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REPORT ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MOBILE EU CITIZENS: SWEDEN

AUTHORED BY
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Report on Political Participation of Mobile EU Citizens

Sweden

*Alina Ostling**

Abstract: Non-resident Swedish citizens have the right to vote and stand as candidates both in national and European Parliament (EP) elections. Voter registration is automatic but active renewal is required every ten years. Non-citizen residents from the EU have the right to vote in and stand for local and EP elections held in Sweden, but voter registration in EP elections is not automatic. On the positive side, Swedish authorities have put comprehensive measures in place to inform mobile EU citizens about the electoral process. However, non-citizen residents face some challenges if they decide to stand as candidates in elections and the turnout among non-resident citizens tends to be very low. Moreover, the author notes that the early voting practice, widespread in Sweden, could be an incentive for electoral participation; and that mobile EU citizens might be more vulnerable to disinformation, a topic that public authorities should take into account when doing electoral outreach.

Abstract in Swedish:

Svenska medborgare bosatta utomlands har rätt att rösta och kandidera sig både i riksdagsvalet och i valet till Europaparlamentet. Upptagning i röstlängden är automatisk men aktiv förnyelse krävs vart tionde år. EU-medborgare som är folkbokförda i Sverige har rätt att rösta och kandidera sig i lokala och EU-val som hålls i Sverige. Upptagningen i röstlängden inför EU-val är dock inte automatisk. Svenska myndigheter har infört omfattande åtgärder för att informera EU-medborgare om valprocessen. Emellertid står invånare som inte är svenska medborgare inför vissa utmaningar om de bestämmer sig för att kandidera sig i val; och valdeltagandet bland utlandssvenskar tenderar att vara mycket lågt. Dessutom noterar författaren att förtidsröstning, som är utbredd i Sverige, kan vara ett incitament för valdeltagande; och att EU-medborgare kan vara mer utsatta för informationspåverkan, en aspekt som offentliga myndigheter bör ta hänsyn till när de utformar valinformation.

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1. Introduction

Non-resident Swedish citizens have the right to vote and stand as candidates both in national and European Parliament (EP) elections (see Table 1). However, these rights are conditional upon previous residency in the country. Non-residents can only stand as candidates if they are entitled to vote. Voter registration is automatic but active renewal is required every ten years. Swedish voters can exercise their electoral rights from abroad by in-country voting, personal voting at diplomatic missions, and postal voting.

Non-citizen residents have the right to vote in and stand for local elections held in Sweden.¹ EU citizens furthermore have the right to vote and stand as candidates in EP elections held in Sweden. Voter registration in EP elections is not automatic, but voters need to register only once; thereafter the registration is automatically renewed for subsequent elections.

Table 1. Conditions for electoral rights of non-resident citizens and non-citizen residents

Type of voter	Election type	Right Voting	Right Candidacy	Automatic registration	Remote voting
Non-resident citizens	National Legislative	YES ²	YES ³	YES ⁴	YES ⁵
Non-resident citizens	European Parliament	YES ⁶	YES ⁷	YES ⁸	YES ⁹
Non-citizen residents	Local Legislative	YES ¹⁰	YES ¹¹	YES	N/A
Non-citizen residents	Local Mayoral ¹²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Non-citizen residents	European Parliament	YES	YES	NO ¹³	N/A

1.1. Demographic Characteristics of Non-citizen Residents and Non-resident Citizens

¹ Third-country nationals enjoy electoral rights in local elections if they have been registered residents in Sweden for three years. Resident EU citizens and Norwegian and Icelandic citizens do not have a minimum (three-year) residence requirement.

² Yes, if previously resident within the voter's lifetime. Renewal required every 10 years.

³ Yes, but only if entitled to vote.

⁴ Automatic registration, but active renewal every 10 years.

⁵ In-country voting, personal voting at diplomatic missions and postal voting.

⁶ Yes, if previously resident within lifetime. Renewal required every 10 years.

⁷ Yes, but only if entitled to vote.

⁸ Automatic registration, but active renewal every 10 years.

⁹ In-country voting, personal voting at diplomatic missions and postal voting.

¹⁰ EU citizens residing in the municipality where the election is held; third country nationals who have resided without interruption in Sweden for at least three years prior to the election day. The three-year residence requirement is waived for Norwegian and Icelandic citizens, who can vote under the same conditions as EU and Swedish citizens.

¹¹ EU citizens residing in the municipality where the election is held; third country nationals who have resided without interruption in Sweden for at least three years prior to the election day. The three-year residence requirement is waived for Norwegian and Icelandic citizens, who can vote under the same conditions as EU and Swedish citizens.

¹² Indirect election.

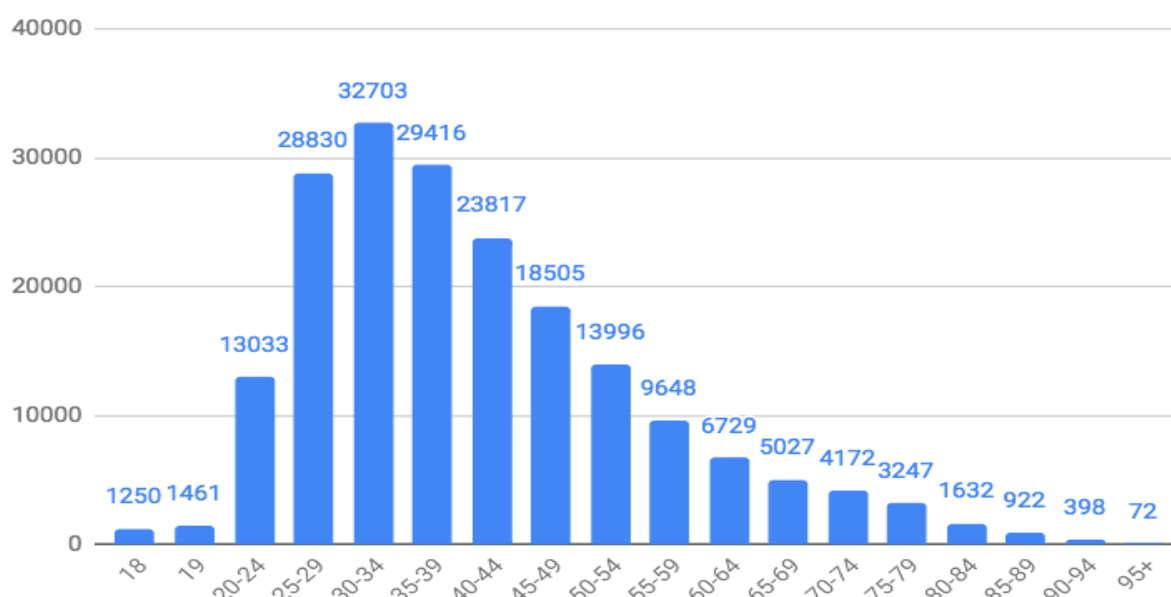
¹³ One-off active registration, which is automatically renewed for subsequent elections.

Sweden has a population of 10,171,524.¹⁴ As of May 2018, about 7.5 million voters are registered in the country and 163,450 voters are registered abroad.¹⁵

Non-citizen residents

In 2017, 231,004 EU citizens (excluding citizens from the Nordic countries¹⁶) were residing in Sweden, with a larger share of resident men compared to women (130,299 men and 100,705 women). In terms of age composition, the most numerous age groups of voting age were those between 20-54 years (all with over 10,000 citizens), as illustrated in Figure 1.¹⁷ Resident citizens from the Nordic countries (i.e. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway; excluding Sweden) amounted to 126,584 (60,898 men and 65,686 women).¹⁸

Figure 1. The age composition of EU citizens (excluding citizens from the Nordic countries), of voting age (18 and above) residing in Sweden in 2017¹⁹



¹⁴ Statistics Sweden (2018). "Population statistics, 1st half 2018: Slower population increase in the first half of the year". Publication date 8 July 2018: <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/statistiknyhet/befolkningsstatistik-1a-halvaret-2018/>

¹⁵ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/383934?download=true>

¹⁶ Statistics Sweden usually makes the categorisation (1) EU citizens (excluding citizens from the Nordic countries) and (2) citizens from the Nordic countries when reporting statistical data. The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

