



Short Profile March 2025

Sweden

Short Cultural Policy Profile

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1. Facts and figures

- **Political system:** parliamentary democracy with a single-chamber parliament, constitutional monarchy.
- **Official language:** Swedish. Recognized national minority languages: Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani, Sámi languages, Yiddish, Swedish Sign Language.

	Latest available data (2023)	Latest available data minus 5 years (2018)
<i>Population on January 1st</i>	10 521 550	10 120 242
<i>GDP in million EUR</i>	540 694.6	467 162.6
<i>GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)</i>	117	119
<i>General government expenditure (in % of GDP)</i>	49.5	50.7
<i>Public cultural expenditure</i>	34 262	30 190
<i>Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP</i>	0.55	0.63
<i>Public cultural expenditure per Capita</i>	3 247	2 951
<i>Share of cultural employment of total employment</i>	4.7	4.6*

* Break in timeseries

Sources: Population on January 1st, latest data available:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en>

GDP in million EUR, latest data available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/namq_10_gdp/default/table?lang=en

GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100), latest data available:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00114/default/table?lang=en>

General government expenditure (in % of GDP), latest data available:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00023/default/table?lang=en>

Public cultural expenditure / Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP / Public cultural expenditure per Capita: see also chapter 7.1.1 of the national Compendium profile.

Share of cultural employment of total employment / latest data available:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/cult_emp_sex/default/table?lang=en

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 Objectives

Swedish cultural policy has a long-standing focus on equal access to, and participation in, arts and culture, as well as on government support for artists.

The current objectives for cultural policy, listed below, were established with the government bill on cultural policy of 2009 (prop. 2009/10:3).

"Culture should be a dynamic, challenging, and independent force based on the freedom of expression. Everyone should be able to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity and artistic quality should mark society's development.

To reach the objectives, cultural policy should:

- *promote everyone's access to cultural experiences, cultural education, and to develop their creative capabilities,*
- *promote quality and artistic renewal,*
- *promote a living cultural heritage, which is preserved, used, and developed,*
- *promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation, and*
- *especially notice the right to culture for children and the young."*

Specific goals also exist for some parts of the arts and culture sector. These are described in the longer version of the Compendium profile under the headlines for these specific areas.

2.2 Main features

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for issues concerning culture, democracy, media, the national minorities, and the language and culture of the Sami people. The Swedish cultural policy model is characterized by a strong national (state) level, with most of its powers invested in government agencies under the leadership of government-appointed directors and boards. Such boards – and the bodies of experts assisting the agencies – often include representatives of relevant sub-fields, professions, and professional organizations within the field of arts and culture. The autonomy of cultural institutions organized as government agencies is protected by constitutional law. In addition, there is a tradition of respect for the autonomy of artists and cultural professionals in matters of content, and quality, of cultural production. This has been described as a double arm's length principle.

The complexity of the Swedish cultural policy model is a result of the large number of heterogeneous units directly subordinated to, and/or financially dependent on, the Ministry of Culture. Among the most important such bodies are the Swedish Arts Council, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, and the Swedish Heritage Board. Other large public bodies are the Swedish Film Institute, and the government agencies responsible for various museums and other cultural institutions.

In the most recent Government Bill on Cultural Policy, that of 2009 (prop. 2009/10:3), the previous focus on the national level of cultural policy was somewhat changed. Since then, a new system has been introduced, in which national government funding of regional institutions is governed through Cultural Policy Plans approved by the Swedish Arts Council. The Arts Council is currently tasked by the government to

present recommendations on how to reduce the administrative burden this process places on its participants.

