



SIGMA

Creating Change Together



A joint initiative of the OECD and the EU,
principally financed by the EU

Public Administration: Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Mapping the EU member states' public administration responses to the COVID-19 pandemic
(for EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries)*

SWEDEN

4 April 2020

2 Rue André Pascal
75775 Paris Cedex 16
France

<mailto:sigmaweb@oecd.org>
Tel: +33 (0) 1 45 24 82 00

www.sigmaweb.org

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union (EU). It should not be reported as representing the official views of the EU, the OECD or its member countries, or of partners participating in the SIGMA Programme. The opinions expressed and arguments employed are those of the authors.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

© OECD 2020 – The use of this material, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found on the OECD website page <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.

Table of Contents

Centre of Government, policy co-ordination and decision-making process.....	3
1. How is the government (council of ministers) functioning (organisation of virtual meetings, remote sessions etc.)?.....	3
2. How are the crisis management and external communications co-ordinated within the Government? What is the role of the CoG in this? Is there a central strategy/guidance?.....	3
3. Any arrangements (rules, working procedures) which aim to streamline and accelerate the Government decision-making process (as regards deadlines, public consultations, transparency, impact analysis)?.....	3
Public service and human resource management.....	3
1. What arrangements regarding teleworking? What is the share of civil servants teleworking? What is the share of civil servants still coming to the office?.....	3
2. What other flexible working arrangement (part time work, distribution of working hours over 7 days...)?4	4
3. If civil servants cannot telework, how are they paid?	4
4. Are civil servants being sent on mandatory annual leave? If not, is use of annual leave recommended? Any other special arrangement on absence management?.....	4
5. Any new, special regulations for working overtime (removing limitations to overtime work e.g. for medical staff)?	4
6. Arrangement for paying for extra workload (health care)?.....	4
7. What measures have been introduced to create fiscal space to fund health care, economic measures etc. against COVID-19 (salary cuts, freeze of recruitment, promotions...)?.....	4
Accountability	4
1. How did you keep the national parliament operational? Any simplification of parliamentary procedures? 4	4
2. How about the Ombudsman (e.g. overseeing the situation in prisons).....	4
3. Does administrative justice work? Have deadlines changed?	4
4. Any public debates on respect of principles of good administration (legality, proportionality, predictability) of protective measures?.....	4
Service delivery	5
1. Which services are being delivered (all, some, only the essential)?.....	5
2. Are there any modifications done to the obligations of:.....	5
3. Has the crisis initiated any simplifications or enhanced the use of alternative tools:.....	5
Public financial management.....	5
1. Are COVID-19 response measures being introduced within the framework of or with reference to existing fiscal rules (budget deficit or public debt ratio limits etc.)?.....	5
2. Are the cost of these measures being published?	6
3. Have budget users been asked to identify cost-saving measures to partially offset the cost of the response measures?	6
4. Are internal controls continuing to operate smoothly (electronic signatures)?.....	6
5. Does each budget user or at least ministry have a risk management strategy that envisaged emergency measures in response to a sudden crisis? How is staff and customer safety balanced against the need to deliver required services?.....	6

SWEDEN

Centre of Government, policy co-ordination and decision-making process

- 1. How is the government (council of ministers) functioning (organisation of virtual meetings, remote sessions etc.)?**

No changes to normal routine. The general recommendations of not arranging physical meetings with many participants (max 50) is followed.

- 2. How are the crisis management and external communications co-ordinated within the Government? What is the role of the CoG in this? Is there a central strategy/guidance?**

Sweden has not applied any lockdown, with most measures being voluntary. The Swedish constitution prohibits ministerial rule and mandates that the relevant government body, here an 'expert agency': the Public Health Agency — must initiate all actions to prevent the virus. On agency recommendation, the Government can follow, as it has with legislation limiting freedom of assembly, temporarily banning gatherings of over 50 individuals; as well as physically closing secondary schools and universities. Primary schools have remained open, in part to avoid healthcare workers from needing to stay home with their children.

The Public Health Agency and Government issued recommendations to work from home, if possible; for people over 70 to stay at home; and issued general recommendations to avoid unnecessary travel within the country and to keep a social distance between people. Those with even minimal symptoms, which could be COVID-19, are recommended to stay home. The 'karensdag' or initial day without paid sick-leave has been removed by the Government and the length of time one can stay home without a doctor's note has been raised from 7 to 21 days.

*There is a Crisis Management Council established since 2008 under the Minister of Interior. The State Secretary under the Minister is co-ordinating the work within the Government. This Council consists **normally** of the Heads of the Police, Security, Defence and some other key departments. There is also a Crisis Management Office linked to this Council that co-ordinates the crisis work within the Government administration. It is on constant duty. The Government office provides general guidance and instructions in close consultation with the expert authorities.*

- 3. Any arrangements (rules, working procedures) which aim to streamline and accelerate the Government decision-making process (as regards deadlines, public consultations, transparency, impact analysis)?**

No special arrangements so far. The Parliaments Committee on the Constitution has agreed to table its examination of the Government until further notice.

Public service and human resource management

- 1. What arrangements regarding teleworking? What is the share of civil servants teleworking? What is the share of civil servants still coming to the office?**

No special rules - the general recommendations apply for the civil service as well. Encourage homework wherever possible.

2. What other flexible working arrangement (part time work, distribution of working hours over 7 days...)?

No special rules.

3. If civil servants cannot telework, how are they paid?

Fully paid.

4. Are civil servants being sent on mandatory annual leave? If not, is use of annual leave recommended? Any other special arrangement on absence management?