¹⁷ Statistics Sweden (2017). "Foreign citizens by citizen country, age and year". http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START_BE_BE0101_BE0101F/UtlmedbR/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=ba88a5b0-01a1-4775-8f50-b4b93dc05a7e

¹⁸ Statistics Sweden (2017). "Foreign citizens by country of citizenship, gender and year" (*Utländska medborgare efter medborgarskapsland, kön och år*).

http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START_BE_BE0101_BE0101F/UtlmedbR/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=ba88a5b0-01a1-4775-8f50-b4b93dc05a7e

¹⁹ Statistics Sweden (2017). "Foreign citizens by citizen country, age and year".

http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START_BE_BE0101_BE0101F/UtlmedbR/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=ba88a5b0-01a1-4775-8f50-b4b93dc05a7e

Labour immigration from the EU has increased in Sweden in the 21st century. The main reason is the enlargement of the EU, which has meant that nationals from more countries enjoy the right of free movement of workers. The sharp increase in labour migration starting from 2004 coincided with the EU enlargement, when ten countries became EU Member States. The top-five EU Member States of origin of labour immigration to Sweden are Poland, the UK, Germany, Spain, and Greece. It is worth noting that citizens from the Nordic countries are not included in these statistics since they do not need to register or apply for a residence permit to live in and work in Sweden.²⁰

In recent years, more and more vulnerable EU citizens have come to Sweden and some of them are also homeless. Many originate from Romania and Bulgaria, most of whom are of Roma ethnicity, and earn their living through begging.²¹ A survey²² conducted by Swedish Radio in 2013 showed that 67 municipalities have had homeless EU citizens present on their territory, 44 municipalities stated that begging occurred among the homeless EU citizens, and 32 municipalities indicated that there is an increasing number of EU citizens who end up in homelessness in their municipality.²³ Begging was also one of the key issues debated during the national legislative elections in 2018.²⁴

Non-resident citizens

Statistics Sweden reports that it is difficult to know exactly how many Swedes live abroad.²⁵ According to estimates, Swedes abroad number around 450,000.²⁶ This would mean that only about one-third of all Swedes residing abroad are on the electoral roll for national parliamentary elections.²⁷

According to Eurostat, Sweden is among the EU Member States with the smallest share of mobile nationals out of the total-country population (1.3%).²⁸ In 2017, 14,999 Swedes emigrated to an EU Member State, excluding the Nordic countries (7,745 men and 7,254 women), and 11,103 emigrated to a Nordic country (5,675 men and 5,428 women).²⁹

²⁰ Ekonomifakta (2018). "Labor immigration from the EU / EEA". Last updated 28 February 2018. <https://www.ekonomifakta.se/Fakta/Arbetsmarknad/Arbetskraftsinvandring/Arbetskraftsinvandring-fran-EUEES/>

²¹ <https://skl.se/ekonomijuridikstatistik/juridik/euratt/utsattaumedborgare.2952.html>

²² The survey was sent to all 290 of Sweden's municipalities.

²³ <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5740442>

²⁴ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sa-tycker-partierna-om-tiggeri>

²⁵ Source: Jonas Olofsson, Democracy Statistics unit, at the Department of Population and Welfare (SCB). Email communication, dated 26 November 2018.

²⁶ Johansson (2012) in Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2015), Democracy Statistics Report no 19, Who chose to choose? – Voter turnout in the 2014 elections.

https://www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/ME0105_2014A01_BR_ME09BR1502.pdf

²⁷ Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2015), Democracy Statistics Report no 19, Who chose to choose? – Voter turnout in the 2014 elections. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/ME0105_2014A01_BR_ME09BR1502.pdf

²⁸ The share refers to citizens of working age (20-64) residing in another Member State than that of their citizenship in 2017. Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8926076/3-28052018-AP-EN.pdf/48c473e8-c2c1-4942-b2a4-5761edacda37>

²⁹ Statistics Sweden (2017). "Emigrations by country of residence/sex, and year." http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START_BE_BE0101_BE0101J/ImmiEmiFlytt/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=33ee1377-a2d9-4349-8e34-412993b37f20

1.2 Summary of the Electoral Rights of Non-citizen Residents and Non-resident Citizens

Non-citizen residents

Sweden is one of the most inclusive countries in Europe regarding voting and candidacy rights of non-citizen residents in local elections. According to the Global Citizenship Observatory's (GLOBALCIT) CITLAW indicators, Sweden has the highest score³⁰ regarding the electoral rights of non-citizen residents in local legislative elections.³¹ Non-citizen residents from any country, who have been registered residents for at least three years, have the right to vote in municipal and county elections since 1976.³² As early as 1968, political parties started to debate the franchise of immigrants, with parties all across the left-right spectrum (the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party) arguing that giving immigrants voting rights in local elections would improve the level of democracy and equality, and help to integrate foreigners into Swedish society.³³ The three-year residency requirement was removed for EU citizens (as well as for Icelandic and Norwegian citizens)³⁴ in 1997.³⁵ The key laws governing the electoral rights of non-citizen residents from the EU in EP and local elections are illustrated in Table 2.

³⁰ Sweden scores 0.98 together with Denmark and Finland.

³¹ Global Citizenship Observatory's (GLOBALCIT) CITLAW indicators (2015): <http://globalcit.eu/citizenship-indicators/?topic=votlawnoncit>

³² The right for foreign citizens to vote in both regional and local elections is laid down in the Swedish Local Government Act (1977: 179). Chap. 4 Elected representatives, Section 2: "Any person registered as a resident of the municipality and 18 years old not later than the election day is entitled to vote in the election of municipal assembly members and their alternates and: 1. is a citizen of Sweden or another Member State of the European Union (a Union citizen), 2. a citizen of Iceland or Norway, or 3. in the case of other aliens, has been a registered resident of Sweden for three consecutive years before the election day." and in Section 3: "Any person entitled to vote in the election of municipal assembly members and their alternates in a municipality within the county council area concerned is entitled to vote in the election of county council assembly members and their alternates." Source: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/9577b5121e2f4984ac65ef97ee79f012/the-swedish-local-government-act>

³³ Engdahl, Mattias & Lindgren, Karl-Oskar & Rosenqvist, Olof (2018). "The role of local voting rights for foreign citizens – a catalyst for integration?," Working Paper Series 2018:3, IFAU - Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy. <https://www.ifau.se/globalassets/pdf/se/2018/wp2018-03-the-role-of-local-voting-rights-for-foreign-citizens-a-catalyst-for-integration.pdf>

³⁴ "The special rules for Icelandic and Norwegian citizens are based on the close ties between the Nordic countries and on Nordic cooperation. Similar rules apply in all Nordic countries." Source: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights : Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. Citation from page 5.

³⁵ Sources: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights : Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. and http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/kommittedirektiv/en-ny-vallag_GRB137

Table 2. Key laws governing the electoral rights of non-citizen residents from the EU

- **LOCAL ELECTIONS:** The right for foreign citizens to vote in both regional and local elections is laid down in the Swedish Local Government Act (1977: 179).³⁶
- **EP ELECTIONS:** The Directive 93/109/EC, laying out provisions for voting and eligibility in elections to the European Parliament for EU citizens residing in a Member State where they are not nationals, was transposed into Swedish law in 1997, through amendments to the Election Act (1997: 157) and to the Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900). Presently, EU citizens' right to vote in EP elections is governed by the Elections Act (2005: 837)³⁷ and the Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900)^{38 39}.

EU citizens, as well as Icelandic and Norwegian citizens, have the right to vote and stand as candidates in elections to county councils and municipal councils⁴⁰ if they fulfil the following preconditions:⁴¹

- have attained 18 years of age no later than on the election day.
- are registered in the population register in the relevant county council area or municipality.

Non-EU foreign citizens have the right to vote if they have been registered residents in Sweden for a continuous period of the three years before the election day.⁴²

EU citizens have the right to vote in EP elections,⁴³ if they fulfil the following preconditions:⁴⁴

³⁶ Chap. 4 Elected representatives, Section 2: "Any person registered as a resident of the municipality and 18 years old not later than the election day is entitled to vote in the election of municipal assembly members and their alternates and: 1. is a citizen of Sweden or another Member State of the European Union (a Union citizen), 2. a citizen of Iceland or Norway, or 3. in the case of other aliens, has been a registered resident of Sweden for three consecutive years before the election day." and in Section 3: "Any person entitled to vote in the election of municipal assembly members and their alternates in a municipality within the county council area concerned is entitled to vote in the election of county council assembly members and their alternates." Source: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/9577b5121e2f4984ac65ef97ee79f012/the-swedish-local-government-act>

³⁷ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

³⁸ Source: <https://www.government.se/49b736/contentassets/9577b5121e2f4984ac65ef97ee79f012/the-swedish-local-government-act>

³⁹ Source: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights: Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. Page 6.

