

Working together for security and development

The election manifesto of the Swedish Social Democrats

2002-2006

We have come a long way when it comes to welfare in Sweden but we have not come far enough.

Despite the successes of the past few years – a strong economy, strong growth, low unemployment - the feeling of insecurity has increased. There is the issue of stress - at work and in everyday life. There is the worry of falling victim to crime or of not getting proper care in time. All too many people feel that our society is becoming colder and harder.

We must turn this development around. We can only achieve this by working together. Security and justice can only be developed in a climate of solidarity and co-operation.

We social democrats are proud of Sweden, but we are not satisfied. We have very real successes behind us. That said, we have much greater challenges in front of us.

Ever since the act of terrorism on the 11 Th of September last year, developments in the international economy have been uncertain. The corporate scandals in the USA have added to this feeling of uncertainty. There is very real concern about the direction of the European economy. What is called for now, is responsibility and co-operation:

- The social democrats will never contribute to undermining the economy of Sweden. For this reason all reforms must be financed. New resources must be used first of all to increase security and justice. This must take priority over large tax cuts.
- Our country is too small for major conflicts. What is needed instead is a new spirit of co-operation that aims at modernising Sweden and making the country more secure. We want to see broad agreements across traditional barriers and borderlines.

We want to see a Sweden with full employment where income gaps shrink and where greed takes a back seat. We want to shape a society where economic, social and ecological goals are in balance with one another. We want to see Sweden as a forerunner among countries when it comes to a changeover to an ecologically sustainable world.

Sweden must be the land of many opportunities and not the land of major polarisation.

Security for all

1. Welfare based on the principle of the right of public access. Welfare policies must cover everyone, must be financed in a spirit of solidarity via taxation and be distributed according to people's needs not on the basis of how fat their wallets are. The work of pulling down barriers that are disadvantageous to the disabled will continue and be intensified. Only those who feel secure can feel free and dare to meet change in a positive way.

2. Better health care, more staff and shorter queues. The proportion of our common resources destined for health care will be increased. In pace with growth in the economy, health care will be allotted substantial resources in the form of increased tax revenue and general government grants. But that will not be enough. We want to provide health care with a further 20 billion crowns in a special effort to recruit more staff and improve

quality in health care services – not least in the most needy areas, improve the working environment and shorten queues for treatment. A national health care guarantee will be introduced. Hospitals will not be allowed to pass into management by private companies based on profit making. No publicly financed health care will provide priority to the customers of insurance companies. The ceiling on sickness insurance payments will be raised. Dental insurance will be improved.

3. Security at work. Every week somebody dies at work. Dangerous working conditions must be got rid of. Labour law must be developed and not dismantled. In the case of redundancies the rules must be objective and leave no room for wilfulness. For this reason we intend to remove the exemptions to the law on last in first out, we will also remove the opportunity for employers in the event of redundancies to use the period of parental leave as part of the period of notice. We want to see full time jobs as a right and part time jobs as an option.

4. Security in the autumn of life. Everyone has the right to a secure old age. The elderly deserve to be met with respect and consideration. For this reason we intend to spend more on the elderly. The ceiling on charges on services in elderly care has improved the situation for many pensioners. 30 000 more people have been employed in elderly care services over the past few years. We want to go further and improve the quality of elderly care and among other measures to include improved health care for the elderly. Zero tolerance of bad conditions must be the rule. We want to see more staff employed by county and by municipal councils in the fields of health care and services for the elderly. We want to invest in improving the skills and competence of the staff and to make it easier to recruit future staff. We will introduce a form of income support for those pensioners who have little or no pension. We will step up the construction of housing units for the elderly.

5. Security against crime. We will strengthen the work of the police in the struggle against crime and in the prevention of crime. This requires more police officers and a continued investment in the training of police recruits. 4 000 new police officers will be trained during the coming four years. Police work must be reorganised so that the police work those hours and in those places where and when crimes are committed. The legal system will be modernised in order to shorten the time between reporting the crime and sentencing by the courts. We will provide the criminal care services with half a billion crowns for work on preventing the recurrence of crime. The police, schools, municipalities, parents and others – are all needed in the job of reducing juvenile crime rates. We need penalties and efforts that are unequivocal at the same time as they provide the juvenile with guidance on how to return to a better life in the community. Protection for women who run the risk of being the victims of crime must be improved. We want to see a tougher law prohibiting convicted partners from visiting their victims as well as a tougher legislation on crimes related to sex. The internationalisation of crime requires increased international co-operation in order to counter terrorism, drug trading and other forms of organised crime that pass between the borders of different countries.