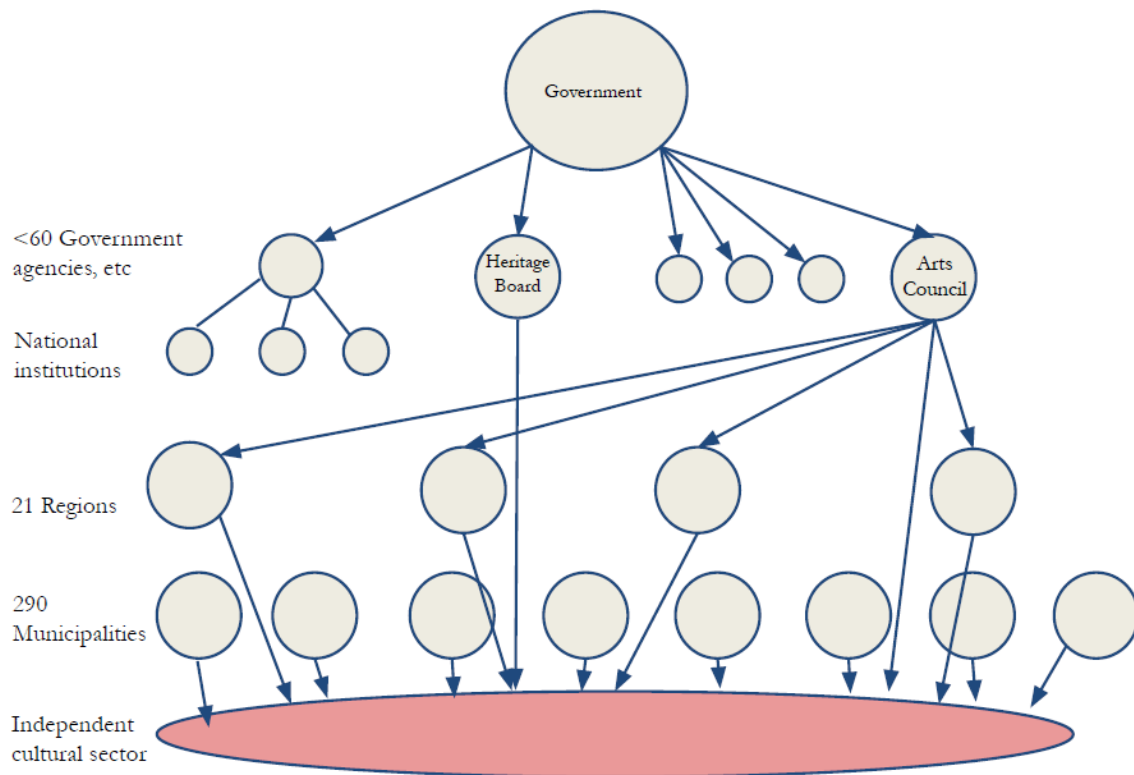
The Regions (*regioner*) are 21 tax-levying authorities on the level between national and local municipal, headed by Regional Councils appointed by directly elected Regional Assemblies. The Regions are mainly responsible for health services, but also provide support for, among other things, county theatres, orchestras, museums, and libraries, within the framework of Cultural Policy Plans. While the autonomy of regional and local governments is protected by the constitution, the autonomy of cultural institutions on the regional and local levels is not. The arm's length principle thus does not exist in the same way at the local and regional levels as it does on the national level.

The 290 Municipalities (*kommuner*) are tax-levying local authorities headed by directly elected assemblies, which appoints municipal councils. They are legally obligated to fund at least one public library, but also fund other cultural activities, e.g. culture and music schools, theatres, art galleries, museums, and popular cultural education. Municipalities are also responsible for regular schools, up to, but not including university-level education. Funding comes mainly from locally leveled taxes. The main areas for municipal activities in the cultural sphere – apart from organizing the regular school system – are libraries, culture and music schools, and support for local NGOs, but larger municipalities may support a significantly broader range of cultural institutions and programs.