⁴⁰ The Directive 94/80/EC, containing provisions for voting and eligibility in municipal elections for EU citizens residing in a Member State where they are not nationals, was implemented in Swedish law in 1997 (Government proposition 1996/97:70). The right for EU citizens to vote in local elections was introduced by an amendment in the Elections Act (1997:157) and an amendment in the Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900). Source: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights : Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. Page 5.

⁴¹ Source: <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html> The relevant law: Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900).

⁴² <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁴³ The Directive 93/109/EC, laying out provisions for voting and eligibility in elections to the European Parliament for EU citizens residing in a Member State where they are not nationals, was transposed into Swedish

- have attained 18 years of age no later than on the election day.
- are registered residents in Sweden at least 30 days before the election day.
- submit a notification requesting that they be listed on the electoral roll.
- they do not vote in the EP elections held in any other Member State.⁴⁵

The right to vote and the place where non-citizens residents may cast their ballots in EP and local elections is determined by the information available in the national population register of the Swedish Tax Agency 30 days before the election day.⁴⁶ EU citizens have to actively register to vote in EP elections. The voter then remains in the voting register until he/she is deleted from it at his/her own request or when the conditions for voting rights are no longer met. The election authority sends a letter to all non-national EU citizens before EP elections to ask whether they want to remain on the voting register.⁴⁷ For an EU citizen to stand as candidate in EP elections in Sweden, the candidate must have the right to vote in the EP election, be registered as resident in Sweden, and file a declaration of non-candidacy in another EU country.⁴⁸

Non-resident citizens

Swedish citizens residing abroad have voting rights in national parliamentary elections and EP elections. The electoral rights of non-resident citizens are governed by the Elections Act (2005:837).⁴⁹ To exercise these rights and to remain on the electoral roll, citizens have to re-register every ten years. Alternatively, an incoming vote from abroad is also counted as a registration for next ten years and considered as valid, if received no later than on the day before the election date.⁵⁰ Swedes residing abroad can vote in-country, by post or at Swedish missions abroad (embassy or consulate).⁵¹ Swedish citizens resident abroad can stand as candidates in EP elections in Sweden if (i) they have voting rights in this type of elections, and (ii) file a declaration of non-candidacy in another EU country.⁵²

law in 1997, through amendments to the Election Act (1997: 157) and to the Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900). Presently, EU citizens' right to vote in EP elections is governed by the Elections Act (2005: 837) and the Swedish Local Government Act. Source: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights: Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. Page 6.

⁴⁴ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁴⁵ Foreign EU citizens that would like to vote in Sweden have to sign a form where they represent assurance that they will not be voting in any other EU Member State.

⁴⁶ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁴⁷ Source: Email reply from the Election authority, dated 13 December 2018.

⁴⁸ <https://www.val.se/for-partier/infor-europaparlamentsvalet-2019/anmala-kandidater.html>

⁴⁹ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.val.se/svenska-valsystemet/rostratt-och-rostkort/rostratt.html#RostrattEuropaparlamentet>

⁵¹ <https://www.val.se/svenska-valsystemet/satt-att-rosta/information-for-utlandssvenskar.html>

⁵² <https://www.val.se/for-partier/infor-europaparlamentsvalet-2019/anmala-kandidater.html>

2. Non-national EU Citizens' Franchise in EP and Local Elections

2.1. Overview of Relevant Administrative Regulations

EP elections

The right of EU citizens to vote in EP elections in Sweden is set in the Election Act (2005: 837)⁵³ and in the Swedish Local Government Act^{54, 55}. To have the right to vote, EU citizens have to fulfil the following preconditions:⁵⁶

- have attained 18 years of age no later than on Election Day.
- are registered residents in Sweden at least 30 days before Election Day.
- submit a notification requesting that they be listed on the electoral roll.
- not vote in any other Member State.

The right to vote and the place where non-citizens residents from the EU may cast their ballots in EP elections is determined by the information available in the national population register of the Swedish Tax Agency 30 days before the election day.⁵⁷ EU citizens have to actively register to vote in EP elections by following these steps:⁵⁸

- submit a request to be listed on the electoral roll;
- state their nationality and address in Sweden;
- state the constituency or the area in the home state where they were last listed in the electoral roll;
- give assurance that they will not vote in another Member State.

The notification that a non-citizen resident has been included in the electoral roll in Sweden is sent to the competent authority in the State where the voter is a citizen. Voters who have been included in the electoral roll remain there until they are deleted from it by personal

⁵³ Source: Election Act (2005: 837), section “Särskilda bestämmelser om val till Europaparlamentet”: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/vallag-2005837_sfs-2005-837

⁵⁴ Swedish Local Government Act (ID-number: Ds 2004:31). “Chap. 4 Elected representatives”. <https://www.government.se/49b736/contentassets/9577b5121e2f4984ac65ef97ee79f012/the-swedish-local-government-act>

⁵⁵ The Directive 93/109/EC, laying out provisions for voting and eligibility in elections to the European Parliament for EU citizens residing in a Member State where they are not nationals, was transposed into Swedish law in 1997, through amendments to the Election Act (1997: 157) and to the Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900). Presently, EU citizens' right to vote in EP elections is governed by the Elections Act (2005: 837) and the Swedish Local Government Act. Source: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights: Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. Page 6.

⁵⁶ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁵⁷ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁵⁸ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

request or the conditions for entitlement to vote are no longer satisfied.⁵⁹ In sum, voter registration is non-automatic but one-off.

For an EU citizen to stand as candidate in EP elections in Sweden, the candidate must have voting rights in the EP election, be registered as resident in Sweden, and file a declaration of non-candidacy in another EU country.⁶⁰ The declaration should be filed to the election authority and state the following:⁶¹

- their nationality and address in Sweden, their date of birth and place of birth, as well as the last address in the home state,
- the constituency or territory in the home state where he or she was last registered to vote;
- declare that he or she will not stand as a candidate in EP elections in any other State and has not lost his eligibility in his or her home state by a judicial or administrative decision.

After such a declaration is filed, the Swedish Election authority sends a notification to that effect to the competent authority of the State of which the person is a citizen.⁶²

Local elections

The right of EU citizens to vote in EP elections in Sweden is set in the Election Act (2005: 837)⁶³ and in the Swedish Local Government Act⁶⁴.⁶⁵ EU citizens, as well as Icelandic and Norwegian citizens, have the right to vote in elections to county councils and municipal councils if they fulfil the following preconditions:⁶⁶

- have attained 18 years of age no later than on the election day.
- are registered in the population register in the relevant county council area or municipality.

⁵⁹ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.val.se/for-partier/infor-europaparlamentsvalet-2019/anmala-kandidater.html>

⁶¹ Source: Election Act (2005: 837), section “Anmälan av kandidater för partier som registrerat partibeteckning”. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/vallag-2005837_sfs-2005-837

⁶² Source: Election Act (2005: 837), section “Anmälan av kandidater för partier som registrerat partibeteckning”. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/vallag-2005837_sfs-2005-837

⁶³ Source: Election Act (2005: 837), section “Särskilda bestämmelser om val till Europaparlamentet”: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/vallag-2005837_sfs-2005-837

⁶⁴ Swedish Local Government Act (ID-number: Ds 2004:31). “Chap. 4 Elected representatives”. <https://www.government.se/49b736/contentassets/9577b5121e2f4984ac65ef97ee79f012/the-swedish-local-government-act>

⁶⁵ The Directive 94/80/EC, containing provisions for voting and eligibility in municipal elections for EU citizens residing in a Member State where they are not nationals, was transposed to Swedish law in 1997 (Government proposition 1996/97:70). The right for EU citizens to vote in local elections was introduced by an amendment in the Elections Act (1997:157) and an amendment in the Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900). Source: Bernitz H. (2013). Access to electoral rights: Sweden. EUDO Citizenship Observatory; 2013/22; Electoral Rights Reports. Page 5.

⁶⁶ Source: <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html> The relevant law: Swedish Local Government Act (1991:900).