No

5. Any new, special regulations for working overtime (removing limitations to overtime work e.g. for medical staff)?

Yes, in Region Stockholm for example all hospital staff are placed under a special crisis agreement which was triggered last week. They are doubled paid and the working week is extended to 48 hours.

6. Arrangement for paying for extra workload (health care)?

See above.

7. What measures have been introduced to create fiscal space to fund health care, economic measures etc. against COVID-19 (salary cuts, freeze of recruitment, promotions...)?

No information available.

Accountability

1. How did you keep the national parliament operational? Any simplification of parliamentary procedures?

Yes, the parliament (riksdag) normally has 351 members. The political parties have agreed to limit the numbers to 55 in voting sessions. The parties have got their proportional share of the 55 when voting. The Constitution Committee has postponed its review of the Government.

2. How about the Ombudsman (e.g. overseeing the situation in prisons)

Sweden has a strong ombudsman system in place but no special information on changing practice during this period.

3. Does administrative justice work? Have deadlines changed?

The administrative court system is affected as well as all other public bodies. Fewer cases and hearings are taking place now.

4. Any public debates on respect of principles of good administration (legality, proportionality, predictability) of protective measures?

Limited debate so far, a lot of unity on the measures decided by the Government and the authorities.

Service delivery

1. Which services are being delivered (all, some, only the essential)?

Most services are delivered. Schools up to 16 years age are open as well as kindergartens.

2. Are there any modifications done to the obligations of:

- i. *the administrations towards citizens/businesses (e.g. freezing of deadlines)?*

No

- ii. *citizens/businesses towards public administration (reporting, payments of taxes, contributions, fees...)?*

There are a number of measures taken in order to simplify especially the position of the businesses. See public financial management section

3. Has the crisis initiated any simplifications or enhanced the use of alternative tools:

- i. *in the internal procedures of the Government (e.g. acceptance of formal approvals over e-mail)?*

No information available

- ii. *in the administrative procedures with citizens and businesses (e.g. replacement of handwritten signature with scanned copies or simple exchange of mails)?*

No information available

Public financial management

1. Are COVID-19 response measures being introduced within the framework of or with reference to existing fiscal rules (budget deficit or public debt ratio limits etc.)?

In mid-March, the Government proposed a 300 billion SEK (€27bn) emergency package to reduce the economic impact of the crisis. The proposal included a system with a reduction in work hours where the Government will cover half of the salary, aiming to help businesses stay afloat without having to layoff staff. Furthermore, the Government would pay the employer's expenses for any sick leave, which is normally shared between the employer and the state. The employer contributions have also been temporarily discontinued for small business owners. This will save small businesses approximately 5000 SEK per employee each month but will result in a loss of tax revenue of 33 billion SEK.

Local governments, such as the Municipal Government in Gävle, have applied measures to businesses delaying the payment of invoices until September 1, 2020 at the earliest and deferring rent payment. On 2 April, the Financial Supervisory Authority ('Finansinspektionen') decided that Swedish banks can temporarily allow exemptions for housing mortgage lenders regarding the reimbursement of loans.

On 30 March, the Government announced a new crisis package for jobs and transition

- *Temporary reinforcement of unemployment insurance: eligibility conditions (length of employment and membership of a fund) will be temporarily relaxed; both the highest and the lowest amounts paid out by an unemployment insurance fund will be raised temporarily; the*

six initial qualifying days will be removed; the unemployment insurance funds will receive funding from the administration.

- *More active labour market policy: increased funding for the public employment service and labour market policy programmes; the period during which a person may have a subsidised job (extra job, new start job or introductory job) will be extended by an additional year for those who already have such jobs; the maximum time for support for starting a business will be extended from six to twelve months; municipalities will receive grants for more summer jobs for young people and funding for green jobs.*
- *More places and more distance learning at higher education institutions to benefit unemployed and people who are given notice of the termination of their contract.*
- *More opportunities for vocational education and training throughout the country.*
- *Removal of the income ceiling for student aid: the income ceiling for all those receiving student aid will be temporarily removed so that health and medical care students can help out in the health care sector without their student aid being reduced.*

Fiscal measures - company specific

- *On 16 March, the short-term layoffs scheme was introduced. Employees receive more than 90% of their wages, but employers' wage costs can be halved, thanks to the Government subsidy. The subsidy level is significantly higher than in the previous short-time work scheme (estimated cost: SEK 20 billion).*
- *Liquidity reinforcement via tax accounts: companies can defer three months payment of employer social security contributions, preliminary tax on salaries and value added tax that are reported monthly or quarterly for up to 12 months, with interest. The new regulations take effect on 30 April, but can be retroactively applied from 1 January 2020. If companies use this opportunity to the same extent as in 2009, this would amount to SEK 27 billion. If all companies would use it to the maximum, this would amount to SEK 315 billion. To support SMEs, it will also be allowed to defer the value-added tax reported annually. Hence, companies can defer the payment of last year's VAT that is due shortly. If this is used to the maximum, it can amount to SEK 7 billion. In addition, SMEs can claim back the preliminary tax paid in 2019 and either pay it later or set it off against future losses (the maximum liquidity reinforcement could amount to SEK 13 billion).*

2. Are the cost of these measures being published?

Yes, on government and agency websites

3. Have budget users been asked to identify cost-saving measures to partially offset the cost of the response measures?

No information available

4. Are internal controls continuing to operate smoothly (electronic signatures)?

No information available

5. Does each budget user or at least ministry have a risk management strategy that envisaged emergency measures in response to a sudden crisis? How is staff and customer safety balanced against the need to deliver required services?

No information available