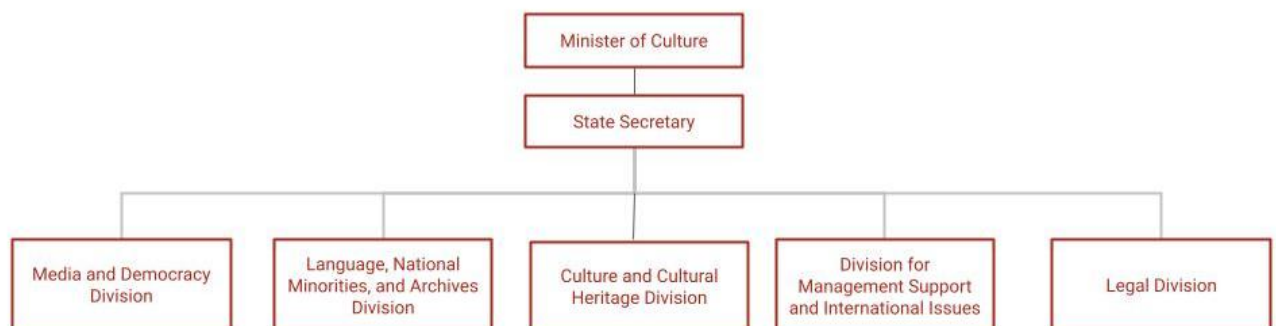
Cultural education is organized largely outside of the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. Instead, higher artistic education is integrated in the university system, a responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Lower-level culture and music schools are a municipal responsibility. The Ministry of Education also supports national study associations and folk high schools, also often dealing with cultural activities and cultural education.

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram

Overall picture of the relationship between different levels of government and arm's-length bodies (arrows indicating funding)



Organisation of the Ministry of Culture:



2.4 Background

1950-1970: Social Democratic governments continued to expand the state to create a broad welfare system. Established cultural institutions were modernised, and new ones created, e.g. touring institutions for exhibitions and music, the Film Institute, and municipal music schools. Among the first new bodies created in cultural policy after the War was the Author's Fund, created in 1954 to distribute government grants to writers, established as a support system compensating writers for the right of public libraries to lend out books.

1970-1990: In the 1960s, political debate focusing on cultural policy increased dramatically, resulting in the first general cultural policy objectives, presented in the Government Bill on Culture 1974. A new government agency, the Swedish Arts Council, was created. While the objectives of cultural policy established at this time were the results of an initiative of the national government, the most significant result may have been the substantial strengthening of county and municipal resources for the production and distribution of quality culture.

The Ministry of Culture was separated from the Ministry of Education in 1991. Many participatory cultural activities are still the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, as is artistic education.

2000-2025: In the 2000's, regional governments became increasingly active in Swedish cultural policy, both in creating their own cultural policies, and in distributing funding from the national budget. In 2009, a new government bill on cultural policy was passed by parliament, setting new objectives for cultural policy, and creating a new and more decentralised organisation for government support of arts and culture. As a result, a significant part of the national funding for culture was transferred to the Regions. Under this model - known as the Culture Cooperation Model - the Swedish Arts Council acts as a representative of the national government in approving the Cultural Policy Plans of the counties for national funding. In the making of their Cultural Policy Plans, counties are obligated to consult with representatives of cultural institutions, professionals, and civil society in their respective areas of responsibility.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

The most significant trends in Swedish cultural policy in the 21st century have been the results of increasing regionalisation, globalisation, and new media. In particular, the increased movements of people, cultural goods, and cultural influences across national borders have been significant influences on developments in arts and culture, as well as increasingly in cultural policy. The main cultural policy responses to these changes so far can be summed up as a new perspective on Sweden as a multicultural society, a more positive perspective on the cultural and creative industries, and new efforts to transfer policy-making powers from the national to the regional level. These trends, and debates, have been noticeable also for cultural institutions, and are visible in regional Cultural Policy Plans and government instructions to relevant cultural institutions.