Non-EU foreign citizens have the right to vote if they have been registered residents in Sweden for a continuous period of the three years before the election day.⁶⁷

2.2. Voter Registration

EP elections

The right to vote and the place where non-citizens residents may cast their ballots in EP elections is determined by the information available in the national population register of the Swedish Tax Agency 30 days before the election day.⁶⁸ EU citizens have to actively register to vote in EP elections. To register to vote non-citizens have to fill out the form entitled “Anmälan till den svenska röstlängden” that will be enclosed with the letter that all EU citizens will receive in advance of the EP elections in 2019 from the Election Authority. Citizens will also be able to download the form from the Election Authority website. The County Administrative Board must receive the completed form by 26 April 2019.

The number of non-citizen residents from the EU registered to vote in the 2014 EP election was circa 49,000 (see data according to gender and age group in “Table 4. EP election 2014: Non-citizen residents from the EU entitled to vote and those who voted, by sex and age”, column “Entitled to vote, in thousands”).⁶⁹

Local elections

The right to vote and the place where non-citizens residents from the EU may cast their ballots in local elections is determined by the information available in the national population register of the Swedish Tax Agency 30 days before the election day.⁷⁰ If a non-citizens resident is entitled to vote he/she will receive a voting card in the post, about three weeks before the elections. If he/she has not received the voting card or have lost it, he/she can order a new one from the municipality or the Swedish Election Authority.

The number of non-citizen residents from the EU (excluding the Nordic countries) registered to vote in the 2014 municipal election was circa 161,000 (see data according to gender in “Table 6. Citizens entitled to vote and those who voted in 2014 municipal elections, by country of nationality and sex”, column “Citizens entitled to vote, in thousands”).⁷¹

2.3. Information during Election Campaigns

The Swedish Election authority (*Valmyndigheten*) provides basic information about elections (including about how to vote, the electoral rights, voting from abroad, establishment of

⁶⁷ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁶⁸ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁶⁹ Please note that statistics on entitlement to vote is based on the information in the electoral roll. Source: <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valresultat/produktrelaterat/Fordjupad-information/fakta-om-statistiken-over-valresultat/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/the-right-to-vote.html>

⁷¹ Please note that statistics on entitlement to vote is based on the information in the electoral roll. Source: <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valresultat/produktrelaterat/Fordjupad-information/fakta-om-statistiken-over-valresultat/>

political party) on their website. This information is available in over 30 languages.⁷² The Election Authority also sends out a voting card to each voter with the following information:⁷³

- the voter's name,
- their number on the voter list,
- the elections in which the voter may participate,
- the voter's polling station and its opening hours.

According to the response to the GLOBALCIT online survey carried out in autumn 2018, public authorities and civil society organisations did not proactively inform non-national EU citizens about their electoral rights.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the Authority is also concerned with security, misinformation and influence on elections. For example, in 2017, the Authority has engaged with the Swedish security services (*Säkerhetspolisen*), the Swedish Defence University (*Försvarshögskolan*), the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), and the British Election authority⁷⁴ to discuss disinformation, influence on elections and possible solutions.⁷⁵

EP elections

In addition to providing basic information about EP elections on its website (as mentioned above), the Election Authority also sends out voter registration forms to all non-national EU citizens who are registered in Sweden and who have not previously registered for EP elections. EU citizens who have already registered and are still residing in Sweden receive a form of withdrawal, which can be used by those who no longer wish to remain on the electoral roll. Non-national EU citizens who are admitted to the Swedish voting list may not vote in EP elections in any other EU Member State.⁷⁶

Local elections

In addition to providing basic information about municipal and county elections on its website, the Election Authority sends voting cards to all those who have the right to vote.⁷⁷ However, at the local level, there seems to be a lack of information in foreign languages. Before the 2018 local elections, the Swedish public service TV (SVT) reported that only two of 26 Stockholm county municipalities provided electoral information in languages other than Swedish and the minority language Finnish on their websites. Many of the municipalities refer to the Election Authority on their website, where information is available in 30 languages, but the reference is usually in Swedish and not always easy to locate.⁷⁸

⁷² <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages.html>

⁷³ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/383934?download=true>

⁷⁴ The British Election authority was consulted regarding influence on elections in the UK, in particular on the Brexit-election.

⁷⁵ <https://www.val.se/download/18.574dd8aa1610997fea413f0/1519398102719/Arsrapport-Valmyndigheten-2017.pdf>

⁷⁶ Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2015). "Democracy Statistics Report no 19, Who chose to choose? – Voter turnout in the 2014 elections." https://www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/ME0105_2014A01_BR_ME09BR1502.pdf

⁷⁷ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/voting-cards.html>

⁷⁸ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/valinformation-pa-svenska>

At the same time, there are some progressive municipalities. For example, Sollentuna municipality provides information in several languages on its website and in brochures, and has held open lectures about democracy for non-national citizens. The municipality has also arranged visits to Swedish For Immigrants (SFI) classes⁷⁹ in the area to inform about the process of elections.⁸⁰ Another example is the Södertälje municipality, where voter turnout was significantly lower than in the rest of Sweden in the past elections (78% versus 85%). The local government therefore decided to start a specific project to address the low turnout by employing specific ‘election informers’, whose aim was to make more people vote. The municipality employed 40 informers that were deployed in priority areas and on town squares to provide information about the practicalities of the voting.⁸¹ It is worth noting that a similar project using election informers in Sigtuna municipality was closed down since there were suspicions that one of the parties tried to influence the informers.⁸² This shows that informers can be susceptible to influence from political parties, and should therefore be tested elsewhere with caution and with due attention to context.

2.4. Political Parties and Candidacy Rights

The desk-based research carried out for this report did not find any evidence of Swedish political parties specifically targeting non-citizen residents from the EU. Moreover, the number of European candidates on party lists is not tracked systematically. The Swedish Election authority, when replying to the GLOBALCIT online survey, indicated that there was one non-citizen from the EU standing as candidate in EP elections in 2014. The candidate was a woman and got elected to the EP. The Election Authority also reported about non-citizens from the EU standing as candidates in the local elections in 2014 but did not indicate how many such candidates there were, and whether they were elected. According to a 2018-mission by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), most of the Swedish political parties conduct only internal elections to nominate candidates and do not apply quotas to promote representation of women, disadvantaged groups, or national minorities.⁸³

However, political parties provide information in foreign languages on their websites. For example, the Social Democratic party provides basic information about their party programme and about how to vote in languages other than Swedish on their webpage (i.e. English, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Yiddish, Spanish, Finnish, Meänkieli, North Saami, Somali (Somalia), Romany Arli, North Kurdish, South Kurdish, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Albanian, and Tigrinya).⁸⁴ The Moderate party also provides basic information about its political programme (manifesto) in foreign languages (i.e. in Arabic, English, Spanish, Persian (Farsi), Finnish, Croatian, Central Kurdish (Sorani), Polish, Dari (Afghan Persian), Somali (Somalia), Serbian (Cyrillic), Tigrinska, Russian, and Turkish).⁸⁵ The Liberals offer information both in other languages and in ‘easy Swedish’ (*lätt svenska*), which means that information has been produced or revised to make it easier to understand and is aimed at those who may have

⁷⁹ Swedish For Immigrants is the national free Swedish language course offered to most categories of immigrants.

⁸⁰ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/valinformation-pa-svenska>

⁸¹ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/sodertalje/sa-ska-sodertaljekommun-gora-for-att-fa-fler-att-rosta-1>

⁸² <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=103&artikel=6960125>

⁸³ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/383934?download=true>

⁸⁴ <https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/other-languages/>

⁸⁵ <https://moderaterna.se/other-languages>

difficulties in reading Swedish.⁸⁶ Moreover, several parties, including the Moderate party⁸⁷ and the Christian Democrats⁸⁸ provide information about how to become party members in many foreign languages.

Finally, it is easy to establish a political party⁸⁹ in Sweden; there are no rules prescribing how form a party,⁹⁰ e.g. it can be done by forming a non-profit association. The party name can be registered with the Election Authority, although this is not mandatory. Even without party registration, people can vote for the party simply by writing the party name on a clean ballot provided at the polling station.⁹¹

EP elections

The Swedish Election Authority, when replying to the GLOBALCIT online survey, indicated that there was one non-citizen from the EU standing as candidate in EP elections in 2014. The candidate was a woman and was elected to the EP.