6. A sustainable development. Nothing is so fundamental to human security as the environment; air free from toxic substances, clean water and healthy crops. The global climate changes are the most serious threat to the environment in our lifetime. Sweden will continue to push the issue of climatic change. Every country must ratify the Kyoto protocol. The emission of greenhouse gases from Sweden will be reduced by at least 4% by the year 2010. The ecosystem of the oceans is unbalanced. For this reason we will give marine ecology a central roll in our environment policy. The struggle against hazardous chemicals must continue. An active environment policy must provide for ecological diversity as well as the enjoyment of a clean countryside for everyone. At the same time as we work on these issues, Sweden must be better at making the most of the opportunities for innovation, technical development and the new jobs that follow in the wake of an ecologically inspired development. We intend to stimulate investments in a technical changeover. Cars must be less damaging to the environment and the sources of renewable energy must be developed. We intend to invest in more effective ways of using energy. The public sector must set an example.

Children and young people – our future

1. Smaller groups of children and more personnel in our day care centres. The personnel in our pre-schools do a fantastic job! But all too many day care centres have groups of children that are far too big and too little staff. Children, parents and the employees – many of them suffer from stress. For this reason we want to expand the special support programmes for more staff in our schools to cover the needs of pre-schools. This would allow for a further 6000 more child minders, pre-school teachers and other personnel groups to be employed in pre-schools.

2. A school to develop in. We need more teachers in our schools. This would allow for smaller classes and better teaching. For this reason we want to see 15000 more teachers and other personnel employed in our

schools. Choosing a school is a question of opportunity and not of enforcement. For this reason the school nearest the home must maintain high standards. This requires increased resources and also that schools are subjected to quality control. Pupils must be provided with fresh and better schoolbooks. Programmes to promote reading must be carried out in all schools. We want to see more and we want to see better school libraries. Children get too little exercise. For this reason we want pupils to have the opportunity for at least 30 minutes of exercise every day they are in school. All secondary school pupils must be taught history. Special efforts will be introduced in the teaching of mathematics. The vocational programmes will be strengthened and internationalised with opportunities for training abroad as part of the improvements. The working environment in our schools must be improved. A future social democratic government will introduce legislation to prohibit discrimination and sexual harassment in our schools.

3. Drugs free Sweden. The struggle against drugs requires that we all shoulder our responsibility in this regard. The whole community must be mobilised – individuals, voluntary organisations and popular movements. The keys to success are dialogue and a change of attitudes – not pointers. We cannot tolerate a situation where young people find it easier to obtain drugs and alcohol than to find some place where they can get together. We need to create drug free meeting places and strong supportive networks for our young people. Municipalities have a special responsibility in this regard. We need to get a better picture of the drug abuse in our bars and clubs and offer the security personnel and bar attendants training in how to deal with drugs. The national co-ordination authority against drug abuse must be given greater powers. Drug smugglers must be stopped. A future social democratic government will improve border controls, employ more drug police and intensify international police co-operation. We will expand the number of treatment centres in order to provide more young drug abusers with treatment. We need more places in our special juvenile centres. Drug treatment will be expanded in the larger urban areas exposed to heavy drug abuse and to the spread of contagious diseases. We intend to work to ensure that our prisons are free from drugs.

3. A handshake with the sports associations. The Swedish sports movement is very good both at the top and in its broad base. Thousands of sports leaders do an excellent job. But the movement requires support over and above the voluntary efforts of the members. A future social democratic government will invite the sports associations and local government to *A Handshake for the Children and the Youth of Sweden*. A greater share of the profits of Svensk Spel, (National Pools and Betting Company) must be used for the benefit of the sports associations. We are prepared to transfer one billion Swedish Crowns to the sports associations during the coming period of government if the sports movement is prepared to open its doors to more members, to keep their fees low, to invest more in sports for girls, to take part in the battle against drugs and to intensify their co-operation with schools.

5. More homes for students and young people. We want to see an increase in the construction of homes for students and to stimulate this by cutting VAT on building materials and construction projects. We want to link the expansion of university places to a demand on local government to provide homes for students. Our goal is the construction of a further 20 000 student homes during the coming period of government. We want to stimulate the construction of small rented apartments with reasonable rents. We will reward municipalities that construct rented accommodation by bringing forward state investment in infrastructure improvements.