The notion of Sweden as a multicultural society, and what this entails, has increasingly been the subject of political debate in the last several years. So far, cultural policy remains relatively stable, but there are indications that the consensus that once characterized Swedish cultural policy is beginning to give way to increased polarization and politicization. One reason for this is the emergence of the populist and nationalist Sweden Democrats as a major political party. Increasing polarization and politicization of cultural policy can be noticed, for example, in recent debates on threats against artists and other professionals in the cultural sector, political activism in libraries, politicization of museums, and the influence of grant-giving bodies on artists and artistic projects.

After the national election in September 2022, a new government was established by a centre-right coalition (Moderates, Christian Democrats, and Liberals), supported by the Sweden Democrats. The new government has declared an ambition to significantly reduce immigration to Sweden, and to emphasize the integration of immigrants into Swedish society and culture. However, the published agreement between the parties in the government coalition and the Sweden Democrats does not indicate any plans for radical changes in cultural policy. Among the few measures directly concerned with cultural policy is the introduction of a Swedish culture canon, a task that a government commission was created for in December 2023. While there has been no radical change in the cultural policy model, there have been significant budget cuts in a few specific areas of cultural policy, especially adult education (*folkbildning*). The government is also increasing expectations on cultural institutions to increase private funding.

As in many other countries, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have been a significant issue in Swedish cultural policy. Government recommendations and restrictions against public events have had serious consequences for the cultural sector of the economy. During the pandemic, digital culture has played a larger role than ever in people's cultural habits, from listening to music to ordering books, and watching theatre performances. Many cultural institutions have increased their efforts to make their work electronically available. Several programs were introduced in order to alleviate the negative consequences that the pandemic has had on the arts and culture sector. Much of the culture sector has now recovered, and these measures have been rolled back.

3.2 Key themes

Income and employment conditions among artists and cultural professionals have been a central issue in Swedish cultural policy for decades, but results have remained unsatisfactory. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation became even more problematic. According to studies carried out by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, artists and other cultural professionals work under poorer financial

conditions than professionals with comparable education and experience in other sectors of society. According to the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis the cultural institutions upon which many career opportunities in the cultural field rely are also facing financial challenges. The Agency has also identified the economic circumstances of the cultural sector as a threat to artistic freedom, along with “hate, threats and harassment”, as well as various forms of political control with and without direct financial connections. These characterizations of the situation remain highly relevant. While consumers of culture are the largest source of finance for cultural production in Sweden, dependence on public funding remains high. The contributions of private donors and sponsors remain limited, compared to public funding.

Internet use in Sweden is among the highest in the world. In 2024, 95 percent of Swedes had access to the Internet, and 91 percent used it daily. In 2020, 65 percent used the Internet to watch movies, or TV series, and 69 percent listen to music. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Internet use became even more central to people’s lives. These figures illustrate the drastic changes, opportunities and challenges posed to cultural policy by new modes of communication. Digital media have become tools in the daily work of all institutions, e.g., in the form of websites, digitalization of catalogues, online library loans, documentation and registration of museum collections, use of digital equipment for stage and other music and drama performances, box-office sales, etc. Similarly, digital media have become the natural mode of communication and networking, and a growing medium for creative expressions. As pointed out, for example, by the Government Commission on the Restart of Culture in its recent report, the increasingly digital distribution of literature, music, and other art forms creates new challenges for professionals in these areas when it comes to being paid for their work. This has now become an increasingly important concern for the government.

3.2 International Cultural Cooperation

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for coordinating international cooperation within cultural policy. It is also responsible for the cultural attachés (kulturråd) at Swedish embassies. Cultural attachés currently exist at the Swedish embassies in Berlin, London, Paris (also heading the Swedish Institute in Paris), and Washington, and at the Swedish Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels. Until recently, cultural attaches were also posted in Beijing, Moscow, and Istanbul.

The Swedish Institute (SI) is a public agency that promotes interest and trust in Sweden around the world (web page). Its core activities include spreading information about Swedish values and experience in the fields of innovation, sustainability, culture and creativity, and providing expert support to both private and public actors wishing to communicate the image of Sweden and Swedish skills.