Local elections

Table 3 illustrates that the number of non-Swedish candidates (EU and non-EU citizens) in the 2018 municipal elections was very limited both on average (circa 1.9%) and among the candidates of the eight leading parties⁹² (all under 3%). The party with most non-Swedish candidates among the nine leading parties was the Green party (circa 2.8%). The number of non-Swedish citizens that were elected was even more limited (circa 0.9% on average), with the Green party having most non-nationals among the elected (2.5%).⁹³ No statistics were found specifically on non-citizen residents from the EU.

⁸⁶ <https://www.liberalerna.se/andra-sprak/>

⁸⁷ <https://moderaterna.se/other-languages>

⁸⁸ https://kristdemokraterna.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/allmanfolder_engelska_180810_HK.pdf

⁸⁹ The definition of a political party according to the government is as follows “Party denotes any association or group of voters which runs for election under a particular designation.”

⁹⁰ <https://www.val.se/servicelankar/other-languages/english-engelska/form-a-political-party.html>

⁹¹ <https://sweden.se/society/10-features-of-democracy-in-sweden/>

⁹² These eight parties were the ones that got mandates in 2018 parliamentary elections.

⁹³ The statistics are based on data in the Residence register (folkbokföringen) and was compiled on 2018-09-09. Source: <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/alkon/K/rike/alderkon.html>

Table 3. Candidates and elected in municipal elections 2018, according to citizenship⁹⁴

	Elected		Candidates	
Party	Total: all citizens	Non-Swedish citizens	Total: all citizens	Non-Swedish citizens
All parties	12,678	0.9%	53,360	1.9%
Social Democratic party	3,752	1.0%	12,822	2.0%
Moderate Party	2,396	0.5%	7,962	1.1%
Sweden Democrats	1,784	0.8%	4,494	1.6%
Centre Party	1,603	1.1%	7,131	1.7%
Left Party	808	1.1%	4,416	2.2%
Liberal Party	689	0.6%	4,539	1.5%
Christian Democrats	676	1.3%	4,109	2.3%
Green party	395	2.5%	2,827	2.8%

A recent study of candidates and those elected in municipal elections carried out by Statistics Sweden found that political parties control the probability of different groups to be elected,⁹⁵ and that non-nationals were underrepresented among candidates. It also showed that political parties put this group and others (such as people with low educational and income levels) more seldom on a ‘selectable place’⁹⁶ on the ballot paper compared with other nominated candidates. The same study also found that foreign-born people were represented to a lesser extent among the first names on the parties’ ballot papers.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ The statistics are based on data in the Residence register (folkbokföringen) and was compiled on 2018-09-09. Source:

<https://data.val.se/val/val2018/alkon/K/rike/alderkon.html>

⁹⁵ SCB (2016). Demokratins representanter – en studie av representativitet, delaktighet och syn på uppdraget. p. 28-29. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/_Publikationer/ME0107_2014A01J_BR_ME09BR1603.pdf

⁹⁶ The authors defined ‘selectable places’ as those with a placement on the ballot paper that corresponds to the number of mandates that the party received in the previous election.

⁹⁷ SCB (2016). Demokratins representanter – en studie av representativitet, delaktighet och syn på uppdraget. p. 30. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/_Publikationer/ME0107_2014A01J_BR_ME09BR1603.pdf

2.5. Turnout

EP elections

In the 2014 EP elections, circa 49,000 non-citizen EU residents were entitled to vote,⁹⁸ and the majority (circa 30,000 or about 61%) voted (see Table 4 below).⁹⁹ There has been an increase in the turnout of 4% compared to the 2009 EP elections.¹⁰⁰ There are slightly more women compared to men both among non-citizens entitled to vote and among those who voted.¹⁰¹ However, the estimate is relatively uncertain considering the small sample of foreign EU citizens.¹⁰² The youngest cohort (18-29) had the highest turnout (circa 69%), while the oldest cohort aged 65+ had the lowest turnout (circa 56%).

Table 4. EP election 2014: Non-citizen residents from the EU entitled to vote and those who voted, by sex and age¹⁰³

	Entitled to vote, in thousands			Voters, in thousands			Voters as (%) of those entitled to vote		
Age	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
18-29	1,3	1,7	3,1	..	1,2	2,1	..	69.0	69.1
30-49	8,9	9,1	18,0	5,4	6,1	11,5	60.5	66.8	63,7
50-64	6,6	7,6	14,2	4,0	4,7	8,6	60.3	61.5	60.9
65+	6,9	7,0	13,9	4,0	3,7	7,7	57.8	53.4	55.6
Total, all ages	23,7	25,3	49,1	14,3	1,6	29,9	60.2	61.7	60.9

⁹⁸ In the first Swedish EP elections in 1995, 36,000 foreign EU citizens were entitled to vote. Source: Statistics Sweden presentation “De preliminärt röstberättigade” by Jonas Olofsson at Statistics Sweden: https://www.scb.se/Grupp/Produkter_Tjanster/Kurser/_Dokument/Demokratidagen-2013/De-preliminart-rostberattigade.pdf

⁹⁹ SCB:s valdeltagandeundersökning. “Valet till Europaparlamentet 2014. Röstningsförhållanden bland röstberättigade utländska EU-medborgare efter kön och ålder.”

¹⁰⁰ Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2015), Democracy Statistics Report no 19. Who chose to choose? – Voter turnout in the 2014 elections. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/_Publikationer/ME0105_2014A01_BR_ME09BR1502.pdf

¹⁰¹ SCB:s valdeltagandeundersökning. “Valet till Europaparlamentet 2014. Röstningsförhållanden bland röstberättigade utländska EU-medborgare efter kön och ålder.”

¹⁰² Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2015), Democracy Statistics Report no 19. Who chose to choose? – Voter turnout in the 2014 elections. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/_Publikationer/ME0105_2014A01_BR_ME09BR1502.pdf

¹⁰³ SCB:s valdeltagandeundersökning. “Valet till Europaparlamentet 2014. Röstningsförhållanden bland röstberättigade utländska EU-medborgare efter kön och ålder.”

Local elections

In total, approximately 578,000 foreign nationals¹⁰⁴ (EU and non-EU), circa 7.4% of the total eligible voters, had the right to vote in the 2018 municipal and county elections (see Table 5). This is 123,000 citizens more (an increase of 1.4 percentage points) compared to the 2014 elections.¹⁰⁵ Upon request, Statistics Sweden provided the total number of EU citizens who were entitled to vote in the 2018 elections to the author, which amounted to 271,672. Statistics on the actual turnout will be released in June 2019.¹⁰⁶

Table 5. The number of nationals and non-nationals entitled to vote at the municipal elections in 2018¹⁰⁷

Swedish and foreign nationals			Foreign nationals			
Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	(%)
3,941,816	3,903,361	7,845,177	265,183	312,416	577,599	7.4 ¹⁰⁸

Table 6 below illustrates the number of citizens entitled to vote and those who voted in the municipal elections in 2014. Among Swedish citizens entitled to vote, the turnout was very high at 85.9%, while among the eligible EU citizens (excluding the Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark and Finland) the turnout was considerably lower at 29.1%. There was no significant difference between the turnout of men and women, but more men than women were entitled to vote in absolute numbers (90,400 compared to 70,400).

¹⁰⁴ Foreign citizens are here defined as registered nationals from EU countries, Norway, Iceland and other foreign nationals who have been registered in Sweden for three consecutive years prior to the election.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valresultat/pong/statistiknyhet/preliminart-rostberattigade-i-2018-ars-val/>

¹⁰⁶ Source: Jonas Olofsson, Democracy Statistics unit, at the Department of Population and Welfare (SCB). Email communication, dated 26 November 2018.

¹⁰⁷ SCB (2018). "Preliminärt röstberättigade i 2018 års val till riksdag och kommunfullmäktige". Compiled on 11 September 2017. Accessed on 30 October 2018. <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valresultat/>

¹⁰⁸ The exact percentage, as calculated by the author is 7.3625 %.