6. Better terms for families with children. We have introduced a ceiling on charges for childcare and after-school services. We have also introduced an extension of paid parental leave and school contact days paid through parental insurance. We now wish to move on. A universal pre-school will be introduced for 4 – 5 year-olds. This will provide every child with the right to three hours in pre-school every day free of charge. The lowest level of daily benefits in the parental insurance scheme must be raised at the same time as the ceiling on income based benefits is also raised. The student benefits paid to those over 16 must be increased from 9 to 10 months per year. During the coming period of government we wish to increase child allowance and to introduce a supplementary allowance from the second child.

Jobs and growth

1. A well ordered economy. Sweden will continue to enjoy strong growth, low levels of unemployment and healthy finances. This entails that public finances must maintain a surplus running equivalent to 2% of the GNP a year, calculated as an average over the business cycle. The ceiling on public expenditure will be maintained. The tax system must be robust and provide incentives to work and to invest. We will continue to improve conditions primarily for wage earners and small business. During the coming period we will take the final steps in our planned reform of taxation directed at low and medium income earners. By the year 2004 the level of

those in gainful employment will be 80%. The need for social welfare support will be cut by half between the years 1999 and 2004.

2. A more humane working life. Neither from a humane nor from an economic point of view can we afford a working life where people are worn out or struck by injuries. We must have a reasonable balance between work and leisure. If we are to achieve this we need more than political decisions. Only if we work together – as employees, employers, trade unions, public authorities, elected representatives – can we succeed in achieving the goal of reducing the number of people on sickness leave by half come the year 2008. Instead of lower levels for those on sickness benefits, we will reward those employers who reduce the number of days off due to illness, we will invest in preventive popular health measures, reinforce the work of workplace health care and improve rehabilitation work. More doctors must be involved in determining the longer periods of sickness leave. We will reform occupational injury insurance to ensure that it is fair and based on the principles of gender equality. We will improve the security of those on casual employment, increase the say of the employees over the planning of working hours and introduce a scheme for individual savings in a competence development bank. We need to see more opportunities for further training not least for those who have limited training and who work in health and care services. The public sector must set an example in this regard.

3. More education – more research. We will increase funding for research and education. We need more places in tertiary education throughout the country. Our goal is to ensure a high quality in all education. We will improve certified occupational training. One or more colleges of education will be given the opportunity to develop into a university and to run research programmes for post-graduates. We will improve conditions for students with small children. Adult education and a system for competence development are important elements in a program for life-long learning. We need to continue our efforts in the fields of medical, biochemical and related sciences. We will set up more schools of research and provide young researchers with better conditions for their work.

4. Diversity enriches. Sweden has a population of almost nine million men and women, old and young – from all over the world. Diversity is an advantage that we must make the most of. Segregation must be ended – in working life, in education, in housing – and discrimination must be outlawed. The right to a grasp of Swedish should be self-evident. Language skills are a precondition for getting a job and for playing a strong role as a parent. More efforts must be made in the field of labour market policy for immigrants. Resources will be used to carry out a speedy evaluation of the knowledge and competence of immigrants, on individual matching at the job centres and on language training at work or on training programmes. The work on complementary training for those with college or university education from other countries will continue. The next social democratic government will ensure that children with an immigrant background will receive better support in order to achieve the goals outlined in the national curriculum. Young girls living under threat or subjected to force must be met with a speedy and qualified support from schools, the police and social services and when required be provided with shelter.

5. A more enterprising Sweden. We intend to launch a programme for high tech enterprise initiatives and improve the government financing as well as loans. We will continue to simplify rules for small enterprises, improve the services provided by public authorities and change the so-called 3:12 rules. We will strengthen those branches where Sweden lies in the front line – not least within the IT sector, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and the vehicle industry. We want to see 2005 as the national year of design. We will establish a national centre to promote development, enterprise and exports in the field of environment technology.

6. Growth throughout the country. Sweden must be held together – both people and regions. Good welfare services throughout the country are a precondition for regional justice. We intend to develop, not to dismantle the system of tax equalisation between the different municipalities in the country. We will develop a regional development policy, which makes the most of local as well as regional engagement. We intend to carry out specific efforts in the use of IT and in the field of distance learning. We will carry out the biggest investment in infrastructure improvements in our generation – both in our major cities as well as in sparsely populated areas.