Much of Sweden’s cooperation in the cultural sphere takes place within *Nordic cooperation*, one of the most extensive regional systems of cooperation anywhere in the world. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are members of the Nordic cooperation, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands. On behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis maintains Kulturanalys Norden, reporting on cultural policy in all the Nordic countries. Sweden is also highly active in organisations such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Unesco.

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

With the exception of cinemas, amusement parks, a few private theatres, and a number of private art collections and heritage sites, all major cultural institutions are financed by the national, regional, or local levels of governments. Most of them are owned and maintained by public authorities. The majority of the national cultural institutions are located in the capital. The national government also contributes to regional and municipal cultural institutions (see 2.2).

National museums are under government authority, and most of them are organised as parts of government agencies. For historical reasons, most cultural institutions are located in the capital. However, the newer Museum of World Cultures is headquartered in Gothenburg, and the Maritime Museum in Karlskrona. National public service TV and radio is organized in companies owned by a foundation with a board representing the parties represented in the national parliament.

Regional cultural institutions are often run as foundations, or limited liability companies, in which the regional and/or municipal authorities are the owners. They are generally co-funded by the Regions and the national government under the Cultural Cooperation Model (see 2.2). There are also examples of institutions that are integrated into the regional or municipal administrations. Access to EU structural funds and earmarked money for cultural projects has become increasingly important at county and local levels.

4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Public sector		Private sector	
		Number (2023)	Trend last 5 years (In percent)	Number (2023)	Trend last 5 years (In percent)
Cultural heritage*	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)*	6 023	1.6%	?	?
	Archaeological sites	693 669	7.3%	?	?
Museums**	Museum institutions	167	1	190	-6
Archives***	Archive institutions	312	+0	N/A	N/A
Visual arts	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	50*	N/A	144**	N/A
Performing arts****	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Concert houses	13 (2022)	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Theatre companies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dance and ballet companies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Symphonic orchestras	14	N/A	N/A	N/A

Libraries*****	Libraries	1 072 (2022)	-3.5	-	-
Audiovisual	Cinemas*****	-	-	471	-2.1
	Broadcasting organisations*****	1	0	2	0
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (please explain)		-	-	-	-

N/A: data not available. No data present for this measure

* Source: Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis

**Note: Number of museums which have responded on the survey for statistics on museums. Botanical gardens are not included

*** Source: Swedish National Archives

**** source: Statistics on performing arts. The statistics is still under construction by The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis.

***** Source: public libraries from the Nordic statistics database (<https://www.nordicstatistics.org/culture/>)

***** Source: Nordic Statistics Database (<https://www.nordicstatistics.org/culture/>)

***** Source: Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority (Myndigheten för press, radio och tv)

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

Compared to the situation in many other European countries, public sector funding is unusually dominant in funding arts and heritage in the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden. During the post-war decades, commercially produced culture was considered low quality by official cultural policy, and private donations were considered to threaten the independence of arts and culture. Since the 1990s, donations on sponsoring have been increasingly viewed as a complement to public financial support of cultural institutions. Expectations that sponsoring would become an important source of funding have proved wrong so far, and the issue has, in view of the marginality of current sponsoring, begun to cool down politically. Official cultural statistics does not calculate the size of voluntary contributions either in the form of voluntary work or in the form of donations. Since donations to cultural purposes are not tax deductible, and no statistics are collected, only very limited data exist on the size of donations.

Of the 16.9 billion SEK allocated by the national government to expenditure on culture, media, religious denominations, and leisure for 2025 (as defined in the national budget), 4.1 billion SEK went to popular adult education (*folkbildning*), 1.7 billion SEK to county-level cultural activities, 1.8 billion SEK to national museums and exhibitions, and 1.5 billion SEK to national grants for theatre, music, and dance. Public spending on culture varies a great deal between different parts of the country, both because different municipalities and counties spend different amounts, and because the national government's cultural budget is spent unevenly in relation to different parts of the country. Priorities within cultural policy may also differ between different levels of government.