Table 6. Citizens entitled to vote and those who voted in 2014 municipal elections, by geographic areas and sex¹⁰⁹

Country of nationality	Citizens entitled to vote, in thousands			Citizens who voted, in thousands			Citizens who voted, as percentage of those entitled to vote		
	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sweden	3,537.4	3,631.7	7,169.2	3,009.9	3,149.1	6,159	85.1	86.7	85.9
Nordics, excl. Sweden	59.5	63.8	123.2	22.6	29.9	52.4	37.9	46.8	42.5
EU-28, excl. Nordics	90.7	70.4	161.1	26.1	20.8	46.9	28.7	29.5	29.1

The author was not able to find any evidence of a political debate or media reports specifically on the electoral participation of non-national EU voters and their potential impact on electoral outcomes.

3. Non-resident Citizens' Franchise in National and EP Elections when Residing in Other EU Member States

3.1. Overview of Relevant Administrative Regulations

EP elections

Swedish citizens resident abroad have voting rights in EP elections. The electoral rights of non-resident citizens are governed by the Elections Act (2005: 837).¹¹⁰ To exercise these rights and remain on the electoral roll, citizens have to re-register every ten years. Alternatively, an incoming vote from abroad is also counted as a registration on the electoral roll and considered as valid, if received no later than on the day before the election date.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Valdeltagande i kommunfullmäktigvalen 2014'', Table 4. "Kommunfullmäktigvalen 2014. Röstningsförhållanden efter kön och medborgskapsland". <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valdeltagandeundersokningen>

¹¹⁰ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

¹¹¹ <https://www.val.se/svenska-valsystemet/rostratt-och-rostkort/rostratt.html#RostrattEuropaparlamentet>

Swedes residing abroad can vote in-country, by post or at Swedish missions abroad (embassies or consulates).¹¹² Swedish citizens resident abroad can stand as candidates in EP elections in Sweden if they have voting rights in this type of elections, and file a declaration of non-candidacy in another EU country.¹¹³

According to the Elections Act, holding the position of a member of the European Parliament is not compatible with being:¹¹⁴

1. a member of a national parliament;
2. a member of the government of a Member State;
3. a member of the European Commission;
4. a judge, Advocate General or Registrar of the Court of Justice of the European Union or the General Court;
5. a member of the European Central Bank Executive Board;
6. a member of the European Court of Auditors;
7. an Ombudsman of the European Union;
8. a member of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union or the European Atomic Energy Community;
9. a member of such committees and other bodies that have been appointed pursuant to the treaties establishing the European Community and the European Atomic Energy Community to manage the funds of the community or to perform a permanent and direct administrative function;
10. a member of the board, member of the executive board or employee of the European Investment Bank; or
11. an officer or other employee on active service within the institutions of the European Union or bodies that are linked with them or the European Central Bank.

National elections

Swedish citizens resident abroad have voting rights in national parliamentary elections. The electoral rights of non-resident citizens are governed by the Elections Act (2005: 837).¹¹⁵ The requirements to stand for election are the same as those that apply to the right to vote (see section 1.2 above).

¹¹² <https://www.val.se/svenska-valsystemet/satt-att-rosta/information-for-utlandssvenskar.html>

¹¹³ <https://www.val.se/for-partier/infor-europaparlamentsvalet-2019/anmala-kandidater.html>

¹¹⁴ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

¹¹⁵ Non-official translation of the Elections Act (Vallagen SFS 2005:837) including amendments SFS 2008:1276, SFS 2010:1327, SFS 2010:1416, SFS 2010:1434, SFS 2013:1159, SFS 2014:301, and SFS 2014:1384. Source: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/democracy-and-human-rights/the-elections-act-2005837/>

3.2. Voter Registration

EP elections

Non-resident citizens have the right to vote in national elections if they have been registered in Sweden at some point. Swedes living abroad are included in the electoral roll if they have emigrated within the last ten years or if they have applied to the Swedish Tax Agency no later than 30 days before the election day to be included in the electoral roll. The application is made by sending the address details to the Swedish Tax Agency. There is a special form for Swedes living abroad ("Ny adress/röslängd för utvandrad") who wish to apply to be included in the electoral roll.¹¹⁶ The form has to be sent to the Swedish Tax Agency. A vote received from abroad in an election also counts for the purposes of registration on the electoral roll. A vote in a given election counts if it is received the day before the polling day.

Non-resident citizens can vote at any Swedish mission abroad that arranges vote reception or vote by post from all the countries in the world. The Swedish Election Authority decides, after receiving proposals from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which Swedish diplomatic missions abroad may collect votes. In the 2018 national elections, there were 248 polling stations located abroad.¹¹⁷ Opening hours differ depending on the mission. Voting begins 24 days before the election day, and in some places may take place only for a short period of time. Voting must cease long enough before the election to enable the votes to reach the Election Authority no later than on the day before the election day. All votes received at diplomatic missions abroad are sent to the Election Authority, where they are sorted and forwarded to the relevant election committee.¹¹⁸ Postal votes can be mailed from abroad 45 days before the election day at the earliest, but may not be mailed from Sweden.¹¹⁹ The voting material required for postal voting may be ordered from the Election Authority or from a mission abroad. Postal votes must arrive in time for the counting of votes.¹²⁰

Before each election, the Election Authority sends out voting cards and postal voting materials to all Swedes who are listed with the Tax Agency as resident outside Sweden. They automatically receive voting materials (without the need to order them) to the address they have reported to the Swedish Tax Agency's civil register (*Skatteverkets folkbokföringsregister*). Swedes abroad receive a letter, which includes voting materials and an international voting card, i.e. a voting card adapted for citizens living abroad. These voting cards can be used for both postal voting and voting at an embassy or consulate. The rest of the voting material consists of a voting envelope, a blank ballot paper for the parliamentary election (where the voter writes the name of the party), an outer envelope and a cover envelope. If the non-resident is in Sweden at the time of the election, he/she can contact the Election Authority, the municipality or the county administrative board to obtain a duplicate voting card that can be used for voting in Sweden.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ <https://www.val.se/service/other-languages/english-engelska/electoral-roll.html>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/val2018/utlandsrostandet-i-gang-i-arets-val>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.val.se/service/other-languages/english-engelska/voting-from-abroad.html>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.val.se/service/other-languages/english-engelska/voting-from-abroad.html>

¹²⁰ <https://www.val.se/service/other-languages/english-engelska/voting-from-abroad.html>

¹²¹ <https://www.val.se/svenska-valsystemet/satt-att-rosta/information-for-utlandssvenskar.html>

National elections

The same rules and procedures apply for national elections as for EP elections (see above).

According to the response to the GLOBALCIT online survey carried out in autumn 2018 by the Swedish Election Authority and by another (anonymous) respondent, public authorities proactively inform non-resident citizens about their electoral rights through paper materials, website, and social media. The information was distributed both well in advance of voter registration and shortly before the registration deadline for the last national elections. Also the civil society, namely the association Swedes Worldwide, reached out actively to nationals abroad by organising personal meetings, by distributing paper materials, by providing information on its website, on social media, radio, TV, and in newspapers, as well as by sending information directly to Swedish embassies and consulates. The information was disseminated well in advance of voter registration, shortly before the registration deadline, and shortly before the elections. Finally, one of the (anonymous) GLOBALCIT online survey respondents recommended that outreach activities should focus on concrete issues that concern Swedes living abroad, and that (potential) voters should be informed about the importance of voting in national elections also while living abroad.

