

Guest Students
and
Researchers...

Welcome To Lund

***** Feature Article *****

Some General Facts on Sweden

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Sweden has an area of 450,000 km² (174,000 sq. mi.) – similar to California, Cameroon, Iraq, Spain or Thailand. Half its land surface is covered with forest. Less than 10% is farmland. Nearly 100, 000 lakes dot the countryside, which is relatively flat. A long mountain chain in the northwest reaches heights of up to 2,111 m (6,926 ft). There are thousands of islands along the jagged coast. The warm Gulf stream in the Atlantic gives Sweden a milder climate than other areas equally far north. Stockholm, the capital, is almost at the same latitude as southern Greenland but has an average temperature of about + 18 C (64F) in July. The winter temperatures average slightly below freezing and snowfall is moderate. Far northern Sweden has long and cold winters and bright summers of moderate temperatures; in June and July daylight lasts around the clock.

THE PEOPLE

Sweden has a population of slightly more than 9 million, with about 85% living in the southern half of the country.



Malmö's Two-Legged Dancing Sheep.

Around 90% belong to the Church of Sweden, which is Lutheran. Swedish is a Germanic language. Like other industrialised countries, Sweden has a low birth rate. It rose during the 1930s and early 1990s but is now in decline again. Life expectancy is high for men and women. Since the 1940s, immigration from neighbouring Scandinavian countries and elsewhere in the world – has accounted for over 40% of the population growth. Sweden has five official minority groups.

THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of government. The king, Carl XVI Gustav, today has only ceremonial functions as Head of state. Parliament consists of one chamber, whose members are directly elected by proportional representation for four- year terms as from January 1995. Sweden has universal suffrage and voting age is 18. Voting turnover is traditionally very high, 85-95%.

The social democratic Party has held power alone or in coalitions during the periods 1932-1976 and 1982-1991, while the non-socialist parties were in government 1976-1982 and 1991-1994. After the 1994 elections, the Social



THE LUNDIAN MAGAZINE volunteers (left to right), Nathalie, Gary, Buko and Kristina dussing articles for this issue. Photo: Betsai.

Democratic Party returned to power. There are more than ten ministries and advisory bodies concerned with preparing new government bills. Enforcement of the laws is handled by 100 or so relatively independent central administrative agencies and 25 central county administrations. Each county also has a popularly elected council entitled to levy an income tax and is responsible chiefly for health care in its area. Today Sweden has 289 municipalities covering the entire country (including rural areas), each with a popularly elected council which collects an income tax and operates such public services as schools, child and elder care, utilities, housing, and cultural and leisure activities. Immigrants with resident permits for at least three years have the right to vote and run for office in local elections.



The Parliamentary Ombudsmen investigate suspected abuses of authority by civil servants. Other Ombudsmen protect the public by keeping the watchful eye discrimination based on religious, ethnic, gender sexual preference, physical disability ground. There is also a n Ombudsman for the rights of children. Most government documents are open to inspection by the public and mass media at any time.

FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENCE

The end of the cold war and the political division of Europe has started new perspectives for Sweden's foreign and security policy, and new opportunities to participate in the process of European integration.

A referendum, which was held in November 1994, resulted in a vote for Swedish membership in the European Union and Sweden became a full member of the EU as of January 1995. Prior to membership, the EEA agreement already provided the legal framework for far-reaching economic integration between Sweden and the EU countries. The free movement of goods, services, capital and persons had been achieved in many respects. Sweden's strategic location between the North Atlantic and Russia is one of the major factors determining Swedish security policy. A strong and independent national defence system is a fundamental element of Swedish security policy. Strong support for the United Nations is a cornerstone of foreign policy. Other features include the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, international disarmament and protection of the environment. Sweden appropriates almost 1% of its gross national income for international development aid. It is also a member of many other international



Photo: Karl Olsson

Lund City Park is well known as a place to rest and enjoy local nature.

organisations such as OECD and the World Bank. There is far-reaching co-operation between the Nordic Countries in social welfare, cultural affairs and a joint labour market.

INDUSTRY AND THE ECONOMY

In the past 100 years Sweden has evolved from a largely agrarian to one where less than 3% of the labour force is employed in agriculture. Huge increases in farm productivity have nonetheless kept Sweden more than 80% self-sufficient in food. Of Sweden's traditional basic industries, forest products still play a major role in the economy. The engineering industry (excluding shipyards) has expanded and today accounts for nearly half a manufacturing, but the fastest-growing manufacturing sector is pharmaceuticals, which, however, remains rather small in terms of output and employment.