Culture – a source of strength for all

We humans are curious and creative. We look for new ways of doing things, break through barriers and widen our perspectives. In order to do this we need security and gainful employment. But more is required.

We need creative pauses, time for imagination and flights of fantasy in suitable doses. We need those moments of receptiveness as a counter to giving. We need those moments of sheer experience that give rise to new thoughts, ideas and curiosity.

Culture is not just a thing of beauty – culture is a source of strength. It provides us with an identity, with the desire and the strength to effect change. It helps us to understand the age we live in, our world and ourselves. Culture makes us stronger – as individuals and as a society.

At one and the same time culture is an anchor in history and our antennae when it comes to the future. Where culture flourishes, there too flourishes democracy and a spirit of openness.

We intend to strengthen cultural activities for children. We intend to provide the young and culturally diverse Sweden with much greater opportunities and the resources to create their own culture policy vision, to determine its contents and to shape it as they wish. We will remove entrance charges to state museums. We will provide more support for voluntary movements in the field of cultural history. We will invest more in those buildings that are part of our cultural heritage. We intend to promote international cultural exchange. We will also provide support for immigrant culture. We will invest in Swedish film and music.

We want to see a new and daring effort in the field of Swedish architecture that integrates the best of the old in new forms. During the coming period of government we will emphasise the importance of architecture, design and art forms and make this an issue of public interest.

A social democratic government is prepared to provide the cultural sector with a further 250 billion during the coming period.

Sweden in the world – the world in Sweden

The values underpinning Social Democracy are timeless and limitless. The daily lives of schoolchildren in Sweden or the issue of clean water for children on the other side of the globe - both relate to the same conviction: the equal dignity of and the equal right to a decent life for every human being.

Sweden is a small country, dependent on the world outside its borders. This has created openness and a sense of curiosity when it comes to things that are different and new. This is an important factor in explaining the success of our country.

Sweden is and will remain free from military alliances. The voice of Sweden is strong and is respected all over the world. We play an active role in the UN, the EU and in other international contexts. Disarmament, and human rights, international law and sustainable development, a free and fair system of trade – these are and shall remain cornerstones in Swedish foreign policy.

The threats of a new age to the security of people and countries can only be met through closer co-operation. Sweden will continue to work for peace in the Middle East, for an expanded EU and will continue to take part in the struggle against international terrorism. We want to see an EU that acts as a progressive force in the struggle for human rights, global justice and free trade.

The struggle against poverty in the world is our common responsibility. During the coming period we will take the decisions needed to ensure that the goal of 1% in aid is achieved. Sweden will react to and act in cases where human rights are violated or wherever solidarity is seen to be lacking. The sex trade must be stopped. Xenophobia as well as racism must be combated.

During the coming parliamentary period we will mobilise the country as a whole – from the business community via cultural life and voluntary associations – to achieve an even greater improvement of the image of our country abroad. We will strengthen the promotion of exports, especially for small enterprises. We will continue to build further on the basis of our success in co-operation along the Baltic rim and to increase our presence in countries nearby, particularly those applying for EU membership as well as in Russia.

Sweden's refugee policy will be humane, solidaristic and provide for legal rights. Legal security for those seeking asylum must be improved and the processing of asylum seekers' cases must be speeded up. The conditions of single asylum seeking children will be improved. We will also develop a common policy for asylum seekers in the EU based on humanity, openness and responsibility.

Your vote makes all the difference

Sweden is the best in the world when it comes to equality between men and women, but we are still far from being truly equal. A just-about-gender-equal Sweden is not good enough. We have steeled ourselves for a tough struggle against unequal wage differentials, against the abuse of women and against discriminating structures in society.

Our vision is one of a Sweden based on co-operation, solidarity and cohesion. Sweden will be stronger and more secure if everyone is included and no one is excluded.

These are the values of Social Democracy, values that we intend to turn into practical policies during the coming years.

Elected representatives throughout the country will make thousands of decisions. They will impact on the daily lives of all that live and have their homes in Sweden. The politics of justice are never better than when many people are involved in the decision making process. We need more politicians, not fewer. We need more democracy – not less.

The choice is yours now. Your vote makes the world of a difference. Vote on the 15th of September.