3.3. Turnout*EP elections*

In the 2014 EP elections, over 155,000 Swedes abroad were entitled to vote but only circa 20,000 or about 13% actually voted (see Table 7 below). There are slightly more women compared to men among those entitled to vote and those who actually voted from abroad. The oldest cohort (65+) had the highest turnout (circa 19%), while the youngest cohort (18-29) has the lowest turnout (circa 9%). It is worth noting that the number of Swedes abroad entitled to vote has increased compared to the 2009 EP elections, when only 137,536 non-resident citizens were entitled to vote.¹²²

¹²² Source: Statistics Sweden presentation “De preliminärt röstberättigade” by Jonas Olofsson at Statistics Sweden: www.scb.se/Grupp/Produkter_Tjanster/Kurser/_Dokument/Demokratidagen-2013/De-preliminart-rostberattigade.pdf

Table 7. EP election 2014: Swedes abroad entitled to vote and those who voted, by sex and age¹²³

	Entitled to vote, in thousands			Voters, in thousands			Voters as (%) of those entitled to vote		
Age	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
18-29	13,0	16,2	29,2	1,2	1,6	2,7	9.0	9.7	9.4
30-49	36,2	40,7	76,9	3,6	4,9	8,5	9.9	12.0	11.0
50-64	15,6	12,1	27,7	1,8	2,5	4,3	11.5	21.0	15.7
65+	10,6	11,3	21,9	2,3	1,9	4,2	21.8	17.0	19.3
Total, all ages	75,4	80,2	155,7	8,9	10,9	19,8	11.8	13.6	12.7

National Elections

In the 2018 parliamentary elections, 7,495,936 Swedish resident citizens were entitled to vote, and 6,535,271 of them voted (corresponding to an 87.18% turnout).¹²⁴ Swedish citizens living abroad normally have a much lower turnout. Only 32% voted in the 2014 national parliamentary elections.¹²⁵ Statistics on the actual turnout in the 2018 national elections will be released in June 2019.¹²⁶ At present, the only known preliminary figures released show that non-resident citizens cast 46,521 votes at embassies and consulates, and 32,579 by postal mail from abroad in 2018.¹²⁷

In the 2014 parliamentary elections, circa 161,000 non-resident Swedish citizens were entitled to vote. Swedes abroad, who are entitled to vote corresponded to circa 2.2% of the total population entitled to vote (see Table 8).¹²⁸

¹²³ SCB:s valdeltagandeundersökning. "Valet till Europaparlamentet 2014. Röstningsförhållanden bland utlandssvenskar efter kön och ålder."

¹²⁴ <https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-landsting-och-kommun/2018/valresultat.html>

¹²⁵ SCB (2015). "Increased electoral participation among the younger and older". Statistical news dated 2015-03-30.

<https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valdeltagandeundersokningen/pong/statistiknyhet/allmanna-val-valdeltagandeundersokningen2/>

¹²⁶ Source: Jonas Olofsson, Democracy Statistics unit, at the Department of Population and Welfare (SCB). Email communication, dated 26 November, 2018.

¹²⁷ <https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-landsting-och-kommun/2018/valresultat.html>

¹²⁸ SCB (2014). "Riksdagsvalet 2014 efter kommun. Svenska medborgare i Sverige och i utlandet." <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valresultat/>

Table 8. The number of citizens entitled to vote in the 2014 parliamentary elections¹²⁹

	Women	Men	Total
Swedish citizens in Sweden and abroad (total)	3,715,169	3,615,263	7,330,432
Swedish citizens abroad	83,431	77,848	161,279
Swedish citizens abroad as percentage of the total number of entitled voters ¹³⁰	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%

Of the circa 161,000 non-resident Swedes entitled to vote, only about 52,000 (32%) actually voted in the 2014 parliamentary elections (see Table 9).¹³¹ Among the non-resident voters, there were slightly more women compared to men (33% versus 31%), as a share of the entire population of non-residents entitled to vote. In terms of age, the older age cohorts (50+) had a higher, above average, turnout compared to the younger ones. The youngest cohort (18-29) had the lowest turnout (less than 30%).

Table 9. The number of non-resident Swedes that voted in the 2014 parliamentary elections, by sex and age (absolute numbers in thousands and in percentages)¹³²

Age	Citizens abroad entitled to vote, in thousands			Citizens who voted, in thousands			Citizens who voted, as % of those entitled to vote		
	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Total</i>
18-29	13,2	16,5	29,7	3,6	5,0	8,6	27.5	30.2	29.0
30-49	36,8	41,5	78,2	11,2	13,0	24,2	30.5	31.3	30.9
50-64	16,3	13,0	29,2	5,3	5,4	10,7	32.6	41.9	36.7
65+	11,6	12,5	24,1	4,2	4,4	8,7	36.6	35.4	36.0
Total	77,8	83,4	161,3	24,4	27,8	52,2	31.3	33.4	32.4

LEGEND: *M*=men, *W*=women.

¹²⁹ SCB (2014). "Riksdagsvalet 2014 efter kommun. Svenska medborgare i Sverige och i utlandet." <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valresultat/>

¹³⁰ Please note that the percentages were calculated and rounded to one decimal by the author.

¹³¹ Jonas Olofsson, Democracy Statistics unit, at the Department of Population and Welfare (SCB) confirmed that these statistics refer to Swedes resident abroad (not to Swedish citizens temporary abroad). Source: Email communication, dated 31 October 2018.

¹³² SCB (2014). "Valdeltagandet i 2014 års riksdagsval". <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-valdeltagandeundersokningen/>

The media has been reporting on non-resident voters mainly because it was assumed that their participation could impact on the electoral outcomes in 2018. The preliminary election results in September 2018 (excluding the early votes that had not yet been delivered to the electoral districts during the election day, and the votes from abroad) left neither the centre-left coalition, nor the centre-right “Alliance” with the possibility to form a majority government.¹³³ Hence, several established news outlets hypothesised that the foreign votes could have broken the deadlock,¹³⁴ something that had happened once before, as far back as in the 1979 election, when the votes from abroad helped to bring the centre-right coalition to power.¹³⁵ However, this assumption did not materialise in the 2018 elections.

Research from other countries has shown that foreigners tend to vote in the same way as resident citizens.¹³⁶ In Sweden, to the contrary, a study from Gothenburg University of the 2014 election results found that non-residents are further to the right than resident Swedes (the largest share of votes by non-residents, 36%, went to the Moderate Party; while the Social Democratic party only got 15% of the non-residents’ votes). Interestingly, the Feminist Initiative, a feminist political party was a pronounced youth phenomenon among Swedes abroad, while the extreme-right populist party Sweden Democrats reached its strongest support among older cohorts. The Sweden Democrats was also popular among non-residents with lower education levels and people who do not visit Sweden, do not feel proud to be Swedish, do not feel at home in Sweden, and who are unlikely to ever move back.¹³⁷

In general, political parties in Sweden have not prioritised campaigning among Swedes abroad. The non-profit organisation Swedes Worldwide (*Svenskar i världen*) underlined that they would like to see more involvement abroad from the political parties.¹³⁸ A recent news article reports on voters abroad also deplores little attention from political parties.¹³⁹ The interviewed Swedish voters in Copenhagen apparently only received a personal letter from one of the political parties (the Moderate Party). The letter from the Moderate Party was signed by the head of the party, who illustrated the party position and its priority areas to voters. This dispatch was prepared by the party-affiliated network “Moderates abroad”.¹⁴⁰

The Moderate Party was the most voted for among Swedes abroad in the 2014 national elections,¹⁴¹ and is probably the most active party, when it comes to outreach to Swedes abroad. On the party website, the Moderates state that it is their priority to increase electoral participation among non-resident citizens and there is a video with the head of the party targeting his message directly to Swedes abroad. The party has made several practical suggestions to facilitate voting for non-residents, including: (i) extended opening hours for voting at Swedish embassies and consulates, (ii) improved information to Swedes abroad about the voting rules, (iii) making a high level of turnout a priority task for Swedish missions

¹³³ <https://www.thelocal.se/20181122/timeline-this-has-happened-in-swedish-politics-since-the-elections>

¹³⁴ For example: (1) <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/val-2018/utlandssvenskar-kan-avgora-valet-sa-paverkar-sista-rosterna/> (2) <https://nyheter24.se/maktkamp24/914228-utlandssvenskar-kan-avgora-valet-sa-brukar-de-rosta> (3) <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2018-09-10/fortidsroster-och-utlandssvenskar-kan-avgora-valet>

¹³⁵ <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/val-2018/utlandssvenskar-kan-avgora-valet-sa-paverkar-sista-rosterna>

¹³⁶ This is asserted by the Swedish study: https://samfak.gu.se/aktuellt/nyheter/nyheter_detalj/moderaterna-storsta-partiet-bland-utlandssvenskar.cid1359434

¹³⁷ https://samfak.gu.se/aktuellt/nyheter/nyheter_detalj/moderaterna-storsta-partiet-bland-utlandssvenskar.cid1359434

¹³⁸ <https://www.svd.se/utlandssvenskar-missnojda-med-valuppvaktning>

¹³⁹ <https://www.kuriren.nu/nyheter/utlandssvenskar-missnojda-med-valuppvaktning-nm4907153.aspx>

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.kuriren.nu/nyheter/utlandssvenskar-missnojda-med-valuppvaktning-nm4907153.aspx>

¹⁴¹ https://samfak.gu.se/aktuellt/nyheter/nyheter_detalj/moderaterna-storsta-partiet-bland-utlandssvenskar.cid1359434