Sweden is among the world's biggest spenders on industrial research and development in relation to national output. About 80% of R&D expenditures are related to transportation and telecommunications equipment, pharmaceuticals, and machinery. A small number of industrial groups also account for most R&D spending, with ABB, Ericsson; Volvo, Saab Automobile, Scania and Astra among the leaders.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Sweden has rich natural supplies of coniferous forest, water power, iron ore, uranium and other minerals but lacks significant oil and coal deposits. The only iron ore mines are situated in the far north. Their production is mainly exported. The vast forests of spruce, pine and other softwoods supply a highly developed sawmill, pulp, paper and finished wood product industry. Despite high domestic consumption, Sweden exports about 60% of its forest products. Cheap hydro power was a major factor in Sweden's industrial development. Today around 15% of the county's energy supply comes from its hydroelectric plants, many of them on the main northern rivers. Over 40% of energy consumed in Sweden comes from imported oil, 7% from imported coal and coke. Sweden's nuclear reactors provide over 15% of total energy or

almost 50% of electrical energy. The rest of the energy supply comes from biofuels, peat, waste heat, etc. After an advisory referendum in 1980, Parliament decided that the use of nuclear power should be phased out by 2010.

LABOUR MARKET

About 4.3 million people (50% of the population) are in the labour force. This high figure is mainly due to the fact that more than 75% of all women aged 16-64 are gainfully employed. Unemployment was given high priority in the 1980s and was for many years kept low by international standards, due to strong business sector, the growth of the public sector, and an ambitious labour market policy. However, due to the recession that began in 1990, the jobless rate has grown considerably. Unemployment amongst immigrants is considerably higher. The standard working week is 40 hours by law. Roughly 25% of the labour force, mainly women, work part-time. There are five week' statutory paid vacation. Nearly 80% of all employees are members of a trade union. The central union bodies are:

the Trade Union Confederation (LO) for manual workers, the Confederation of Salaried Employees (TCO) for white-collar employees, and the Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO) mainly for graduate level white-collar employees. The main business organisation, The Swedish Employers' Association (SAF), represents all kinds of private companies grouped in trade associations. Pay bargaining is primarily handled by the SAF, LO, TCO, SACO member associations/unions. A large number of laws regulate the labour market, including acts on employment security, the status of shop stewards, the work environment and employee participation in decision-making. A tax reform that took full effect in 1991 is aimed at lowering rates and broadening the tax base.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Health care and social welfare services are as public sector responsibilities, and are supported by a national social insurance system. Responsibility for health care, both inpatient and outpatient, is a duty of 23 county councils and 3 large municipalities. Responsibility for social welfare services rests primarily with the

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Publisher and Managing Editor:

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Copy Editor: Don Lane

Art Director: Monique Fransén.

This issue was published in association with the Antidiscrimination Bureau of Lund (ADB Lund). **Special Thanks** to Summer 2005 volunteers Emmi, Nathalie and Kristina. Also to Lund's Vipeholmskolan' Media Programme, Integrationsverket and many others.

ISSN: 1404-9511

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municipalities.

All residents in Sweden are covered by a national health insurance plan. If a person is ill, or must stay home to care for sick children, he/she receives a taxable daily allowance of lost income, depending on the length of the absence. The patient is charged a fee for medical consultations and any drugs prescribed. For persons with considerable costs for medical treatment and medicines, however, there is a ceiling after which further treatment/drugs are free of charge. The county councils together with the health insurance system then pay most of the hospitalisation costs and laboratory fees. A large proportion of private doctors' fees in outpatient care are covered by this insurance. When a child is born, the parents are legally entitled to a total of twelve months' paid leave from work, which can be shared between them and used any time before the child's eighth birthday.

EDUCATION

Nine years of schooling are compulsory for all children from the age of 6 or 7. About 95% go on to the upper secondary school, which offers both vocational and academic programs. Schools are run by municipalities

and provide free instruction, books and lunches. A separate municipal adult education system enables adults with inadequate schooling to reach the same level of education as young people.

