the needs of each board and council, and require the ministry concerned to play an active part in the training.
In 1996/97, the Government implemented an evaluation of the effects of changes in employer policy. One of the resulting conclusions was that the state had not assumed dominance of pay trends in the labour market as a result of this reform. However, it was found that too short a time had passed for more far-reaching conclusions to be drawn concerning the effects of the reform on activities. The Government therefore intends to carry out a new evaluation of the employer reform, including delegation of pay formation to the agencies.

The performance dialogue between each agency head and the ministry management concerned is another of the Government’s instruments for controlling the agencies. The purpose of the performance dialogue is to follow up activities over the past year and, on the basis of these, discuss the results from an activity perspective, and also engage in a personal planning discussion between the political management and agency head. Questions to be dealt with in this dialogue should, in the future, also include strategic issues relating to the supply of skills and management in the agency concerned.

These development inputs and changes in financial control are a process that is continuous and part of the Government’s responsibility with respect to governance of public administration. Since 1997, part of this development work has been conducted within the framework of the “Vesta” project (concerning tools of financial control in the Swedish state), the purpose being to pave the way for more efficient governance and monitoring of central-government activities at various levels of decision-making.

**MEASURES**

- **Developing Performance Management**
  The Government is carrying out an overview of objectives and their structure in every area of public spending. One purpose of this overview is to develop and improve performance management. It is a matter of, for example, achieving a closer association between objectives, the budget and performance, on the one hand, and monitoring and evaluation strategies on the other.

- **Adapting Agency Governance to Activities**
  The Government’s control of the agencies must be developed and adapted to their activities. A series of seminars are to be held with ministries and agencies to improve governance and adapt it better to the agencies’ work.
• **Trial implementation of agreements on activities**

  To supplement the official appropriation documents, pilot projects involving two-part performance dialogues are to be conducted at a limited number of agencies. An initial part, relating to the objectives for activities in the financial year ahead (the activity agreement), is to be implemented in the autumn. A second part, relating to the results attained, is to take place in the spring (the performance dialogue).

• **Developing the annual performance dialogues**

  The present development efforts to enhance the quality of these dialogues between the ministry management and agency head concerned will continue.

• **Improving activity assessments**

  For the purpose of improving performance assessments and feedback from the same to executive management and employees, the Government is to conduct a study of quality in the present-day performance assessments that are carried out in conjunction with the annual reports and the budget and finance bill. The content, impact and significance of the current performance assessments, in particular, will be studied.

• **Reviewing the Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance**

  The purpose of this review is to achieve greater clarity regarding the administrative-policy requirements to which the agencies are subject. The review covers, for example, issues relating to the agencies’ activity development, their services (including provision of information), simplification of regulations and forms of management.

• **Evaluating official functions as a basis for benchmarking**

  This measure involves the Government evaluating central-government agencies in terms of certain joint official functions, such as management of IT, procurement, regulatory work, the supply of skills and premises, services and the development of activities. The purpose is for the evaluation to yield a basis for benchmarking.

• **Reviewing central-government supervision**

  A review of central-government supervision is in progress. Its purpose is to bring about more appropriate state supervision of agencies, municipalities and businesses. The content of central-government supervision should be clarified.
Better documentation for decision-making

Parliament and the Government must have documentation of the highest quality, so that every aspect of the questions they deal with is clarified. A smoothly functioning system of commissions of inquiry is important to satisfy this need. A government commission of inquiry must be based on a well-founded analysis of problems and be given the resources and the time frame required for the task in hand. The procedure of circulating commission reports to official consultation bodies to obtain their comments must be implemented in such a way that essential viewpoints are taken into account while, at the same time, openness in the drafting process is maintained.

For the administrative-policy objectives to have the requisite impact, better follow-up of the agencies’ reform work is required.
One crucial aspect of the follow-up is annual feedback to the Government by the agencies. Over and above the present-day requirement of an annual report there is, among the feedback requirements, the employer-policy follow-up decided upon by the Government. In addition, the agencies should report back on the improvements in their services to citizens and companies, and the other quality improvements they have carried out.