(embassies/consulates), and (iv) introducing postal voting from inside the country for Swedish residents abroad, who happen to be visiting Sweden in election times. These proposals were formulated in a parliamentary bill in autumn 2016 and were approved by the Parliament. It is now up to the government to implement them. The Moderate party also has a number of proposals that specifically represent the interests of non-residents, e.g. regarding taxes for Swedes abroad, translation of school grades to harmonise the Swedish system and systems abroad, and the right to a burial place for non-residents.¹⁴²

The Social Democratic party did not have a targeted campaign aiming at Swedes abroad in 2018, but the party is trying to reach this group of voters through social media, and when Ministers and other politicians from their party travel abroad. The Centre party had a campaign aimed at non-residents, including a video with the head of party speaking directly to Swedes abroad. The Sweden Democrats distribute election material in areas where many Swedes reside (e.g. on the Spanish coast and in some areas of Thailand). The head of communications for the Sweden Democrats, Joakim Wallerstein, interviewed by a newspaper mentions that the party has a large number of election workers (between 500 and 1,000) in areas where there is a large proportion of Swedes. These workers have the objective to build local networks of active participants and influencers. However, the party does not produce specific election material for Swedes abroad.¹⁴³

4. Conclusion

Mobile EU-citizens are an increasingly important group of voters. The number of non-citizen residents entitled to vote in local and EP elections in Sweden has grown. Also the number of non-resident citizens entitled to vote has increased between the 2009 and 2014 EP elections. At the same time, the turnout of mobile EU citizens tends to be very low, e.g. only 13% of Swedes living abroad voted in the 2014 EP elections and 29% of non-citizen residents from the EU voted in local elections held in Sweden.

Non-citizen residents:

The need for non-citizen residents to actively register to vote in EP elections could be considered a challenge to participation. However, the Swedish authorities have put comprehensive measures in place to inform potential non-citizen voters about voter registration and the electoral process. The Election Authority provides practical information about elections in over 30 languages on their website, and sends out voter registration forms to all non-national EU citizens who are residents in Sweden and who have not previously registered for EP elections. Moreover, some progressive municipalities organise open lectures about democracy and elections for foreigners, and employ specific ‘election informers’ to inform about the voting process in low turnout areas.

Non-citizen residents also face some challenges if they decide to stand as candidates in elections. The limited data available seems to suggest that the number of non-citizen candidates in EP and local elections are few, with even fewer non-Swedes getting elected.

¹⁴² <https://moderaterna.se/svenskar-bosatta-utomlands-ska-alltid-vara-valkomna-hem>

¹⁴³ <https://www.kuriren.nu/nyheter/utlandssvenskar-missnojd-med-valuppvaktning-nm4907153.aspx>

Political parties seem to be placing non-national candidates more seldom among the first names and on 'selectable' positions on ballot papers.¹⁴⁴

In terms of potentially good practices, early voting is a functional and popular solution in Sweden. A significant share (2,911,326 or almost 39%) of citizens entitled to vote in the 2018 elections in Sweden voted in advance.¹⁴⁵ All municipalities are obliged to ensure that there is at least one location which receives early votes on the election day.¹⁴⁶ As of the national elections in 2006, early voting was expanded to enable people to vote in advance in libraries, municipalities and at other premises. This proved to be a successful reform in several ways. The number of polling stations where people could vote in advance increased, and there was also a greater diversity in types of voting locations.¹⁴⁷ The percentage of early voters also increased in the following elections (2010 and 2014). Swedish research shows that that early voting is comparatively popular among women, elderly, and single people.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, early voting facilitates outreach to vulnerable groups, such as homeless people, by locating the polling stations in places that they are likely to visit. For example, in the 2018 elections, a polling station was located at the Citizen Office for Homeless People (*Medborgarkontoret för hemlösa*)¹⁴⁹ in Stockholm.¹⁵⁰

At the same time, the effect of early voting on turnout is still up for debate. The empirical evidence shows mixed results. Several studies find only smaller increase in turnout associated with convenience voting, such as voting by post or early in-person voting,¹⁵¹ while other studies suggest that early voting is convenient merely for those who would have voted anyway.¹⁵² A Swedish study shows that the effect of early voting on turnout is rather small; individuals who had more access to early voting locations only had a slightly higher turnout.¹⁵³ In sum, early voting could be a practical measure that might (slightly) increase electoral participation of some groups of voters. However, more research would be needed to understand whether early voting can increase participation of non-citizens and in which contexts.

Non-resident citizens:

The turnout among non-resident citizens tends to be very low. In the last EP elections (2014), the overall turnout was only 13%, being particularly low among the youngest cohort (circa 9% among the 18-29 years old). In terms of practical solutions that could facilitate voting for non-residents, the author concurs with suggestions made by one of the main political parties in Sweden, the Moderate party, including: (i) extended opening hours for voting at Swedish embassies and consulates, (ii) improved information about voting rules, (iii) making high

¹⁴⁴ SCB (2016). Demokratins representanter – en studie av representativitet, delaktighet och syn på uppdraget. p. 30. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/ME0107_2014A01J_BR_ME09BR1603.pdf

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-landsting-och-kommun/2018/valresultat.html>

¹⁴⁶ Early voting may begin 18 days before the election day and continue until the election day. Source: Statistics Sweden (2015). Democracy Statistics Report no 19, Who chose to choose? – Voter turnout in the 2014 elections. https://www.scb.se/Statistik/Publikationer/ME0105_2014A01_BR_ME09BR1502.pdf

¹⁴⁷ Source: Dahlberg, Oscarsson & Öhrvall 2008 in Statistics Sweden (2015).

¹⁴⁸ Source: Brothén 2003 in Statistics Sweden (2015).

¹⁴⁹ At the Citizen office, homeless people can meet social secretaries for information and advice on social issues without appointment.

¹⁵⁰ <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/rostmottagning/fortidsrostning/rosthingslokal/01/80/15561/index.html>

¹⁵¹ Gronke, P., Galanes-Rosenbaum, E., & Miller, P. (2007). Early Voting and Turnout. PS: Political Science & Politics, 40(4), 639-645.

¹⁵² Neeleya G. W. and Richardson L. E. (2001). Who is early voting? An individual level examination. The Social Science Journal, Vol: 38, Issue: 3, Page: 381-392

¹⁵³ Source: Dahlberg, Oscarsson & Öhrvall 2008 in Statistics Sweden (2015).

turnout a priority task for Swedish missions abroad, and (iv) introducing postal voting from inside the country for Swedish residents abroad who are visiting Sweden on the election day.

In terms of good practices, the Election Authority sends voting materials to all Swedes, who are listed as residents abroad, before each election. Also the civil society reaches out actively to nationals abroad by providing electoral information on the web, on paper, social media, radio, TV and in newspapers, as well by organising personal meetings. Moreover, despite being a Member State with a smaller population, Sweden provides many polling stations abroad (248 stations worldwide in the 2018 national elections).

Finally, a topic that will probably become increasingly important in the future is disinformation and manipulation of elections, including outreach to specific communities by tailored political messages (microtargeting). Mobile EU citizens might be more vulnerable to manipulation compared to resident citizens since most non-citizens have more limited local language capacities compared to natives, while non-residents have to make a particular effort to keep up to date with current affairs in their home country, and might have more limited access to news in their own language while abroad. Before and after the last Swedish elections in 2018, some of the most substantial disinformation campaigns focused on election fraud and were spread in the Swedish, English, Danish and German languages. Similar campaigns took place during elections in France and the referendum on the EU in the United Kingdom.¹⁵⁴ The EU has just launched an Action Plan to step up efforts to counter disinformation in Europe, and the European Commission is setting up measures to address disinformation, including the creation of a Rapid Alert System. At the national level, several electoral authorities, including the Swedish one, are already examining potential disinformation threats and are looking into solutions. This is also an area where more research would be needed to understand both the impact of disinformation on turnout, and the opportunities of using microtargeting to reach specific groups of citizens to increase turnout.

¹⁵⁴ Colliver C., Pomerantsev P., Appelbaum A. and Birdwell J. (2018). "Smearing Sweden: International Influence Campaigns in the 2018 Swedish Election".
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/iga/assets/documents/arena/2018/Sweden-Report-October-2018.pdf>