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in national currency and in EUR, 2023

NB: If no accounted expenditure figures can be provided, you may use budget figures, but this should be clearly indicated in a NOTE at the end of the table.

Level of government	2023 Cultural expenditure			2018 Cultural expenditure		
	Total in million SEK*	Total in EUR	% share of total	Total in million SEK*	Total in EUR*	% share of total
State (national)	14 851	1 294	43 %	13 855	1 351	46 %
Regional*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local (municipal, counties)*	19 411	1 691	57 %	16 335	1 592 3	54 %
TOTAL	34 262	2 985	100 %	30 190	2 943	100 %

Source: (research body and year of data publication)

*Local is including counties. Regional is not used in a Swedish context according to Eurostat standards.

6. Legislation on Culture

6.1 Overview national cultural legislation

The allocation of public funds to arts and culture is not typically regulated by law in Sweden. Objectives are instead decided on either by parliamentary decision (as with the general cultural policy objectives), or in the specific instructions given either in the national budget (by annual parliamentary decision), or by the government to specific government agencies. Most of the cultural policy is implemented by government agencies and similar bodies, which are constitutionally separated from the government ministries and only subjected to decisions and regulations made by the government collectively, or by parliament. The powers of a government minister are thus limited, but in practice include the power to make propositions to the government concerning instructions to government agencies, appointments of their directors and board members, and concerning government bills, including the government bill on the national budget.

There have always been some exceptions to the tendency not to regulate cultural policy in law, and the number of laws regulating the cultural sphere appears to be growing. The Library Law (1996:1596) requires all municipalities to provide public libraries. Public Service broadcasting is funded by a special tax (previously a TV license fee) and regulated in law. Some regulations regarding the Culture Cooperation Model (see 2.2) are included in the law on certain government grants to county-level cultural activities (2010:1919). A separate law on this issue was suggested by a government commission in 2023 but has yet to be introduced. Museums are regulated by the Museum Law (2017:563), and for the preservation of heritage buildings an extensive body of legislation exists (e.g. The Heritage Commemoration Act, 1988:950).

In addition to articles on fundamental democratic rights and freedom of expression, information, religion, and assembly the constitution also includes a paragraph (Article 19 in Chapter 1 of the Instrument of Government) concerning artists and artistic copyrights: "Authors, artists and photographers shall own the rights to their works in accordance with rules laid down in law." These issues are further regulated in special copyright legislation.

The Freedom of the Press Act (1766) is the oldest existing law on freedom of expression in the world, and in some ways the first. It regulates the principle of openness in government administration, as well as freedom of expression in written media. The corresponding freedom of expression in radio, television, and other transmissions, as well as in films, video recordings, sound recordings, and other recordings, is regulated in the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (1991).

6.2 Overview international cultural legislation

Apart from national legislation, international documents signed by Sweden may also have been given the force of law. The following conventions and other international legal instruments related to culture have been adopted by Sweden. Please note that this list includes some of the more important and relevant documents, not all international agreements in this field.

International legal instruments implemented by Sweden in the cultural field

Title of the act	Year of adoption
International Convention for the Protection of Performers, producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organisations	1962
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1971

Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights	1996
Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works	1904
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	1985
Convention for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage	1985
Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention	1985
Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe	1992
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe	1985
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	2003
Convention on means to Prohibit and Prevent the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property	2002
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	2005
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages	1999
European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production	1993
European Landscape Convention	2000
Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	1999
World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Copyright Treaty	1996
World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Performances and Phonograms Treaty	2010
UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects	2011
Convention on the Rights of the Child	2020

Sources: Updated from various sources, including the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, the Swedish Arts Council, and the Ministry of Culture.