Altogether there are about forty institutions of higher education in Sweden, operated mainly by the State and providing free instruction. About half the students are women, and a large number are people over 25 taking advantage of special admission rules for those with work experience. Almost one fourth of adult Swedes have a higher education. Private government-subsidised adult education associations arrange study circles for more than 2.5 million course participants a year.

Source: The Swedish Institute, Fact Sheet, Stockholm.



Photo: Erik Grahn

Södra Esplanaden in Lund has a beautiful path leading to the City Park. On Saturdays there is a flea market.

Messages to Members

See messages on the websites:

www.thelundian.com
adblund.comhem

Change in the Law

Stockholm, July 1, 2005: A complimentary change to the law prohibiting discrimination in labour (SFS 1999:130) came into effect on the first of July. Full Details at: www.do.se SFS 2005:477

Autumn Calendar for 2005

August

Crayfish Premiere
Malmö Festival
Autumn Term starts

September

Lund's Culture Night

Oktober

4 Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
Ramadam (1)
6th Gedalya
13 Yom Kipper
18 - 24 Sukkot

24 IUN-dag. ADB Region South Conference in Lund

30 Halloween

November

3 Eidal Fitr (Shawwah)
5 All Saints Day
11 Mårtensgås
13 Farther's day
27 1st. advent

December

10 Human Rights Day/Nobel Prize Day
13 Lucia
25 Christmas Day
26 Hanukka
31 New Year's Eve

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News From Abroad

Finland's New Equality Act

The Finnish Equality Act came into force in February 2004. It aims to decrease discrimination and increase equality in the Finnish society.

In Finland, there are already several laws that prohibit discrimination. Yet many people feel that they are being discriminated at work or free time. The new Equality Act prohibits discrimination that is based on age, ethnic or national origin, citizenship, language, religion of belief, conviction, opinion, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics such as financial position, pregnancy or family social situation.

In Finland, Ethnic origin refers both to immigrants and Finland's old ethnic minorities such as Roma, Sámi, Tatars, Jews and representatives of the old Russian community. Thus the Act applies both to native Finns and people who have moved to Finland, including children, men and women of all ages.

Source: *SILTALEHTI - The Magazine for many languages and cultures (SOUMI-EGLANTI 02/2005)*

EUMC NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 23, JUNE 2005

The EUMC has published a large number of studies on key issues related to its mandate. Lately, the EUMC published comprehensive comparative reports on the situation in employment, education, legislation and with regards to racist violence in the EU. Should you be interested in receiving any of these publications or the EUMC's Annual Reports and its periodical magazines, write to: information@eumc.eu.int or complete the publications ordering from available at <http://eumc.eu.int>

Sweden: Police seeks to enhance reporting of hate crimes. The police authority in Stockholm presented a first report on a project to improve how hate crimes are dealt with. As a first step, changes were introduced in the reporting system of the Stockholm City police. The computerized system asked the police to be more specific in their reporting (e.g. whether the crime was an assault, threat or graffiti) and to report whether or not the crime is hate motivated. The next step in the project is to interview the police responsible for writing the reports, prosecutors and if possible plaintiffs.

Considered will be the treatment of victims, first action taken, investigation method, cooperation and education. The overall aim of the project is to increase knowledge about hate crimes in the police force and to make it easier for victims to report.

Source: EUMC Newsletter.

Letter to the Editor

Wednesday, 15 June 2005

British Embassy
Stockholm
Consular/Visa Section

As you may be aware the British Government recently announced that consular fees levied by the British Embassy are to be increased as of 1st of July 2005. Examples of the types of services affected are the issuance of passports, the registration of Births and Deaths and the performing of Notarial Acts. (A more detailed list is attached.)

It is the British Government's policy that fees for consular services should be set to recover the full costs involved without being subsidised by the UK taxpayer. The fees are therefore calculated on the basis of the full cost (staff, accommodation and overheads) proportionate to the average time taken to perform the service. The fees are calculated in sterling and are applied on a worldwide basis. They are reviewed annually. All our posts have a statutory requirement to implement them. The calculations are scrutinised by HM Treasury, approved by the Privy Council and laid before Parliament. The method is one operated generally by the government departments offering cost-recoverable services.

We wish to give those associations with whom we have contact fair notice of the increases and to ask them to inform their members of these increases and of the policy that determines the level of fees charged.

With the very best regards,

James Moody,
Vice Consul.



Photo: The Dancing Sheep-lady in Malmö Says: We Are All (Dancing) Sheep. *Lundian Archive*