Apart from agency-specific feedback, the Government needs to obtain a broad, general picture of how public administration is developing. This follow-up is aimed at showing whether the Government’s administrative policy yields the desired results, not how individual agencies develop.

One of the main points in the Government’s administrative policy is that central-government activities must have a clear focus on the citizens. Through performance indicators and feedback requirements, the agencies’ adaptation to citizens’ demands can be monitored. In this central issue, the Government also has reason to find channels for sounding out public opinion on central-government administration, e.g. through pilot projects involving citizen panels.

Information concerning administrative policy should be included in an overall assessment of the agencies’ work, together with other information, such as feedback on the agencies’ performance and costs in the annual reports, the assessments contained in the audits, and special studies that have been carried out.

Another part of administrative-policy monitoring is the Government’s annual report to Parliament on development in public administration.

Better documentation for decision-making

**MEASURES**

- **Developing the Commission-of-Inquiry System**
  A project has begun in the Government Offices with the purpose of improving the quality of work carried out by commissions of inquiry. The project focuses on the Government Offices’ preparation and monitoring of the investigation work. Efforts include measures to enhance quality in, for example, commission directives; to improve planning; to boost commissioners’ knowledge; to improve the supply of skills; to consider effective follow-up, etc.

- **Trial Implementation of Citizen Panels**
  To monitor quality in public administration, new channels for hearing citizens’ and businesses’ views on central-government activities are being tried out.
Sweden’s membership of the European Union and accession to the single market has made Swedish public administration part of a partially new system of institutions, regulatory frameworks and procedures that change the conditions for the work of public administration. It affects both its governance and organisation, on the one hand, and the manner in which it works on the other.

Swedish public administration is also affected by Sweden’s conduct in the international arena in, for example, the OECD, UN and WTO.

Internationalisation is calling for a great ability on Sweden’s part to collaborate with other players, and confronting public administration with new issues and tasks.

EU membership affects, broadly speaking, the whole of public administration, especially the central governmental bodies and administrative agencies. When

• Developing performance indicators
  Work has commenced on more systematic monitoring of the development of public administration, using performance indicators. These indicators are also intended to form the basis for comparative studies, national and international. The indicators are based on the objectives reported by the Government in its administrative-policy bill.

• Special recurrent studies
  The monitoring is also to include special recurrent studies of attitudes among staff and external stakeholders, as well as comparative national and international studies based on performance indicators and administrative functions.

• Annual reporting on the development of public administration
  Since 1996, on behalf of the Government, the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development (SAFAD) has drawn up the report The Swedish Central Government in Transition, a summary account of development in central-government administration with respect to the impact of structural changes on public finances, employment, etc. The need for systematically implemented monitoring and evaluation of administrative policy has increased. The content of SAFAD’s report therefore needs broadening and basing on—besides official, high-quality statistics—citizen panels and also follow-ups and studies based on performance indicators. One purpose is to ensure that the Government’s reports to Parliament on development in public administration improve.

The EU and internationalisation

Sweden’s membership of the European Union and accession to the single market has made Swedish public administration part of a partially new system of institutions, regulatory frameworks and procedures that change the conditions for the work of public administration. It affects both its governance and organisation, on the one hand, and the manner in which it works on the other.

Swedish public administration is also affected by Sweden’s conduct in the international arena in, for example, the OECD, UN and WTO.
agency employees represent Sweden in working groups or other bodies in the EU, they do so as representatives of the Government, not of independent agencies. For Sweden to gain influence over Union decision-making procedures, well co-ordinated policy is important. Sweden must be capable of speaking with one voice on the basis of a carefully thought-out, soundly argued and broadly based view. This presupposes efficient forms of preparation and co-ordination in the Government Offices, as well as between them and the administrative agencies. Section 16 of the Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance states that agencies must make available for Sweden's participation in the EU the staff requested by the Government. The Government Offices are responsible not only for co-ordinating EU work, but also for ensuring that the agencies adequately represent the standpoints adopted by the Government. Moreover, effective channels of co-ordination with other players outside the state, such as the business sector and interest organisations, are essential.

EU-related work in public administration is in a development phase. By adapting the central-government administration's organisation and forms of work to the requirements and opportunities entailed by EU co-operation, efficiency gains can be made and Sweden's influence in the Union can be enhanced.

In the Statement of Government Policy of 14 September 1999, the Prime Minister announced the Government’s ambition of “proposing a specific programme of measures to modernise the EU.” In terms of administrative policy, one aim is to attain results in the form of a more modern EU bureaucracy with more efficient work procedures and increased accessibility to Union citizens. Aspirations as far as Swedish public administration is concerned include facilitating contacts and achieving more far-reaching co-operation with EU institutions.

In preparation for Sweden’s EU presidency of spring 2001, the Government is concentrating on enhancing knowledge of the Union and Swedish participation in its work. The agencies will be responsible for much of this work, and it is therefore essential for the exchange of information and other co-operation between the Government Offices and the agencies to function smoothly. The principal task of the country that has the presidency is to lead EU co-operation and press for progress in joint issues. The presidency also means that Sweden is the face of the Union, representing the EU in dealings with other countries and in international contexts.

The intention is for openness to permeate the Swedish presidency. A multilingual Internet website is, for example, being created to inform journalists and the public
about the work that is under way. The Government’s programme for the presidency includes, besides the above-mentioned efforts to bring about an open, modern and efficient Union, giving high priority to work on realising its enlargement. In addition, priority is given to issues relating to sustainable development, welfare and security, increased employment and growth in a competitive Union, and also solidarity and an active international role.

The EU and internationalisation

MEASURES

• **EU influence on public administration**
  Swedish public administration’s experience of collaboration in joint EU work has been evaluated. This evaluation has elucidated how the forms of control and co-ordination have developed, how the division of labour and co-operation between the Government Offices and agencies function, and how preconditions for the agencies’ openness and transparency have been affected. The evaluation is to form the basis for the interchange of experience between the Government Offices and the agencies. A seminar to share experience gained to date will, for example, be held in autumn 2000.

• **Shaping a strategy for export of public-administration expertise**
  An investigation has been carried out to survey and analyse Swedish export of know-how concerning central-government administration. Based on the findings of this inquiry, the Government will develop a strategy aimed at boosting high-quality, and also efficiently organised and run, export of public-administration expertise.

• **Preparations for the presidency**
  Practical preparations for the presidency include extensive meetings in Brussels, Luxembourg and Sweden, twin-town activities and popular education. Every six months, some 250 different working groups will meet in the Council, a total of 1,200–1,600 times. During Sweden’s presidency these meetings will be chaired by Swedish officials. These will be appointed by the Government, which will also offer all those taking part in the work extensive training inputs to make a successful presidency possible. In Sweden, 70–80 meetings will also be arranged at various levels: the summit meeting in Gothenburg at the end of the presidency, informal get-togethers among ministers, and a number of meetings and conferences at official and expert level.
At a time when public administration, like society at large, is characterised by diversity and variation it is paramount for us to recall what unites us—our joint function to serve democracy. In our view, it is therefore vital to keep public administration together as a coherent whole, through a shared administrative culture and ethic,” write Göran Persson, Prime Minister, and Britta Lejon, Minister for Democratic Issues and Public Administration, in the foreword to this action programme.

The purpose of central-government administrative policy is to create forms of organisation, governance and management that pave the way for the three basic values of democracy, the rule of law and efficiency to be realised throughout public administration.

Here, the Government presents its action programme for attaining the objectives of administrative policy. The Government’s measures serve as a foundation for long-term development of public administration.